

‘SEA LEAGUE OF ALL THE BRITONS’:
RACE, IDENTITY, AND IMPERIAL DEFENSE,
1868-1914

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ABSTRACT

Focusing on the transnational connections between the metropole and the empire, my dissertation explores the cultural dimensions of British imperial defense policy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with a particular emphasis on cooperation with the self-governing colonies of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. The existing scholarly literature on Anglo-Dominion relations presents the period 1868-1914 as a monolithic struggle between the proponents of imperial centralization and the powerful sentiments of colonial nationalism. In contrast, I argue that any critical examination of the evolution of the Commonwealth must be situated within the cultural and intellectual milieu of late Victorian ideas about race. I demonstrate that a pervasive sense of pan-British identity shaped the worldview of white colonials and resulted in an unprecedented level of imperial cooperation. Furthermore, I explore how the racial and cultural hegemony of imperial elites pushed non-white participation in the defense of the empire to the margins, reinforcing the popular literary construction of Rudyard Kipling's "Gunga Din" and other "loyal" subaltern stereotypes. My dissertation thus revises our understanding of the broader imperial relationship and provides a comprehensive and more nuanced context for the meaning of "British" identity within the empire.

INDEX OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADM	Admiralty Papers
BD	Bodleian Library, Oxford University
BL	British Library
CAB	Committee of Imperial Defence Papers
CCA	Churchill College Archives
CHAR	Winston Churchill Papers
CO	Colonial Office Papers
ICS	Institute of Commonwealth Studies
IFL	Imperial Federation League Papers
IWM	Imperial War Museum
JC	Joseph Chamberlain Papers
LAC	Library and Archives of Canada
LC	Lord Chamberlain Papers
MCKN	Reginald McKenna Papers
NA	National Archives
NAM	National Army Museum
NMM	National Maritime Museum
NSM	National Scouting Museum, New Zealand
PC	Privy Council Papers

SAA Scout Association Archives

WO War Office Papers

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Introduction

On the evening of August 4th 1914, Great Britain went to war with Germany. Within hours the white self-governing Dominions offered their unqualified support for the “Mother Country.”¹ In Australia, Liberal Prime Minister Joseph Cook proclaimed that “when the Empire is at war, so is Australia at war,” and added “all of our resources in Australia are in the Empire and for the Empire.” Cook’s political opponent, Labor politician Andrew Fisher, confirmed that Australia would defend the empire “to our last man and our last shilling.”² In Canada, both major political parties abandoned partisan rhetoric and supported the dispatch of a Canadian Expeditionary Force. Though long identified as a spokesperson of Canadian nationalism, the Liberal opposition leader, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, acknowledged that “when the call comes, our answer goes at once, and it goes in the classical language of the British answer to the call of duty, 'Ready, aye, ready.'”³ From New Zealand Prime Minister William Massey came a more pronounced declaration: “All we are and all we have is at the disposal of the British Government.”⁴ These pledges of imperial assistance comforted a people who faced the prospects of a long and arduous conflict. King George V likely spoke for many Britons when he exclaimed “I shall be strengthened in the discharge of the great responsibility which rests upon

¹ The self-governing colonies became “Dominions” in 1907. In 1914 they included Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and Newfoundland.

² Quoted in E.M. Andrews, *The ANZAC Illusion: Anglo-Australian Relations During World War I* (Cambridge, 1993), 41.

³ Quoted in Desmond Morton and J.L. Granastein, *Marching to Armageddon: Canadians and the Great War* (Toronto, 1989), 6.

⁴ Quoted in Alexander Reed, *The Story of New Zealand Place Names* (Wellington, 1952), 358.

me by the confidence that in this time of trial my Empire will stand united, clam, resolute, trusting in God.”⁵

Imperial unity at the *fin de siècle* depended heavily on cultural and racial sentiments of “Britishness.” During the long nineteenth century, hundreds of thousands of emigrants willingly left the British Isles for a new life in the empire. The vast bulk of these colonists retained some semblance of “British” identity marked by a common language, religion, allegiance to the crown, and a vague (and often contested) racial affiliation. They also constructed a vision of “Greater Britain” that linked the old “Mother Country” with the white settler colonies. Belonging to this imagined global community allowed for the coexistence of ethnic, colonial, or national identities under the protective umbrella of British race patriotism. As the empire gradually expanded to cover one-fifth of the world’s landmass, “Britishness” became a powerful cultural force that linked people from London to Sydney to Capetown.

This dissertation explores the cultural, social, and political dimensions of British and Dominion imperial cooperation during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The title, “Sea League of All the Britons,” refers to the ways that many white residents of “Greater Britain” conceived of the empire as a defensive alliance of British states. The dissertation merges more traditional studies of diplomatic, military, and naval matters with a wider cultural analysis. In doing so, it poses important questions about the ontological nature of race, empire, and identity. What was a “Briton” and what was “Britishness”? How were these ideas represented? What was the role of imperial elites—policymakers and prominent members of society—in reinforcing this cultural/racial bond? Where did non-white subjects fit into this racially homogenous and inherently exclusive vision of empire? Most importantly, it seeks to

⁵ Quoted in the *Times*, August 5 1914.

discover how popular ideas of racial and imperial unity contributed to the great “Britannic Alliance” of the First World War. This study thus reasserts the importance of the white imperial relationship and provides a comprehensive and more nuanced understanding for the meaning of “British” identity within the empire.

Historians of the empire have long relegated the study of Britain’s interactions with the Dominions as anachronistic. In the aftermath of the Second World War, scholarly attention understandably shifted from white imperial elites to non-white colonial subjects. The model of “informal empire” offered by Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher in their 1953 article dedicated little attention to the self-governing colonies.⁶ Nor did David Fieldhouse’s binary categories of “metropole” and “periphery” apply to the white colonists who shared in the dividends of empire.⁷ In 1993, P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins’ study on “Gentlemanly Capitalism” and the “City of London” redirected scholarly focus back to the metropolitan heart of the empire.⁸ They acknowledged the importance of the Dominions in the empire, but from a purely economic standpoint that neglected the wider cultural framework of British identity. In the last twenty years, historians have employed postcolonial theories as a historical lens for deconstructing power relationships within the empire. Although these valuable contributions offer a better understanding of European hegemony over the non-white “Other,” they reveal very little about white colonial populations who considered themselves “Britons.”⁹

Nationalist historians in the former Dominions have also eschewed a study of empire.

⁶ Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher, “The Imperialism of Free Trade,” *Economic History Review* 2nd serial, Vol. I (1953), 1-15; Ronald Robinson, John Gallagher, and Alice Denny, *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism* (London, 1961).

⁷ David Fieldhouse, *Economics and Empire, 1830-1914* (Ithaca, 1973).

⁸ P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: Innovation and Expansion, 1688-1914* (London, 1993).

⁹ For the theoretical framework of Postcolonialism, see Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1978). For leading postcolonial studies of the empire, see Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects* (Cambridge, 2002); Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Conquest* (New York, 1995); Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The “Manly Englishman” and the “Effeminate Bengali” in the late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester, 1995).

In Australia and New Zealand, the postwar historiography became increasingly insular and parochial in context.¹⁰ Similarly, Canadian historians largely ignored the “British” connection in favor of a multi-ethnic “Canadian” history. These scholars have followed a narrow path that sought to erase any evidence of the imperial past.¹¹ What was lost in these “national” perspectives was the vast cultural interconnectedness between Britain and the Dominions. Some scholars recognized this problem and sought to reinsert the empire back into national histories. In 1974, New Zealander John Pocock, a leading historian of early modern England, decried the “Balkanization” of the profession and challenged his colleagues to readdress “British” history from a global perspective.¹² Despite garnering some attention in the academic community, Pocock’s appeal failed to convince other historians of the pressing need to study the British world through a transnational prism.

Fortunately recent historiographical trends have moved the study of the British Empire to a more comparative approach that acknowledges the importance of the white Dominions. The publication of Linda Colley’s *Britons: Forging the Nation* in 1992 launched a scholarly (and public) debate over the nature of “Britishness” in the United Kingdom.¹³ Colley’s contention that one could be “English,” “Scottish,” and “Welsh” as well as “British” offered tantalizing possibilities for scholars struggling with the issue of white identity within the empire. Historians are now beginning to take seriously the idea of “Britishness” as a global phenomenon. The initiation of the “British World” conferences in 1998 and the “British Scholar” conferences in

¹⁰ For a survey of this material see Stuart Macintyre, “Australia and the Empire,” in Robin Winks, ed., *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume V Historiography* (Oxford, 1999), 172-181; D.R. Owam, “Canada and the Empire,” in *Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume V Historiography*, 156-162.

¹¹ For a critique of this development, see Philip Buckner, “Whatever Happened to the British Empire?,” *Journal of Canadian Historical Association* (1993), 3-32; A.G. Hopkins, “Back to the Future: From National History to Imperial History,” *Past and Present*, 164 (August 1999), 198-243.

¹² J.G.A. Pocock, “British History: A Plea for a New Subject,” *New Zealand Journal of History* 8 (1974), 3-21. The article was reprinted for a much larger audience as “British History: A Plea for a New Subject,” *The Journal of Modern History* Vol. 47 No. 4 (December 1975), 601-621.

¹³ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (London, 1992).

2007 gave an impetus to the belief that there was a white empire and that many of its residents claimed membership as “Britons” as well as “English,” “Scots,” “Canadians,” or “South Africans.”¹⁴ As two leading scholars of this new historiographical trend insist, “we have lost contact with what was always the heart of the imperial enterprise, the expansion of Britain and the peopling and building of the trans-oceanic British world. It is time we reacquainted ourselves with what was once considered both vitally important and self-evident.”¹⁵

Historians have also readdressed the influence of the empire upon metropolitan society and culture. These studies argue against older claims that the empire mattered only to an elite sub-caste of bureaucrats, landowners, merchants, and bankers. In the 1980s, John MacKenzie’s *Propaganda and Empire* (1984) and *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (1986) launched a wave of cultural studies that viewed an “imperial ideology” as an integral part of British society.¹⁶ These works point to varying manifestations of imperial ideas in everyday activities such as school, entertainment, consumer advertising, and sports. MacKenzie also created the highly influential Manchester University Press series on “Studies in Imperialism.” The vast bulk of these works focus on the non-white empire, though some recent additions have begun to examine the cultural connections with the white settler communities.¹⁷

¹⁴ See, for example, Carl Bridge and Kent Fedorowich, eds., *The British World: Culture, Diaspora, and Identity* (London, 2003); Philip Buckner and R. Douglas Francis, eds., *Rediscovering the British World* (Calgary, 2005); John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System* (Cambridge, 2009); Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order* (Cambridge, 2007).

¹⁵ Carl Bridge and Fent Fedorowich, “Mapping the British World,” in *The British World*, 11.

¹⁶ John M. MacKenzie “Introduction,” in John MacKenzie, ed. *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester, 1986), 5. Also see J.M. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: Public Opinion and the Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester, 1984).

¹⁷ Some of these include: Daniel Gorman, *Imperial Citizenship: Empire and the Question of Belonging* (Manchester, 2006); John MacKenzie and Nigel Dalziel, *The Scots in South Africa: Ethnicity, Identity, Gender, and Race 1772-1914* (Manchester, 2007); Marjory Harper, ed., *Emigrant Homecomings: The Return Movement of Emigrants, 1600-2000* (Manchester, 2005); Annie Coombes, ed., *Rethinking Settler Colonialism: History and Memory in Australia, Canada, Aotearoa New Zealand and South Africa* (Manchester, 2006); Katie Pickles, *Female Imperialism and National Identity: Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire* (Manchester, 2009); Angela McCarthy, *Scottishness and Irishness in New Zealand Since 1840* (Manchester, 2011); Neville Kirk, *Labour and the Politics of Empire: Britain and Australia, 1900 to the Present* (Manchester, 2011).

Despite the scholarly renaissance in imperial historiography, there remains a noticeable void between the history of the empire and military/naval history. Most studies of British defense policy in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods address important topics such as naval power, army reform, and defense administration from a largely metropolitan perspective.¹⁸ Two important works by Donald Gordon and Richard Preston expand this focus to consider how British authorities pursued military and naval cooperation from the self-governing colonies. Though incorporating Canadian and Australasian perspectives, these studies focus solely on the actions of policymakers, neglecting the broader cultural, social, and intellectual forces shaping the British world.¹⁹ What is needed is a study that combines military history with newer approaches to empire. As one prominent scholar recently explained, military and naval historians “have to exploit the current interest in Empires to join the debates, bringing their own unique insights and resources to bear.”²⁰

This dissertation answers this challenge and bridges a number of historiographical fields to provide a comprehensive study of the cultural and racial origins of the imperial defense partnership. First, it contributes to the growing literature on British identity and the empire. The fact that “Britons” and “Britishness” transcended the political boundaries of the United Kingdom suggests important global ramifications for understanding this racial/cultural bond. In

¹⁸ See, for example: W.C.B. Tunstall, “Imperial Defence, 1897-1914” in J. Holland Rose, A.P. Newton, and E.A. Benians eds., *Cambridge History of the British Empire Volume I* (Cambridge, 1929), 563-604.; Arthur Marder, *The Anatomy of British Sea Power: A History of British Naval Policy in the Pre-Dreadnought Era 1880-1905* (New York, 1940); John F. Beeler, *British Naval Policy in the Gladstone-Disraeli Era 1866-1880* (Stanford, 1997); Rhodri Williams, *Defending the Empire: Conservative Party and British Defense Policy, 1889-1915* (New Haven, 1991); Donald Schurman, *Imperial Defence 1868-1887*, ed. John Beeler (London, 2000).

¹⁹ Donald Gordon, *Dominion Partnership in Imperial Defense 1870-1914* (Baltimore, 1965); Richard Preston, *Canada and Imperial Defense 1867-1919* (Durham, 1967); In his review of Preston’s book, Gordon correctly criticized the author for being “indifferent to the emotions reflected in press and parliaments. However, both works exclude the “popular” dimension. Donald Gordon, “Review of ‘Canada and ‘Imperial Defense’: A Study of the Origins of the British Commonwealth’s Defense Organization, 1867-1919,” in *Military Affairs*, Vol. 31 No. 4, Winter 1967, 199.

²⁰ Andrew Lambert, “The Royal Navy and the Defence of Empire, 1856-1918” in *Imperial Defence: Old World Order, 1856-1956*, ed. Greg Kennedy (New York, 2007), 128.

particular, it demonstrates the prominence of the settler communities in “British” consciousness. These white colonials were not the “exotic” characters drawn from the pages of Rudyard Kipling and G.A. Henty; they were the sons and daughters, cousins and former neighbors of Britons in the metropole. Their cultural interactions played an important role in constructing “Greater Britain” as a transnational community that traversed oceans and continents. Secondly, this dissertation adds a valuable contribution to the “New Military History” of the empire. Popular attitudes about race, empire, and “Britishness” greatly shaped the formation of imperial defense policy. After all, governments might employ powerful instruments such as armies and fleets, but they relied on the approval and democratic whims of modern mass society. This project addresses the cultural milieu within which political elites rendered decisions about the future security of the empire.

The methodology reflects this multidisciplinary approach. On the one hand, it relies upon intensive archival research from a variety of international sources to consider the “official mind” of policymakers and defense administrators. Of particular interest are the ministerial offices responsible for defense, including the Admiralty, the War Office, the Colonial Office, and the Committee of Imperial Defense, as well as the leading political figures in Britain and the Dominions. On the other hand, it addresses wider cultural attitudes as expressed through newspapers, advertisements, popular literature, and boys’ weekly magazines. Print media occupies a central part of this analysis. Benedict Anderson’s groundbreaking work on “Imagined Communities” points to the role of print culture in forging national identities. This was particularly applicable in the Victorian British world, where the emergence of the “penny press” and the establishment of imperial telegraph lines allowed for a mass global audience of daily

newspaper readers.²¹ The dissertation draws on over 120 different periodicals from throughout the empire as a means of assessing “public” opinion and, more importantly, understanding the discursive elements and vocabulary of “Britishness.”

Each of the seven chapters in this dissertation explores a different dimension of how pan-British identity shaped the imperial relationship. Chapter One establishes the groundwork by considering the wide contours of “Britons,” “Britishness,” and “Greater Britain.” Being a “Briton” was a nebulous and highly contested label that included vast groups of people. It was an inclusive term that melded “English,” “Scottish,” “Welsh,” and in some cases “Irish” identities into a common association.²² “Britishness” also served as a cultural and racial connection linking Canadians, Australians, New Zealanders and South Africans with the residents of the United Kingdom. In some cases, “Britishness” could even stretch its boundaries to incorporate French Canadians, the Boers, or non-British European immigrants. At the same time, “Britishness” was a racially exclusive category that denied membership to the non-white population of the empire. The negative depiction of Indians, Asians, and Africans in opposition to Europeans was an integral stage in the construction of “Britishness.” The chapter concludes with a survey of prominent imperial theorists and their ideas about “Greater Britain.” Here the focus is less on actual political boundaries and more on popular visions of the empire as a racially homogenous community.

Defending a global empire with limited resources was one of the great challenges for Victorian policymakers. The second chapter, therefore, explores how concepts of “Greater Britain” were associated with the future of imperial defense. Over the course of the late

²¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York, 1991). For an excellent study of the imperial press connections, see Simon Potter, *News and the British World* (Oxford, 2003).

²² Ireland presents a complicated addition to the understanding of “Britishness.” With minor exceptions, this dissertation eschews a study the Irish as a separate case study altogether.

nineteenth century, the white colonies began to be seen as potential allies prepared to throw their resources behind the embattled “Mother Country.” Britons advanced this vision of the empire through political rhetoric, organizations such as the Imperial Federation League, and even popular literature. This process coincided with rising anxiety about the employment of non-white soldiers, including the empire’s traditional reservoir of manpower, the Indian Army. The chapter also examines how white colonial participation in the South African War (1899-1902) was encouraged, depicted, and largely interpreted as a public manifestation of imperial and pan-British solidarity.

The employment of white colonial soldiers in the South African War produced more than a symbol of imperial unity; it provided the archetype for a masculine and patriotic Briton. Chapter Three explores how colonial troops became a powerful symbol of idealized masculinity during the late Victorian period. According to conventional wisdom, life in the empire promised to make “Better Britons” out of the weak and effete men of the metropole. These ideas were expressed in wartime advertising, literature, and press reports that emphasized the masculine traits of colonial men. It was also manifest in the curious phenomenon of predominantly middle-classes in Britain who donned khaki uniforms and slouch hats, and enlisted for temporary military service. What prompted these performative acts? How did these images shape metropolitan understandings of colonial Britons? And how did colonial Britons employ these images for their own identity construction? Through examining the semiotic appeal of these colonial “Rough Riders,” this chapter demonstrates the importance of gender in fashioning and understanding British identities.

Late nineteenth-century European governments often employed parades and spectacles to reinforce the social and national consensus. These “invented traditions” often featured a strong

military presence and martial pageantry.²³ Chapter Four presents imperial spectacles such as the Diamond Jubilee of 1897, the Quebec Tercentenary of 1908, and the Royal Coronation of 1911 as forms of propaganda in which elites manufactured a stirring image of imperial solidarity. Though addressing the intentions of those from “above,” it draws on a wide array of personal accounts and press reports to consider public reactions to these staged events. A crucial part of this study is the discursive comparisons between white and non-white participants. After all, the depiction of Indian, African, and West Indian troops as “colorful” or “exotic” auxiliaries was an important component in legitimatizing colonial hegemony. This chapter revisits the scholarly debate over “invented traditions” to see these elaborate displays as popular events in which government and public performed contested visions of “Britons” and “Britishness.”

Chapter Five continues this study by considering the role of the Royal Navy as a form of imperial propaganda. Recent scholarship by Jan Rüger and Mary Conley points to the British public’s fascination with the navy.²⁴ The chapter widens this scope of inquiry to assess how policymakers and naval enthusiasts employed the navy as an agent of empire. This trend was most pronounced at the height of the Anglo-German naval arms race, when colonial contributions to the navy were represented as the inherent “maritime spirit” of the British race. The chapter considers how the formation of independent Australian and Canadian navies altered this rhetoric to allow for the idea of the Dominions as separate British states operating in a maritime alliance with the “Mother Country.” Building upon Rüger’s earlier work, it sees the naval arms race as an important cultural and discursive event that contributed to ideas of a global British community.

²³ Eric Hobsbawm and Terrance Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983).

²⁴ Jan Rüger, *The Great Naval Game* (Cambridge, 2007); Mary Conley, *From Jack Tar to Union Jack: Representing Naval Manhood in the British Empire 1870-1918* (Manchester, 2009).

The majority of Britons who served in the First World War came of age during the Edwardian period. Their childhood experiences are the subject of Chapter Six. Drawing on Gramscian theories of cultural hegemony, this chapter considers how white boys throughout the empire received a programmed education that reinforced ideas of patriotism, nationalism, and the masculine and civic responsibilities of military service. It explores three major topics: state elementary education programs, campaigns for mandatory military training for boys, and the propaganda role of voluntary youth organizations. The Boy Scout Movement receives particular attention as a transnational institution that instilled lessons of race patriotism, military preparedness, and imperial loyalty. By incorporating a wider imperial framework than previous studies of youth movements, this chapter points to the heightened militarization of Edwardian society that prepared young Britons for imperial military service.

The last chapter chronicles the evolution Anglo-Dominion relations from the South African War to the First World War. The dissemination of ideas about “Greater Britain,” combined with an increasingly volatile international situation, led to gradually closer defense ties between Britain and the Dominions. Yet any defense agreements had to contend with the powerful undercurrents of colonial nationalism, which resented any infringements of colonial autonomy. Chapter Seven delves into the complicated and detailed negotiations between Britain and Dominion leaders which prepared the white states of the empire to fight a common war. It successfully bridges “national” and “imperial” contexts to demonstrate the overwhelming importance of culture, sentiment, and mutual understanding in forging defense policies. Though only presenting a brief overview of this subject, it suggests new avenues of research for studying the formation of the world’s first (and most enduring) global defense partnership.

Chapter One

Imagining the British World: Ideas of Race, Empire, and Britishness

On the evening of May 9 1899, the members of the Royal Colonial Institute gathered at the aptly named Hôtel Métropole for a lecture on “The Colonies and the Century.” Former Prime Minister of Natal Sir John Robinson treated attendees to a thorough review of the growth the British Empire during the nineteenth century, with particular emphasis on the development of the self-governing colonies of Canada, New Zealand, Cape Colony, and the Australian states. A native of Yorkshire who emigrated to South Africa as a small boy, Robinson viewed the white settler communities across the seas as natural outgrowths of the British race. He maintained that “national pride is compatible with Imperial supremacy” and insisted “a Canadian or an Australian, or a South African need not be the less ardent British subject because he is devoted to his own land.”¹ In the subsequent discussion, a visitor from New Zealand named Charles Pharazyn admitted that he did not feel like a stranger in London but rather “a unit in a great Empire.” He expressed disappointment “that we have no one word in common use to express that idea. A man is a New Zealander, or an Australian, or a Canadian, but there is no common name to identify him as a member of the Empire.” One member of the audience immediately interjected “he is a Briton.”² After brief consideration, Pharazyn agreed with this inclusive term of identity to link the white residents of the empire. He concluded “it is an old name, a name full

¹ John Robinson, “The Colonies and the Century,” May 9 1899 in *Proceedings of the Royal Colonial Institute Volume 30* (344).

² “Ibid., 359.

of significance, and just as St. Paul was able in Jerusalem to claim his rights as a Roman citizen, so we claim the name and the rights of Britons.”³

“Britons” and “Britishness”

For a subject that denotes some level of shared affiliation, the issue of British identity is a divisive and controversial topic among historians. Many critics see “Britishness” as a form of cultural hegemony imposed by the English majority upon the populations of Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and Cornwall. These scholars, often writing in the context of Devolution in the 1990s, minimize the importance of an overarching “British” identity in favor of regional, national, or ethnic affiliations.⁴ Michael Hechter employs the sociological term “internal colonialism” to describe the Celtic dependence on the English economy during the industrial age. Similarly Tom Nairn sees the case of Scotland as a state that surrendered national sovereignty for economic integration with England, but “preserved an extraordinary amount of the institutional and psychological baggage normally associated with independence.” He compares the concept of “Britishness” to a form of mental illness caused by competing multiple identities.⁵ Echoing this theme, Robert Colls insists that the British connection could not have held much attraction for people on the Celtic periphery. He asks “how could one be authentically Scottish and loyally Unionist at the same time?”⁶

Other scholars argue for a distinct sense of “Britishness.” Keith Robbins contends that a common British identity emerged from a “blending” process between the disparate elements of

³ “Ibid., 359.

⁴ Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development* (Berkeley, 1975); Stephen Haseler, *The English Tribe: Identity, Nation, and Europe* (London, 1996); Tom Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism* (London, 1977); Nairn, *After Britain: New Labour and the Return of Scotland* (London, 2000); Murray Pittock, *Celtic identity and the British Image* (Manchester, 1999).

⁵ Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain*, 118.

⁶ Robert Colls, *Identity of England* (Oxford, 2002), 283.

the United Kingdom. He considers issues of religion, language, sport, education, and business that produced a phenomenon of interconnectedness between the English majority and Scottish and Welsh minorities during the nineteenth century (he largely ignores Ireland). These interactions created a dominant identity that “transcended ‘Englishness’ and ‘Scottishness.’”⁷ Robbins identifies the First World War as the ultimate crucible which assured the British state as an “enduring” entity. As he concludes, “within Britain its inhabitants might identify themselves primarily as ‘English’ or ‘Scottish’ but in relation to ‘foreigners’ they were British.”⁸

The most persuasive explanation for British identity is found in Linda Colley’s *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (1992). Colley argues that a distinct and shared sense of “Britishness” coexisted comfortably with separate English, Scottish, Welsh, and, in some instances, Irish identities. She contends that internal similarities, such as Protestantism and language, combined with the “vast superstructure of prejudice” against Catholic France, served as bonding agents that solidified a common British identity.⁹ Moreover, she demonstrates how active participation in the empire and overseas commerce during the long eighteenth century reinforced loyalty to the new political entity of “Great Britain.” Most importantly, Colley points out that this overarching association with “Britishness” did not entirely subsume or exclude parochial, regional, confessional, or national identities. One could simultaneously be a Briton, a Scot, a Presbyterian, and a resident of Edinburgh.

A brief glimpse at the politics of British identity reveals the tendency of “Englishness” to dominate the cultural foundations of “Britishness.” This was to be expected of a group of people

⁷ Keith Robbins, *Nineteenth-Century Britain: Integration and Diversity* (New York, 1988), 5.

⁸ Keith Robbins, *Great Britain: Identities, Institutions and the Idea of Britishness* (London, 1998), 262.

⁹ Linda Colley, *Britons, Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (London, 1992), 36.

who constituted 68.7% of the population of the United Kingdom in 1871.¹⁰ The monarchy followed the traditions of the Church of England, the empire was funded by the Bank of England, and Parliament sat in the English city of Westminster. Moreover, the interchangeability of “England” and “Britain” in public discourse was (and remains) a constant source of friction for the people of Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. The chronicles of national mythology are replete with examples of confusing “British” and “English” identifications. On the eve of the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805, British naval hero Admiral Horatio Nelson undoubtedly annoyed his non-English sailors when informing them that “England expects every man to do his duty!”¹¹ Four years later, British general Sir John Moore, mortally wounded at the Battle of Corunna, muttered his dying wish that “England will be satisfied! I hope my country will do me justice!”¹² Unlike Nelson, Moore was a Scot. Liberal MP James Bryce aptly summarized England’s close identification with Britain as the dominant member of the Union. He noted that the Scots and Irish possessed separate national identities, but found that the Englishman “has but one patriotism, because England and the United Kingdom are to him practically the same thing.”¹³

Despite the obvious power and influence of the English majority, it is problematic to argue that Celtic minorities were powerless in an Anglo-centric British state. The Scots, Welsh, and some Irish occupied many key positions in British institutions such as the army, the East India Company, and the colonial service. Scotland in particular came to play a disproportionate

¹⁰ Eric Evans, “Englishness and Britishness c. 1790-1870, in Alexander Grant and Keith Stringer eds., *Uniting the Kingdom? The Making of British History* (London, 1995), 233.

¹¹ Quoted in Arthur Herman, *To Rule the Waves: How the British Navy Shaped the Modern World* (New York, 2004), 388.

¹² Jeremy Paxman, *The English: A Portrait of a People* (London, 1999), 44.

¹³ Quoted in D.G. Boyce, “The marginal Britons: The Irish,” in Robert Colls and Philip Dodd, eds., *Englishness: Politics and Culture 1880-1920* (London, 1986), 236.

role in British politics during the late nineteenth century. Of the eight men to hold the office of Prime Minister between 1885 and 1922, four were of Scottish ancestry and one Welsh.¹⁴ Colley employs the powerful example of a 1917 satirical work entitled *The Oppressed English* to reinforce her point about the incorporation of the Celtic “fringe” into the mainstream of British life. The author of this book insists:

Today a Scot is leading the British army in France [Field Marshal Douglas Haig], another is commanding the British grand fleet at sea [Admiral David Beatty], while a third directs the Imperial General Staff at home [Sir William Robertson]. The Lord Chancellor is a Scot [Viscount Finlay]; so are the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Foreign Secretary [Bonar Law and Arthur Balfour]. The Prime Minister is a Welshman [David Lloyd George], and the First Lord of the Admiralty is an Irishman [Lord Carson]. Yet no one ever brought in a bill to give home rule to England.¹⁵

Ideas of “Britishness” went far beyond the boundaries of the United Kingdom. In the nineteenth century the British Empire experienced what James Belich terms a “settler revolution.”¹⁶ Between 1853 and 1922, over 9,733,000 people left the British Isles in pursuit of better economic opportunities abroad.¹⁷ Until the turn of the century, the majority of these emigrants went to the United States. However, by 1900 the “settler communities” of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa absorbed the bulk of this British diaspora. Indeed, Canada alone attracted 1,791,600 emigrants in the period 1891-1920—a remarkable demographic transformation considering the 1900 population of the United Kingdom was approximately 38,000,000. The result was that British identities were literally exported to the vast self-governing colonies of the empire.

¹⁴ William Gladstone (Liberal) 1868-1874, 1880-1885, 1888, 1892-1894; Earl of Roseberry (Liberal) 1894-1895; Arthur Balfour (Conservative) 1902-1905; Henry Campbell-Bannerman (Liberal) 1905-1908; David Lloyd George (Liberal) 1916-1922. Lloyd George was born in West England but of Welsh ancestry and spoke Welsh.

¹⁵ Quoted in Linda Colley, “Britishness and Otherness,” *Journal of British Studies* Vol. 31 (October 1992), 326.

¹⁶ James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World* (Oxford, 2009).

¹⁷ P.J. Cain, “Economics: The Metropolitan Context,” *The Oxford History of the British Empire Volume III: The Nineteenth Century*, Andrew Porter and Alaine Low eds. (Oxford, 1999), 47. For a broad survey of British emigration, see Eric Richards, *Britannia’s Children: Emigration from England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland* (London, 2004).

The proliferation of white settler communities in the British Empire at the end of the nineteenth century created an unprecedented trend towards closer imperial unity. On the one hand, the colonies became closely linked with the “Mother Country” through technological advances in travel and communication. Improvements in steam, rail, and maritime technology dramatically decompressed the vast geography of the empire. By 1900 a steamship from Portsmouth could reach Australia within a month.¹⁸ The establishment of an “All Red Route” of telegraph cables enabled messages to be transmitted from London to Cape Town to Sydney in a matter of hours.¹⁹ Unprecedented economic growth in the colonies also facilitated closer financial ties with Great Britain, which remained the chief source of capital and the primary consumer market for colonial exports.²⁰ This of course accompanied the fact that large portions of the colonial populations retained much of their original “British” identity long after leaving the shores of the “Mother Country.” Far from being displaced emigrants, Britons in the settler communities “considered themselves co-owners of London, the Empire, and British-ness in general.”²¹

These broader British identities often coexisted with emerging colonial “national” identities. The evolution of the settler communities into self-governing colonies fostered a new sense of colonial nationalism in which terms such as “Canadian,” “Australian,” and “New Zealander” enjoyed widespread currency, particularly among second and third-generation colonists. However, these “national” associations typically existed under the framework of

¹⁸ Barney Warf, *Time-Space Compression: Historical Geographies* (New York, 2008), 110-111.

¹⁹ See Simon Potter, *New and the British World* (Oxford, 2003), 65-70.

²⁰ See James Belich, “The Rise of the Anglo-World: Settlement in North America and Australasia, 1784-1918,” in Phillip Buckner and R. Douglas Francis eds., *Rediscovering the British World* (Calgary, 2005), 39-58.

²¹ James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World* (Oxford, 2009), 209.

inherently “British” states in a larger empire.²² Many Canadian, Australian, and New Zealander “nationalists” of the late Victorian period were also ardent “imperialists,” and saw no contradiction in advocating a greater role for their Dominion within the empire.²³ As the architect of confederation, Canadian Prime Minister John MacDonal(d) (a Scot emigrant) also proudly proclaimed his wider patriotism: “A British subject I was born, a British subject I will die.”²⁴ Similarly Sir Henry Parkes, the longtime premier of New South Wales, championed Australian federation as a project of building a British nation in the Pacific. He believed that the new Commonwealth “would be admitted in the rank of nations, under the noble and glorious flag of the mother land.” With an eye towards the cohesiveness of “British” identity, he concluded that the “crimson thread of kinship runs through us all.”²⁵ New Zealand Prime Minister Richard Seddon promoted his colony’s participation in the South African War as a means to increase its voice in imperial affairs. Though identifying the colonial troops as “New Zealanders,” he couched his rhetoric in racialized language that played on the emotions of the British connection: “We are part of the English-speaking race. Our kindred are scattered in dispersed parts of the globe, and wherever they are, no matter how far distant apart, there is a feeling of affection—that crimson tie, that bond of unity existing which time does not affect—and in the end will become indispensable.”²⁶

Travelers in the empire often remarked upon the inherently “British” nature of the white settler communities. In 1912 Winifred Wrench accompanied her brother Evelyn on a extended

²² For a discussion, see Philip Buckner, “Creation of the Dominion of Canada 1860-1901,” *Canada and the British Empire*, Philip Buckner ed. (Oxford, 2008), 66-86; Deryck Schreuder and Stuart Ward, “Introduction: What Became of Australia’s Empire?,” in Deryck Schreuder and Stuart Ward eds., *Australia’s Empire* (Oxford, 2008), 1-24.

²³ Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914* (Toronto, 1970).

²⁴ Quoted in John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830-1970* (Cambridge, 2009), 152.

²⁵ Quoted in C.E. Lyne, *The Life of Sir Henry Parkes* (London, 1897), 494, 495.

²⁶ *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates Volume 110*, October 28 1899, 75-76.

tour of the empire. She was struck by the heightened sentiments of imperial patriotism in New Zealand, which she considered a “thoroughly solid British community.”²⁷ She also characterized Australians to be “ultra British.”²⁸ Her brother fondly recalled one Canadian who took pride in teaching his young son to proclaim “I am British.”²⁹ Sir Charles Lucas, a civil servant at the Colonial Office, was also impressed by his encounters with Britons in the self-governing Dominions. In 1910 he authored a special report to Parliament that insisted “the instinct of race must necessarily be more and more combined as years go on with an instinct of special nationality, but I see no reason why the former should be swallowed up in the latter.” Lucas advocated a popular view of the empire in which colonial nationalism “may well gain in strength and dignity as the individual expression of one or another of linked British communities, each with a recognized character and standing of its own.”³⁰

The travel diaries of journalist Richard Jebb offer one of the most enlightening perspectives into the issue of “Britishness” in the empire. Jebb was fascinated with the interchangeability of British and colonial identities, and frequently engaged his hosts about their views on the imperial connection. One of the trends that intrigued young Jebb was the tendency of “native born” colonists in the Antipodes to refer to Great Britain as “home.”³¹ In New Zealand he talked with an old schoolmaster whom he characterized as “Very British.” He recorded that the man “talks of ‘going home to die’ in the style of the fast-disappearing generation of emigrants now rapidly giving place to the ever increasing native born.”³² Later he

²⁷ British Library. Evelyn Wrench Papers 59571 Winifred Wrench Diary, November 25 1912.

²⁸ Wrench Papers 59572 Winifred Wrench Diary, March 26 1913. Winifred revealed her radical politics when she praised the social democracy of the Antipodes, and exclaimed “and when we have seen things as they are out here, as they might be at home can you wonder that we wish Lloyd George ‘God Speed’ and only hope he will go far enough.” Wrench Papers 59571 Winifred Wrench Diary, December 23 1912.

²⁹ Wrench Papers 59570 Evelyn Wrench Diary, May 18 1912.

³⁰ PP 1910 Cd. 5100 Notes of a Visit to Australia, New Zealand, and Fiji in 1909 by Charles Lucas, 6.

³¹ Institute of Commonwealth Studies. Richard Jebb Papers ICS116/B/2 Diary Entry August 21 1899.

³² Jebb Papers ICS116 B/2/9 Diary Entry December 22 1899.

stayed with a family in a rural part of New Zealand. Over dinner the family considered the question “What are We—British or English or what?” Jebb registered his surprise that head of the family (a native-born New Zealander) identified himself as “English” because “his father and grandfather lived in England.”³³ He noted that the children “allude to England as Home!” and added “shouldn’t have thought this would have survived the first generation.”³⁴

Jebb’s time in the Antipodes coincided with the outbreak of the South African War (1899-1902) and the dispatch of Australian and New Zealand volunteers to assist the British Army. He was deeply moved by what he interpreted as an imperial patriotism and loyalty to the “Mother Country.” He met one enthusiastic volunteer whom he described as “more English than Australian.”³⁵ In New Zealand he described the prevailing “jingoistic” mood of the populace, and added “of course the shops are full of contingent photos and contingent colours, i.e. a Union Jack with the stars of the Southern Cross.”³⁶ Jebb was in Hobart, Tasmania when word arrived that the beleaguered city of Mafeking had been relieved by British forces. He recorded the popular celebrations that ensued, noting the shouts of “God Save the Queen” and adding “everyone, men, and women and child seemed to be wearing ‘patriotic’ badges and ribbons.” He believed that “these Australians are more emotional than the Home British” and admitted “it was an impressive sight, and the effect upon the children must be lasting and pregnant with history.” Later that night Jebb stopped in a tavern where two patrons quarreled over the nature of imperial participation in the war. One individual defined his idea of “British ‘patriotism’ as affection for a pride in the race, as contrasted with e.r. French patriotism, which is

³³ Jebb Papers ICS116 B/2/19 Diary Entry April 22 1900.

³⁴ Jebb Papers ICS116 B/2/19 Diary Entry April 22 1900.

³⁵ Jebb Papers ICS116 B/2/4 Diary Entry September 20 1899.

³⁶ Jebb Papers B/2/5. Jebb diaries. The exact date is not recorded, but it falls sometime between October 26-30.

affection for the soil of the Fatherland.”³⁷ The other contended that Australia joined the war to assist fellow Australians living in South Africa (perhaps not realizing the change of location might necessitate a change in self-identification). Deeply impressed by colonial affinity for the “Mother Country,” Jebb adamantly denied that “national sentiment is incompatible with the imperial connection.”³⁸

The phenomenon of “return migration” also strengthened the bonds of a common British identity across the empire. One historian calculates that at least 40% of all British emigrants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries subsequently returned to the “Mother Country.”³⁹ While that number may be exaggerated, it is clear that the global migration of Britons was not a one-way street. Some of these return migrants experienced unexpected economic hardship and abandoned their new lives abroad. Others secured their wealth overseas and came home to live a life of prosperity.⁴⁰ Many Britons traveled freely throughout the empire, transporting their cultural baggage of “Britishness” as they moved from colony to colony. These elusive individuals create a dilemma for historians as they defy traditional binary categorization of “metropolitan” and “colonial.” For example, one First World War veteran interviewed in the 1980s claimed he was raised in New Zealand, emigrated to South Africa as a teenager, received a university education in London, and spent much of his adult career in India.⁴¹ Though he claimed “New Zealand” as his national identity, his life experience reflected a variety of experiences subsumed under the common umbrella of being a white subject of the British Empire.

³⁷ Jebb Papers ICS116 B/2/20 Diary Entry May 19 1900.

³⁸ Jebb Papers ICS116 B/2/16 Diary Entry March 13 1900.

³⁹ Dudley Baines, *Emigration from Europe, 1861-1930* (Cambridge, 1991), 39.

⁴⁰ For an excellent survey of return migration, see Marjory Harper and Stephen Constantine, *Migration and Empire* (Oxford, 2010), 306-337.

⁴¹ Imperial War Museum (Hereafter cited as IWM) Sound Archives Hari Williams, Recorded 1984.

A biographical examination of the political leadership of Australia and New Zealand during the late Victorian and Edwardian periods reveals a range of identities spanning the entire empire.⁴² Of the six men to occupy the position of Prime Minister of Australia in the period 1900-1914, only two were native-born Australians.⁴³ Joseph Cook came from a poor mining family in Staffordshire, England, and both George Reid and Andrew Fisher emigrated from the lowlands of Scotland.⁴⁴ The empire's first Labor Prime Minister, John Christian Watson, was born in the large British community of Valparaiso, Chile, the product of a German traveler and a New Zealand woman (though Watson maintained for the whole of his life that his father was a British sailor!)⁴⁵ All of the men who dominated New Zealand politics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries emigrated to the Dominion as young men. Richard "King Dick" Seddon grew up in northern England, flocked to Australia during the Gold Rush of the 1850s, and eventually settled in New Zealand.⁴⁶ Joseph Ward, a Roman Catholic of Irish descent, was born in Melbourne and crossed the Tasman Sea with his family as a young boy.⁴⁷ His successor, William Massey, was a Protestant from Londonderry who moved to New Zealand at the age of fourteen.⁴⁸

The case of Australian Prime Minister George Reid exemplifies this multiplicity of identities in the British world. Reid was a native of Scotland who emigrated to Victoria at the age of seven. After a successful political career in Australia, he served as the Commonwealth's

⁴² For some examples of this mixture of identities, see some of the personalities studied in David Lambert and Alan Lester ed., *Colonial Lives Across the British Empire: Imperial Careering in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2006).

⁴³ Edmund Barton (Protectionist) 1901-1903; Alfred Deakin (Protectionist/Fusion) 1903-1904, 1905-1908, 1909-1910.

⁴⁴ Joseph Cook (Free Trade) 1913-1914; George Reid (Free Trade) 1904-1905; Andrew Fisher (Labor) 1908-1909, 1910-1913, 1914-1915.

⁴⁵ John Christian Watson (Labor) 1904.

⁴⁶ Richard Seddon (Liberal) 1893-1906.

⁴⁷ Joseph Ward (Liberal) 1906-1912, 1928-1930.

⁴⁸ William Massey (Reform) 1912-1925.

first High Commissioner in London from 1910-1916, and did much to promote wartime cooperation between the Dominion and the Mother Country. Following the end of his political appointment, Reid elected to remain in London and secured a Unionist seat in the *British* Parliament which he held until his death in 1918. Reid's experiences over the course of his imperial career included a number of identities: Scots, Australian, British, and Londoner. In his memoirs he candidly acknowledged the ease with which Britons merged their parochial, national, and imperial associations within an individual consciousness. He explained:

The people of the British Isles seem to blend their more readily their love for the old land with their love for the news lands which become their adopted homes than people of other nationalities. English, Scottish, Irish, and Welsh do not find that the new sentiment supplants the old. Indeed, each (sic) seems to strengthen the other practically, as well as emotionally. There is nothing inconsistent in that. The feelings which make rivalries between neighboring villages keenest ought to make national patriotism strongest.⁴⁹

This observation confirms Colley's argument that "identities are not like hats. Human beings can and do put on several at a time."⁵⁰

For many Britons the empire served as a binding link that reconciled their former ethnic or national identities within a broader imperial community. Historians widely recognize that Scottish and Irish emigrants made up a disproportionate number of the white populations of the self-governing colonies. For example, in 1901 the Scots constituted 15 percent of the population of Australia, 21 percent of Canada, and 23 percent of New Zealand despite only representing 10 percent of the population of Great Britain.⁵¹ These non-English elements embraced their new colonial identities and sustained their old national identities while simultaneously professing a common imperial one. Philip Buckner has demonstrated how the Scots and Protestant Irish formed their organizations such as the "St. Andrew's Society," the "Caledonia Society," and the

⁴⁹ George Reid, *My Reminiscences* (Melbourne, 1917), 7.

⁵⁰ Colley, *Britons*, 6.

⁵¹ Keith Robbins, *Great Britain: Identities, Institutions, and the Idea of Britishness* (London, 214).

“Orange Order” as a means of preserving “ethnic” traditions. However, he also points out that these groups typically embraced a broader notion of Britishness that trumped ethnic affiliations. He concludes “most English, Scottish, and Protestant Irish emigrants became more British overseas than they had felt themselves to be at home.”⁵² Another study suggests that even the Catholic Irish in Canada exhibited increased loyalty to the imperial connection as part of their integration into Canadian society.⁵³

While reflecting the cultural heritage of the “Mother Country,” many oversea Britons saw themselves improvements upon the racial lineage. White colonials did not attempt merely to replicate Great Britain overseas, but to create, in the words of James Belich, “Better Britains.”⁵⁴ As he explained, “Better British ideology melded an increasingly intense assertion of Britishness with a pre-existing popular self-image and an embryonic collective identity.”⁵⁵ Much of this coterminous pride in colony/nation and empire focused on the settler communities as laboratories for social, political, and economic reform. The province of Canada was the first colony to receive responsible self-government (1841), the Australian states pioneered the use of the secret ballot (1856), and New Zealand was the first state in the empire to adopt women’s suffrage (1893). Most importantly, economic opportunities and the absence of a landed aristocracy spawned a mythical aura of social egalitarianism that appealed to many Britons as progressive and modern. Prime Minister Seddon of New Zealand portrayed this image when he challenged Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain to visit his colony and see the effects of this revitalized British society. He explained:

⁵² Philip Buckner, “Creation of the Dominion of Canada,” in Philip Buckner, ed., *Canada and the British Empire* (Oxford, 2008), 82-83.

⁵³ See Mark McGowan, *The Waning of the Green: Catholics, the Irish, and Identity in Toronto, 1887-1922* (Ithaca, 1999).

⁵⁴ James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, 466; Belich, *Paradise Reforged: A History of the New Zealanders from the 1880s to the year 2000* (Honolulu, 2001), 76-86.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 78.

I can assure you of a most hearty welcome and you would see there an English community, a community with opportunities denied those in the mother-country, and you would find that those that have the building up of what will ultimately be a great branch of the great Empire have taken warning of the evils which for centuries have grown up in Europe and are carefully trying to guard against their being repeated in the newer world.⁵⁶

The public discourse of “Better Britain” also emphasized a direct correlation between colonial Britons and physical superiority.⁵⁷ Life in the empire, according to conventional wisdom, offered better and healthier living conditions than urban and industrial Britain. It also allowed men to pursue masculine activities free from the feminine constraints of Victorian domesticity. In short, the settler communities promised to reinvigorate the British race. One ardent prophet of empire explained:

English enterprise had occupied the fairest spots upon the globe where there was still soil and sunshine boundless and life-giving; where the race might for ages renew its mighty young, bring forth as many millions as it would, and would still have means to breed and rear them strong as the best which she had produced in her prime.⁵⁸

Emigration advertisements also echoed these themes. In 1909 an advertisement in a British paper for Alberta informed would-be emigrants that “it is God’s free country, where a man is a man and nothing more. The land is new and the people’s faces are towards the front.”⁵⁹ The message assured Britons that the empire not only sustained wider racial links, but contributed to its moral and physical improvement.

The imperial connection could at times appeal to white members of the empire who did not hail from the “Mother Country.” The presence of a large minority of French Canadians in Quebec and an outright Boer majority (among the whites) in South Africa tarnished the image of

⁵⁶ Birmingham University. Joseph Chamberlain Papers (Hereafter cited as JC) 29/6/8/2 Prime Minister Richard Seddon to Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain, July 25 1899.

⁵⁷ This was noticed by visiting Dominion journalists who responded to a questionnaire after the 1909 Imperial Press Conference. *Review of Reviews*, August 1909, 127.

⁵⁸ James Anthony Froude, *Oceana* (London, 1886), 10-11.

⁵⁹ *Times*, May 24 1909.

the settler communities as homogenous “British” states.⁶⁰ However, recent scholarship suggests that many French Canadians and Boers could appreciate the practical dividends of the empire without embracing the racial, sentimental, or cultural aspects of “Britishness.”⁶¹ Colin Coates shows how French Canadians cautiously guarded their local autonomy and religious practices through the language of “British liberty,” though they typically rejected an active role in the empire.⁶² Similarly, many Boers recognized that living under British jurisdiction offered protection against the majority black African population.⁶³ In the aftermath of the South African War, many Boers put aside anti-British animosity in favor of practical cooperation with imperial authorities with the ultimate goal of preserving white supremacy.⁶⁴ This strange devotion often baffled British administrators charged with maintaining close imperial ties. In 1908 the Governor General of Canada Earl Grey confided:

The longer I remain here the more I am confirmed in my impression that in the Province of Quebec the Empire has its surest anchor. This Province is at once the strength and the weakness of Canadian Imperialism. The French realize that the security for the enjoyment of their privileges is greater inside than outside the British Empire. On the other hand their contented temperament leaves them satisfied with the role of a parasite.⁶⁵

But these examples serve as further evidence that the wide cultural and geographical contours of “Britishness” allowed for the incorporation and coexistence of many identities for the white rulers of the empire.

⁶⁰ Of course the non-white populations of the Maoris, Afrikaners, native Americans, and black Africans did not factor into their calculations.

⁶¹ See, for example: Donal Lowry, “The Crown, Empire Loyalism, and Assimilation of non-British White Subjects in the British World: An Argument Against Ethnic Determinism,” in Carl Bridge and Kent Fedorowich, eds., *The British World: Diaspora, Culture and Identity* (London, 2003), 96-120.

⁶² Colin Coates, “French Canadian’s Ambivalence to Empire,” in *Canada and the British Empire*, 181-199.

⁶³ Mordechai Tamarkin, “The Cape Afrikaners and the British Empire from the Jameson Raid to the South African War,” in Donal Lowry, ed., *The South African War Reappraised* (Manchester, 2000), 129-139.

⁶⁴ See Martin Legassick, “British Hegemony and the Origins of Segregation in South Africa, 1901-1914,” in William Beinart and Saul Debow, eds., *Segregation and Apartheid in Twentieth Century South Africa* (London, 1995), 43-59.

⁶⁵ Library and Archives of Canada. George Albert Grey Papers Volume 15. Grey to Colonial Secretary Lord Crewe, December 8 1908.

Some white minorities even rose to leadership positions of great prominence within the empire. The French Canadian Prime Minister Wilfred Laurier dominated the Dominion's political scene from 1896-1911. Laurier played a delicate game of balancing national and imperial demands. He mollified his Liberal supporters in Quebec by resisting calls to bring Canada into closer formal ties with Britain. However, he also pledged to maintain the empire in the event of an emergency, and presided over the dispatch of a Canadian contingent for the South African War.⁶⁶ Jan Smuts was a former Boer general who fought against the British in the Transvaal. After the conflict, he cooperated with imperial authorities and British colonists in an effort to create a unified South Africa under white domination. He countered the belief that Boers could not take part in the shared leadership of the empire, insisting "Imperial peoples really are a mixture of various stocks."⁶⁷ By 1917 he was a *British* Field Marshal and an invited member of the *British* Imperial War Cabinet.

These examples should be taken with a degree of caution, as many white minorities lacked any appreciation for the empire. Nonetheless, it demonstrates that "Britishness" could be a nebulous and expansive category. This was the lesson for one Australian journalist reporting on the 1907 Colonial Conference and the presence of French Canadian (Laurier) and Boer (Louis Botha) delegates. He concluded "it says much for the strength and character of the Empire, for the healing and assimilating power of its Constitution, when from these apparently incongruous elements come expressions of loyal devotion, and are granted a place in a Council where there is

⁶⁶ Réal Bélanger, "L'élite politique canadienne-française et l'Empire britannique : trois reflets représentatifs des perceptions canadiennes-françaises 1890-1917," in Colin Coates, ed., *Imperial Canada 1867-1917* (Edinburgh, 1997), 122-140. Also see Chapter Two for a discussion of Laurier's role in the conflict.

⁶⁷ In a speech at the Savoy Hotel, London on May 22 1917, in Jan Smuts, *Towards a Better World* (New York, 1944), 7.

no room save for those who are linked together in one vast work—the maintenance of the Empire’s strength and of its institutions.”⁶⁸

In exploring the vast cultural contours of British identity, one central fact is clear: Britishness did not extend to the empire’s non-white population. The contributions of postcolonial theories to imperial historiography reveals the process of identity construction that created a clear distinction between Europeans and the non-white “Other.”⁶⁹ This “rule of colonial difference,” according to Partha Chatterjee, played a fundamental role in the legitimation of European authority.⁷⁰ In turn, the discourse of colonial hegemony helped solidify ideas of a racially homogenous identity for white imperial elites. Catherine Hall, in her groundbreaking study, insists that “the identity of coloniser is a constitutive part of Englishness.”⁷¹ Linda Colley also uses the metropolitan encounters with the empire in her understanding of the construction of “Britons.” In addition to framing an identity “in conscious opposition to the Other beyond their shores,” imperial elites saw the empire as the common preserve for white Britons. She explains “whatever their own individual ethnic backgrounds, Britons could join together vis-à-vis the empire and act out the flattering parts of heroic conqueror, humane judge, and civilizing agent.”⁷² All of these works demonstrate the impassable divide between white and nonwhite claims to common imperial identity. After all, if imperialism was sustained, in part, by discursive tools operating as hegemonic devices, how could the rhetoric of “Britishness” apply to non-white colonial subjects?

⁶⁸ *The Queenslander* (Brisbane), April 27 1907.

⁶⁹ See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1978).

⁷⁰ Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton, 1993), 10.

⁷¹ Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Colony and Metropole in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (Chicago, 2002), 12. Also see Linda Colley, “Britishness and Otherness,” *Journal of British Studies* Vol. 31 October 1992 , 309-329; Antoinette Burton, *At the Heart of the Empire: Indians and the Colonial Encounter in Late Victorian Britain* (Berkeley, 1998); Susan Thorne, *Congregational Missions and the Making of an Imperial Culture* (Stanford, 1999).

⁷² See Linda Colley, “Britishness and Otherness,” *Journal of British Studies* Vol. 31 October 1992, 316, 324-325.

The tension between race and British identity was most visible in the white settler colonies. In the late nineteenth century, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and South Africa erected “Great White Walls” aimed at blocking non-white immigration.⁷³ These exclusionist policies became a defining feature of white colonial nation-building and often served as a point of contention between British and colonial governments. Nonetheless, colonial governments enacted these laws in order to maintain the inherent “British” character of their settler societies. Nothing reminded Australians, Canadians, and South Africans of their common British heritage better than the fear of non-white racial miscegenation and integration. In 1898 the *Sydney Morning Herald* clarified its support for a homogenous society by insisting “that by a White Australia we mean a British Australia.”⁷⁴ Australian Labor politician William M. Hughes took this rhetoric a step further. By maintaining a homogenous and pure “White Australia,” he explained, “we are more British than the people of Great Britain.”⁷⁵

The racial politics in the city of Vancouver offer an interesting juxtaposition of ideas about race, empire, and Britishness. In 1910 the Scottish community in Vancouver formed a regiment for service with the Canadian militia. They adopted “Highland” regalia such as kilts and tartans, and appealed to the British War Office for official affiliation (“Alliance”) with the Seaforth Highlanders Regiment of the British Army in Scotland.⁷⁶ Both the British and Dominion governments eagerly adhered to their requests and facilitated their development as a new addition to the Canadian Militia. And since enlistment was open to all white Canadian men, the regiment offered a curious amalgamation of “Scottish,” “Canadian,” and “British” cultural

⁷³ Charles Price, *Great White Walls are Built: Restrictive Immigration to North America and Australia, 1836-88* (Canberra, 1974); Robert Huttenback, *Racism and Empire: White Settlers and Colored Immigrants in the British Self-Governing Colonies, 1830-1910* (Ithaca, 1976).

⁷⁴ *Sydney Morning Herald*, March 7 1898.

⁷⁵ Quoted in Neville Meany, “Britishness and Australia: Some Reflections,” in *The British World*, 121.

⁷⁶ National Archives. Colonial Office Papers (Hereafter cited as CO) 42/956 R. Brade of the War Office to the Under Secretary of State at the Colonial Office, December 14 1911. For a broader survey of this “regimental alliance” system, see Chapter Seven.

affiliations. By comparison, the Canadian government adamantly refused to allow local Sikh emigrants to form a militia battalion in British Columbia. The Governor General explained “true we employ Indian native army men in other countries besides India, but not in white men’s countries. This is, and hopes to remain, a white man’s country.”⁷⁷

What do these examples mean about the nature of “Britons” and “Britishness”? Like all national identifications, it was an artificial and “imagined” community. In one sense, it was wide and inclusive and served to unify the residents of the British Isles as a cultural complement to the political entity of the United Kingdom. Yet it also transcended a mere “national” or “political” association. Britons populated a vast empire and coexisted with emerging colonial nationalism. Finally it was also an exclusive identity in that it denied the vast bulk of the empire with non-white skin. It became part of the broader phenomenon of racial hegemony that sustained so much of the Victorian empire. Britons and Britishness, then, was a powerful world force made capable by a century of unprecedented imperial expansion. It served as an extraordinary cultural bond between white imperial subjects from London to Cardiff to Glasgow, from Capetown to Bermuda to Vancouver, and from Calcutta to Sydney to Hong Kong.

“Greater Britain”

Most Britons resided in the global polity of “Greater Britain.” But there was little consensus as to what this imagined community looked like. Many Victorians saw the empire as a single world-state under the authority of the British monarchy. Others espoused a liberal view of the empire as a series of emerging independent states. Some Britons even interpreted “Greater Britain” as a cultural entity that transcended political boundaries and included the United States.

⁷⁷ Grey Papers, Volume 31. Governor General Earl Grey to Charles Hanbury Williams, September 15 1909.

These approaches all had one thing in common: a focus on Great Britain and the white settler communities at the expense of India and the Crown Colonies. “Greater Britain,” for many contemporaries, was a racially homogenous imagined community linking the white residents of the empire. This was a powerful cultural force. Even the anti-imperialist theorists J.A. Hobson admitted “a curious blindness seems to beset the average educated Briton when he is asked to picture to himself our colonial Empire. Almost instinctively, he visualises Canada, Australia, and only quite recently South Africa—the rest he virtually ignores.”⁷⁸

One of the formative examples for imagining “Greater Britain” was provided by a young radical Liberal named Charles Dilke. In 1866, Dilke embarked on a global tour that included Canada, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and India. Upon his return he penned a highly popular book entitled *Greater Britain* (1868). Though ostensibly a travelogue, Dilke’s work revealed a comprehensive vision of empire bound by what he perceived as the inherent solidarity of the Anglo-Saxon race. He acknowledged that diverse environments contributed to different characteristics and traits in Canadians, Australians, the British, and even Americans, but insisted that “in essentials, the race was always one.”⁷⁹ Like many mid-Victorian liberals, Dilke doubted the feasibility of formal control over self-governing portions of the empire and instead argued for an eventual series of independent British states linked by a common cultural and racial connection. He explained “that which raises us above the provincialism of citizenship of little England is our citizenship of the greater ‘Saxondom’ which includes all that is best and wisest in the world.”⁸⁰ Most importantly, Dilke’s work gave a common title to the broader white English-speaking parts of the empire: “Greater Britain.”

⁷⁸ Quoted in Andrew Thompson, *Imperial Britain: The Empire in British Politics, 1880-1914* (London, 2000), 15.

⁷⁹ Charles Dilke, *Greater Britain Vol. I* (London, 1868), vii.

⁸⁰ Quoted in Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain*, 117.

Other theorists followed Dilke's lead in conceptualizing the empire as a homogenous racial entity. The noted historian James Anthony Froude called this realm "Oceana." He described a globe-spanning entity "held together by common blood, common interest, and a common pride in the great position which unity can secure."⁸¹ Froude exhibited sympathy for the cause of closer political union between the "Mother Country" and the self-governing colonies. However, he deprecated the idea of a binding constitutional agreement forced on colonials by the imperial government. Instead, he emphasized the need for cultivating the sentimental and cultural connections among Britons, insisting "if the natural tie is not strong enough, no mechanical tie will hold."⁸²

The most important and influential treatise on "Greater Britain" was John Seeley's *Expansion of England* (1883).⁸³ His book enjoyed widespread circulation among the reading public, selling 80,000 copies in the first two years and remaining in print until 1956.⁸⁴ A historian at Cambridge University, Seeley adhered to the ideas of Leopold von Ranke and others who viewed the great powers and international statecraft as the proper preserve of history. Unlike Dilke and Froude, Seeley saw "Greater Britain" as global world-state that represented "not merely the English race, but the authority of the English government."⁸⁵ He prophesized two possible destinies for this large political system: that the self-governing colonies would eventually seek independence and separate from the empire, or that they would draw into a political federation with Great Britain. Colonial independence, he maintained, would dash any hope for British global supremacy as each state would follow its own self-interests and sacrifice

⁸¹ James Froude, *Oceana, or England and Her Colonies* (London, 1886), 20.

⁸² Quoted in Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain*, 147.

⁸³ For a discussion of Seeley's role in shaping imperial consciousness, see Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain*, 150-178.

⁸⁴ Thompson, *Imperial Britain*, 18.

⁸⁵ Seeley, *Expansion of England*, 51.

common utility. On the other hand, imperial federation would marshal the common resources and result in an unassailable British Empire. To secure this closer union, Seeley challenged Britons at home and abroad to think of the colonies as integral parts of the “Mother Country” separated only by the British-controlled sea lanes. He explained “if Greater Britain in the full sense of the phrase really existed, Canada and Australia would be to us as Kent and Cornwall.”⁸⁶

Race was the central binding link in Seeley’s conception of a British world-state. His Anglo-centric view of the empire rarely considered Scotland and Wales, though he included them into his projected community because of their common language.⁸⁷ He also emphasized the settler communities because they “are of our own blood, and are therefore united with us by the strongest ties.”⁸⁸ He even permitted the presence of large numbers of Boers and French Canadians. Though categorized as different “races” under Seeley’s definition of the term, these fellow Europeans could coexist in the empire without “marring the ethnological unity of the whole.”⁸⁹ However, he characterized non-whites as having no place in an imperial political state. The possession of India and other Crown colonies, according to this view, were moral obligations to spread Christianity, “progress,” and other Western ideas. But they could not fall into the racially-exclusive polity of “Greater Britain.”⁹⁰

Seeley’s ideas gave a lead to imperialists who desired closer political, economic, and military ties between Great Britain and the self-governing colonies. The Canadian educator and idealist George Parkin became a leading spokesperson for a formal political arrangement for the

⁸⁶ Seeley, *Expansion of England*, 63.

⁸⁷ See John Mackenzie, “Empire and National Identities in the Case of Scotland,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society Sixth Series Volume 8* (1998), 219.

⁸⁸ John Seeley, *Expansion of England* (London, 1883), 13.

⁸⁹ Seeley, *Expansion of England*, 50.

⁹⁰ For a view on Seeley’s ideas about India, see Bell, *Idea of Greater Britain*, 171-178.

empire.⁹¹ Parkin, like many Victorians, saw the future of political communities in large federated states on the model of the German Empire and the United States.⁹² He argued “we are passing from a nation epoch to a federation epoch,” and insisted “that the British people should fall in with this tendency is in the strict line of historical continuity.”⁹³ Parkin dedicated most of his adult life to traveling the empire and campaigning in support of closer unity between its white states. Though he neglected to produce a specific scheme for imperial federation, he clearly identified the settler communities as the key to the empire’s future survival: “nothing can be more certain that the true solution of her destiny lies in holding close to the young Titans who are growing up around her in Greater Britain.”⁹⁴

Parkin’s support for imperial federation was predicated on bringing the white population of the empire into closer communion with one-another. As a proud Canadian, he saw federation as a means of bringing the Dominion into the hallowed confines of imperial decision-making. He adamantly denied that federation would result in a loss of colonial sovereignty; rather it would make Canada, Australia, and New Zealand coequals with Britain as part of a new global world-state. Parkin also argued that imperial federation would further protect the liberties of non-British white subjects in the empire. Though he exhibited little admiration for the people of Quebec (he blamed their poverty on “a certain unprogressive spirit”), he pointed to the influence of “British constitutionalism” among the French Canadian population.⁹⁵ He explained “the reasoned political allegiance of the people goes out to the British connection, which gives steadiness to their public and security to their religious life.”⁹⁶ This contrasted with his view of

⁹¹ Terry Cook, “George R. Parkin and the concept of Britannic idealism,” *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 10 (August 1975), 15–31; Carl Berger, *Sense of Power*, 33–41.

⁹² See Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain*, 92–98.

⁹³ George Parkin, *Imperial Federation: The Problem of National Unity* (London, 1892), 27.

⁹⁴ LAC George Parkin Papers MG 30 D-44 Vol. 69 Speech to the Authors Club in London, UK, January 17 1910.

⁹⁵ Parkin, *Imperial Federation*, 154.

⁹⁶ Parkin, *Imperial Federation*, 157.

the non-white population of the empire as “weak races” in need of constant supervision. He pointed to the extraordinary economic profits derived from India, and urged the white colonies to contribute towards its administration.⁹⁷

The cause for closer political unity in the empire reached its apogee with the founding of the Imperial Federation League in 1884. Though never boasting a large membership, the league served to raise public awareness about the future of the imperial relationship. It mobilized an impressive roll of politicians, journalists, and military/naval officers in Britain and the colonies, as well as publishing a monthly journal, *Imperial Federation*.⁹⁸ The league claimed a major public relations victory when it successfully lobbied the British government to convene a conference with colonial leaders in 1887. However, the organization failed to convince leading politicians to commit to a major reorientation of the British constitutional system. Moreover, league members exhibited a wide range of ideas about what form federation should take. Some activists favored a purely advisory council, while others sought the creation of a new Imperial Parliament with representatives from all the self-governing states in the empire. Ultimately, leading members privately acknowledged the futility of their Sisyphean task and turned to other projects such as tariff reform and imperial defense cooperation. In 1893 its members touted its success as a propaganda tool and concluded “having brought the matter to this point the League is fully justified in claiming that the responsibility for the future may and ought to be left with the Imperial Government.”⁹⁹ It then voted itself out of existence.

The rejection of formal imperial unity did not, however, comprise a rejection of ideas about “Greater Britain.” Indeed, even the avowedly “anti-imperialist” Goldwin Smith often

⁹⁷ Parkin, *Imperial Federation*, 248-249.

⁹⁸ For a study of the league and its activities, see J.E. Tyler, *The Struggle for Imperial Unity 1868-1895* (London, 1938).

⁹⁹ British Library. Imperial Federation League Papers (Hereafter cited as IFL) 62780 Report of a Committee, July 1893

exhibited many of the same ideas about race, culture, and “Britishness” as his political opponents. Smith was an Oxford professor who emigrated to Canada in 1871. He was convinced that the white colonies, upon reaching a proper stage in national maturation, would become independent states. Indeed, he viewed the self-governing colonies as “free nations dependent upon us only in name.” and called for their “Colonial Emancipation” from British authority.¹⁰⁰ Smith also prophesized the eventual absorption of Canada into the United States—a unpopular position for which he was much maligned by the British and Canadian presses. Overtime Smith became negatively identified in the public mind as a “Little Englander” and as the leading critic of the British Empire. However, Smith always professed that his ideas were grounded in the context of a broader Anglo-Saxon global community (including the United States). He saw sentimental and racial bonds as far more important than constitutional arrangements and political boundaries. Above all else, he claimed to be “a loyal and even ardent citizen of Greater Britain.”¹⁰¹

The gospel of race patriotism found its strongest apostle in Lord Alfred Milner. A former journalist and imperial administrator, Milner was a self-declared “British Race Patriot” who agitated in pursuit of closer imperial ties with the self-governing colonies.¹⁰² He saw “Greater Britain” as “two empires” separated by the color line.¹⁰³ The more important component was the white settler communities bound together by “the bond of common blood, a common language, common history and traditions.”¹⁰⁴ Milner worried about the “calamity” of imperial decentralization and warned of a “gradual drifting apart of the scattered states of the Empire.”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ Goldwin Smith, *The Empire: A Series of Letters* (Oxford, 1863), viii, 1.

¹⁰¹ Quoted in Bell, *Ideas of Greater Britain*, 184.

¹⁰² Quoted in J. Lee Thompson, *A Wider Patriotism: Alfred Milner and the British Empire* (London, 2007), 6. Ironically, Milner was born and raised in Germany as his father was a reader at a German university.

¹⁰³ In a speech to the Royal Colonial Institute, June 16 1908, Milner, *The Nation and the Empire*, 289.

¹⁰⁴ Alfred Milner, *The Nation and the Empire* (London, 1913), xxxv.

¹⁰⁵ Speech in Manchester on December 14 1906, Milner, *The Nation and the Empire*, 143.

In its place, Milner espoused “Constructive Imperialism” that actively pursued policies such as imperial tariff reform and closer imperial defense cooperation with the colonies. Imperial and racial unity, he argued, must be maintained at all costs. They “were not cosmopolitans,” he explained to a Unionist rally in 1907, “but Britons.”¹⁰⁶

Milner’s ideas about “Greater Britain,” imperial unity, and race found expression in his work as the High Commissioner for Southern Africa (1897-1905). He became preoccupied with addressing the “race question” between British colonists and the Boers.¹⁰⁷ He hoped to address the population imbalance by encouraging British emigration, and privately informed one supporter “it thus becomes of the first importance to strengthen the British element on the land.”¹⁰⁸ In the aftermath of the war, he flooded South Africa’s administration with loyal supporters; young educated men who became known as “Milner’s Kindergarten.”¹⁰⁹ Many of these activists, including Leo Amery, Lionel Curtis, Philip Kerr, Geoffrey Dawson, and John Buchan, went on to prominent political and journalistic careers and served as the spokespersons for imperial affairs well into the 1930s. Under Milner’s direction, they campaigned tirelessly for a unified South Africa that included both Boers and Britons while preserving British political authority.

Despite his voracious racial rhetoric of Anglo-Saxonism, Milner believed in a “wider patriotism” that could link together all white subjects of the crown. He accepted that white non-Britons could become part of the imperial community through cooperation, loyalty, and assuming shared responsibilities such as imperial defense. The empire could thus serve as a

¹⁰⁶ Speech at Guilford on October 29 1907, in Alfred Milner, *Constructive Imperialism* (London, 1908), 48.

¹⁰⁷ See Thompson, *A Wider Patriotism*, 70-87;

¹⁰⁸ LAC Parkin Papers MG 30 D44 Vol. 16 Alfred Milner to George Parkin, September 13 1901.

¹⁰⁹ For an examination of the “Kindergarten” see John Kendle, *The Round Table Movement and Imperial Union* (Toronto, 1975), 3-45; Walter Nimocks, *Milner’s Young Men: The “Kindergarten” in Edwardian Imperial Affairs* (Durham, 1968).

melting pot of pan-Britannicism (so long as non-Britons made some effort towards assimilation). A “French Canadian,” he concluded, “may be a British soldier or administrator all the same, and he will have absolutely the same scope and opportunities as his competitors of British blood.”¹¹⁰

In the late Edwardian period ideas of race patriotism sparked a renewed effort in favor of closer political links among the white states of the empire. In 1910 several former members of Milner’s South African “Kindergarten” formed the Round Table Movement in order to consider options of eventual political federation. They shared Milner’s beliefs of “Constructive Imperialism,” and privately admitted “the conviction that permanent stability for the Empire was not to be found in the policy of alliances or in bonds of sentiment.”¹¹¹ Their leader, Lionel Curtis, informed one supporter that “nothing will hold the Empire together in the absence of organic institutions.”¹¹² A federal solution, he explained, was the only way that the centripetal bonds of the empire could be sustained against the centrifugal forces of colonial nationalism. Curtis and his Round Table colleagues advanced several plans for federation that included an Imperial Parliament and greater Dominion voice in foreign policy. They were the inheritors of Seeley’s vision of the empire as a unified British world-state. As one anonymous writer explained, it was “a system which is the direct outcome of the political philosophy of the British race.”¹¹³

The members of the Round Table regarded their organization as an elite group of individuals who could gradually influence public opinion in Britain and the colonies. This was to be a closed caste, above the fray of party politics and mass democracy. As Curtis insisted, “it has indeed been necessary to exercise some care not to invite the cooperation of larger numbers

¹¹⁰ Milner, *The Nation and the Empire*, xxxviii.

¹¹¹ From a meeting at Plas Newydd, Wales on September 1909, quoted in Kendle, *The Round Table Movement*, 64.

¹¹² Cambridge University. Churchill College Archives. Leo Amery Papers (Hereafter cited as AMEL) 2/5/13 Lionel Curtis to Leo Amery January 22 1914.

¹¹³ “The Problem of Imperial Defence,” *Round Table*, May 1911, 232.

than can conveniently share in a work of research. For, as remarked above, a multitude of workers may be fatal to genuine enquiry.”¹¹⁴ They established chapters throughout the empire and maintained a steady correspondence on the issue of imperial centralization. They also created an imperial journal, *The Round Table*, for a wider circulation. Curtis explained its purpose as “a valuable medium of education for the thinking and reading class of people who really make public opinion.”¹¹⁵

The Round Table Movement achieved mixed results. Like its ideological predecessor the Imperial Federation League, it failed to secure formal political union between Britain and the Dominions. Its elitist membership precluded the active participation of the masses, and it served more in the role of a study group than an extrapolitical propaganda organization. However, the Round Table’s activities helped to channel the educated public’s interest in the empire and the global British connection. Unlike the Imperial Federation League, the Round Table Movement remained viable and played a large role in the public discussion about the continued evolution of the Commonwealth.¹¹⁶

The members of the Round Table reflected energetic if marginalized opinion in favor of “Greater Britain” as a global world-state. By comparison, Richard Jebb assumed a more practical and realistic approach to imperial unity that acknowledged the insurmountable obstacle of colonial nationalism. His travels throughout the empire in 1897-1901 and 1905-1906 impressed upon him the growing pressure for increased autonomy in the self-governing

¹¹⁴ Oxford University. Bodleian Library (Hereafter cited as BD) Lionel Curtis/Round Table Papers MSSS 776 “Memorandum” marked private by Lionel Curtis, undated but subsequent letter indicates it was written on April 22 1910.

¹¹⁵ BD Lionel Curtis/Round Table Papers MSSS 776 “Memorandum” marked private by Lionel Curtis, undated but subsequent letter indicates it was written on April 22 1910. A prominent member in the British “Moot” was Geoffrey Dawson, editor of the *Times*.

¹¹⁶ In the 1930s it turned much of its attention to India’s transition to the status of a self-governing Dominion.

colonies.¹¹⁷ He subsequently came to view imperial federation or formal constitutional links as an anathema to colonial sensibilities. Jebb identified a powerful sentiment of “colonial nationalism” that was both proud of an emerging national identity and committed to closer relations with Great Britain. In 1905 he published the influential *Studies in Colonial Nationalism* which outlined his ideas. In place of federation, he advocated a “Brittanic Alliance” of the sort which governed external relations between sovereign entities.¹¹⁸ He explained to his readers:

Alliance recognises separate national aspirations: federation aims at national unity. If diversified nationalism, within workable limits, is valued as a progressive element in human civilisation, then the new policy is one which is desirable as well as practicable, superseding an older policy which was neither.¹¹⁹

Jebb argued that colonial nationalism and imperial loyalty were not mutually exclusive. He pointed to “nationalists” in Australia and Canada who supported participation in the South African War as part of a broader imperial patriotism. He added:

Everywhere within the Empire national character is being imbued with a deep respect and affection for British tradition. The same fundamental conceptions, essential to effective cooperation, continue to underlie the superficial differentiation of national temperament. Thus the imperial continuity of the past has created the opportunity for a more intimate and permanent alliance within the Empire than is possible elsewhere.¹²⁰

Jebb’s vision of empire centered on the idea of political sovereignty as the highest category of national identity. He hypothesized that “Canada,” “Australia,” “New Zealand,” and “South Africa,” represented inherent nations on the same political footing as Great Britain. He saw Canadian and South African nationalism as a unifying bond in which “French” and “Dutch” identities—categories he branded as “racial”—could coexist with “British” populations under a common political union. These national identities could flourish then under the broader cultural

¹¹⁷ For various interpretations of Jebb’s experiences, see the essays in John Eddy and Deryck Schreuder eds., *The Rise of Colonial Nationalism* (Sydney, 1988).

¹¹⁸ Richard Jebb, *The Brittanic Question* (London, 1913), 126.

¹¹⁹ Richard Jebb, *Colonial Nationalism* (London, 1905), viii.

¹²⁰ Jebb, *Colonial Nationalism*, 23.

banner of “Britannic” loyalty. Curiously this approach relegated England, Scotland, and Wales as lesser entities within a political state and thus unworthy of the title of “national” identity. He concluded “if corresponding terms are demanded for use with reference to the component peoples—English, Scottish, Irish , Welsh—perhaps ‘tribe’ and ‘tribal’ would be conveniently terse and sufficiently accurate.” He concluded that “if anyone could suggest an alternative to ‘British’ for the Empire, or to ‘English’ for the United Kingdom, it would be the part of conciliation to consider the new term on its merits, without prejudice or perverted patriotism.”¹²¹

Compared with famous men like Seeley, Parkin, and Milner, Richard Jebb was a relatively obscure character in the pantheon of imperial theorists. He always considered his cause an uphill battle against proponents of “Constructive Imperialism.” In 1913 he informed one friend “I have, I think, grown out of the notion that there is any possibility of winning the present generation of Englishmen to the conception of the Britannic Commonwealth which I again put forward in this book, but I am still sanguine that the action or inaction of the Dominions may keep the door open to this ideal and eventually consummate it.”¹²² Yet Jebb’s vision probably reflected the most accurate depiction of the empire as an evolving commonwealth of white self-governing states. His insistence that national pride actually strengthened imperial loyalty spoke to the real and undeniable tendency of many Canadians, Australians, New Zealanders, and South Africans to also consider themselves “English,” “Scottish,” “Welsh,” “Irish,” or “British.” The Edwardian empire was a smorgasbord of identities that transcended oceans, continents, and political boundaries. But ultimately the purveyors of “Greater Britain” claimed a common inheritance as “Britons” that trumped all ethnic, racial, or national differences. This this was the message from one leading New

¹²¹ Jebb Papers ISC116/M/3 “Imperial Home Rule,” *Morning Post* clipping of August 15 1908.

¹²² Jebb Papers, Jebb to J.L. Garvin, May 28 1913.

Zealander who insisted that “the Australasian has not ceased to regard England as his Motherland, and to her he turns with the larger patriotism that is not fully satisfied by the intense and consuming but still provincial desire for the development and prosperity of his own country.” “The Australasian,” he concluded, “with all his independence born of isolation, is at heart an Englishman.”¹²³

¹²³ James Allen, “The Strength of Sentiment,” *Empire Review* November 1909, 271-272. Allen was the Minister of Defence in the Dominion government from 1912-1920.

Chapter Two

Defending Greater Britain: Race and Imperial Defense 1870-1900

Nobody doubts that if today either Canada or Australia were attacked by any foreign power the whole might of Great Britain would be put forth to protect them. As little doubt can there be that if Great Britain were wantonly attacked and engaged in a struggle for existence, each of these great colonies would be ready with such assistance as it could give. Race sentiment and national honour, to say nothing of self-interest, would combine, as things now stand, to make these results as certain as anything can be in human affairs.

George Parkin, 1892¹

In the summer of 1897, representatives from around the empire assembled in London for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. On the far side of the world, the *New Zealand Graphic and Ladies Magazine* observed this imperial celebration with a special illustration entitled "The New Recruit." (Figure 2:1)² The central focus of the cartoon was a young military cadet being presented to the Queen by the well-known British general Sir Garnett Wolsey. A white sash across his chest identified the boy as a member of the "Colonial Forces." Wolsey assured the monarch that "He's only a youngster at present, your Majesty, but he bids fair to grow into a 'First Class Fighting Man.'" The underlying message reflected growing ideas of the white self-governing colonies as fledgling "British" states who would one day make a major contribution to the defense of the empire. The cartoon proved prophetic. Within two years, white colonial soldiers from Canada, Australia, and New Zealand would be fighting and dying beside their fellow Britons on the South African veldt.

¹ George Parkin, *Imperial Federation: The Problem of National Unity* (London, 1892), 42.

² *New Zealand Graphic and Ladies Magazine*, July 10 1897, 65.

During the latter half of the nineteenth century, the white settler colonies occupied a central position in the construction of a pan-British identity. Contemporaries such as Charles Dilke, James Anthony Froude, and John Seeley advocated a global community of “Greater Britain” linked by common language, devotion to the monarchy, and an a vague (and often contested) identification with a common race. Historians have also devoted considerable interest to linking this emerging “British World” with a broader imperial identity.³ Duncan Bell argues that globalization, combined with fears of national decline and mass democracy, contributed to the idea of the white empire as a “single transcontinental political community.”⁴ Faced with economic and military/naval competition with the other great powers, Bell argues, “it became imperative to many in Britain to seek solace in the verities of scale—to try and maintain Britain’s power by welding the United Kingdom and its outlying colonial possessions into a formidable unit.”⁵ Focusing on a later period, Daniel Gorman examines Edwardian ideas about “imperial citizenship” that connected Britons in the metropole with those in the colonies while excluding non-white subjects of the empire. Gorman identifies widespread concerns about military, economic, and social decay as a stimulus in promoting a unified empire. As he explains, imperial citizenship offered “a means of fostering imperial unity and cementing Britain’s status as the leading imperial power in an increasingly competitive geopolitical world.”⁶

By comparison, military and diplomatic historians have exhibited little interest in the ways that Britons conceptualized the settler communities as the future guardians of the empire. An older historiography emphasizes the complicated diplomatic, strategic, and political issues

³ See the essays in Carl Bridge and Kent Fedorowich, eds., *The British World: Diaspora, Culture and Identity* (London, 2003); Phillip Buckner and R. Douglas Francis, eds., *Rediscovering the British World* (Calgary, 2005).

⁴ Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain* (Cambridge, 2007), 3.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁶ Daniel Gorman, *Imperial Citizenship: Empire and the Question of Belonging* (Manchester, 2006), 2.

involved in maintaining imperial security.⁷ Donald Schurman's pioneering work on the subject correctly identifies the Royal Navy as the powerful instrument responsible for imperial defense. British seapower, he points out, limited the colonies to a cursory role of providing for local security. Works by Richard Preston and Donald Gordon address later efforts to forge imperial unity in defense matters. Though incorporating the perspectives of colonial political leaders, their studies ignore the broader cultural elements that undergirded the "British World" and allowed for such an unprecedented global partnership to flourish under a common imperial banner.

This chapter explores the intellectual, cultural, and political contours of Victorian imperial defense policy. It examines the "official mind" of policymakers and defense administrators as well as cultural attitudes as expressed through the national presses, public discourse, and popular literature. Evolving conceptions of a racially homogenous "Greater Britain" contained significant ramifications for the imperial relationship. Many Britons began to view white colonists as important participants in the gargantuan undertaking of maintaining imperial security. At the same time, Britain steadily diminished its reliance on the vast Indian Army and other resources of native soldiery. In the aftermath of the Indian Mutiny (1857) and the Morant Bay Rebellion in Jamaica (1865), Britons grew increasingly hesitant to employ non-white soldiers against European opponents. The South African War (1899-1902) is represented as the culmination of changing ideas about race and imperial defense. In this war against the white Boers, imperial elites encouraged the participation of troops from Canada, Australia, and

⁷ See, for example: W.C.B. Tunstall, "Imperial Defence, 1897-1914" in J. Holland Rose, A.P. Newton, and E.A. Benians, eds, *Cambridge History of the British Empire Volume I* (Cambridge, 1929), 563-604.; Donald Gordon, *Dominion Partnership in Imperial Defense 1870-1914* (Baltimore, 1965); Richard Preston, *Canada and Imperial Defense 1867-1919* (Durham, 1967); Rhodri Williams, *Defending the Empire: Conservative Party and British Defense Policy, 1889-1915* (New Haven, 1991); Donald Schurman, *Imperial Defence 1868-1887*, ed. John Beeler (London, 2000). Schurman's original dissertation was completed in the 1950s but remained unpublished for many years.

New Zealand as a symbolic manifestation of pan-British unity. They concomitantly barred the contributions of Indian and black African soldiers by labeling the conflict a “white man’s war.” By drawing on a wide array of British and colonial sources, this chapter offers more than a reexamination of British defense policy: it serves an enlightening case study for juxtaposing notions of race, empire, and “Britishness.”

The Burden of “Imperial” Defence

The defense of the British Empire in the nineteenth century was a daunting task. In addition to providing for the security of the Home Islands, policymakers were responsible for preserving naval supremacy, protecting distant colonial possessions, and upholding white hegemony within the empire, all the while complying with the strict fiscal limitations of mid-Victorian Liberalism. As Paul Kennedy, in his magisterial exposé on “imperial overstretch,” aptly stated, “British statesmen had to engage in a diplomatic and strategic juggling act that was literally worldwide in its dimensions.”⁸

Increasing tension with the Great Powers further complicated this picture. The legacy of the Revolutionary Wars, coupled with deep-seated suspicions about Napoleon III’s continental ambitions, created an atmosphere of mistrust that permeated Anglo-French relations throughout the nineteenth century.⁹ Much of this heightened Francophobia occurred after significant advances in French naval construction, notably Louis Philippe’s steam battlefleet of the 1840s and Napoleon III’s ironclad programs of 1858-1863, challenged Britain’s traditional supremacy on the high seas. Originally intended to coerce Britain into closer relations with France, the policies initiated a series of “invasion scares” that accelerated British defense spending and

⁸ Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (London, 1988), 292.

⁹ Robert Gibson, *Best of Enemies: Anglo-French Relations Since the Norman Conquest* (London, 1995), 159-215; Georgios Varouxakis, *Victorian Political Thought on France and the French* (New York, 2002), 152-156.

provoked rampant anti-French sentiments.¹⁰ Expansion in the colonial sphere also antagonized Anglo-French relations as both powers competed in the Scramble for Africa. Colonial rivalry came to a head in 1898 when British and French troops squared off over rival claims to a barren mud fort in the southern half of the Sudan. Though diplomatic negotiations ultimately averted war, the Fashoda Incident played a pivotal role in pushing both countries towards an *entente* that was more pragmatic than *cordiale*.¹¹

A more consistent threat to British imperial security emanated from Russia. Victorian society suffered from recurring bouts of “Russophobia,” with an abiding distaste for what it perceived as autocratic, illiberal, and “Oriental” national characteristics.¹² These cultural attitudes were reflected in foreign policy initiatives aimed at keeping the “Northern Bear” out of the Middle East and Central Asia. Disputes over the “Eastern Question” led to British participation in the Crimean War (1853-1856) as well as a major war scare in 1877-1878. The ultimate nightmare scenario for British defense administrators was a Russian invasion of India’s Northwest frontier. Britons recognized all too well the precarious condition of their imperial rule in the subcontinent, and they vigorously engaged in the “Great Game” of espionage and diplomacy to keep the region free from Russian influence.¹³ As Jennifer Siegel has

¹⁰ The threat of invasion was greatly exaggerated. See Andrew Lambert, “Politics, Technology, and Policy-Making, 1859-1865: Palmerston, Gladstone and the Management of the Ironclad Naval Race,” *Northern Mariner/La Marine du Nord* July 1998, 9-38; C.I. Hamilton, *Anglo-French Naval Rivalry 1840-1870* (Oxford, 1993).

¹¹ A point made by Paul Schroeder in “World War I as Galloping Gertie: A Reply to Joachim Remark,” *Journal of Modern History* 44, No. 2 (September 1972), 319-344.

¹² See for example Jimmie Cain, *Bram Stoker and Russophobia: Evidence of the British Fear of Russia in Dracula and the Lady of the Stroud* (Jefferson, North Carolina, 2006); Anthony Cross, “The Crimean War and the Caricature War,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* July 2006, 460-480. For an older survey see John Howes Gleason, *The Genesis of Russophobia in Great Britain* (Cambridge, 1950).

¹³ Peter Hopkirk, *The Great Game: The Struggle for Empire in Central Asia* (New York, 1992); Sneh Mahajan, “The Defence of India and the End of Isolation: A Study in the Foreign Policy of the Conservative Government, 1900-1905,” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* X (1982), 168-193.

demonstrated, concern over Indian security continued to attract the attention of policymakers in Whitehall well after the establishment of the Anglo-Russian rapprochement in 1907.¹⁴

German unification in the 1860s-1870s presented a new potential danger to British interests. Britons feared the developing industrial and military power of a unified Germany which demonstrated little restraint in flexing its muscles in the pursuit of foreign policy objectives. Successive British governments declined (or were helpless) to intervene in Prussian wars against Denmark (1864), Austria (1866), and France (1870-1871). This growing unease was also manifest in George Chesney's 1871 popular invasion story, "The Battle of Dorking," in which Britain faced a humiliating invasion by a powerful and unified Germany.¹⁵ These fears should not be exaggerated, as many middle-class Victorians held a special affinity for the land of Kant, Hegel, and Goethe, and both countries enjoyed strong cultural exchanges well into the Edwardian period.¹⁶ In addition, government policy continued to treat France and Russia as the likely enemies in a future general European war. Nonetheless, it is clear that many Britons anxiously viewed the growing power of the *Kaiserreich* long before it began an expansionist *Weltpolitik*.

Even a fellow "Anglo-Saxon" power like the United States posed a challenge for British imperial security. Many Britons looked on with a curious mixture of awe and fear at the swelling population and growing industrial strength of the young republic.¹⁷ They also recognized Canada's vulnerability to American invasion—an enormous strategic liability that

¹⁴ Jennifer Siegel, *Endgame: Britain, Russia and the Final Struggle for Central Asia* (London, 2002).

¹⁵ See Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain*, 38-39.

¹⁶ For the complicated attitudes towards Germany, see: Paul Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860-1914* (London, 1980); Frank Müller, *Britain and the German Question: Perceptions of Nationalism and Political Reform 1830-1863* (New York, 2002); John Davis, *Britain and the German Zollverein, 1846-66* (New York, 1997); Frank McDonough, *The Conservative Party and Anglo-German Relations, 1905-1914* (New York, 2007); Domink Geppert and Robert Gerwarth (eds), *Wilhelmine Germany and Edwardian Britain: Essays on Cultural Affinity* (Oxford, 2008).

¹⁷ See Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain*, 231-259.

proved to be the “Achilles Heel” in Britain’s vast overseas empire.¹⁸ Tension with the United States erupted over a number of territorial issues and came perilously close to war during the Trent Crisis of 1861-1862.¹⁹ Yet Anglo-American relations steadily improved in the latter half of the century. British decisions to submit the *CSS Alabama* claims and the Venezuela boundary dispute to international arbitration went a long way in fostering mutual understanding between the two powers, while the creation of the Dominion of Canada in 1867 lessened radical calls for American annexation. Moreover, both countries enjoyed cultural and linguistic similarities that blossomed in the aura of late Nineteenth Century racialism. By the end of the century, policymakers on both sides of the Atlantic could speak of a “Great Rapprochement” based on mutual interests and reinforced by a growing sense of “pan-Anglo-Saxon” identity.²⁰

Despite the considerable challenges of protecting the empire, British policymakers lacked a cohesive and integrated imperial defense strategy throughout most of the Victorian period. Indeed, the term “imperial defence” did not achieve widespread currency in Great Britain until the late 1880s.²¹ Instead the responsibility for upholding the *Pax Britannia* was parceled out to multiple parties who rarely consulted one-another on their mutual task. The primary burden rested with the Royal Navy which enjoyed unequivocal supremacy over any combination of

¹⁸ See Kenneth Bourne, *Britain and the Balance of Power in North America, 1815-1908* (Berkeley, 1967).

¹⁹ Howard Jones, *The Union in Peril: The Crisis over British Intervention in the Civil War* (Chapel Hill, 1992).

²⁰ Stuart Anderson, *Race and Rapprochement: Anglo-Saxonism and Anglo-American Relations, 1895-1904* (Rutherford, 1981). Bourne minimizes the importance of race and argues that strategic requirements forced the British to recognize American hegemony in North America. He admits “sentiment rather than interest made that acceptance at least tolerable and ultimately even welcome; but it was a realistic assessment of priorities that dictated it.” Bourne, *Britain and the Balance of Power in North America*, 342.

²¹ A search of the *Times Digital Archival* for the term “imperial defence” reveals the first recorded instance in 1856 when the editor made a distinct reference between “national or imperial defence.” *Times*, August 9 1856. Even late Victorian contemporaries remained divided over the origins of the term. In 1897 James Thursfield and Charles Dilke worried about possible copyright infringement on the title of their book *Imperial Defence*. Thursfield traced the term to an anonymous article in the *Edinburgh Review* which he hypothesized had been written by Sir George Clarke. BL Charles Dilke Papers 43916 James Thursfield to Charles Dilke, May 13 1897. For a survey of the development of “imperial defense,” see Donald Schurman, *Imperial Defence 1868-1887*, ed. John Beeler (London, 2000).

potential rivals.²² Throughout much of the nineteenth century Britain employed a “Blue Water” defense doctrine that relied on seapower as the shield of empire. Within this strategic context, the navy performed a number of roles including the defense of the Home Islands, securing overseas trade routes, and protecting the colonies (Canada and India excluded) from invasion by foreign armies. The navy also acted as a powerful agent of empire, with warships “showing the flag” in overseas possessions, suppressing piracy and the slave trade, and reinforcing diplomatic initiatives against foreign powers. By comparison, the army assumed a secondary role as a colonial police force. Most of the army remained scattered as small garrisons in colonies, coaling stations, Ireland, and India.²³ Though it was constantly embroiled in colonial “brush wars” against native populations, British policymakers never intended to employ the army on the continent of Europe.²⁴

The non-white subjects of the empire bore a significant load of imperial defense responsibilities. Most Crown Colonies maintained levies of native troops for ensuring local defense and internal security. Colonial officials paid for these forces out of local funds, thus preserving the British taxpayer from the heavy financial burdens of empire. By far the largest concentration of non-white soldiery was found in the Indian Army. Even after the brutal lessons of the 1857 Sepoy Mutiny, the Indian Government employed over 200,000 native soldiers—a considerable deterrent to Russian designs in Central Asia. These native forces also fought in numerous colonial campaigns against non-white opponents. British authorities employed the

²² For a survey of Victorian naval policy, see Andrew Lambert, *Battleships in Transition: The Creation of the Steam Fleet, 1815-1860* (London, 1984); John F. Beeler, *British Naval Policy in the Gladstone-Disraeli Era 1866-1880* (Stanford, 1997); John Beeler, *Birth of the Battleship: British Capital Ship Design, 1870-1881* (Annapolis, 2001); Arthur Marder, *The Anatomy of British Sea Power: A History of British Naval Policy in the Pre-Dreadnought Era 1880-1905* (New York, 1940).

²³ By the middle of the century Britain maintained over 45,000 troops in India; in the aftermath of the 1857 Mutiny, this number increased to 65,000.

²⁴ For the Victorian army, see Corelli Barnett, *Britain and Her Army 1509-1970* (New York, 1970) 272-325; Edward Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army 1868-1902* (Manchester, 1992); Ian F.W. Beckett, *The Victorians at War* (New York, 2003).

Indian Army in China (1859), New Zealand (1860-1861), Abyssinia (1867), Malaya (1875), Egypt (1882), and the Sudan (1885). The Indian Army thus provided one of the central ironies of the “Age of Empire”: that non-white colonial subjects played an instrumental role in further European hegemony.

By comparison, the white colonists of the self-governing colonies contributed very little to the defense of the empire. British authorities, heavily influenced by the ideas of classical Liberalism, expected the white settler communities to provide for their own local defense as the natural corollary to responsible government. During the 1850s and 1860s they gave an impetus to colonial military developments by withdrawing most imperial garrisons from the self-governing communities.²⁵ However, the lessons of the American Revolution generated a grudging respect for colonial rights, and British authorities avoided any semblance of coerced cooperation for common imperial purposes. For their part, most colonies maintained small permanent forces (typically to operate coastal defense fortifications) and larger formations of poorly trained militia and volunteers. These amateur forces had no legal authority to operate beyond the confines of their respective colonies and could not be counted on for assistance in an imperial conflict. In this context, “imperial defense” in the mid-Victorian period cannot be seen as a collaborative project between the “Mother Country” and white colonists. Relatively immune from foreign threats, the politicians in Ottawa, Sydney, Wellington, and Capetown were quite content to hide behind the protective shield of the Royal Navy in lieu of expensive projects of military preparedness.

Prominent defense theorists of the Victorian period also attached little weight to white colonial assistance in the defense of the empire. In 1867 Sir John Colomb published a highly

²⁵ A policy that angered many colonials, particularly New Zealanders who were involved in ongoing wars against the Maori. Gordon, *The Dominion Partnership in Imperial Defense*, 24-45.

influential treatise in which he identified the Royal Navy, operating from fortified bases throughout the world, as the chief guarantor for imperial security.²⁶ He lambasted colonials for their parochial attitudes towards defense, assuring them that “from whatever quarter of the Empire a cry for help comes—wherever the British flag waves over Englishmen struggling on their own ground for all they hold dear—it is there our home is in danger, there is the rallying-point of forces created for its defence.”²⁷ However, Colomb offered little in the form of guidance apart from a vague hope for a future world system which would “have for its object the welding together of the elements of English war strength into ‘a harmonious whole.’”²⁸ Charles Dilke, the famous advocate of “Greater Britain,” also lent his expertise in colonial affairs to the question of imperial defense. He originally expressed his misgivings that “our colonists would, for any long stretch of time, engage to aid us in our purely European wars. Australia would scarcely find herself deeply interested in the guarantee of Luxembourg, nor Canada in the affairs of Servia (sic).”²⁹ In his later book *Imperial Defence* (1892), Dilke amended his position by suggesting that British authorities create a “General Staff” to coordinate all local colonial governments. Yet the bulk of his work focused on the preservation of naval supremacy and the defense of India by native troops. Though he continued to preach for a united empire, he failed to produce a viable scheme for a true partnership in imperial defense.³⁰

The British government did little to advance the cause of imperial defense cooperation. Throughout the 1870s and 1880s many authorities still regarded the self-governing colonies as

²⁶ John Colomb, *The Protection of our Commerce and Distribution of our Naval Forces* (London, 1867). For his later writings see John Colomb, *The Defence of Great and Greater Britain* (London, 1880); *Imperial Federation: Naval and Military* (London, 1886).

²⁷ Colomb, *The Defence of Great and Greater Britain*, 91.

²⁸ Colomb, *The Defence of Great and Greater Britain*, 167.

²⁹ Charles Dilke, *Greater Britain* (London, 1868), Volume II, 151.

³⁰ Charles Dilke and Spenser Wilkinson, *Imperial Defence* (London, 1892). In 1897 George Clarke advocated some form of agreement between British and colonial politicians for combined action in wartime. He warned that “patriotism, strong race sentiment, and loyalty to a common cause are factors of the utmost importance in war, but they can never compensate for want of preparation.” George Clarke, *Imperial Defence* (London, 1897) xii.

strategic liabilities rather than potential sources of strength. They assured colonial leaders that the best contribution towards mutual security was protecting local naval depots and thus ensuring the free mobility of the Royal Navy. The formation of the Colonial Defence Committee in 1885 reflected this line of strategic thought. Comprising representatives from the Colonial Office, War Office, and Admiralty, the committee served as a government clearing house for surveying the state of colonial defenses throughout the empire. They coordinated with colonial authorities to improve coastal fortifications and harbors against attacks by enemy vessels. But the committee rarely considered the possibility of a large-scale colonial military effort in a future great war scenario. In one general memorandum, the members of the committee explained:

Doubtless a time will come when the increasing strength and resources of the self-governing Colonies will enable them to materially assist the mother country by placing at her disposal for operations in any quarter of the globe bodies of troops formed from the excellent material of strong, self-reliant Colonists, but at present, the development of their own vast territories in time of peace, and the effective protection of them in time of war is undoubtedly the best contribution the Colonies can offer to Imperial Defence.³¹

The document acknowledged that individual colonies might dispatch small contingents of white volunteers for imperial military service, but emphasized the true merit of this assistance “as evidence of that real solidarity on which the greatness of the British Empire must ultimately rest.”³²

Nor did the self-governing colonies make any concerted efforts towards forging a comprehensive defense arrangement for the entire empire. At the 1887 Colonial Conference, the representatives of New Zealand and the Australian states agreed to an annual subsidy of £126,000 towards the Royal Navy. This measure was celebrated by many British officials who considered it “the first step towards a federation for defence which will not only add strength to

³¹ Quoted in Gordon, *Dominion Partnership in Imperial Defense*, 106.

³² *Ibid.*, 106.

the Empire, but tend to find its members in a closer union.”³³ More practical minds recognized the move as providing for local security. The money financed British warships in Australasian waters, and required Admiralty officials to consult colonial governments before moving them outside of the Pacific. Far from producing a coordinated imperial defense plan, the 1887 Colonial Conference demonstrated that the residents of Sydney, Wellington, and Melbourne still thought about imperial defense in purely parochial terms.

Race and Imperial Unity

During the last two decades of the nineteenth century, the relationship between the settler colonies and the idea of “imperial defence” underwent a fundamental transformation. The participation of Australian forces in the Sudan in 1885 triggered widespread interest in the military potential of the white empire. No longer characterized as “millstones around our necks,” many Britons began to see the growing white colonies as familial allies and sources of considerable strength in a future great war.³⁴ This enthusiasm generated a spate of interest in closer imperial relations and was manifest through public discourse, popular literature, and the growth of organizations such as the Imperial Federation League. Most importantly, this campaign for a unified “Greater Britain” often operated outside (and contrary to) the mainstream of official government policy. These examples suggest that the evolution of the imperial defense partnership was as much a cultural phenomenon as a political process.

These developments ran concurrently with growing fears about employing non-white subjects in a broader imperial defense strategy. Prime Minister Salisbury’s boast that India was

³³ The words of Colonial Secretary Sir Henry Holland, quoted in Preston, *Canada and Imperial Defense*, 104. For a discussion of the naval parameters of this conference, see Chapter X.

³⁴ Famous phrase used by Benjamin Disraeli in 1852. Quoted in William Monypenny and George Buckle, eds., *The Life of Benjamin Disraeli Volume 3* (New York, 1912), 385.

“an English barrack in the Oriental Seas from which we may draw any number of troops without paying for them,” went against conventional wisdom about the use of native levies outside of the subcontinent.³⁵ The harsh lessons of the Indian Mutiny of 1857 left lingering doubt about the trustworthiness of the native sepoy. Many Britons worried that using Indian troops against a white enemy would dispel the myth of European supremacy. These dangers accompanied the tacit recognition that large-scale reliance on non-white colonial subjects for imperial defense would require significant political concessions towards self-government.³⁶ As a result, the contemporary vision of “Greater Britain” must be contextualized within late Victorian ideas about race and the colonial “Other.”

The 1878 war scare with Russia highlighted the growing importance of race in ideas about defense planning. In the spring of that year British and Russian diplomatic interests clashed over the “Eastern Question.”³⁷ With Russian armies poised to occupy Constantinople, Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli strengthened the Mediterranean Squadron and ordered 7,500 Indian soldiers to reinforce the British garrison at Malta. Though German arbitration ultimately averted a war, Disraeli’s actions sparked conversation throughout the diplomatic corridors of the continent. For the first time a Western power had deployed non-white colonial troops on European soil against a white opponent.

The war scare with Russia demonstrated that many Britons were uneasy with the idea of employing non-white forces against a European enemy. Though some segments of public

³⁵ Quoted in Michael Howard, *The Continental Commitment* (London, 1989), 17-18.

³⁶ See B.R. Tomlinson, “India and the British Empire, 1880-1947,” *Indian Economic and Social History Journal*, XII (October 1975), 337-380. For an interesting study of the proponents and critics of black African troops in imperial defense, see David Killingray, “The Idea of a British Imperial African Army,” *Journal of African History* 20, 3 (1979), 421-436.

³⁷ In 1878 Russia forced the Ottoman Empire to sign the Treaty of San Stefano which created an autonomous (and Russian occupied) Bulgarian state and granted the Russian Navy access through the Dardanelles. This act went against the provisions of the Congress of Paris (1856). See R.W. Seton, *Disraeli, Gladstone, and the Eastern Question* (London, 1962); Richard Millman, *Britain and the Eastern Question 1875-1878* (Oxford, 1979).

opinion supported the deployment of Indian soldiers, many denounced the policy as contrary to the best interests of the empire.³⁸ Critics feared the subversive influences on native troops if facing a European opponent in battle. One author warned that “the Oriental imagination is vivid and not altogether without a rude logic of its own,” and that Indian sepoys would “begin to fancy that their English leaders and fellow-soldiers might not be more unconquerable than their Russian foes.”³⁹ Another writer concluded:

If these Indian troops were ever to take the field with us one of two things must happen. We would beat the enemy or be beaten by him. In the former, the Indian troops go back and tell their countrymen how easy it is for black soldiers to beat white ones. If the latter, they would go back saying that the English were a decaying race, with no power of fighting left in them, and that the time to drive them to the sea had come.⁴⁰

The *Spectator* harshly compared British policy to that of “decadent Rome,” insisting that “in asking Sepoys to fight for them in a quarrel outside Asia, Englishmen are putting off upon subject races a duty which, if it is obligatory, they ought to perform themselves, and rendering themselves in no small degree dependent upon their own subjects.”⁴¹ The government’s actions also precipitated a vote of censure in Parliament, where the opposition Liberal Party characterized the deployment of “Oriental” troops in Europe as a devious circumvention of the annual Mutiny Act.⁴² A vitriolic debate lasted for three nights, and though ultimately defeated by a vote of 347-246, it served as a stern public reminder of the importance of race in defense planning.

³⁸ For a sample of this supportive opinion, see *Times*, April 18 1878; *Morning Post*, April 18 1878; *Standard*, April 18 1878; *Daily Telegraph*, April 18 1878. Evidently the *Times* became embroiled in the jingoist climate of the metropole as the previous day it had warned readers that “such an employment of Asiatic troops is, on the one hand, open to obvious objection which would have to be seriously considered if the matter should ever pass beyond the region of speculation.” *Times*, April 17 1878.

³⁹ W.R. Greg, “Employment of our Asiatic Forces in European Wars,” *Fortnightly Review*, June 1878, 845.

⁴⁰ “India to the Rescue,” *Examiner*, May 11 1878, 583. For a similar debate, see “India and Our Colonial Empire,” *Westminster Review*, April 1878, 569-598.

⁴¹ “The Despatch of Native Troops to Malta,” *Spectator*, April 20 1878, 494. Canadian nationalist Goldwin Smith worried that the use of native troops would “lend a savage character to European Warfare.” Goldwin Smith, “Eastern Crisis,” *Fortnightly Review*, May 1878, 652.

⁴² The debate lasted three nights (May 20th, 21st, 23rd) The Mutiny Act dated back to the Glorious Revolution and empowered the crown to maintain the British Army only with the annual sanction of Parliament.

Some British residents in India also voiced concern at the deployment of native soldiers outside of the subcontinent. The *Friend of India*, a leading English-language paper, pointed out that native opinion and foreign powers would interpret this move as “a sign of weakness and decay.” “Let us suppose,” it continued, “that Crecy and Poitiers had been won for us by Oriental mercenaries. Should we not look back at them with sorrow and shame?”⁴³ They later complained that Indian troops in Malta assumed a heightened sense of social prestige that threatened the delicate racial fabric upholding white hegemony. The paper reported widespread instances of “rude” and “impertinent” behavior towards Europeans, particularly women. They predicted that further service in Malta would lead towards greater social unrest or “something worse, as the fruits of this to Europe and unsparing use of mischievous flattery.”⁴⁴ The *Times of India* adopted a more restrained approach and insisted “we have no thought of prophesying evil or of suggesting the idea of an Indian Damocles.” However, it worried about local unrest and added “we shall be reluctant to see the departure of many European soldiers from India.”⁴⁵

The case of Indian soldiers in the 1878 war scare stands in stark contrast to the celebrated participation of Australian volunteers in the 1885 Sudan campaign. Earlier that year the death of British General Charles Gordon at the hands of a Sudanese army caused a public shock that reverberated throughout the empire. With angry crowds clamoring for a military response, the government of New South Wales offered to raise a battalion of volunteers for service in the Sudan.⁴⁶ British authorities regarded these amateur soldiers as a hindrance to professional military operations and politely declined further offers from Victoria, South Australia, and New

⁴³ *Friend of India and Statesman* (Calcutta), July 2 1878.

⁴⁴ *Friend of India and Statesman*, August 20 1878.

⁴⁵ *Times of India* (Bombay), April 23 1878.

⁴⁶ A private force of Canadian *voyageurs* also assisted the British Army in ascending the Nile River. For a history of the Australian contingent, see Ken Inglis, *The Rehearsal: Australians at War in the Sudan* (Sydney, 1985).

Zealand.⁴⁷ Nonetheless they recognized their symbolic significance as the first manifestation of white colonial aid in an imperial military campaign. As Governor General Sir Augustus Loftus explained “this first appearance of an Australian contingent with the British troops in actual war operations will have a visual effect in Europe which will prove to Foreign Governments the unity of feeling which exists between Her Majesty’s Subjects in this part of the British Empire.”⁴⁸ The British government accepted the contingent and on March 3 the soldiers boarded a ship in Sydney Harbor amidst thousands of cheering spectators.⁴⁹ An exuberant editorial in the *Sydney Morning Herald* observed their departure with the imperialist claim that “we are showing to the world our willingness to expend not only our treasure but our heart’s blood, in the cause of the dear old land from which we sprang.”⁵⁰

Britons in the metropole celebrated the Australian action as evidence of the underlying solidarity of the empire. The *Times* welcomed the news as “proof that the ties of blood remain strong and real between ourselves and our kinsmen.”⁵¹ The president of the Imperial Federation League, W.E. Forster, maintained that other nations should “recognize that our colonial fellow-countrymen have proved that they are not only willing but longing to take their share in the defence of our common country.”⁵² Even the anti-imperialist Prime Minister William Gladstone, whose cautious policies towards the Sudan contributed to his 1885 electoral defeat, admitted

⁴⁷ Gordon, *The Dominion Partnership in Imperial Defense*, 89.

⁴⁸ CO 201/603 New South Wales Governor General August Loftus to Colonial Secretary Earl of Derby, February 19 1885.

⁴⁹ The *Sydney Morning Herald* noted “rightly or wrongly, the undertaking has commanded the sympathies of the multitude, and a crowning proof of the fact was afforded by the enthusiasm of the tens of thousands who assembled and applauded yesterday.” *Sydney Morning Herald*, March 4 1885.

⁵⁰ *Sydney Morning Herald*, March 2 1885.

⁵¹ *Times*, February 18 1885.

⁵² W.E. Forster, “A Few More Words on Imperial Federation,” *Nineteenth Century*, March 1885, 652.

“they at once bear testimony to the unity of the British Empire, and likewise powerfully tend to draw closely together the bonds of that union.”⁵³

Political cartoons also depicted the white colonial forces as evidence of a new pan-British military relationship. The popular magazine *Punch* ran a series of illustrations that employed racial and familial tropes to depict colonial military aid as an epic rallying of the Anglo-Saxon race in time of emergency. One cartoon entitled “Kith and Kin” featured a young white woman dressed as a Native American scout (representing Canada) reporting to Britannia. The caption assured readers “if I can be of any assistance, command me.” (Figure 2:2)⁵⁴ A subsequent cartoon entitled “My Boys!” featured a proud adult lion watching a long parade of lion cubs in military uniforms and bearing the banners of Canada and Australia—an allusion to the potential of a vast pan-Britannic army. (Figure 2:3)⁵⁵

This imagery emanated from the colonies as well. A Capetown paper printed an illustration of Britannia surrounded by a host of warrior women representing the colonies—an artistic motif that would become a common semiotic representation of “Greater Britain.” (Figure 2:4)⁵⁶ Curiously this group included “India’ who was also represented as a white woman. The brazen caption read “The True Empire League: England Against the Whole World, If Necessary.” In the midst of another war scare with Russia that same summer, the *Queensland Figaro* printed an illustration of tall colonial volunteers guarding a large artillery piece. The caption warned potential adversaries:

There is not a strong hand,
Throughout the Southern Land,
But will draw a sword in dear Old England’s Cause,
Our numbers may be few

⁵³ Hansard Parliamentary Debates, February 20 1885.

⁵⁴ *Punch*, February 21 1885, 87,

⁵⁵ *Punch*, February 28 1885.

⁵⁶ *Lantern* (Capetown), February 28 1885.

But we've loyal hearts and true,
And the Lion's cubs have got the Lion's claws.⁵⁷

The *Sydney Daily Telegraph* echoed this theme, warning Russia that they “would find Englishmen in Australia.”⁵⁸

The idea of “Greater Britain” as a military alliance also filled the pages of popular literature. As I. F. Clarke has demonstrated, the explosion of “invasion novels” in the late Victorian period underscored widespread fears about Great Britain’s perceived weakness in a future conflict with European adversaries.⁵⁹ This genre featured a common motif in which fellow “Anglo-Saxons” rally to the support of an embattled “Mother Country.” For example, William LeQueux’s *The Great War in England in 1897* (1894) depicts a disastrous invasion of the British Isles by France and Russia. Though “Teutonic” Germany eventually enters the war on Britain’s behalf, the nation is saved by white colonial volunteers whose “knowledge of Britain’s danger had been sufficient incentive to induce them to act their parts as Britons.”⁶⁰ LeQueux only briefly alludes to the participation of non-white forces as he concludes that “the fate of England, nay of our vast British Empire was in the hands of those of her stalwart sons of many races who were now wielding valiantly the rifle and the sword.”⁶¹ Another work by James Barnes, *The Unpardonable War* (1904), tells of a short conflict between Great Britain and the United States. After several inconclusive battles at sea, volunteer contingents from throughout the empire assemble to repel an American invasion of Canada. The author (an American) notes with a degree of envy that “the contagion had spread over the red-mapped countries. It was magnificent, as the gathering of a storm is magnificent . . . millions of men and millions of

⁵⁷ *Queensland Figaro*, April 4 1885.

⁵⁸ *Sydney Daily Telegraph*, April 24 1885.

⁵⁹ I.F. Clarke, *Voices Prophesying War: Future Wars 1763-3749* (Oxford, 1966).

⁶⁰ William Le Queux, *The Great War in England in 1897* (London, 1894), 130.

⁶¹ Le Queux, *The Great War in England in 1897*, 303.

money were at her call.”⁶² The story ends on a happy note of Anglo-Saxon solidarity as both countries settle their differences and engage upon a racial alliance of mutual prosperity.

Colonial authors also wrote about the evolution of the imperial relationship. In 1889, former New Zealand Prime Minister Julius Vogel published *Annio Domino 2000; Or, Woman's Destiny*, a science fiction novel about the future British Empire. Vogel duly admitted that one of the chief ideas in his work “is to suggest that the materials are to hand for forming the dominions of Great Britain into a powerful and beneficent empire.”⁶³ He prophesized a federalized “empire of United Britain” with most of the constituent states being ruled by a series of female prime ministers (New Zealand was the first colony to institute women’s suffrage).⁶⁴ The empire was protected by a fleet of “air cruisers” which connected the various “British” states with the new Emperor of Britain. In the storyline, the emperor leads a pan-British army to repel a sudden invasion of Canada by the United States. He is careful to minimize American casualties as he “could not bear the idea of the carnage inflicted on persons speaking the same language and whose fore-fathers were subjects of his own ancestors.”⁶⁵ At the end of the novel, the emperor breaks social conventions by marrying the Duchess of New Zealand—a symbolic measure alluding to the new relationship between Britain and the self-governing colonies. As Vogel concluded, “Britain had nothing to gain from foreign marriage alliances, that she was strong enough without them.”⁶⁶

One of the most dramatic novels of this genre was Louis Tracy’s *The Final War* (1896). In a highly improbable scenario, Germany, France, and Russia launch a surprise invasion of the British Isles. While devising their plans, the military leaders of the Great Powers acknowledge

⁶² James Barnes, *The Unpardonable War* (London, 1904).

⁶³ Julius Vogel, *Annio Domino 2000; Or, Women's Destiny* (London, 1889), 328.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 283.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 296.

the imperative of defeating the British before they can mobilize their imperial reserves. One German Field Marshal angrily declares “these Saxons have the brute instinct of the family. Give them a month and we shall have the Canadian, the African, the Australian, and the Indian fighting side by side in Europe!”⁶⁷ This prophecy comes true in the ensuing narrative. Hastily formed British armies repulse their enemies and then join their colonial brethren, recently assembled from the far reaches of the empire, in an epic invasion of northern France. Another British force secures a fortified city in Northern Germany where its commander plans to wait “till Canada and South Africa and Australia come swimming down the Baltic.”⁶⁸ Germany is ultimately eliminated from the war when the infamous South African filibusterer Leander Star Jameson leads a hand-picked force of fifty Boer scouts (!) and kidnaps Kaiser Wilhelm II from his Berlin palace. In a final twist of Anglo-Saxon solidarity, the United States comes to Britain’s aid and convinces the European powers to sue for peace. Like many other future war novels, the conflict ends with an optimistic promise of Anglo-Saxon manifest destiny and the prospect of a peaceful world. As Tracey concludes, “the Saxon is confident wherever he is: the instinct of his blood tells him that the earth is his homeland, that his spirit must inform the nations and regenerate decaying peoples.”⁶⁹

On at least one occasion the lines between government policy and popular literature intersected. In 1892 the Secretary of the Colonial Defence Committee Sir George Clarke published *The Last Great Naval War* under the ostentatious penname “A. Nelson Seaforth.” A staunch advocate of broader colonial participation in imperial defense, Clarke later admitted “it was my special object to bring the whole Empire into the drama of war.”⁷⁰ His novel told the

⁶⁷ Louis Tracy, *The Final War* (London, 1896), 139.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 147.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 464.

⁷⁰ George Clarke, *My Working Life* (London, 1927), 109.

story of a sudden conflict erupting between Britain and France over colonial rivalry in the Southwest Pacific. Before either side can mobilize their resources, the new Commonwealth of Australia seizes French colonies in the Pacific Ocean, then dispatches a large expeditionary force of 10,000 troops to Europe. Clarke writes that “the enthusiasm in England was unbounded . . . A new impulse had come from across the world—a message and an example from the young and vigorous nation under the Southern Cross.”⁷¹ The conclusion (set in the futuristic 1930s) depicts an orderly and peaceful world policed by a federated commonwealth “of Anglo-Saxon people, whose alliance is the dominating political factor of the present age.”⁷²

Heightened imperial sentiment also provided momentum to extra-political organizations such as the Imperial Federation League to lobby for a more participatory defense arrangement between Britain and the self-governing colonies.⁷³ In 1891 the league commissioned a survey of leading military, naval, and colonial authorities over the best means of producing a structured imperial defense system.⁷⁴ It also passed resolutions calling for a permanent Imperial Council of Defence comprised of British and colonial representatives.⁷⁵ Perhaps its most significant achievement was successfully lobbying the government to convene the 1887 Colonial Conference.⁷⁶ The defense goals of the league even survived as a tangible goal after the demise of political federation. Following the dissolution of the organization in 1893, some members

⁷¹ George Clarke (pseudonym A. Nelson Seaforth), *The Last Great Naval War* (London, 1891), 59.

⁷² Clarke, *The Last Great Naval War*, 116.

⁷³ For a sample of defense-related articles in its monthly journal, see David Wark, “Federation of the British Empire,” *Imperial Federation* (October 1886), 270-272; J.A. Longley, “An Australian Regiment for India,” *Imperial Federation* (October 1887), 209. One prominent member told the Canadian imperialist George Parkin that the participation of colonial troops fighting in the Sudan campaign “is felt and spoken very kindly of in the Old Country, and may it prove to be the beginning of the Consolidation of our Empire.” LAC George Parkin Papers MG 30 D44 Edward Thring to George Parkin, February 18 1885.

⁷⁴ IFL 62783 Replies to Interrogatives Issued by Special Committee, August 1891.

⁷⁵ IFL 62779 Report of Executive Committee to Council, July 1889.

⁷⁶ IFL 62778 Minutes of Special Meeting of the Executive Council, July 17 1886.

formed the Imperial Federation (Defence) Committee, which continued to put out a steady flow of propaganda pamphlets emphasizing the need for closer military relations with the colonies.⁷⁷

This interest resulted in some limited successes at the government level for closer imperial unity in defense matters. In 1897 the colonial premiers reassembled in London for a conference meeting in conjunction with Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. The conference came under the energetic direction of Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain. An avowed imperialist and race patriot, Chamberlain's primary goal at the Colonial Office was to pursue a "closer union" between Britain and the white colonies.⁷⁸ He lectured colonial leaders on the importance of mutual defense as a binding link between the white peoples of the empire. He explained:

We are looking to the Colonies as still children, but rapidly approaching manhood. In the lifetime, perhaps, of some of us, we shall see the population doubled, and certainly in the lifetime of our descendants, there will be great nations where now there are comparatively sparse populations, and to establish in the early days this principle of mutual support and of a truly Imperial patriotism, is a great thing which our Colonial statesmen may well be proud.⁷⁹

As an initial step towards an imperial *Kreigsverein*, Chamberlain urged the adoption of standardized weapons as well as an auspicious unit exchange program between the British Army and colonial forces.⁸⁰

These trends demonstrate that policymakers did not own a monopoly on ideas about the role of colonial peoples in the defense of the empire. Through public discourse, popular

⁷⁷ For a brief discussion of the Imperial Federation (Defence) League, see Andrew Thompson, *Imperial Britain: The Empire in British Politics, 1880-1932* (New York, 2000), 128-131.

⁷⁸ JC 29/2/2/7 Joseph Chamberlain to Canadian Governor General Lord Aberdeen, November 23 1895.

⁷⁹ National Archives. Committee of Imperial Defense Papers (Hereafter cited as CAB) 18/9 "Memorandum" in Proceedings of a Conference Between the Secretary of State for Colonies and the Premiers of the Self-Governing Colonies 1897, 6-8.

⁸⁰ CAB 18/9 "Memorandum" in Proceedings of a Conference Between the Secretary of State for Colonies and the Premiers of the Self-Governing Colonies 1897, 9-10. The unit exchange failed to materialize on a broad scale due to financial reasons, though some colonial militia forces visited the United Kingdom on their own initiative. See Gordon, *Dominion Partnership in Imperial Defense*, 136-139.

literature, and extra-political agitation, educated Britons at home and abroad crafted a vision of “Greater Britain” that prophesied white colonials as the future saviors of the *Pax Britannia*. This cultural trend developed concurrently with growing interest in imperial affairs, and became manifest in the unbounded enthusiasm which greeted the colonial premiers and their military escorts at the 1887 Golden Jubilee, 1897 Diamond Jubilee, and 1902 Coronation of Edward VII. But with the notable exception of the Australian contingent in the Sudan, advocates of “Greater Britain” lacked a substantial example of how imperial (and racial) solidarity could be achieved through common military service. Ultimately it would take a shared crusade on the South African veldt to provide Britons with a physical manifestation of this new imperial defense partnership.

“The Call of the Blood”

The South African War (1899-1902) offered Britons an opportunity for highlighting the potential military resources of “Greater Britain.” Policymakers in London cooperated with their counterparts in the colonies to procure public declarations of support for the war effort. These “manufactured” displays of imperial unity coexisted with widespread patriotism throughout the empire. Thousands of Britons enlisted in the armed forces, and the national presses exuberantly praised the war as an epic rallying of the English-speaking peoples. Imperial elites also made a concerted effort to define the conflict as a “white man’s war.” Unlike the other small wars of empire, this campaign was to be fought against a white enemy amidst a population that was overwhelmingly non-white. The conflict thus permitted a racially exclusive arena for showcasing the imperial military bond of Britons from across the globe.

Colonial involvement in the South African War was largely the product of British Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain. As the diplomatic situation in South Africa teetered towards open hostilities, he scrambled to present the world with an image of imperial solidarity. On July 3 1899 Chamberlain penned a private letter to the Governor General of Canada Lord Minto that warned of the possibility of war and explained that a public declaration of military support by Dominion leaders “would have a great more affect (sic) and might go far to secure a pacific settlement.” He urged Minto to “sound the necessary people” and assess the likelihood of a Canadian offer of troops. Chamberlain also dispatched similar letters to the governors general of Victoria and New South Wales.⁸¹

Chamberlain’s secret machinations met with a cool reaction from colonial authorities. In a series of private exchanges with Minto, Canadian Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier professed his unwavering support for the British cause but pointed out that the small Boer republic hardly constituted an imminent threat to the empire. He insisted:

The present case does not seem to be one, in which England, if there is war, ought to ask us, or even to expect us, to take a part, nor do I believe that it would add to the strength of the Imperial sentiment, to assert at this juncture that the Colonies should assume the burdens of military expenditure, except—which God forbid—in the case of pressing danger.⁸²

Laurier catered to British Canadian opinion by supporting a parliamentary resolution of moral support, but withheld any official offer of military assistance. The leaders of New South Wales and Victoria returned similar responses. They promised that in the event of war their governments would provide facilities for individual Australians to volunteer with British troops

⁸¹ JC 29/2/5/135 Chamberlain to New South Wales Governor General Lord Beachump, July 3 1899. Members of the army expressed similar ideas. In June 1899 Commander in Chief Sir Garnet Wolsey informed the War Office that “it would create an excellent feeling if each of the Australian Colonies, Tasmania, and New Zealand furnished contingents of mounted troops, and that Canada should furnish two battalions of foot.” Sir Garnet Wolsey to Lord Landsdowne, June 8 1899 in Parliamentary Papers 1904 Cd. 1789 *Report of His Majesty’s Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Military Preparations and Other Matters Connected with the War in South Africa*, 262.

⁸² LAC Lord Minto Papers MG 27 II B Volume I Wilfred Laurier to Minto, July 30 1899.

but declined to raise forces for a hypothetical conflict.⁸³ Chamberlain concealed his frustration and thanked the premiers for their moral support but explained “that Her Majesty’s Government are not in need of volunteers as they have of course ample resources for any emergency.”⁸⁴ In a similar display of imperial bravado Minto reminded Laurier that “the question has not been one of assistance to British troops but whether Canada should think it advisable for imperial reasons to offer troops.”⁸⁵ British authorities sent a clear signal that they valued a public symbol of imperial unity via an official commitment more than an amateur band of colonial volunteers.

Some historians have viewed these actions as evidence of a British conspiracy to lure the colonies into an imperial war.⁸⁶ On the surface this interpretation seems plausible. Imperial agents in the colonies—notably British-seconded military commandants and governors general—worked tirelessly to influence colonial policies. However, more recent examinations of the period acknowledge the powerful pro-imperialist sentiments that ultimately forced the hand of the colonial governments.⁸⁷ Politicians who opposed the war were branded as “Pro-Boer,” “un-patriotic,” or more tellingly, “Un-British.” These denunciations were often accompanied by rowdy renditions of “God Save the Queen” and other imperialist songs. From Toronto to Melbourne, the public debate over participation in the South African War became largely a referendum on the British connection.

⁸³ JC 29/2/5/135 Beauchamp to Chamberlain, July 14 1899.

⁸⁴ JC 29/2/5/135 Chamberlain to Beauchamp, July 17 1899.

⁸⁵ JC 9/2/1K/6 Minto to Laurier, July 31 1899.

⁸⁶ C.N. Connolly, “‘Manufacturing Spontaneity’: The Australian Offers of Troops for the Boer War,” *Historical Studies* 18:10 (April 1978), 106-117; Connolly, “Class, Birthplace, Loyalty: Australian Attitudes to the Boer War,” *Historical Studies* 18:70 (October 1978), 210-232; Laurie Field, *The Forgotten War: Australia Involvement in the South African Conflict of 1899-1902* (Melbourne, 1979).

⁸⁷ Craig Wilcox, *Australia’s Boer War: The War in South Africa 1899 to 1902* (Melbourne, 2002); Wilcox, “Looking Back on the South African War,” in Peter Dennis and Jeffrey Grey, (eds.), *The Boer War: Army, Nation, Empire* (Canberra, 2000), 1-13; Carman Miller, *Painting the Map Red: Canada and the South African War 1899-1902* (Montreal, 1993).

In Canada the Conservative press launched a crusade to pressure the Laurier Government into sending a military contingent to South Africa.⁸⁸ Before the outbreak of hostilities the *Daily Mail and Empire* demanded immediate action, insisting that “our people desire to stand shoulder to shoulder with Britain in this crisis.”⁸⁹ Similarly the *Ottawa Citizen* denounced the government’s caution as “a disgrace to Canada.”⁹⁰ The most hyper-jingoistic words came from the pages of the *Montreal Daily Star* under the editorship of prominent imperialist Hugh Graham. Graham worked in conjunction with the leaders of the Canadian Conservative Party to brand Laurier and his Liberal colleagues as effete, unpatriotic, and unduly influenced by Francophone sentiments.⁹¹ For nearly two weeks his paper savaged the government with sensational headlines such as “Canada’s Duty in the Transvaal,” and insisted that Canadians “will not allow moral cowardice in high places nor political exigencies to stand in the way of their manifest duty to the Mother Country.”⁹² The paper published lists of national, provincial, and local politicians who supported the war and warned readers in a headline that “If the Government Does Not Act the People Will.”⁹³ Perhaps the most inflammatory language occurred on October 11th when the paper alluded to the dangers of Laurier’s French proclivities under the simple (and reactionary) banner “Our Country Must Be Kept British.”⁹⁴ Though touching on domestic political controversies, these incidents allude to the importance of “Britishness” in defining Canada’s loyal participation in the war.

⁸⁸ Carman Miller demonstrates that anti-war sentiment existed beyond the confines of French Canadians. However he admits “no one can deny that there was a strident pro-war party confined largely to English Canada, and virtually unanimous opposition and indifference to Canadian participation in French Canada.” *Painting the Map Red*, 16.

⁸⁹ *Daily Mail and Empire* (Toronto), October 9 1899.

⁹⁰ *Ottawa Citizen*, October 5 1899.

⁹¹ Graham wrote to Charles Tupper, the leader of the Canadian Conservative Party, that “surely something more than passing resolutions should be done here to strengthen the British Government’s hand. If idea commends itself to you say to the proper person that you know one in Canada who would gladly offer to provide for dependents killed or wounded as would likely induce raising Canadian regiment for Transvaal if needed.” LAC Charles Tupper Papers Vol. 19 Hugh Graham to Charles Tupper, August 25 1899.

⁹² *Daily Star* (Montreal), October 3 1899.

⁹³ *Daily Star*, October 4 1899; *Daily Star*, October 9 1899.

⁹⁴ *Daily Star*, October 11 1899.

The response from many Canadian Liberals was to follow a cautious path that protected colonial autonomy while professing their undying devotion to the empire. Laurier explained his intentions to one supporter as being “quite willing to do our share as a part of the British Empire,” but explained “we should not countenance any suggestion of Jingo Bellowing.” Canada, as a young nation, had “no reason to play soldiering.”⁹⁵ Many leading Liberal papers supported this position. In the weeks leading up to the war the influential Toronto *Globe* agreed with the government’s decision to postpone a decision.⁹⁶ Yet after the start of hostilities the *Globe* joined other jingoistic voices with sensational headlines such as “Soldiers of the Queen!”⁹⁷ The *Halifax Chronicle* also supported the government’s position, and added “the only people who are casting doubts upon the loyalty of Canada and the solidarity of the empire are the jingoist howlers of the Canadian Tory press.”⁹⁸ Even the *Manitoba Free Press*, the mouthpiece of Prairie Liberalism, supported the dispatch of a contingent once the war began, though it admitted that its only useful purpose would be as a symbolic demonstration of imperial loyalty.⁹⁹

The Australian presses also reflected strong public commitment to the war effort. The Melbourne *Argus* maintained that Victoria’s failure to send a contingent “would be a national scandal.”¹⁰⁰ The paper argued that participation in the war would demonstrate imperial loyalty while also facilitating a keen sense of colonial nationalism. It explained that “the Australian-born in the colony are proud that they are of the British race, but there is a feeling that to

⁹⁵ LAC Wilfrid Laurier Papers Series A Volume 127, Laurier to John Cameron, October 14 1897. Cameron was the Liberal editor of the *Advertiser* (London, Ontario).

⁹⁶ *Globe* (Toronto), October 7 1899.

⁹⁷ *Globe*, October 14 1899; *Globe*, October 16 1899. Also see the *Star* (Toronto), October 12 1899. One resident of Montreal wrote Laurier that he was a lifelong Liberal but that his loyalty to the Queen came first. Laurier responded that the government would follow the advice of British authorities but sternly added “I feel a little aggrieved and mortified by the fact that an old Liberal like yourself, Liberal by convictions and tradition as well, should have so hastily placed credence in Tory slanders.” LAC Laurier Papers Vol. 127 Thomas Reid to Laurier, October 13 1899; Laurier to Reid, October 15 1899.

⁹⁸ *Halifax Chronicle*, October 11 1899.

⁹⁹ *Manitoba Free Press*, October 12 1899.

¹⁰⁰ *Argus* (Melbourne), October 4 1899. For the debates in the individual colonial parliaments, see Field, *The Forgotten War*, 1-34.

establish our claim our men must stand shoulder to shoulder with the British forces under the flag on the nation's battle-fields, where manhood is tested and empire is lost or won."¹⁰¹ Other papers put forward similar appeals. The *Brisbane Courier* assured readers that "Queensland may prove her fitness for the larger responsibilities of nationhood by giving those of her sons who will fight for the flag in South Africa a hearty and unanimous 'God Speed.'"¹⁰² The Hobart *Mercury* insisted troops should be sent not for military purposes but "because they deem the occasion to be one on which the unity of the Empire should be shown."¹⁰³ Another periodical concluded "if the need was pressing, we believe ninety-nine out of every hundred militiamen in the country would volunteer for service."¹⁰⁴ One of Australia's most influential publications, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, made a direct connection between support of the war and the cultural/racial connections of "Britishness." It urged Australians to make a decision "not on the local issue in South Africa . . . but in favour of demonstrating on this suitable opportunity the solidarity of Australia with the Empire, and with that race-system with which our best interests are indissolubly bound up."¹⁰⁵

In New Zealand the decision to send a military contingent to South Africa was marked by a noticeable lack of public debate or controversy.¹⁰⁶ Many New Zealanders took their cue from Prime Minister Richard Seddon who viewed military support for the "Mother Country" as an obligation of imperial citizenship. In Parliament Seddon characterized the British colonists in

¹⁰¹ *Argus*, October 6 1899.

¹⁰² *Brisbane Courier*, October 6 1899.

¹⁰³ *Mercury* (Hobart), October 11 1899. The *Western Australian* (Perth) questioned the wisdom of fighting "against a people which are likely shortly to become our fellow colonists," but admitted "it is certain that the spectacle of her children coming to the aid of England, whatever the cause, will be a valuable lesson to other nations. Were the assistance of her dependences really required were there serious danger threatening the Empire, there can be no doubt what the response would be." *Western Australian*, October 16 1899.

¹⁰⁴ *Melbourne Punch*, September 28 1899, 299.

¹⁰⁵ *Sydney Morning Herald*, October 21 1899.

¹⁰⁶ For an analysis of muted opposition to the war in New Zealand, see Malcome McKinnon, "Opposition to the War in New Zealand" and Megan Hutching, "New Zealand Women's Opposition to the South African War," in John Crawford and Ian McGibbon, (eds.), *One Flag, One Queen, One Tongue: New Zealand, the British Empire, and the South African War, 1899-1902* (Auckland, 2003), 28-57.

the Transvaal as part “of our own race and kindred” and insisted “we must, and I say it is our duty as Englishmen, strengthen and support that course.”¹⁰⁷ The Dominion press largely upheld this message. The influential *Evening Post* (Wellington) expressed some sympathy with the Boer position, but ultimately decided that “the Imperial idea has been accepted here, and it is our clear duty to be loyal to it.”¹⁰⁸ They also admitted that the call to send colonial troops was “representative of public opinion.”¹⁰⁹ The *Auckland Star* called their troops “the most convincing form in which at this moment we can prove that our loyal affection for the Old Land and our sense of Imperial obligation are no empty boasts.”¹¹⁰ The *Otago Witness* adopted a more aggressive tone and suggested that the six members of the House of Representatives who voted against participation should renounce their British citizenship.¹¹¹

Ultimately all of the self-governing colonies except Newfoundland contributed soldiers to the war effort. Their announcements prompted a flood of eager volunteers, forcing colonial authorities to curtail enlistments to meet the War Office’s stated requirements for small formations.¹¹² Over the next few weeks, approximately 1,300 Australians, 1,000 Canadians, and 250 New Zealanders embarked for the Cape to join the thousands of South African colonials already engaged in the fighting.¹¹³ By the cessation of hostilities in 1902, over 80,000 colonial troops had fought alongside the British Army in South Africa.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁷ New Zealand Parliamentary Debates Volume 110 September 28 1899, 75-76.

¹⁰⁸ *Evening Post* (Wellington), September 27 1899.

¹⁰⁹ *Evening Post*, September 29 1899.

¹¹⁰ *Auckland Star*, September 29 1899.

¹¹¹ *Otago Witness*, October 5 1899.

¹¹² See Wilcox, *Australia’s Boer War*, Chapter 2. Also see Carmen Miller, *Painting the Map Red*.

¹¹³ Wilcox, *Australia’s Boer War*, 22.

¹¹⁴ Approximately 50,000 South Africans, 16,414 Australians, 6,513 New Zealanders, 6,500 Canadians, and 500 white volunteers from India and Ceylon. This does not take into account the thousands of colonials who travelled to South Africa and enrolled in the South African Constabulary. John Featherstone Stirling, *The Colonials in South Africa, 1899-1902* (London, 1907), x.

The declarations of colonial military support produced the intended image of imperial solidarity. Throughout Britain the jingoist press praised their fellow Britons for assuming “the tradition of Brotherhood of Empire.”¹¹⁵ A contributor to the *National Review* insisted “hardly any words can be found to do full justice to the joyous spontaneity, the uncalculating lavishness of soul which marked this Colonial Rally.”¹¹⁶ The *Pall Mall Gazette* proclaimed that “the man in the street is proud of the Empire’s sons who have come from afar to fight shoulder to shoulder with the English, Scotch, and Irish against the enemies of the Union Jack.”¹¹⁷ It contrasted the patriotic volunteerism of white colonials with armies of Imperial Rome which “came as mercenaries or slaves.”¹¹⁸ The *Illustrated London News* ran numerous prints of the colonial troops in their khaki uniforms. They decried the anti-British rhetoric of the continental presses, insisting “the good opinion of our own kinsmen the world over, of the Colonists who are quitting their hearths in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, to fight the battle for England, is more to us than the jealousies that influence what the foreigner is pleased to call in his judicial mind.”¹¹⁹ The *Melbourne Punch* celebrated Australian contributions with an illustrated collage of colonial and British soldiers fighting together on the African veldt. At the top of the picture was Britannia telephoning an Australian woman asking to “spare me a few more soldiers boys.” The colonial woman proudly responded “A few? Look through the telectroscope and see for yourself.”¹²⁰

Other voices alluded to the growing military power of “Greater Britain.” Defense expert George Clarke pointed out that the small colonial contingents were “only an earnest of what

¹¹⁵ John Oldcastle, “Our Loyal Colonies,” *English Illustrated Magazine*, December 1899, 281.

¹¹⁶ Talbot Baines, “Some Consequences of the Imperial Rally,” *National Review*, May 1900, 459-460.

¹¹⁷ *Pall Mall Gazette*, January 18 1900.

¹¹⁸ The paper explained “they never came to offer the willing service of the volunteer and asking in the common tongue for leave to share in the peril which threatens the dominion of the common race.” *Pall Mall Gazette*, December 9 1899.

¹¹⁹ *Illustrated London News*, January 6 1900, 2.

¹²⁰ *Melbourne Punch*, December 2 1899, 624.

could and would become available in the event of a real imperial emergency.”¹²¹ A writer for *Cornhill Magazine* with extensive travel experience in the colonies proclaimed that colonial cooperation would result in an imperial relationship “so intimate that no sane coalition in the world will lightly meddle in its family affairs.”¹²² The American journalist Poultney Bigelow proclaimed Australia as a powerful new ally in the British family of nations. He explained “the Anglo-Saxon has here a nursery of his own flesh and blood which is growing stronger everyday.”¹²³ Once again *Punch* captured the essence of prevailing imperial sentiments in an illustrated cartoon that championed this rallying of the dutiful self-governing colonies. They portrayed a strong and defiant Britannia surrounded by a host of exuberant female warriors. The triumphalist caption simply read “Under One Flag.”¹²⁴

“The White Man’s War”

The celebration of imperial “Britishness” must be contrasted with popular attitudes about non-white participation in the war. At the same time that Chamberlain endeavored to concoct a display of white imperial solidarity, offers of military assistance flowed in from India and the Crown Colonies. Lord Lugard proposed raising a contingent of West African Hausas for imperial service and several Indian potentates volunteered to lead their native armies to South Africa.¹²⁵ The most tempting option was when the Viceroy of India, Lord Curzon, made available the vast resources of the Indian Army.¹²⁶ But government officials resolutely refused

¹²¹ George Clarke, “Wanted: An Imperial Conference,” *Empire Review*, February 1901, 11.

¹²² “Australian Memories,” *Cornhill Magazine*, April 1900, 515.

¹²³ Poultney Bigelow, *Children of the Nations: A Study of Colonization and its Problems* (New York, 1901), 323.

¹²⁴ *Punch*, October 18 1899, 182.

¹²⁵ David Killingray, “The Idea of a British Imperial African Army,” *Journal of African History* 20, 3 (1979), 422; David Omissi, “India: Some Perceptions of Race and Empire,” in *The Impact of the South African War*, (eds.), David Omissi and Andrew Thompson (New York, 2002), 216.

¹²⁶ Omissi, “India: Some Perceptions of Race and Empire,” 215.

to employ non-white forces against the Boers.¹²⁷ As the Secretary of State for India Lord George Hamilton explained, this was “a racial quarrel . . . between our race and the Dutchmen. It was therefore . . . inadvisable that there should be sent over a race other than the white race.”¹²⁸

This exclusive racial policy extended to non-white populations in the self-governing colonies. In January 1900 Lord Minto forwarded to the Colonial Office an offer from the leaders of the Six Nations of Canada to send a detachment of Native American scouts to South Africa.¹²⁹ The following month he received a notice from the Japanese residents of Vancouver to form a volunteer battalion for imperial service.¹³⁰ Both offers were declined by the British government.¹³¹ A similar incident occurred in New Zealand when Governor General Lord Ranfurly reported the Maoris’ intentions to contribute to the war effort. Despite receiving some support from the colonial government, the Maoris were prevented from enlisting in the all-white New Zealand contingents.¹³² Chamberlain expressed private sympathy for their cause that belied his primary goal of forging a public image of white solidarity. He insisted “if they had sent them without asking and mixed them up with others no one would have known the difference. But we promised that this should be a white man’s war.”¹³³ Later in the war imperial authorities declined another Maori proposal to serve garrison duty in India to relieve British soldiers for active service in South Africa. A Colonial Office representative privately noted that “they are merely children and though they might fight as well as any coloured troops officered by

¹²⁷ As early as July 28 1899, First Lord of the Treasury Arthur Balfour assured Parliament that “there is no intention of using any but white troops.” Hansard. House of Commons Debate, July 28 1899, Vol. 75 c683.

¹²⁸ Quoted in Omissi, “India: Some Perceptions of Race and Empire,” 216.

¹²⁹ CO 42/875 Minto to Chamberlain, January 11 1900.

¹³⁰ CO 42/875 Minto to Chamberlain, February 21 1900.

¹³¹ CO 42/879 Undersecretary of the War Office E. Fleetwood Wilson to Undersecretary of the Colonial Office, March 13 1900.

¹³² CO 209/260 New Zealand Governor General Lord Ranfurly to Chamberlain, April 11 1900.

¹³³ Quoted in Ashley Gould, “Different Race, Same Queen: Maori and the War” in *One Flag, One Queen, One Tongue: New Zealand, the British Empire, and the South African War*, 121.

Englishmen, they would soon become great trouble in a garrison.”¹³⁴ This rejection is all the more significant considering the Colonial Office’s secret endeavors to create a force for Indian garrison duty drawn from Boer prisoners of war held in Ceylon!¹³⁵

Even in South Africa few opportunities existed for non-white subjects to participate in the war in a public capacity. From the beginning of the conflict both sides issued strict orders forbidding the arming of black Africans.¹³⁶ Instead thousands of Africans were pressed into service as labourers and other non-combatant positions. Other ethnic minorities faced similar discrimination. A young attorney named Mohandas Gandhi offered to raise a contingent from the educated, middle-class Indian population in Natal. He hoped that military service to the empire would enable Indians to embrace a broader imperial community—a community heretofore dominated by a racially-inspired sense of “Britishness.” As he explained, “it would be a link to bind closer still the different parts of the mighty Empire of which we are all proud.”¹³⁷ Colonial authorities reluctantly accepted these non-white volunteers but confined their service to the non-combatant Indian Ambulance Corps. Presumably the image of Anglo-Saxon brotherhood in arms would not be tarnished by the marginalized participation of non-white personnel in purely service positions.

Public opinion in Britain widely supported this policy of racial exclusion. Many Britons viewed the conflict in South Africa as a litmus test for continued British hegemony in the

¹³⁴ CO 209/244 Minute on Maori Troops February 1902. The notation was by the Undersecretary of the Colonial Office Earl of Onslow, who was a former Governor General of the Dominion.

¹³⁵ JC 11/16/3 George Hamilton to Chamberlain, August 23 1901. Hamilton declined to use repatriated prisoners alongside non-white troops. He insisted “India is the last vile corpus in the world upon which to make any such experiment. The idea that we are a people who can afford to treat our vanquished enemies so chivalrously or with whom the latter have become so rapidly assimilated that they are content to take arms in our defence, is one that would be quite unintelligible to the native mind.” JC 11/16/4 Hamilton to Chamberlain, September 4 1901.

¹³⁶ Peter Warwick, *Black People and the South African War, 1899-1902* (Cambridge, 1983), 16-18.

¹³⁷ *India*, December 22 1899. *India* was the official periodical of the British Committee of the Indian National Congress. Also see Goolam Vahed, “‘African Gandhi’: The South African War and the Limits of Imperial Identity,” *Historia*, (May 2000), 201-219.

empire. In his history of the war, novelist and veteran Sir Arthur Conan Doyle applauded the “offers” of assistance from non-white colonials, but he admitted ““this was to be a white man’s war, and if the British could not work out their own salvation then it were well that empire should pass from such a race.”¹³⁸ The editors of the *Spectator* defended the government’s strict position and insisted “we refused to avail ourselves of this unique instrument of power.”¹³⁹ Even in the bleakest hours of “Black Week,” the *Daily Mail* steadfastly refused to print any suggestion that the British Army employ Indian sepoy.¹⁴⁰

Ultimately the notion of this conflict as a “white man’s war” was a myth perpetuated by imperial elites. As Peter Warwick and Bill Nasson have shown, the exigencies of war forced both sides to employ thousands of black Africans as armed combatants.¹⁴¹ Yet their contributions went unacknowledged in the public celebration of the war. Instead Britons constructed an image of the war as a crucial moment in the evolution of imperial consciousness in which the white, English-speaking populations of the empire rallied to its defense. White colonial participation in the war (and concurrent restrictions on non-white participation) became a bond of solidarity that helped to define the contours of imperial “Britishness.” These developments led one British officer in Australia after the war to declare triumphantly that the “war in South Africa has demonstrated the fact that the defence of the British Empire in the future is not a question to be left wholly to the people of the British Isles, but that the English-speaking people throughout the Empire are willing to take their share in its defence.”¹⁴²

¹³⁸ Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Great Boer War* (London, 1902), 73.

¹³⁹ *Spectator*, December 16 1899, 904. *Spectator*, April 17 1900, 472.

¹⁴⁰ *Daily Mail*, December 16 1899.

¹⁴¹ Warwick, *Black People in the South African War*; Bill Nasson, “Black Communities in Natal and the Cape,” in *The Impact of the South African War*, 38-55; Nasson, *Abraham Esau’s War: A Black South African War in the Cape 1899-1902* (Cambridge, 2003).

¹⁴² CAB 11/121 Major General George French to New South Wales Premier William Lyne, in memorandum “Major General French’s Defence Scheme.”

CONCLUSION

In the aftermath of the South African War, the radical economic theorist J.A. Hobson published a scathing critique of British imperialism. Though primarily concerned with the connection between capitalism and imperial expansion, Hobson leveled charges against Britain's dangerous reliance on non-white soldiers to protect the empire. He compared these practices of employing "foreign mercenary armies" to that of the late Roman Empire, and asserted that "it has proved one of the most perilous devices of parasitism."¹⁴³ He made it clear that these policies represented "a degradation of Western States and a possible *débâcle* of Western civilization."¹⁴⁴ Linking his fears to his broader indictment of capitalism, he prophesied a period in which "Africa and Asia may furnish huge cock-pits for the struggles of black and yellow armies representing the imperialist rivalries of Christendom." By comparison, Hobson outlined a clear demarcation between "New Imperialism" and colonial emigration to the self-governing colonies. He saw the British-populated settler communities as the "natural overflow of nationality."¹⁴⁵ Moreover, he viewed the greater political and military unity of "free British States" as "eminently desirable" as it would lead to greater stability and peace for the future of the world order.¹⁴⁶ And despite his aversion to imperialism, Hobson admitted the cultural appeal of a racially homogenous "Greater Britain." He concluded that "the genuineness and the warmth of the attachment to the British Empire and to the Mother Country are indisputable . . . it is quite evident that their sentiments are such as would lead them voluntarily to expend both

¹⁴³ J.A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study*, introduction by Philip Siegelman (Ann Arbor, 1965), 136.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 138.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 332.

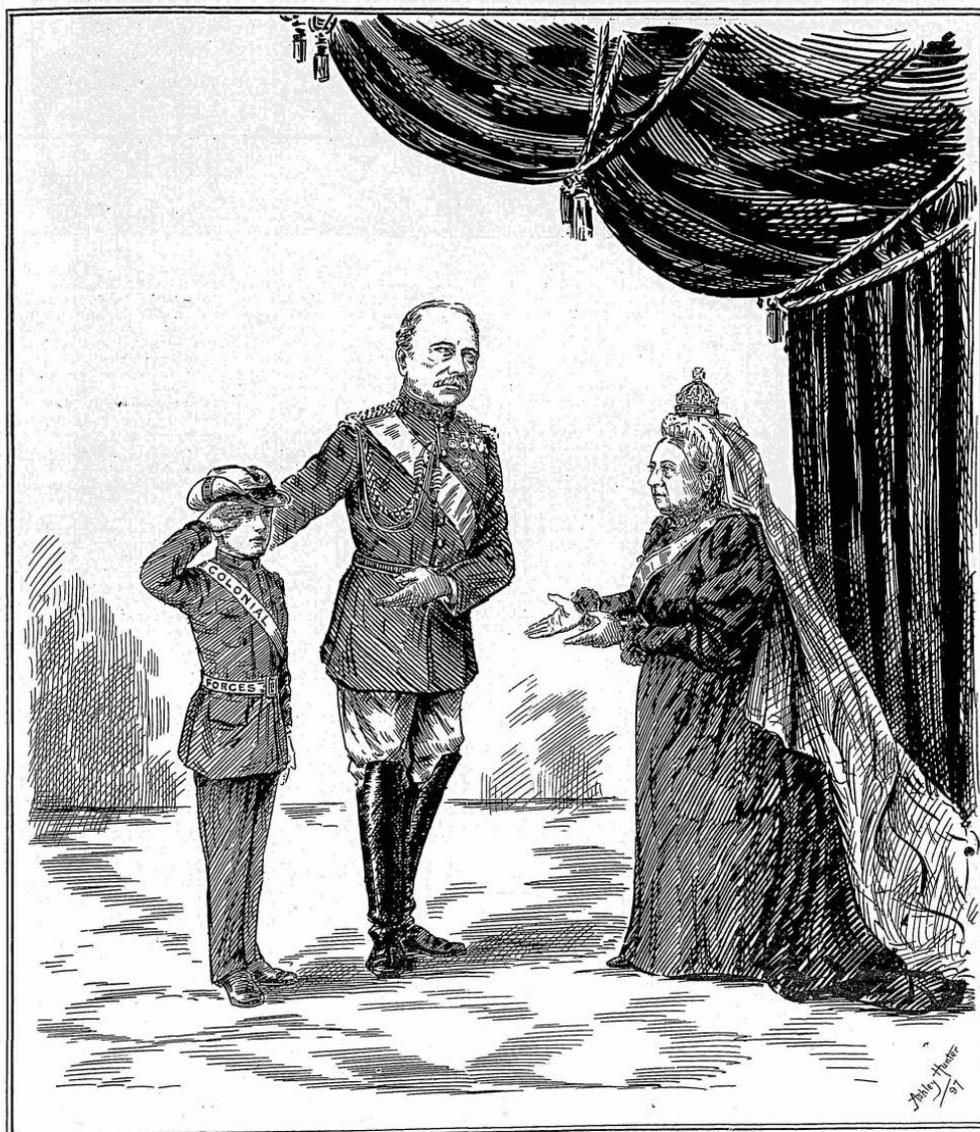
blood and money where they thought the existence, the safety, or even the honour of the Empire was at stake.”¹⁴⁷

Hobson’s ideas about imperialism were largely out of tune with a British populace who took exceptional pride in their empire. But his attitudes towards non-whites and a racially homogenous “Greater Britain” reflected a broader worldview. As mid-Victorian ideas about race and culture hardened into the binary categories of “European” and “Other,” many Britons expressed concern over the employment of native soldiers. Conversely, widespread sentiments of pan-British unity pushed government authorities to pursue more cooperative defense arrangements with the self-governing colonies. These ideas became manifest in the South African War, when “whiteness” and “Britishness” became a mandatory qualification for publicly sharing the burden of imperial defence. The war (and its concurrent focus on imperial solidarity) became a rallying point for increasing the sentimental, political, and military bonds between the “Mother Country” and her vast diaspora of oversea Britons. “The Empire, hitherto little more than an aspiration,” declared Austen Chamberlain, the son of the Colonial Secretary, “has become a reality, and a great step forward has been made towards the closer union which are founded our best hopes for the future of the British race.”¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 335.

¹⁴⁸ Quoted in Max Beloff, *Imperial Sunset Vol I: Britain’s Liberal Empire 1897-1921* (New York, 1970), 77.

FIGURE 2:1¹



THE NEW RECRUIT.

Gen. W—y : "He's only a youngster at present, your Majesty, but he bids fair to grow into a 'First-class Fighting Man.'"

(Lord Wolseley inspected the Colonial Troops at Chelsea Barracks, and expressed himself much pleased with their appearance and drill.)

¹ *New Zealand Graphic and Ladies Magazine*, July 10 1897, 65.

FIGURE 2:2¹

FEBRUARY 21, 1885.]

PUNCH, OR THE LONDON CHARIVARI.

87



KITH AND KIN.

Canada (to Britannia). "IF I CAN BE OF ANY ASSISTANCE, COMMAND ME." (And so say Victoria and New South Wales.)

¹ *Punch*, February 21 1885, 87.

FIGURE 2:3¹



¹ *Punch*, February 28 1885.

FIGURE 2:4²



THE TRUE EMPIRE LEAGUE.

“England against the whole World”—if necessary.

² *The Lantern* (Cape Town), February 28 1885.

Chapter Three

Better Men, Better Britons: Colonial Soldiers, Masculinity, and the South African War

Above everything, the Colonial soldier is perfectly natural, perfectly self-possessed wherever he may be placed. He stands on his right as a man, he has carried his own way in the world, he has had space in which to grow and develop, he has been thrown on his own resources, he glories in the tradition of the stock from which he has sprung, and whether he finds himself in a tight corner on a kopje or face to face with a royal princess, he shows no sign of being anything but composed.

Violet Brooke-Hunt, *The Daily Mail*, 1902¹

At daybreak on February 6th 1900, twenty soldiers of the Western Australian contingent found themselves surrounded by several hundred Boers on a small *kopje* outside of Colesberg, South Africa. One trooper was shot through the head and another mortally wounded but the outnumbered soldiers refused repeated calls to surrender. The beleaguered Australians bravely held their ground and denied their enemy a valuable strategic position. As darkness fell the Australians quietly escaped in pairs and returned to the safety of British lines. Their feat became one of many instances in which white colonial soldiers were celebrated as the true heroes of the empire. British and colonial newspapers echoed with praise for the masculine and martial qualities of these hardened frontier warriors. *Fun* magazine printed a poem dedicated to the Western Australians that concluded “Our Blood runs riot in our veins/fierce patriotic flame will

¹ *Daily Mail*, August 25 1902.

burn/at deeds heroic of our men, when back to the Bush Life we return.”² In his history of the war, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle complimented the soldiers of the Commonwealth. He exclaimed:

They proved one and for all that amid all the scattered nations who came from the same home there is not one with a more fiery courage and higher sense of martial duty than the men from the great island continent . . . throughout the entire African army there was nothing but the utmost admiration for the dash and spirit of the hard-riding, straight-shooting sons of Australia and New Zealand.³

These accolades pleased one proud Western Australian veteran, who recalled the “manly resolution and unfailing devotion” of his time in South Africa. He concluded “those who went, and those who will yet go to fight for the honor of the Empire will come back better men.”⁴

Scholars frequently characterize the *fin de siècle* as a period of wavering doubt about the state of British manhood. The prophetic warnings of Rudyard Kipling’s “Recessional” poem foretold of national degeneration and imperial decline, foreshadowing his later challenge for “Anglo-Saxons” to “take up the White Man’s Burden.”⁵ Much of Kipling’s fear focused on the perceived physical deficiencies in British society. The highly publicized investigations of Charles Booth, Benjamin Roundtree, and other social reformers illuminated the appalling physical conditions of Britain’s industrial working class.⁶ These deficiencies became strikingly apparent during recruiting drives for the South African War. One famous study found that out of 11,000 recruits in the industrial slums of Manchester, only 2,000 met the minimum physical standards for army enlistment.⁷ The upper classes faced a more insidious threat: the ongoing feminization of British men.⁸ In the wake of scandalous events such as Oscar Wilde’s trial for

² *Fun*, May 22 1900, 163.

³ Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Great Boer War* (London, 1902), 244.

⁴ Letter to the editor in *Western Australian* (Perth) April 17 1902.

⁵ Rudyard Kipling, *Recessional* (New York, 1898).

⁶ Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People* (London, 1889); Benjamin Seebohm Rowntree. *Poverty: A Study of Town Life* (London, 1901); Jack London, *People of the Abyss* (New York, 1903).

⁷ George Shee, “The Deterioration in the National Physique” *Nineteenth Century*, May 1903, 802.

⁸ See, for example, Jonathan Rutherford, *Forever England: Reflections on Race, Masculinity, and Empire* (London, 1997).

“gross indecency,” many social critics condemned the comforts of Victorian society that placed a premium on bourgeois leisure, gentlemanly pursuits, and domestic environments for young boys. These fears contributed to common characterizations of metropolitan British culture as increasingly effeminate, cowardly, and physically and morally degenerate.

British male society confronted these challenges by embracing a new masculine persona that was inherently courageous, aggressive, and strong. In his groundbreaking study *The Image of Man*, George Mosse identifies the emergence of a new “normative masculinity” in Europe that combined older aristocratic notions of bravery, honor, and chivalry with bourgeois values such as order, restraint, and morality. Masculinity had to be expressed outwardly through physical fitness (an allusion to natural beauty) and proper attire. This self-identification encapsulated the “aesthetic appeal” of the male body and offered a visual representation of a new man—a possible solution for the challenges of modernity.⁹ Most importantly, this notion of masculinity was wedded with nationalism and patriotism to create an acceptable and idealized middle-class identity based around loyalty to the state. Soldiering in particular became connected with masculinity in the public imagination in a way that championed the virtues of military service and manly adventure in the empire. As Jessica Meyer explains, “in history, fiction, children’s literature, on the lecture circuit and in newspapers, the soldier was celebrated as the epitome of both the imperial ideal and appropriate masculinity.”¹⁰

With the advent of the South African War, the white colonial soldier became a visual and highly identifiable symbol for this conception of masculinity. In his study of British culture during the war, Steve Attridge argues that the “the soldier is an archetype, symbolizing race and

⁹ George Mosse, *The Image of Man* (Oxford, 1996), 180. Also see Michael Roper and John Tosh eds., *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain Since 1800* (London, 1991); Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire, and the Imagining of Masculinity* (New York, 1994).

¹⁰ Jessica Meyer, *Men of War: Masculinity and the First World War in Britain* (London, 2009), 5. Also see Michael Adams, *The Great Adventure: Male Desire and the Coming of World War I* (Bloomington, 1990).

nation.”¹¹ His work shows how the British public began to view the army’s shortcomings during the war as indicative of degenerating national culture and manhood. Yet Attridge neglects to consider the imperial dimension of Britain and its armed forces. As British identity became implicitly linked to the empire, and in particular the white self-governing communities, colonial actions, characteristics, and images played an increasingly important role in defining “Britishness.” White colonists evoked an image that was both familial and strikingly different. They often considered themselves part of a broader British world linked by sentimental, cultural, and racial ties, and in many cases were born in Great Britain. At the same time, colonial male Britons carried in the public eye a rugged masculinity and frontier ethos largely absent in the “Mother Country.” Popular perceptions of white colonial troops as “rough riders” or “Bushmen” served to reinforce common stereotypes of Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and South Africa as frontier communities promoting a lifestyle of hard work, virtue, and manly endeavor. Faced with cultural fears of racial degradation and emasculation, Britons began to identify white colonial soldiers as icons of masculine prowess and martial skill.

This chapter presents the white colonial soldier as an example of late-Victorian idealized masculinity. The participation of colonial troops in the South African War elicited popular acclamations about imperial unity and the underlying solidarity of the British race. But it also illuminated the shortcomings of the “Mother Country” over the perceived virtues of the settler communities. This theme was reinforced in the British public sphere in a wide variety of venues including the presses, advertisements, boys’ literature, and popular discourse. And though primarily aimed at a metropolitan audience, this image was embraced by colonial audiences who incorporated the frontier person into their ongoing construction of national identity. Canadians,

¹¹ Steve Attridge, *Nationalism, Imperialism, and Identity in Late Victorian Culture: Civil and Military Worlds* (London, 2003), 6.

New Zealanders, and in particular Australians relished the opportunity to depict their societies as masculine “Better Britains,” embracing the full cultural heritage of their ancestors but flourishing through the improved environments of their frontier societies. Most telling, however, is the manner in which predominately middle-class male Britons embraced this mythologized image as part of a social escape from bourgeois domesticity. The war witnessed an unprecedented rate of enlistment by the middle class and gentry in privately raised forces which emulated the uniform and frontier persona of the white colonial soldier. In this broader cultural context, the colonial frontier trooper was a powerful symbol for harmonizing issues of imperialism, identity, and masculinity.¹²

The Colonial Trooper

Late nineteenth century middle-class constructions of masculinity placed a premium on the perceived physical virtues of the colonial lifestyle. In what John Tosh describes as the “flight from domesticity,” many British middle and upper-class males sought a release from the constrictive values and conventions of marriage, home life, and bourgeois ideologies. In their place, they yearned for adventure in the far-flung empire—a homosocial environment constituting a veritable litmus test for manly expression. Life in the empire offered immunity from the degenerative influences of the metropole and enabled men to achieve a greater degree of physical and moral development.¹³ This perceived difference was particularly stark in part due to the alleged “athleticism” of white colonial males. Travelogues and popular accounts frequently remarked on the physical attributes of young colonials, while visiting sports teams

¹² Phrase used by James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, 466.

¹³ John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven, 1999), 170-194.

from the Dominions attracted considerable interest amongst British fans.¹⁴ Most importantly, contemporaries viewed this youthful exuberance as a dominant feature of colonial manhood throughout adult life. Despite the best efforts of Victorian public school instructors to inculcate the necessities of physical fitness in British youth, they continued to worry about the feminizing influences of domesticity and pleasurable pursuits. By comparison, the colonial male “is fond of all athletic sports; but it is not till leaving school that his athleticism becomes fully pronounced, thus reversing the order observed in England.”¹⁵

Within this imperial context, the white colonial frontiersman served as an appealing model of British masculinity. As Robert MacDonald has shown, Britons applied the iconic image of the American cowboy to their own imperial frontiers, crafting a manly romantic hero who combined bourgeois values of self-independence and virtue with a natural ruggedness noticeably absent in metropolitan Britain.¹⁶ South African scouts, New Zealand cattlemen, Canadian mounted police, and Australian “Bushmen” represented inherently “British” frontiersmen who explored and protected the disparate corners of the empire. Moreover, the small wars of ‘New Imperialism’ allowed colonial men to display their martial prowess through amateur military service. Indeed, frontier warriors produced some of the quintessential imperial heroes of the Age of Empire. Men such as Robert Baden-Powell, Frederick Selous, and Fred

¹⁴ For a survey of the Anglo-Australian sporting bond, see Daryl Adair, John Nauright, and Murray Phillips, “Playing Fields Through to Battlefields: The Development of Australian Sporting Manhood in its Imperial Context, 1850-1918” *Journal of Australian Studies* 56 (1998), 51-68; Richard Casman, “Symbols of Imperial Unity: Anglo-Australian Cricketers, 1877-1900,” in *The Cultural Bond: Sport, Empire, Society*, ed. J.A. Mangan (London, 1992), 129-141. This interest in imperial athleticism attracted attention in the colonies as well. While visiting Sydney in 1899, Richard Jebb recorded “The progress of the Australian cricket team in England is the absorbing interest of the man in the street. The success of their champion over ‘all England’ and in most of the provincial matches evokes a good deal of derision which finds its expression over in the newspapers. The local porter is an ardent ‘sportsman’ and asks me ‘what is it that England can beat us at? Marbles perhaps?” Jebb Papers ICS 116/B/2/3 Jebb Diary, July 30 1899.

¹⁵ Richard Twopenny, *Town Life in Australia* (London, 1883), 88.

¹⁶ MacDonald, 34.

Burnham carved out their reputations by scouting and raiding with colonial forces during the First and Second Matabele Wars (1893-1894, 1896-1897). Their well-chronicled exploits in the British press supplied eager readers with living examples of the fictional creations of Rudyard Kipling, Rider Haggard, and G.A. Henty.¹⁷

The war in South Africa provided a unique opportunity to utilize the frontiersmen of the empire in a common imperial military enterprise. As Chapter Two demonstrates, British policymakers originally envisioned colonial participation in the war as a symbol of imperial unity rather than a significant military addition to the strength of the empire. The War Office clearly expected a short war fought against an inferior opponent, and placed little stock in the fighting capabilities of the colonies' amateur soldiers. Policymakers initially notified the colonial governments in Canada, New Zealand, and the Australian states that they would incorporate only small token formations into British Army battalions. They further demonstrated their ignorance about the nature of warfare on the vast South African veldt by requesting that the colonies dispatch infantry, with cavalry "least serviceable."¹⁸

Early military setbacks at the hands of the Boers convinced many Britons that a successful prosecution of this conflict would require a new type of warrior with extensive colonial experience. Mobilizing almost the whole of their available manpower, Boer citizen-soldiers rapidly invaded northern Natal and besieged isolated British garrisons at Kimberley, Mafeking, and Ladysmith. Efforts in early December to relieve these positions by General Buller's British expeditionary force resulted in a series of unmitigated military disasters that became known as "Black Week." Highly mobile Boer armies ambushed and repulsed

¹⁷ MacDonald, *Sons of the Empire*, 62-70. Baden-Powell wrote the popular *The Matabele Campaign* (London, 1897). The fact that Baden-Powell served in South Africa on military assignment, and Burnham was an American citizen, suggests that conventional wisdom did not require one to be born in the colonies in order to profit from its vitality.

¹⁸ Stephen Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry 1880-1918* (London, 2008), 83.

British columns at Stormberg, Colenso, and Magersfontein with heavy loss of life.¹⁹ For days newspapers at home and in the colonies bemoaned these shocking reverses, conjuring images of an imperial crisis similar to the dark memories of the Indian Mutiny in 1857.²⁰ Exacerbating this national humiliation was a growing admiration for the amateur Boer soldiers as little more than untrained farmers espousing the virtues of “Muscular Christianity.” *Morning Post* correspondent Winston Churchill, himself a prisoner of the Boers, described his captors as “thousands of independent riflemen, thinking for themselves, possessed of beautiful weapons, led with skill, living as they rode without commissariat or transport or ammunition column, moving like the wind, and supported by iron constitutions and a stern, hard, Old Testament God who should surely smite the Amalekite hip and thigh.”²¹ Churchill, like many contemporaries, viewed the Boers as a worthy adversary possessing many masculine qualities lacking in the metropole.

Public opinion quickly turned to the white colonial volunteers as Britain’s answer to the Boer method of warfare. Much of this public interest in colonial fighting capabilities was transformed into widespread admonition of government military policy. The War Office’s earlier efforts to employ only small formations of colonial infantry garnered significant criticism in the national press. Newspaper offices were flooded with angry letters condemning the War Office’s restrictions on colonial soldiers as a shameful neglect of imperial security. These critics characterized the colonials as “cool, and skilled marksmen,” and insisted “surely it is better to learn from our own loyal and patriotic colonists than to gain bitter experience from disasters.”²² They favored the use of colonial mounted soldiers who “are better able to meet the wily Boer on

¹⁹ Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War* (New York, 1979), 252-259.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 257-258.

²¹ Frederick Woods (eds), *Young Winston’s Wars: Original Dispatches of Winston S. Churchill War Correspondent, 1897-1900* (New York, 1972), 177. It should be noted that Churchill, ever the self-promoter, failed to mention that he was captured by a band of Italian volunteers fighting for the Boer cause.

²² *Times*, January 9 1900; *Pall Mall Gazette*, December 20 1899.

equal terms than the soldier whose experiences of life has been limited to conditions obtaining in the old country.”²³ A letter to the editor in the *Daily Mail* on December 13 castigated the War Office for limiting the number of colonial volunteers, noting “professional jealousy or prejudice ought not to be allowed to intervene in a matter affecting the prestige of the Empire.”²⁴ Three days later, the paper reported receiving over 15,000 responses from the public urging the government to accept additional mounted soldiers from the self-governing colonies.²⁵ They explained that the war “was between Regular and Irregular troops” and insisted “before we can conquer the Boers we have, as ever in the past, to conquer our own War Office. Its obstinacy will cost many lives.”²⁶ Other critics commented on the “hoity-toity” character of the War Office and demanded that government officials accept all colonial volunteers without provision, so long as they were white soldiers.²⁷ Even in Parliament, the government faced a barrage of disapproval from critics, one of whom insisted that “in Canada, Australia, and elsewhere there are valuable recruiting grounds untapped, and in the present patriotic state in which the inhabitants of the Empire are, I think use might be made of them.”²⁸

The disastrous reverses of “Black Week” prompted the War Office to alter its policy towards colonial troops. Abandoning its earlier intransigence, it quickly accepted fresh offers of mounted contingents from Canada, New Zealand, and the Australian states, and hastened to raise additional colonial forces within South Africa.²⁹ In addition, it requested that colonial governments create new irregular formations for the express purpose of countering the Boer superiority in mounted infantry. Whereas previous colonial forces were largely drawn from

²³ *Morning Post*, December 18 1899.

²⁴ *Daily Mail*, December 13 1899.

²⁵ *Daily Mail*, December 16 1899.

²⁶ *Daily Mail*, December 28 1899.

²⁷ Leo Amery to Sir Valentine Chirol, December 11 1899, in John Barnes and David Nicholson (eds) *The Leo Amery Diaries 1896-1929* (London, 1980), 31; *Spectator*, December 16 1899, 1904.

²⁸ Words of Captain C.W. Norton, in *Hansard Parliamentary Debates 4th Series Vol. 78*, February 12 1900, 1295.

²⁹ Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War*, 25-30.

middle-class communities with prior experience in the militia, these new “Bushmen” contingents were recruited from the ranch hands, sheep-herders, and rural farmers of the empire. In Canada, Scottish-born railroad tycoon Lord Strathcona personally financed a regiment drawn from the mounted police, prospectors, and cowboys of the Dominion’s Prairie Provinces. He encountered no shortage of able volunteers, and was forced to turn away many eager applicants (including an alleged offer from 600 “Arizona Stockmen).”³⁰ From Australia and New Zealand came a series of “Bushmen” and “Rough Rider” contingents. The volunteers for these new formations far exceeded the number of available positions.³¹ In New South Wales a surge of interest forced authorities to select 500 troops from over 2,000 eager young men.³² South Australian officials received twelve times the number of necessary applications.³³ And despite repeated warnings that volunteers “must certify as to their Bush experience” and that “no duffers need apply,” many middle-class men in the colonies used their financial influence to secure a position in the “Bushmen” corps.³⁴

These new colonial contingents came to symbolize much of the romantic panache of war on the veldt. British society deemed these frontier citizen-soldiers as manly, aggressive, physically superior, and better suited to the mobile conditions of modern warfare. Most importantly, the “Bushman” evoked a considerable degree of respect from bourgeois society for

³⁰ Clearly moved, he admitted “it was clear proof of what the Empire can expect in time of trouble. One could have had the assistance of thousands of the finest horsemen in the United States.” Quoted in Beckles Willson, *The Life of Lord Strathcona and Mount Royal Volume II* (Boston, 1915), 347.

³¹ This was not the case for raising money to fund the “Bushmen” corps. Authorities originally hoped that public subscription would provide the approximately £100 necessary to dispatch a horseman to South Africa, but in most cases the colonial governments had to contribute towards this expense. Wilcox, *Australia’s Boer War*, 31-35.

³² Laurie Field, *The Forgotten War: Australia and the Boer War* (Melbourne, 1995), 132.

³³ Wilcox, *Australia and the Boer War*, 32.

³⁴ *Queanbeyan Age* (New South Wales), January 27 1900; *Sydney Mail*, January 20 1900; *Evening Post* (Wellington), February 2 1900; Wilcox 32. In New Zealand, the government required that applicants “be of sound health, good riding, and knowledge of shooting.” Yet as Colin McGeorge has shown, the New Zealand force “was extremely representative of the male population, and it included men from all walks of life and from all over the colony.” *Evening Post*, January 19 1900; Colin McGeorge, “The Social and Geographical Composition of the New Zealand Contingents,” in *One Flag, One Queen, One Tongue: New Zealand, the British Empire, and the South African War, 1899-1902*. John Crawford and Ian McGibbon (eds) (Auckland, 2003), 116.

eschewing proper military discipline and drill in favor of a perceived colonial “school of experiences.”³⁵ This perplexing transference of class identities transformed the ostensibly lower-class, irreverent colonial trooper into a symbol of rugged masculinity. As one illustrated paper noted of the Bushman, “his nomadic life and changing circumstances have hardened his muscles, quickened his intellect, inured him to privation, made himself reliant, a good shot, an intrepid horseman.”³⁶ Another writer even compared the colonials to the mythical Centaurs—half horse and half man.³⁷ One telling account from a British traveler told a story of a young boy from the prairie who aspired to join a Canadian regiment but faced the opposition of professional military officers who doubted his ability as a horseman. The boy overcame adversity and asserted his manhood by mounting an unbroken horse and proving that he could ride anything “except a porcupine.” The same (dubious) account celebrated another Canadian who forced a medical examiner to accept his application at gunpoint. The author concluded “these men can shoot with both hands, from the back of a horse at full gallop, and heaven help the Boer if they ever get a chance at them in pursuit!”³⁸ Even the rabidly anti-war *Manchester Guardian* became fascinated with this masculine frontier archetype. In a lengthy treatment on the character of Australian troopers, the paper applauded the:

Vigour and efflorescence of youth, the colonial, democratic and free of manner and tongue, give the sons of the old country the go-by. There is an abundance and variety in their ‘cuss words’ creditable to their imagination and invention. They startle rather than shock you, for they mostly swear good-naturedly—without malice—from exuberance of spirits.

³⁵ Arnold White, “Britannia and the Colonist,” *National Review*, June 1900, 637.

³⁶ *Graphic*, April 21 1900 (528)

³⁷ Herbert Wilson, *With the Flag to Pretoria* (London, 1900), 100.

³⁸ C. Hanbury-Williams, “Riders of the Plains” *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, April 20, 1900, 477, 480, 482.

Though deploring the war itself, the paper admitted “there is no better material and no better soldiers in any service than the Antipodean Rampers.”³⁹

Colonial populations eagerly embraced the frontier image and incorporated it into their fledgling national identities. In her recent work on the “racial categorization” of British non-white colonial troops, Heather Streets explains the manner in which Sikh and Gurkha soldiers often cooperated with their European-constructed martial identity because of its privileged position in the structured racial hierarchy.⁴⁰ Similarly, the white soldiers of the self-governing colonies promoted their image as masculine frontiersmen as part of an identity construction that afforded an elevated status among the white leadership of the empire. Indeed, they became co-partners in forging and disseminating this message to British and colonial societies alike.

Colonial war correspondents produced a steady stream of articles praising the courageous exploits of “their” troops, and depicted British officers as incompetent (foreshadowing the anti-British trope of First World War discourse). A New Zealand journalist characterized the colonial soldier as “a plucky rider, and a marvelous flying shot . . . he will fight any man, even if he is ‘as big as a house,’” and insisted he “will drink anything from ‘post and rails’ down to turpentine, pain-killer, and boiling water.”⁴¹ A South African writer assured readers that “for endurance, pluck, and horsemanship they at least equal the Boer.”⁴² One proud Canadian told an American journalist that “Two hundred Canadians could do more than ten thousand English—and do it easy. The English are not in our class as fighters!”⁴³

³⁹ *Manchester Guardian*, October 2 1900.

⁴⁰ Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race, and Masculinity in Imperial Culture* (Manchester, 2004).

⁴¹ *New Zealand Daily Graphic and Ladies Journal*, January 20 1900, 112.

⁴² *Cape Illustrated Magazine*, January 1 1900, 603.

⁴³ Quoted in Philip Buckner, “Canada” in *The Impact of the South African War*, David Omissi and Andrew Thompson eds. (London, 2002), 242.

This confluence of frontier masculinity, imperial patriotism, and national identity had its most enduring impact in Australia. Australians typically look to the First World War sacrifices of the ANZAC Corps at Gallipoli for evidence of shared national traits that were inherently anti-authoritarian and hyper-masculine.⁴⁴ Yet as other scholars point out, the “Bushmen” contingents of the Boer War did much to solidify the image of the tough Australian soldier as the Commonwealth’s unique contribution to imperial defense.⁴⁵ Australian journalists in South Africa maintained a steady stream of correspondence about the manly qualities of the Australian soldier-hero. Famed author and poet Andrew “Banjo” Paterson—a progenitor of the Bushman image through famous literary works such *The Man from Snowy River*—served as Australia’s favorite war correspondent, writing for the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the *Sydney Mail*, and the *Melbourne Age*. His descriptive articles promoted an image of a strong, intelligent, and resourceful Australian soldier able to overcome adversity in the field through sheer prowess and natural instinct.⁴⁶ Another well-known Australian correspondent, Arthur “Smiles” Hales, wrote for the London *Daily News*, providing an influential colonial perspective for British readership. He took great pride in his fellow colonial’s martial accomplishments, once claiming “I would sooner have called myself an Australian commoner than the son of any peer in any other land under high heaven.”⁴⁷ Other correspondents returned from the war and composed popular books regarding their experiences in South Africa. Frank Wilkinson of the Sydney *Daily Telegraph*, *Adelaide Advertiser*, and *Melbourne Age* spent so much time with Australian cavalry forces that he produced two popular works on the subject, one of which was written for a

⁴⁴ Graham Seal, *Inventing ANZAC: The Digger and National Mythology* (Queensland, 2004), 3; Dudley McCarthy, *Gallipoli to the Somme: The Story of C.E.W. Bean* (London, 1983). ANZAC stands for Australian and New Zealand Army Corps.

⁴⁵ Luke Trainor, “Building Nations: Australia and New Zealand,” in *The Impact of the South African War*, 254.

⁴⁶ Shirley Walker, “‘A Man Never Knows His Luck in South Africa’: Some Australian Literary Myths from the Boer War,” *English in Africa*, Vol. 12, October 1985, 1-20.

⁴⁷ *Daily News*, May 10 1900.

British audience. As he explained, “the general public not only *wants* to know what Australia has done for the Empire in this crisis, but is anxious to give her a full measure of credit for it.”⁴⁸

One cartoon in the *Melbourne Punch* even suggested that Australia send a contingent of “Bush Rangers” to kidnap Transvaal President Paul Krueger.⁴⁹ (Figure 3:1) It is significant that this cartoon featured armor-clad bandits (reminiscent of the notorious Irish-Australian Ned Kelly) in pursuit of an avowedly imperial effort.

Of course not all contemporaries embraced this discourse of the masculine frontier soldier. Some travelers in the empire complained that this colonial hyperbole might lead to misunderstanding between the “Mother Country” and colonies.⁵⁰ One British newspaper warned British and colonial journalists alike to employ “modesty and sobriety of language” in their accounts.⁵¹ Another person penned a worried letter to the editor and urged “a true standard of criticism, and the most complimentary, should be exactly the same for Englishmen and for Colonials.” In this way, he explained, colonials would not think “you are ‘talking through your hat.’”⁵² A few colonials agreed. A writer for the *Sydney Mail* admitted that the Australian soldier was “a good rider and a good shot” but noted that the true “Bushmen” remained an obscure backcountry figure who rarely ventured into the world of imperial politics.⁵³ Another colonial journalist offered a more critical appraisal of Australia’s “frontier” persona, pointing out that “not one Australian in ten has any but an extremely vague and more or less inaccurate idea of the central portion of the continent.”⁵⁴ Even before the war began, one Australian complained

⁴⁸ Frank Wilkinson, *Australia at the Front: A Colonial View of the Boer War* (London, 1901) vi; Wilkinson, *Australian Cavalry: The New South Wales Lancer Regiment and the First Australian Horse* (Sydney, 1901).

⁴⁹ *Melbourne Punch*, June 21 1900, 605.

⁵⁰ Jebb Papers, Jebb Diary B/2/20 May 13 1900; C. Frederick Hamilton, “The Englishman in Canada,” *The National Review*, September 1907, 116-127.

⁵¹ *The Outlook*, December 1900, 562.

⁵² *Spectator*, August 25 1900, 236.

⁵³ *Sydney Mail*, February 3 1900.

⁵⁴ *The Australasian* (Melbourne), February 10 1900, 314.

to his British guest that the local militia “ridicule discipline and merely love to pose to amateur photographs as types of the Australian soldier.”⁵⁵

Despite this emphasis on the alleged superiority of the Bushman soldier, most colonial writers were at pains to emphasize the “British” connection that unified all white imperial forces in South Africa. New and emerging colonial identities did not seek to replace “Britishness” within their new imagined communities. Instead they built upon popular ideas about the empire and frontier to craft a new designation as “Better Britons.” In 1902, former New South Wales trooper John H. M. Abbott penned a highly popular book, *Tommy Cornstalk*, a detailed comparison of a stereotyped Australian trooper to Great Britain’s iconic “Tommy Atkins.” Abbott employed all manner of hyperbole in describing the physical and intellectual superiority of colonial men. Nonetheless, he accounted for this advantage as a result of placing Britons in enhanced natural surroundings. As he explained, “His is not a new race—it is rather the renewed, reinvigorated reproduction of an older one.”⁵⁶ A New Zealand newspaper editor agreed, celebrating the virtues of colonial life while admitting “at the back of it all there is that same indomitable pluck that is characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon race the world over.”⁵⁷ Even the archetype “Bush Poet” Andrew Paterson acknowledged Australia’s proper place in the Empire. In his 1910 work *On the Wool Track* he assured readers that “Australia is as purely British as the people of Great Britain—perhaps more so.”⁵⁸ One illustrated paper reflected the beliefs of many contemporaries regarding white colonials and “Britishness.” While extolling their frontier virtues, it admitted that “our colonial troops rightly claim as their birthright the

⁵⁵ British Library. Edward Hutton Papers 50095 David Miller to Edward Hutton, March 30 1897.

⁵⁶ John H.M. Abbot, *Tommy Cornstalk* (London, 1902), 4. An English editor agreed, noting “Tommy Cornstalk is the Australian counterpart of his English Cousin Atkins, though Atkins is of the Nineteenth Century, Cornstalk of the Twentieth.” H.C. Gutteridge, “Tommy Atkins’s Cousin” *Bookman*, June 1902, 102.

⁵⁷ *Mataura Ensign* (NZ), January 20 1900.

⁵⁸ Cited in Joy Damousi, “War and Commemoration: The Responsibility of Empire” in *Australia’s Empire: Oxford History of the British Empire Companion Series*, eds., Dereyck Schruder and Stuard Ward (Oxford, 2008), 295.

name of British Soldier. Whether they be Canadians, Australians, or Africanders, they swear the same oath of allegiance to Her Majesty; all serve one Queen, one people, and are prepared to fight for the defence of the empire and the maintenance of our sovereign rights.”⁵⁹

The Colonial Trooper as Popular Symbol

The rising popularity of the iconic frontier soldier figure in the opening weeks of the South African War became manifest through public celebrations, consumer items, and widespread media attention. Indeed, Great Britain underwent a temporary craze for images of colonial soldiers. Illustrated periodicals, a mainstay of lower middle-class and working-class readership, ran numerous prints of Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand contingents embarking from colonial ports or drilling in South Africa. These illustrated editions identified for readers the various colonial units, insisting that the troops had assumed “the tradition of Brotherhood in Empire.”⁶⁰ The New South Wales Lancers, by virtue of their presence in London at the outbreak of hostilities, attracted a disproportionate amount of interest. Thousands of spectators turned out to see the lancers ride to Tilbury Station, affording “the mob and others who are burning with a warlike fever an excellent opportunity to shout themselves hoarse.”⁶¹ One illustrated paper explained that the “Lancers will be especially watched by people in this country. We seem to know them best . . . their march through the city marked a step on our Imperial road. For the first time in our history, the Empire gave a practical demonstration of its military solidarity in the Home of our Race.”⁶² A popular boys’ periodical later recalled that the

⁵⁹ *Big Budget*, November 11 1899, 350.

⁶⁰ *English Illustrated Magazine*, December 1899, 281; *Illustrated London Times*, January 6 1900; *Graphic*, December 2, 9, 16, 30 1899; *Illustrated London News*, October 14 1899.

⁶¹ *Illustrated Police News*, October 14 1899.

⁶² *Graphic*, January 13 1900, 42.

Australian cavalymen were “giants” and that “they were to be escorted by police, and so that the City policeman should not appear insignificant when compared with the ‘cornstalk’ all the forty picked men and sergeants were at least 6 feet 2 inches in height.”⁶³ Colonial soldiers also appeared on the stage. During the early months of the war, the corridors of London music halls echoed with patriotic showtunes dedicated to colonial soldiers and applauding the new imperial relationship. One popular number included the refrain:

Songs of Old Eng’ (sic) and marching off to war
With our brave Colonials from a distant shore;
We’re going to fight and conquer as we’ve done before
For the love of our country and our Queen.

Another performance featured actors dressed in the imminently recognizable uniforms of the New South Wales Lancers leading the audience in “Rule Britannia,” “God Save the Queen,” and other patriotic songs.⁶⁴

The colonial soldier also served as a popular image in the explosion of late nineteenth century advertising campaigns. Thomas Richards has demonstrated how the semiotics of commodity advertising reflected popular themes of empire and national identity.⁶⁵ Similarly Brent Shannon has shown how middle-class male consumers were targeted with a specific appeal to late Victorian ideas about masculinity.⁶⁶ Not surprisingly, these advertising strategies found a ready audience in the jingoistic and imperialistic climate surrounding the South African War. Some advertisements attempted to capture the themes of imperial and racial solidarity with

⁶³ *Chums*, March 21 1900, 493.

⁶⁴ *The Era*, October 21 1899; *Newcastle Weekly Courant*, October 28 1899; *Manchester Times*, November 17 1899. Music Halls became a staple of working-class and lower middle-class expression. See Penny Summerfield, “Patriotism and Empire: Music-Hall Entertainment, 1870-1914,” in John M. MacKenzie, *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester, 1986), 17-48; Dave Russell, “We Carved our Way to Glory: the British Soldier in Music Hall Song and Sketch” in John M. MacKenzie, *Popular Imperialism and the Military, 1850-1950* (Manchester, 1992), 50-79; Paula Krebs, *Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire: Public Discourse and the Boer War* (Cambridge, 1999).

⁶⁵ Thomas Richards. *Commodity Culture of Victorian England* (Stanford, 1991), 88.

⁶⁶ Brent Shannon, “Refashioning Men: Fashion, Masculinity, and the Cultivation of the Male Consumer in Britain 1860-1914,” *Victorian Studies* 46, No. 4 (Summer 2004), 597-630.

images of British and white colonial cooperation. A prominent cigarette ad featured two mounted soldiers, one British and one colonial (discernible to the public by their uniform and headdress) sharing a cigarette. The caption encompassed both themes of military sacrifice and the unity of the empire: “Ogden’s ‘Guinea Gold’ Cigarette is a ‘Welcome Comrade’”⁶⁷ (Figure 3:2) A later cigarette ad highlighted the participation of colonial mounted forces in Field Marshal Frederick Roberts’ much-celebrated invasion of the Transvaal. It capitalized on colonial popularity by depicting several rugged colonial troopers resting on a kopje with the caption “On the road to Pretoria: A Well-Earned Rest.”⁶⁸ (Figure 3:3) Similarly, a Bovril ad showed a British soldier greeting a returning patrol of colonial mounted troops, the “eyes and ears” of a combined imperial endeavor.⁶⁹ (Figure 3:4)

Other advertisements celebrated the colonial soldier as an emblem of frontier masculinity. Perhaps the most iconic symbol of the colonial soldier in metropolitan advertising was Tortoise Shell Tobacco’s “bearded trooper.” Cast in a slouch hat and military uniform, and sporting a bushy beard, this recurring image contained the masculine themes of martial prowess, physical fitness, and romanticism that made colonial soldier images so popular.⁷⁰ (Figure 3:5) The fact that British volunteer contingents, modeling themselves on their colonial counterparts, soon adopted this image for their own use points to the influence of these overseas Britons in identifying and articulating ideas of masculinity.⁷¹ A similar iconography proliferated in the colonies as well. A popular advertisement in the Antipodes featured a galloping colonial horseman. Accompanied by a testimonial from a New South Wales trooper, the caption

⁶⁷ *Illustrated London News*, February 10 1900, 198.

⁶⁸ *Illustrated London News*, April 21 1900, 557.

⁶⁹ *Illustrated London News*, October 13 1900, 539.

⁷⁰ See for example *Illustrated London News*, June 30 1900, 889.

⁷¹ For example, London papers soon began depicting the City Imperial Volunteers (CIV), who modeled themselves on the colonial troopers, with the same graphic as the “bearded trooper” but with a clear “CIV” stamp on the hat.

informed its readers that “the Colonial Contingent and Dr. Tibble’s Vi-Cocoa Gives You New Life & Vigour.”⁷² (Figure 3:6) This connection between imperial military service and a nutritional supplement appeared to enhance the physical and moral strength of its users. Even late in the war, when the romanticism of mounted warfare had deteriorated into guerilla attacks and concentration camps, the image of the colonial soldier contained a romantic appeal to British consumers. An advertisement for a London bicycle store depicted a flashy colonial Bushman peddling a bicycle.⁷³ This curious amalgamation of empire and frontier masculinity (the soldier) with bourgeois domesticity (the bicycle) served to reflect the growing popularity of the settler communities in the formation of British consciousness.

Many adults attempted to convey this vision of colonial masculinity to the young boys of Britain. Foreshadowing the later messages of the Boy Scout movement, they championed the alleged merits of frontier life and pointed to the colonial soldier as a paragon of physical development. Much of this material emanated from popular boys’ literature.⁷⁴ The result of improving literacy rates in the aftermath of the 1870 and 1880 Education Acts, boys’ periodicals addressed a growing market desire for affordable entertainment with adventurous themes. Authors such as Rudyard Kipling, G.A. Henty, and Rider Haggard produced “penny novels” which typically featured soldiers, sailors, buccaneers, and frontiersmen in an assortment of exotic locales. Paramount in this literature was an attempt on the part of some members of society to promote frontier virtues of self-reliance and manly prowess against the “effete” influences of bourgeois domesticity. As a contemporary biographer explained of G.A. Henty, he

⁷² *Melbourne Punch*, June 5 1900, 7; *New Zealand Graphic and Ladies Journal*, October 13 1900, 667.

⁷³ *Daily Mail*, March 19 1902, 8.

⁷⁴ Considerable work has been done on the connections between boys literature and empire. For example: Jeffrey Richards (ed) *Imperialism and Juvenile Literature* (Manchester, 1989); Joseph Bristow, *Empire Boys: Adventure in a Man’s World* (New York, 1991); Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire, and the Imaging of Masculinity* (New York, 1994).

“had a horror of a lad who displayed any weak emotion and shrank from shedding blood, or winced at any encounter.”⁷⁵

But it was the penny and half-penny weekly periodicals that captured the greatest attention of young Britons of the middle and working classes. Popular weeklies such as the *Boys Own Paper* (with a 1900 circulation of over 400,000) included colorful illustrations and serialized stories that promised weekly adventure and escape from the urban (and domestic) confines of the metropole.⁷⁶ The authors and editors of boys’ literature sought to capitalize on the immense popularity of colonial soldiers.⁷⁷ Common scenarios included the combination of a British middle-class hero with a white colonial sidekick—the classic literary motif of male bonding on an imperial campaign. For example, a short story in *Union Jack* pitted British soldier Frank Fraser with Australian scout “Tasmanian Dick” in a bewildering series of adventures battling Arab mystics, lions, snakes, and the Boers.⁷⁸ Another storyline in *Boys of England* ran a serial throughout 1900 that included popular character “Jack Harkaway” leading a collection of courageous “war scouts” including an Australian, New Zealander, and Canadian nicknamed “Cornstalk,” “Maori,” and “Kannuck.”⁷⁹ These serialized stories appeared as books with the alluring titles of *Jack Harkaway’s War Scouts* (1900) and *Jack Harkaway in the Transvaal*.⁸⁰ Penny novels such as Henty’s *The Young Colonists* (1885), *With Buller in Natal* (1901), and

⁷⁵ George Manville Fenn, cited in Jeffrey Richards, “Popular Imperialism and the Image of the Army in Juvenile Literature,” in *Popular Imperialism and the Military*, John M. MacKenzie (ed.) (Manchester, 1992), 83.

⁷⁶ Andrew Thompson, *Empire Strikes Back?: The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (New York, 2005), 103.

⁷⁷ One editor of a popular boys’ periodical admitted “I don’t suppose there ever was a year when English boys took so much interest in our Navy and Army, or discussed sailors and soldiers so often. Needless to say, old “Chums” is not going to be left out of a discussion like that. Trust us, gentlemen, to be as much on the spot as ever we were, and being on the spot, to recognize your interest in naval and military affairs.” *Chums*, No. 362 Vol. VII, August 16 1902, 827.

⁷⁸ *Union Jack*, Vol. XV No. 334 1901.

⁷⁹ See for example *Boys of England*, February 16 1900, 237; *Boys of England*, February 23 1900, 269.

⁸⁰ Bracebridge Hemyng. *Jack Harkaway’s War Scouts* (London: Edwin J. Brett, 1900); Bracebridge Hemyng, *Jack Harkaway in the Transvaal; or Fighting for the Flag* (London, 1900).

With Roberts to Pretoria (1902) mirrored this approach.⁸¹ In *With Buller in Natal* a young colonial (a gentleman's son, the reader is assured) commands a troop of mounted soldiers in harrowing military operations against the Boers. Similarly, *With Roberts to Pretoria* features a recent British émigré to the veldt who learns the values of marksmanship, scouting, and self-reliance—important skills that pay substantial dividends upon the outbreak of war. In both stories the metropolitan middle-class hero demonstrates his manliness through military cooperation with hardened colonial frontiersmen.

Other stories merely satisfied consumer demand for increased coverage of colonial soldiers. Army veteran F.S. Brereton and Australian journalist A.G. Hales drew on their own wartime experiences to produce thrilling fictional stories of colonial irregulars such as *Driscoll, King of Scouts* (1901) and *One of the Fighting Scouts* (1903).⁸² Other stories borrowed themes from popular American “Western” tales by presenting the mounted colonials as the British equivalent of the cavalry. In “Colonials to the Rescue,” a dashing Australian cavalry unit arrives in the nick of time to save a British missionary couple from execution by the dreaded Boers.⁸³ Most stories merely chronicled the exploits of colonial units in South Africa. These articles employed vivid imagery of the mounted soldiers and ran titles such as “Tommy’s Comrades in South Africa” and “Our Brave Colonial Troops,” and assured young boys of their superiority as “splendid horsemen, able to sense the presence of the enemy as if by instinct, and deadly shots.”⁸⁴ The image of the colonial soldier as a masculine and romantic figure remained a strong presence in popular boys’ periodicals, so that by 1907, entrepreneurs of the Amalgamated Press

⁸¹ Guy Arnold, *Held Fast for England: G.A. Henty Imperialist Boys’ Writer* (London, 1980).

⁸² A.G. Hales, *Driscoll, King of Scouts: A Romance of the South African War* (Bristol, 1901); F.S. Brereton, *One of the Fighting Scouts: A Tale of Guerrilla Warfare in South Africa* (London: Blackie, 1903).

⁸³ *Chums*, No. 395 Vol. VIII April 1900.

⁸⁴ *Illustrated Chips*, December 9 1899, 11; *Illustrated Chips*, January 6 1900, 2; *Chums*, No. 389 Vol. VIII, February 21 1900; *Chums*, No. 383 Vol. VIII, January 10 1900; *Chums*, No. 393 Vol. VIII, March 21 1900

advertised the launch of a new weekly *The Gem* with a full-page illustration of a frontier rifleman.⁸⁵

Children's consumer goods also reflected a contemporary interest in colonial warfare. The late Victorian and Edwardian fascination in toy soldiers enabled young children (and quite a number of adults as well) to refight the epic battles of the empire on a miniature scale.⁸⁶ The rapidity in which entrepreneurs such as William Britain Toys produced sets based on contemporary conflicts ensured that tiny colonial soldiers became available to young boys shortly after the start of the Boer War.⁸⁷ Within this miniature army, mounted colonial troops were highly popular items. But the high costs of these toys kept them out of the hands of many working-class boys. By comparison, the iconic cigarette card was a common item collected and traded throughout the urban slums of Edwardian Britain. This popular street commodity—what Robert Roberts termed “programmed learning”—prominently featured imperial military themes, with colorful pictures of colonial soldiers in their distinctive uniforms. This form of imperial propaganda allowed adults to rely on youthful fascination with frontier soldiers to spread messages with imperial and masculine themes.⁸⁸ In this light, it should come as no surprise that

⁸⁵ *Union Jack*, Vol. VII No. 179 1907. Nor was this confined to young boys. The middle-class women's magazine *Hearth and Home* ran a contest in their “lassies and ladies” section for the best poem on “Our Colonial Troops.” *Hearth and Home*, September 2 1897, 675.

⁸⁶ Science Fiction novelist H.G. Wells later created detailed rules for miniature “war games” that attracted both youth and adult audiences. See H.G. Wells, *Little Wars* (London, 1913). For a survey of toy soldiers during this period, see Kenneth D. Brown, “Modelling for War? Toy Soldiers in Late Victorian and Edwardian Britain,” *Journal of Social History* 24, No. 2 (1990), 237-254. Kenneth D. Brown points out that Wells “played” war games with politicians and public figures such as Leo Amery, Winston Churchill, Robert Louis Stevenson, and C.P. Trevelyan (241).

⁸⁷ For example, Britain's Toys produced a series based on the Jameson Raid (1895) within months of the actual event. The author is indebted to Mr. Ron Ruddell of London Bridge Toys for his expert knowledge on the Britain's line.

⁸⁸ For the idea of “programmed learning” see Robert Roberts, *The Classic Slum* (London, 1971), 169. For an analysis of cigarette cards' popularity among British children (and its link to popular imperialism) see John Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester, 1984), 23-26.

witnesses listed the fashionable uniform of the New South Wales Lancers as the most popular costume for young boys at the Lord Mayor's annual Costume Ball.⁸⁹

Masculinity and the Last of the Gentlemen's Wars

In 1937, British military theorist J.F.C. Fuller described the South African War as “the last of the gentleman's wars.”⁹⁰ Fuller portrayed the conflict as being guided by a European chivalric code of conduct—a stark comparison to the later horrors of the Western Front.⁹¹ Yet this characterization also alluded to a disproportionate degree of middle-class and aristocratic participation in the war. In the aftermath of “Black Week,” the War Office mobilized the army reserves and called for citizen volunteers to perform one year of military service. In addition, the government gave its blessing for private citizens to raise an “Imperial Yeomanry” corps.⁹² Authorities clearly intended this new mounted force to serve as Britain's equivalent of the colonial “Bushmen” units, and advertised for men who “could shoot and ride.” The resulting call to arms surprised even the most optimistic supporters of the war. Over the course of the conflict, approximately one hundred thousand civilians abandoned their peacetime pursuits and

⁸⁹ *Illustrated London News*, January 20 1900, 76.

⁹⁰ J.F.C. Fuller, *Last of the Gentleman's Wars: A Subaltern's Journal of the War in South Africa* (London, 1937).

⁹¹ This of course completely ignores the concentration camps, execution of prisoners and black Africans, and other atrocities that plagued the later stages of the conflict.

⁹² The Yeomanry developed during the Napoleonic Wars as groups of small landowners (as their name suggests) formed mounted companies to contend against both foreign invasion and domestic insurrection (as evidenced by their participation in the infamous “Peterloo Massacre” of 1819). Similarly, the Volunteers emerged as a middle-class movement during the French invasion scare of 1859. Members of the Yeomanry and Volunteers provided their own arms and uniforms, elected their own officers, and received minimal financial assistance from the War Office. Not surprisingly, contemporaries viewed these two forces as “Gentleman's clubs.” This vision somewhat blurs the reality of the situation, as the majority of the force by the end of the Nineteenth Century came from skilled artisans. Nonetheless, economic barriers prohibited the admission of most working-class citizens, and offered Middle Class men a suitable alternative to the undistinguished rabble of the Militia. See Hugh Cunningham, *The Volunteer Force: A Social and Political History* (London, 1975), 33-50.

volunteered for military service.⁹³ Many of these new recruits came from among the urban bourgeoisie and country gentlemen who longed for adventure with the romanticized Imperial Yeomanry. As Thomas Pakenham characteristically put it, “there was a rush to abandon the fox and pursue the Boer.”⁹⁴

The question of what caused these citizen-soldiers to volunteer continues to bedevil historians. Analysis is complicated by the frustrating tendency of veterans’ memoirs, diaries, and letters to focus solely on their heroic exploits in battle at the expense of private introspection. Most accounts briefly mention “duty,” “patriotism,” or other elusive catchwords that defy exact categorization. Indeed, one trooper of the 69th Sussex Volunteers listed twenty-three reasons for enlisting, including “patriotic fever,” “duty,” “to escape my creditors,” and the “love of war.”⁹⁵ In this void, historians continue to seek a better understanding of volunteerism during the war. In his monumental study of late Victorian patriotism, Richard Price casts significant doubt on the alleged working-class commitment to the war effort. He posits that rising unemployment rates encouraged members of the working class to enlist in the armed forces.⁹⁶ Other historians reject this thesis, arguing that multiple causes (including patriotism) influenced volunteer rates.⁹⁷ Though admitting that economic conditions may have driven some of the urban poor into the ranks, they point to the disproportionate number of volunteers from the lower-middle and artisan classes who enjoyed the benefits of a steady income.⁹⁸

⁹³ Approximately 45,566 from the Militia, 19,856 from the Volunteers, 35,520 in the Imperial Yeomanry, 833 in the Scottish Horse, and 7,273 who enlisted in the South African Constabulary. Parliamentary Papers 1902 Cd. 990 Return of Military Forces in South Africa 1899-1902, 3.

⁹⁴ Pakenham, *The Boer War*, 264.

⁹⁵ P.T. Ross. *A Yeoman’s Letters* (London, 1901), 180.

⁹⁶ Richard Price, *An Imperial War and the Working Class* (London, 1972), 205.

⁹⁷ See for example: Hugh Cunningham, *The Volunteer Force*; Ian Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition, 1558-1945* (Manchester, 1991); Edward Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army 1868-1902* (Manchester, 1992); Stephen Miller, *Volunteers on the Veld: Britain’s Citizen-Soldiers and the South African War* (Oklahoma, 2007).

⁹⁸ A point made by Hugh Cunningham who shows that the vast majority of Volunteers were employed.

An alternative explanation, though one that readily acknowledges the powerful influences of economics and sentiment, is that volunteering afforded British men an outlet for asserting a particular concept of manhood in the ultimate crucible of war. Many Britons anguished over their own sense of manly duty, or worse, faced the potential disgrace of being labeled a coward. A student at Trinity College, Dublin recalled the early days of the war when men “passed each other by in the street with a mere nod of recognition, hoping that our kinsfolk or acquaintance would not stop to speak what was uppermost in mind.” He explained “it was a time when many of us felt that possibly we might be of use; but useful or useless, we wanted to be up and doing something.”⁹⁹ Women also played an influential role in “shaming” men into military service. One British woman in South Africa recalled with pride how she castigated a young colonial soldier for failing to reenlist at the end of his tour of duty.¹⁰⁰ Another trooper admitted that accusations of cowardice from his wife drove him into the ranks.¹⁰¹

Social pressure proliferated in the colonies as well. When the New South Wales Lancers arrived in Cape Town, approximately 29 refused to disembark. Most of these soldiers faced health problems, financial troubles, or were too young to serve without parental consent. Nonetheless, they encountered scorn and humiliation upon their return to Australia. Politicians publicly denounced their lack of resolve, school children jeered in the streets, and women gave them white feathers in a public accusation of cowardice.¹⁰² In the provincial town of Leichhardt, a Ladies Meeting passed a resolution criticizing the returned lancers, and urged other women to encourage their sons to volunteer. They insisted “if mothers allowed their sons to have a martial

⁹⁹ Maurice Fitzgibbon, *Arts Under Arms: An University Man in Khaki* (London, 1901), 2, 3.

¹⁰⁰ Maud Rolleston, *Yeoman Service: Being the Diary of the Wife of an Imperial Yeomanry Officer During the Boer War* (London, 1901), 169-170.

¹⁰¹ Stephen Miller, “In Support of the ‘Imperial Mission’? Volunteering for the South African War,” *Journal of Military History* 69 3 (2005), 704.

¹⁰² Lawrence Field, *The Forgotten War: Australian Involvement in the South African Conflict of 1899-1902* (Melbourne, 1979), 55-56.

training they should also recognise the true sense of their duty in allowing them to go to battle when needed.”¹⁰³ Members of other lancer units even complained that popular sentiment in Australia now associated the lancer uniform with cowardice.¹⁰⁴ This public admonition served as a powerful discursive tool for encouraging imperial military service. Within a month, many of the disgraced lancers had enlisted in the second New South Wales contingent and re-embarked for South Africa to reestablish their shattered reputations.¹⁰⁵

Middle-class Britons in particular viewed the war as a new space for asserting their manhood in a forum that transcended class and imperial boundaries. In a context that transcended class and imperial boundaries, enlistees in the Volunteers, colonial contingents, or the Imperial Yeomanry could participate in the glories of military service without the long-term commitments (and the adverse social stigma) of joining the Regular Army.¹⁰⁶ A jubilant *Times* editorial noted that British men enlisted to “prove their mettle” and “to show that they are not sham soldiers.” It explained:

It will be the aim of the Volunteers from the Old Country to enter into a honourable rivalry with the volunteers from Natal and from the Cape, from the Dominion, and from Australasia who have so gloriously won the spurs—to show that they too can stand shoulder to shoulder with the picked regiments of the British Army—that they too can fight for England with the same valour, and die for her, if need be, with the same undaunted courage.¹⁰⁷

Another individual assured the mother of one young Oxford recruit that “it was the best thing that could have happened to him,” and that “campaigning in the healthiest country in the world will make a browne and stalwart man of him.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ *Sydney Morning Herald*, November 30 1899.

¹⁰⁴ *Sydney Morning Herald*, December 4 1899.

¹⁰⁵ Including all seven members who were deemed as having no identifiable reason to return home (i.e. illness, domestic affairs, etc). Field, *The Forgotten War*, 56.

¹⁰⁶ No self-respecting middle-class male could join the Regular Army unless provided with an officer’s commission. By comparison, thousands of middle-class men joined volunteer corps in the enlisted ranks. The minimum term for enlistment in the regulars was three years.

¹⁰⁷ *Times*, December 19 1899.

Many recruits also reveled in the class-mixing and masculine environment of the Volunteers and the Imperial Yeomanry. The romantic frontier façade of these new corps enabled the aristocracy and bourgeoisie to mingle, albeit temporarily, with the lower orders without surrendering their class prestige. Indeed, this association with masculine (and inherently respectable) working-class men afforded the gentry and aristocracy a certain level of rugged manliness by association. One Yeomanry officer proudly admitted of his corps that “there was hardly a trade or profession which was not represented.”¹⁰⁹ This included the upper-echelons of British society, as no fewer than 29 Peers and 25 Members of Parliament served in these volunteer units.¹¹⁰ Some officers in Volunteer or Militia organizations resigned their commissions to serve as ordinary troopers in the Imperial Yeomanry.¹¹¹ As one critic insisted, “to be a private in such a corps is in itself a distinction not to be lightly valued.”¹¹² Above all, male Britons scrambled to secure a coveted position in this new amateur army. Transcending their perceived “duty” to the empire, Britain’s manhood competed for the prospects of masculine adventure through imperial military service.¹¹³

This influx of volunteerism involved a conscious effort to emulate the frontier image of the white colonials. Yeomanry units and other volunteer units adopted suggestive and

¹⁰⁸ National Army Museum. Letters of Charles Snow. 9007-96. Letter of Edwin Girling to Mrs. Snow, March 7 1900.

¹⁰⁹ H.G. McKenzie, *Records of the Rough Riders: XXth Battalion Imperial Yeomanry* (Bedford, 1907), 4.

¹¹⁰ *Volunteer Service Gazette*, May 11 1900, 433.

¹¹¹ William Lamont, *Volunteer Memories* (Greenock, 1911), 154.

¹¹² *Volunteer Service Gazette*, January 5 1900, 149. Certainly not all middle-class recruits felt this way about their social inferiors. One volunteer complained that his friend “Pinkie” desired a transfer into the fashionable “Duke of Cambridge’s Own,” explaining that he “expected them all to be in top hats and kid gloves.” NAM. Letters of Cecil Landon. 2001-06-111. Letter to his Mother, February 7 1901.

¹¹³ As Volunteer and Yeomanry battalions could only accept a fraction of available candidates, many members of the middle class tried to enlist. A Barrister in civilian life, trooper Sidney Peel of the 40th Oxfordshire Company recalled the anguish he felt as he attempted to prove his qualifications to join the Yeomanry. A Scottish trooper of the 18th Company Imperial Yeomanry agreed, noting “we were very much carried away by the novelty and excitement of the moment, and considered we were extremely fortunate to get the chance of going out to the war under such exceptional circumstances.” Sidney Peel, *Trooper 8008 IY* (London, 1901), viii; Alexander Stewart Orr, *Scottish Yeomanry in South Africa, 1900-1901* (Glasgow, 1901), 3.

romanticized titles such as the 20th Battalion “Rough Riders,” “Lovat’s Scouts,” and “Paget’s Horse.” These forces also adorned the recognizable Khaki pattern, slouch hat, and bandolier—the trademark of the colonial contingents. When the Lord Mayor of London sponsored the formation of the “City Imperial Volunteers,” a local advertisement assured potential applicants that they would be issued hats like the New South Wales Lancers.¹¹⁴ A newspaper in Glasgow even urged Scottish regiments to abandon the ceremonial “Highland Dress” in favor of colonial patterns with the “Colonial Slouch Hat.”¹¹⁵ One perceptive critic mused, “it is curiously symptomatic that the Australian larrikin’s felt hat, the last word of de-civilisation, an amorphous reduction of a hat to its first elements, looped up and furbished into smartness by the Australian trooper, has become the chosen headgear of our British middle classes (as of the Imperial yeomanry) when they fare forth to war.”¹¹⁶ But this trend was more than a fleeting fashion statement; it reflected a broader need among metropolitan (and primarily middle-class) Britons to be more like their colonial brethren. It must have contained some element of appeal, for by 1911 British trade journals targeting a primarily bourgeois market still sold the colonial slouch hat as their “Camp life” model.¹¹⁷

This phenomenon was by no means confined to England. The leading newspaper in Wales, the *Western Mail*, opened a competition to fund six positions in the Glamorgan contingent of the Imperial Yeomanry.¹¹⁸ It advertised the need for an “experienced rough rider”

¹¹⁴ *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper*, December 24 1899.

¹¹⁵ *Glasgow Herald*, April 21 1900. The War Office also faced questions in Parliament about the need to adopt the colonial hat, prompting Undersecretary of War George Wyndham to admit “I hope that someday the forces of the empire may wear the headdress which have become dear to many of us owing to recent operations.” *Hansard* Four Series Vol. LXXXIV June 15 1900, 147.

¹¹⁶ Harold Parsons, “Our Colonial Kingdoms,” *Anglo-Saxon Review*, June 1900, 205. An Australian correspondent also noted the fashion trend, explaining to his readers that “khaki- represents the fight, and scarlet the dancer, and there is much good sense and reason behind the new contempt for pretty uniforms.” *Melbourne Punch*, June 21 1900, 597.

¹¹⁷ *British Hatter: Illustrated Quarterly Trade Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1, August 1911, 6.

¹¹⁸ *Western Mail* (Cardiff), December 26 1899.

who was a “crack shot.” Adding an element of romance, it assured potential applicants that their future comrades would include a former Australian soldier, several South African scouts, and an American veteran of Cuba “itching to give our people a hand.”¹¹⁹ It also reprinted select applications, showing that nearly all potential applicants stressed their ability as a “rough rider.”¹²⁰

Scotland also witnessed considerable popular enthusiasm for the volunteer movement.

One young yeoman in Cupar recalled:

An advertisement in the newspapers had announced that a corps was to be formed for service in South Africa, and immediately every young man who could ride and shoot (or who thought he could) was on his way to Cupar to offer his service. The pen was thrown down, the student’s books were laid aside, the farm was left to take care of itself, and every one was speculating on his chance of success at the ranges or in the riding school.¹²¹

A member of the same unit proudly informed his mother that one of his officers was a former American “rough rider” who “came home to join the Yeomanry.”¹²² Perhaps the most famous Scottish contingent was a private yeomanry force raised by the venerable Lord Lovat. The “Lovat Scouts” advertised for “deerstalkers, ghillies, shepherds, and a certain number of good shots.” They required men of a “good physique and be capable the climate, prepared to perform hard work and to suffer inconveniences while they are serving their countries.”¹²³ Units such as the Lovat Scouts also sought to maintain an element of distance from the rigid oversight of the British Army. As one aristocratic proprietor noted, “leave the ghillie corps to Lord Lovat, he

¹¹⁹ *Western Mail*, December 28 1899.

¹²⁰ *Western Mail*, December 29 1899, January 2 1900.

¹²¹ The author noted “it was a picturesque sight to see the Yeomen in big slouch hats and long cavalry overcoats riding through the snow-covered streets on these bright winter mornings. Probably some hundreds of years had elapsed since the Bonnygate of Cupar had worn such martial aspects.” J.P. Sturrock, *The Fifes in South Africa: Being a History of the Fife and Forfar Yeomanry* (Cupar-Fife, 1903), 5, 9.

¹²² NAM. Letters of Jack Gilmer. 2003-01-9. Letter to his mother February 28 1900.

¹²³ *Glasgow Herald*, January 8 1900.

being an ardent sportsman needs little instruction as to what his men needs.”¹²⁴ The message was clear: men with extensive frontier experience possessed the necessary masculine skills for success.

Even after the war veterans constantly touted their manly experiences with colonial troops in their published accounts. For example, a middle-class trooper of “Paget’s Horse” denigrated the “parade antics” and discipline of his officers who were “quite the beau ideal of bourgeois respectability.” He recalled fondly how they were “licked into shape by a colonial lieutenant,” and concluded that “whatever may be one’s sentiments at the tea-table, at the firing line one prizes the ready brain and bold heart above all the virtues of surburban-villadom.”¹²⁵ Another soldier described the “dark-faced, slouch-hatted irregulars, sitting free and easy in their saddles,” and added “you never see a fat Colonial.”¹²⁶ A member of the same unit concluded “that the colonials were far better fighting material than our own men; and their knowledge of Bush life gave them an advantage which no amount of drilling counterbalanced.”¹²⁷

These citizen-soldiers further affirmed their “frontier” credentials through professional photographs depicting themselves as hardened veterans of colonial warfare. Sharrad Gilbert’s published account of the war recalled his service alongside Australian and New Zealand “Bushmen” with their “stalwart and workmanlike appearance.” He emulated these fellow Britons in a jacket illustration replete with the khaki uniform, slouch hat, and ammunition bandolier.¹²⁸ (Figure 3:7) A more famous self-propagandist, Lieutenant William Churchill, chronicled his experiences in the Imperial Light Horse through several books. In 1900 he urged

¹²⁴ Letter of Lord Archibald Campbell, reprinted in *Aberdeen Weekly Journal*, January 13 1900.

¹²⁵ Cosmo Roe-Innes, *With Paget’s Horse to the Front* (London, 1901), 44, 45.

¹²⁶ L. March Phillipps, *With Remington* (London, 1902), 4,5.

¹²⁷ Reginald Rankin, *Subaltern’s Letters to His Wife* (London, 1901), 76.

¹²⁸ Sharrad H. Gilbert, *Rhodesia-and After: Being the Story of the 17th and 18th Battalions of Imperial Yeomanry in South Africa* (London, 1901). Illustration on inside of the book sleeve.

his brother John (also an officer in the Light Horse) to capitalize on the merits of his service, and to "come home to the quills of the city and the arms of the ladies."¹²⁹ Like Gilbert, Churchill sat for a photograph in his tailored khaki uniform. This self-identification became an important component in an overall fantasy process by which urban middle-class males could transcend their domestic and "effete" environments in order to become like the masculine "rough rider" heroes of the empire.¹³⁰

Conclusion

In the immediate aftermath of the South African War, Rudyard Kipling condemned what he perceived as the complacency and psychological isolation of metropolitan British society. In "The Islanders" he accused his countrymen of being "fenced by your careful fathers" and condemned their softness: "long did you wake in quiet and long did ye lie down at ease." By comparison, he praised the white settler communities as "the Younger Nations who could shoot and ride!"¹³¹ Kipling's poem reflected the common depiction of the white colonial male as the improved specimen of the Anglo-Saxon race. In an era of doubt about the state of British manhood, the rugged colonial citizen-soldier constituted a masculine ideal type that offered a glimmer of hope for the reinvigoration of the imperial spirit. This image served as a recurring motif in the subsequent debates and discourse over army reform, education, social programs, compulsory military training, and imperial policy. After all, it was the young colonial cadets of the Siege of Mafeking who provided Lord Robert Baden-Powell with the inspiration for his

¹²⁹ CCA. Winston Churchill Papers (Hereafter cited as CHAR) 28/152B/186-187 Winston Churchill to John Churchill, June 17 1900.

¹³⁰ Individuals might emulate colonial troops for other reasons. At least one Londoner was convicted after the war for impersonating an Australian veteran in order to secure favorable results from a street vendor. *West London Press*, June 25 1902.

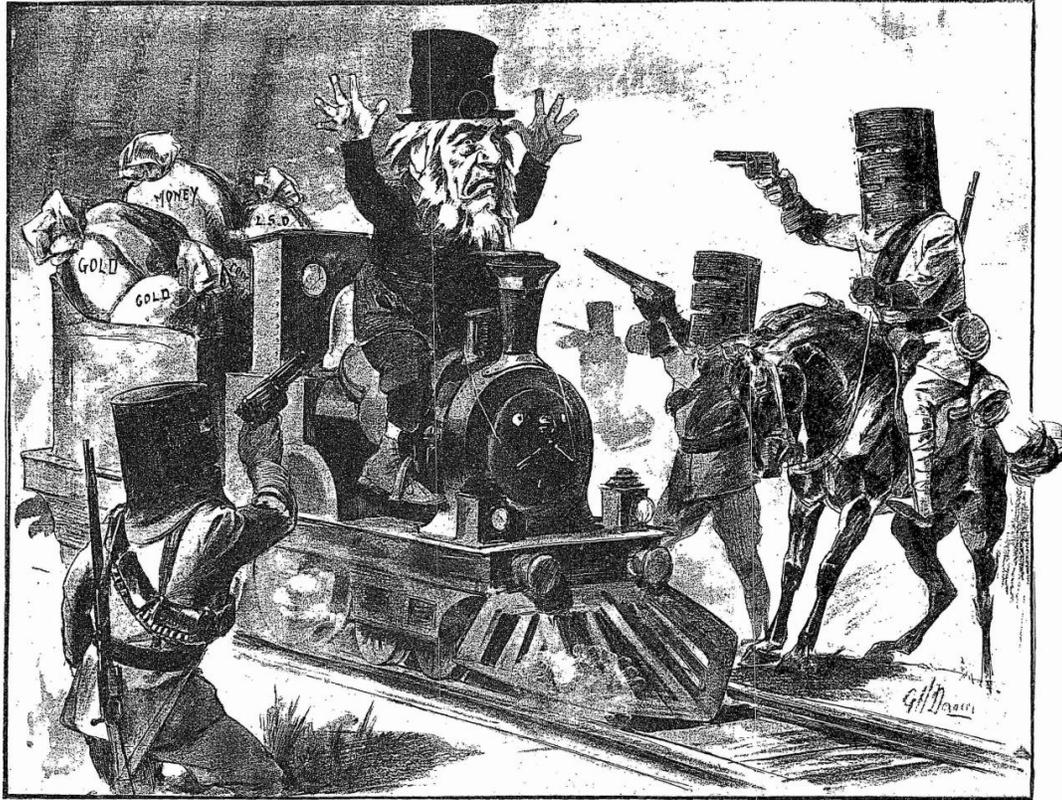
¹³¹ Published in the *Times*, January 4 1902.

much-heralded Boy Scout Movement.¹³² White colonial participation in the South African War generated far more than a promise for the future of imperial solidarity; it provided an ideal for a “Better Briton.” Perhaps an British journalist “embedded” with a contingent of Canadian “Rough Riders” best summarized this hope for the future of British manhood: “to these men I would say, come out to the colonies, fill your lungs with the wild free air of a new country, look around and see your blood-brothers living close to Nature herself . . . then you will feel and know that the coming century is only seeing the birth of a new empire greater than we have yet known.”¹³³

¹³² In a 1984 interview, an elderly New Zealand veteran of the Natal Field Force claimed that Baden-Powell liked his hat so much that he adopted it for use in the Boy Scout Movement. Though probably apocryphal, the story demonstrates the link between colonial troops and the early days of the Boy Scouts. IWM. Hari Williams. Reel Five (Recorded 1984).

¹³³ C. Hanbury-Williams, “Riders of the Plains,” *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* April 1900, 491.

FIGURE 3:1¹



"BAIL-UP!"

(A very interesting undertaking for a band of organised Australian Bush Rangers in the Transvaal.)

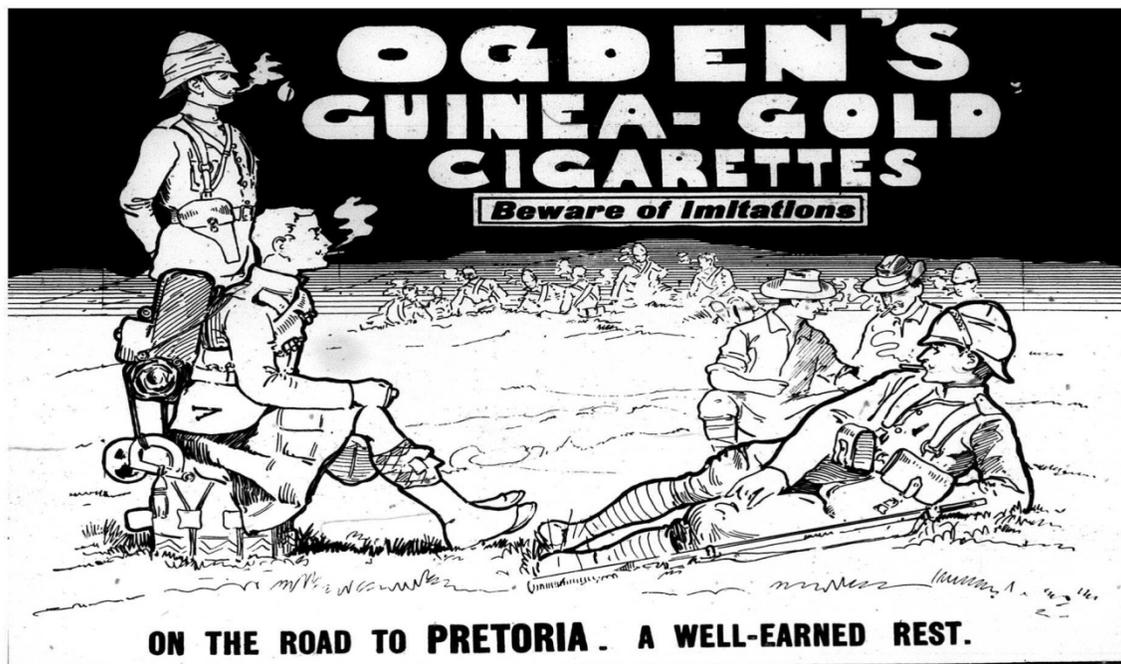
THE RUSH RANGER.—"Bail-up! Your money or your life! We want you, too, Paul, as a little present for Bobs."

¹ *Melbourne Punch*, June 21 1900, 605.

FIGURE 3:2¹



FIGURE 3:3²



¹ *Illustrated London News*, February 10 1900, 198.

² *Illustrated London News*, April 21 1900, 557.

FIGURE 3:4¹

THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS, Oct. 13, 1900. — 539

BOVRIL

AT THE FRONT & IN THE FRONT
BOVRIL IS LIQUID LIFE.

¹ *Illustrated London News*, October 13 1900, 539.

FIGURE 3:5¹



Smoke
TORTOISE-SHELL
MIXTURE

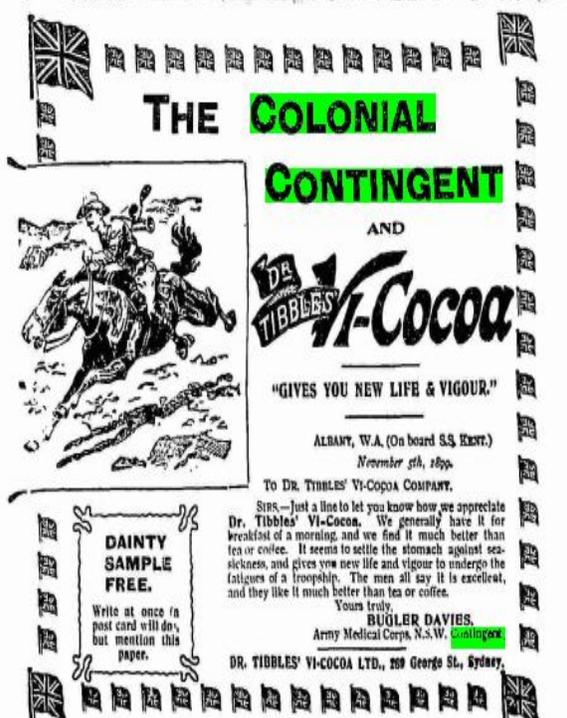
The Purest and Best Smoking Mixture ever produced.
 SOLD EVERYWHERE IN PACKETS AND TINS ONLY.

MILD With Silver Shield **MEDIUM STRENGTH** Green Shield

ALSO
TORTOISE-SHELL CIGARETTES
The Highest Class Virginia Cigarettes Procurable.

W. A. & A. C. CHURCHMAN, Ipswich, London, and Norwich.

FIGURE 3:6²



THE COLONIAL
CONTINGENT
 AND
DR. TIBBLES' VI-COCOA

"GIVES YOU NEW LIFE & VIGOUR."

ALBANY, W.A. (On board S.S. HERT.)
 November 5th, 1899.

TO DR. TIBBLES' VI-COCOA COMPANY.

SIRS—Just a line to let you know how we appreciate Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa. We generally have it for breakfast of a morning and we find it much better than tea or coffee. It seems to settle the stomach against sea-sickness, and gives you new life and vigour to undergo the fatigues of a troopship. The men all say it is excellent, and they like it much better than tea or coffee.

Yours truly,
BUGLER DAVIES,
 Army Medical Corps, N.S.W.

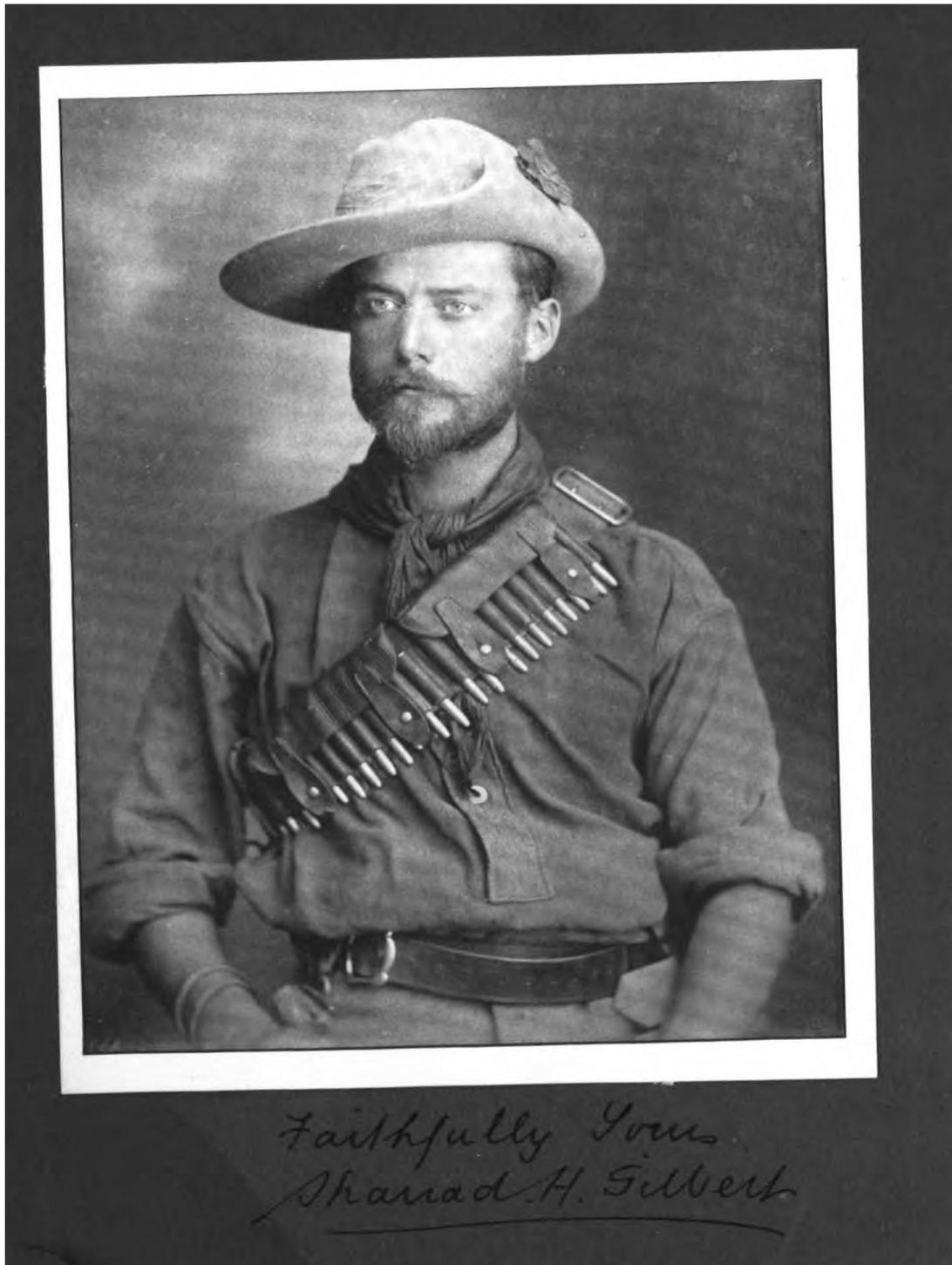
DR. TIBBLES' VI-COCOA LTD., 209 George St., Sydney.

DAINTY SAMPLE FREE.
 Write at once in post card will do, but mention this paper.

¹ *Illustrated London News*, June 30 1900, 889.

² *Melbourne Punch*, June 5 1900, 7; *New Zealand Graphic and Ladies Journal*, October 13 1900, 667.

FIGURE 3:7¹



¹ Sharrad H. Gilbert, *Rhodesia-and After: Being the Story of the 17th and 18th Battalions of Imperial Yeomanry in South Africa* (London, 1901). Illustration on inside of the book sleeve.

Chapter Four

The Empire on Parade: Race, Ritual, and Representations of Imperial Unity, 1887-1911

I was not dreaming of so stunning a show. All the nations seemed to be filing by. They all seemed to be represented. It was sort of an allegorical suggestion of the Last Day, and some who live to see that day will probably recall this one if they are not too much disturbed in mind at the time.

Mark Twain at the Diamond Jubilee, 1897¹

On the morning of June 22 1897, London experienced a celebration of Kiplingesque magnificence. At 9 a.m. Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee procession departed Buckingham Palace in an aura of pageantry and visual splendor unsurpassed throughout the queen's long reign. Millions of spectators lined the streets to catch a glimpse of tall soldiers in scarlet uniforms, well-rehearsed military bands, the ceremonial Yeomanry of the Guard, foreign and colonial dignitaries in highly ornate carriages, and the civic representatives of the City of London, to say nothing of the ageing monarch.² But it was the appearance of over 800 colonial troops that "received a welcome from all London that was in heartiness second to none."³ Mounted colonials from the white settler communities of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa intrigued the crowds with their frontier panache and "swashbuckler hats."⁴ Behind them marched an array of non-white soldiers in "exotic" uniforms representing colonies as

¹ Mark Twain, "Queen Victoria's Jubilee," in *The Complete Essays of Mark Twain* (New York, 2000), 197.

² Crowd estimates wildly vary though one dubious claim placed the number as high as 7 million. *Western Mail* (Cardiff), June 23 1897.

³ *Navy and Army Illustrated*, December 24 1897, 154.

⁴ *Bristol Times and Mirror*, June 25 1897.

diverse as India, Borneo, Jamaica, Hong Kong, and Sierra Leone.⁵ To many contemporaries, the Jubilee procession was a symbolic manifestation of the military might of the empire on which the sun never set. American novelist Mark Twain thought that “the procession was the human race on exhibition, a spectacle curious and interesting and worth traveling far to see.”⁶

In the decades since Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger’s influential *Invention of Tradition* appeared, scholars have devoted considerable attention to the role of mass spectacle in forging domestic consensus.⁷ They argue that political elites staged elaborate public rituals in response to the emergence of democratic electorates and class antagonism. As George Mosse explains in his study of German nationalism, participation in public spectacles promoted a common cause that transcended class boundaries—a “nationalisation of the masses” that appealed to sentiment and patriotism over more material demands.⁸ Historians of modern Britain have shown how such displays merged with imperial propaganda. Denis Judd characterizes the Diamond Jubilee as a form of “bread and circuses” intended “to make the majority of British citizens feel proud of their country and empire.”⁹ Similarly, John Mackenzie emphasizes the role of imperial spectacles in forging national consensus. He maintains that “through the

⁵ The *Times* recorded the following mounted units: Canadian Hussars, Dragoons, and Mounted Police; New South Wales Lancers and Mounted Rifles; Victorian Mounted Rifles; New Zealand Mounted Troops; Queensland Mounted Rifles; Cape Mounted Rifles; South Australian Lancers and Mounted Rifles; Natal Mounted Rifles; Natal Carabineers; Umvoti, Natal, and Border Mounted Rifles; Mounted Troops of the Crown Colonies; Zaptiehs from Cyprus; Trinidad Mounted Rifles; and “a few Rhodesian Horse.” Non-mounted troops included the Canadian Highlanders; West Australian Artillery Volunteers; Trinidad Field Artillery; West Australian Infantry; Trinidad Infantry; Borneo Police; Trinidad Police; Jamaica Artillery; Sierra Leone Artillery and Frontier Police; Royal Niger Hausas; Gold Coast Hausas; British Guiana Police; Ceylon Light Infantry and Artillery Volunteers; and “detachments from Hong-Kong and the Straits Settlements.” *Times*, June 23 1897.

⁶ Twain, 198. Lord Northcliffe called the procession “the most magnificent spectacle I ever beheld, or can ever behold.” BL Northcliffe Papers 62385 Diary Entry June 22 1897.

⁷ Eric Hobsbawm and Terrance Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983).

⁸ George L. Mosse, *Nationalisation of the Masses* (Ithaca, 1975).

⁹ Denis Judd, *Empire: The British Imperial Experience from 1765 to the Present* (London, 1998), 133.

colonial connection domestic ‘under-classes’ could become imperial ‘over-classes.’ They could feel part of a national enterprise on which the majority had been persuaded to agree.”¹⁰

In a similar vein, scholars have examined the role of mass spectacle in reinforcing an imagined collective identity. Anthropologists in particular have attached significant meaning to the manner in which public ritual defines a given society.¹¹ They view spectacles as performed acts as in which “we reflect upon and define ourselves, dramatize our collective myths and history, present ourselves with alternatives, and eventually change in some ways while remaining the same in others.”¹² These scholars insist that being part of the audience was an important component of the overall theatrical production. Participation in the vast teeming crowds allowed spectators to transcend their individual identities and become part of a larger whole—an example of what Victor Turner terms “communitas.” Most importantly, this approach bestows an element of agency to all participants, for which the spectacles reflected the cultural attitudes and beliefs of their society. Or as Clifford Geertz puts it, they are “a story they tell themselves about themselves.”¹³

This chapter explores the nexus among mass spectacles, race, and empire. It seeks to bridge the scholarship between the proponents of the Hobsbawmian “invented tradition” school and those who depict ritual as a form of reflected cultural identity. On the one hand, events such as the Diamond Jubilee represented a concerted exercise in “top down” propaganda. Political

¹⁰ John MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion* (Manchester, 1984), 254. Also see MacKenzie (ed), *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester, 1986); James Mangan (ed.), *Making Imperial Mentalities: Socialisation and British Imperialism* (Manchester, 1990); Jonathan Schneer, *London 1900: The Imperial Metropolis* (New Haven, 1999); Scott Hughes Myerly, *British Military Spectacle: From the Napoleonic Wars through the Crimea* (Cambridge, 1996).

¹¹ See Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York, 1973); Geertz, *Negara: The Theatre-State in Nineteenth Century Bali* (Princeton, 1980); John MacAloon (ed.), *Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle: Rehearsals Toward a New Theory of Cultural Performance* (Philadelphia, 1984); Victor Turner, *The Anthropology of Performance* (New York, 1989). For a study of parades, see Mary Ryan, “The American Parade: Representations of the Nineteenth Century Social Order,” in Lynn Hunt (ed.), *The New Cultural History* (Berkeley, 1989), 131-153.

¹² MacAloon, *Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle*, 1.

¹³ Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 448.

elites used spectacles as a form of “bread and circuses” that catered to the masses while purporting a popular and benevolent vision of empire. In particular, they employed parades, army reviews, and martial pageants to display the potential military resources of the empire to domestic, colonial, and foreign audiences alike. At the same time, imperial spectacles were cultural performances in which many of the white subjects of the empire sought to forge a mutual sense of “Britishness.” Policymakers went to great lengths to depict this “gathering of the clans” as evidence of the underlying racial and cultural link of all Britons. In contrast, they depicted non-whites as “ornamental” accessories and evidence of Britain’s imperial providence. Far more than monarchical rituals or national festivals, these celebrations became grand imperial homecomings extolling the inherent unity of the pan-British race and upholding the delicate racial hierarchy of the empire.

Towards a Pageant of Empire

Queen Victoria’s 1887 Golden Jubilee was the first large-scale national pageant in Great Britain. Whereas early nineteenth century royal ritual was an intimate affair that affirmed the ties between the monarchy and the aristocracy, the jubilee reached out to the masses in an unprecedented national celebration.¹⁴ Event organizers planned an elaborate procession through the streets of London that included the royal family, Indian princes, and nearly all the crowned heads of Europe. The procession also featured a substantial military presence, with the popular Life Guards, sailors from the Royal Navy, and a small detachment of Indian lancers deemed

¹⁴ David Cannadine, “The British Monarchy, c. 1820-1977,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terrance Ranger (Cambridge, 1983), 115-120; Richard Williams, *The Contentious Crown: Public Discussion of the British Monarchy in the Reign of Queen Victoria* (Aldershot, 1997). The organizing committee experienced the most resistance from the Queen, who abhorred the idea of festivities that pandered to the masses. She complained to her private secretary that the Jubilee “seems to be considered only for the *people* and their *convenience* and amusement.” Lant, *Insubstantial Pageant*, 152.

“second to none in interest.”¹⁵ One witness described the parade as “a river of gold flowing between banks of extraordinary richness and splendour.”¹⁶ Another compared the event to “the great cavalcades” of victorious Roman heroes.¹⁷

Equally impressive were the eager crowds that assembled to watch the jubilee. Visitors from across the British Isles descended upon London, many spending the night in the streets to secure a decent view of the show. They endured the oppressive summer weather, a lack of facilities, and transportation conditions that “meant little less than suffocation.”¹⁸ Despite these difficulties, nearly every account of the festivities remarked on their “patriotism” and “enthusiasm” as “striking evidence of the fact that the population of London is eminently loyal, order loving and kindly.”¹⁹ One journalist mused that even avowed socialists “were carried away by the enthusiasm of the millions.”²⁰ The depiction of a unified people celebrating an inherently “British” institution provided the essential ingredient in transforming the Jubilee from a uniquely royal pageant into a shared national celebration. As the Tory *Standard* explained, “the crowds that thronged the thoroughfares supplied a setting without which the gayest pageant would be but an empty show.”²¹

The successes of the Golden Jubilee convinced many political elites of the benefits of mass spectacle. Ten years later the nation observed Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee with an even larger national pageant. Under the personal leadership of the Prince of Wales, the organizing

¹⁵ *Times*, June 22 1887. Accounts of the uniforms, glittering helmets and sabers testified to their popularity among the audience. As one perceptive critic explained, “the Jubilee procession will owe what splendor it has to its character of a military display.” *Pall Mall Gazette*, June 20 1887.

¹⁶ *Times*, June 22 1887.

¹⁷ *Leeds Mercury*, June 22 1887.

¹⁸ *Daily Chronicle*, June 22 1897.

¹⁹ *Times*, June 22 1887. Also see *Daily Chronicle*, June 22 1887; *Daily News*, June 22 1887. The Queen recorded in her diary that the display was “a most satisfactory event, and showed the loyalty of the people.” Lant, *Insubstantial Pageant* 173.

²⁰ *Daily Chronicle*, June 22 1887.

²¹ *Standard*, Wednesday June 22 1887. Also see: *Times*, June 22 1887; *Daily Chronicle*, June 22 1887; *Daily News*, June 22 1887.

committee went to great lengths to reach a broad element of the population. It designated the royal procession as the capstone event of the weeklong festivities and planned a long and circuitous route around Hyde Park, through Piccadilly Circus and parts of the East End, and a return by way of the South Bank and Westminster Bridge.²² (Figure 4:1). The committee also eliminated the private ceremony at Westminster Abbey in favor of a public open-air service outside of St. Paul's Cathedral.²³ These arrangements enabled the participation of thousands of additional spectators and transformed the streets of London into the primary stage for performing the perceived links among monarchy, nation, and empire.

The military assumed a much more visible role in the festivities. Policymakers catered to popular demand for martial pageantry by staging one of the largest displays of military power ever witnessed in the British Isles.²⁴ Over 50,000 soldiers took part in the royal procession, while numerous military bands strategically placed along the streets produced a continual source of stirring music (a notable omission during the Golden Jubilee).²⁵ One perceptive journalist characterized the parade as “almost altogether a military pageant” and “something to catch the public eye and please the popular taste.”²⁶ The festivities also included a series of military reviews. The queen presided over one at Aldershot on July 1, when over 30,000 British and colonial troops paraded before a host of spectators that included dignitaries from France, Germany, Russia, and the United States.²⁷ A Canadian woman offered this romanticized account

²² *Illustrated Programme of the Jubilee Royal Procession* (London, 1897).

²³ Lant, *Insubstantial Pageant*, 224. During the Golden Jubilee, one participant grumbled “it is unfortunate that the route is all too short for the accommodation of the countless thousands who are bent upon being present at so historical an event, and many officials regret that the Queen did not select St. Paul's Cathedral in preference to the Abbey.” *Saturday Review*, June 18 1887, 876-877.

²⁴ For popular interest in the military, see John MacKenzie, *Popular Imperialism and the Military, 1850-1950* (Manchester, 1992).

²⁵ Lant, *Insubstantial Pageant*, 226.

²⁶ *Daily News*, June 23 1897.

²⁷ *Times*, July 2 1897. The colonial troops also received their own special review by the Duke of Connaught on June 11

of the Aldershot show: “every heart beat it’s fullest, and many a tear fell unheeded over the faces of man and woman . . . It was splendid; it was magnificent. It touched the edges of the sublime.”²⁸

The imperial dimension marked the most significant component of the jubilee. Unlike the Golden Jubilee which virtually ignored the empire, the Diamond Jubilee was an elaborate state-sponsored pageant promoting a vision of imperial unity.²⁹ When Victoria refused to invite the crowned heads of European states, the organizing committee struggled “with the question of what to do to give a *quid pro quo* for the money voted.”³⁰ Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain took the lead by inviting the premiers of the self-governing communities to attend the Jubilee as official state guests. As he explained “there has never been in English territory any representation of the Empire as a whole, and the Colonies especially have, hitherto, taken little part in any ceremony of the kind.”³¹ He further requested that each colony send a representative detachment of soldiers, citing “the great effect which I anticipate from a demonstration of the solidarity of the Empire.”³² Chamberlain clearly viewed the Diamond Jubilee as a tool of imperial propaganda. As he explained to the colonial premiers:

I think you may also feel that the main object of your visit has already been to a great extent accomplished. The great pageant to which you contributed so interesting a feature has shown to this country, to the Colonies, and to all the world, the strength, the power, the resources, and the loyalty of the British Empire.³³

Imperial pageantry transcended mere entertainment for the masses. Indeed, the vision of British and colonial soldiers marching together served as a powerful symbol of imperial unity.

²⁸ Kit Coleman, *To London for the Jubilee* (Toronto, 1897), 118.

²⁹ With the exception of the Indian princes, the Golden Jubilee lacked a noticeable imperial dimension. The committee responsible for the Westminster Abbey service allocated only 150 seats to the Colonial Office—a paltry number when compared to the 300 seats divided between the Home Office, Education Board, and Board of Trade! NA. Lord Chamberlain Papers (Hereafter Cited as LC) 2/114 “Distribution of Seats” Undated.

³⁰ NA. Privy Council Papers (Hereafter Cited as PC) 22/1 Bigge to Hamilton, January 18 1897.

³¹ Lant, *Insubstantial Pageant*, 219.

³² JC 29/2/5/70 Chamberlain to Governor General of New South Wales Lord Hampden, January 28 1897.

³³ CAB 18/9 Opening address to the 1897 Colonial Conference, June 24 1897.

Many correspondents remarked on the potential of future imperial defense cooperation. The *Times* correspondent characterized the Aldershot review as “a demonstration of imperial power and unity.” Though admitting the diminutive size of the colonial forces, he insisted they “represented a reserve of fighting strength which if the Empire were, at any time, severely attacked, will need no summons to range it in the ranks of the defence.”³⁴ The editor of the *National Review* agreed, adding “they fairly took the Londoner’s breath away and conjured up visions of inexhaustible resources.”³⁵ Other voices alluded to the Jubilee’s veiled warning to would-be adversaries. An Australian visitor recalled that “the parade on Jubilee Day showed the possibility of an innumerable army” which should serve as an “object lesson to whom it may concern outside the boundaries of the Empire.”³⁶ Similarly an East End journalist explained “to the world of foreign speaking peoples we conceive this gathering of the clans around our Empress-Queen will be an instructive revelation.”³⁷ Perhaps the *Daily Graphic* offered the most optimistic appraisal of British intentions:

To the foreigner, however, it has been a revelation. He finds that England has sources of strength in her internal social peace and in the enthusiastic loyalty of her colonies by the side of which the alliance of a Continental Power, or even a group of Continental Powers, is of small consequences. He has realised that Splendid Isolation is not an empty British boast.³⁸

These representations of imperial unity did leave an indelible impression upon many foreign observers. American special ambassador Chauncey Depew described the Jubilee procession as “a panorama of power unequalled in history.”³⁹ In Paris the typically Anglophobe press lavished exuberant praise on the Jubilee. They labeled the national festival “a rare

³⁴ *Times*, July 2 1897.

³⁵ *National Review*, July 1897 (643).

³⁶ “Life in London and Thereabout,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, August 7 1897.

³⁷ *The Mercury* (London), June 26 1897.

³⁸ Quoted in Judd, *Empire*, 132.

³⁹ *New York Times*, June 23 1897.

magnificence” and an “immense display of its power.”⁴⁰ *Le Temps* explained that “the Whole of Europe has contemplated with an admiration not exempt from envy this grand affirmation of national unity.” *Le Figaro* insisted that “Rome is equaled if not surpassed by the power which in Canada, Australia, India, in the China Seas, in Egypt, Central and Southern Africa, in the Atlantic and in the Mediterranean, rules peoples and governs their interests.”⁴¹ Even in Germany the Conservative *Kreuz Zeitung* maintained that any attack on the British Empire would involve operations “which are far easier to plan than to execute.”⁴²

The popularity of imperial military pageantry at the Diamond Jubilee established a precedent for future celebrations. Encouraged by the participation of 80,000 white colonials in the South African War (1898-1902), the organizers of Edward VII’s 1902 coronation planned an even larger display of colonial soldiery. As the official historian of the coronation explained, the colonials were “looked upon with peculiar interest, as the incarnation of the strongest sentiment of attachment which had ever been evoked between the Mother Country and the Colonies.”⁴³ War Office expenditure increased over 600% from 1897, as authorities scrambled to showcase the military resources of the empire.⁴⁴ In addition, the Colonial Office organized a whirlwind tour of Scotland for the colonial premiers and their troops. This arrangement reflected a concerted effort to link the Celtic periphery with the empire in a common celebration of

⁴⁰ “*Tout ce groupe, dont la reine est le centre, est d’une rare magnificence.*” *La Presse*, June 23 1897; *Le Matin*, June 24 1897, quoted in *Times*, June 25 1897

⁴¹ “*Le spectacle qu’offrait hier Londres et qu’offrira demain Spithead est unique dans les fastes de l’humanité. Rome est égalée sinon dépassée, par la puissance qui, au Canada, en Australi, aux Indes, dans les mers de Chine, en Egypte, dans le centre et dans le sud de l’Afrique, dans l’Atlantique et dans la Méditerranée, régit les peuples et gouverne les interests.*” *Le Figaro*, June 23 1897.

⁴² Quoted in the *Times*, June 24 1897.

⁴³ John Edward Bodley, *The Coronation of Edward VII* (London, 1903), 25.

⁴⁴ The War Office (responsible housing colonial troops in the UK) spent £18,261 in 1897 and £112,938 in 1902. PC 22/3 War Office to Southward, October 16 1901; PC 22/2 unmarked memorandum.

“Britishness.”⁴⁵ As one Scottish journalist proclaimed, “the projected trip will be welcomed more heartily by ourselves as a means of bringing us into closer and more tangible relationship with our gallant kinsmen beyond the seas.”⁴⁶

Public representations of imperial unity were not confined to large-scale spectacles such as jubilees and coronations. Many smaller exhibitions incorporated imperial military pageantry into their programs. The opening of the Imperial Institute in 1893 included an elaborate military procession that foreshadowed the Diamond Jubilee. In their efforts to assemble a mosaic of the empire, the directors took the unprecedented step of inviting military contingents from India, New South Wales, and Victoria to serve as the Queen’s personal escort.⁴⁷ Civic pageantry also embraced the theme of imperial unity. The 1899 Lord Mayor of London’s Show—one of the oldest civic processions in the United Kingdom—included a float entitled “Great Britain Surrounded by Her Sons” which featured actors garbed in the various khaki uniforms of the self-governing colonies. The escort for the procession comprised a group of Londoners dressed in the recognizable uniforms of the New South Wales Lancers.⁴⁸

The annual Royal Military Tournament was one of the more visible venues for performing the pageantry of imperial unity.⁴⁹ A collaboration among the army, the government and private entrepreneurs, this popular show featured drills, parades, and theatrical reenactments of historical battles. Beginning in 1891, colonial forces became a regular staple of the

⁴⁵ For a historical parallel, see John Ellis, “Reconciling the Celt: British National Identity, Empire, and the 1911 Investiture of the Prince of Wales,” *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 37 October 1998, 391-418.

⁴⁶ *Glasgow Evening News*, July 24 1902. In 1899 the New South Wales Lancers visited Aberdeen on a goodwill tour. An editorial noted that “if the ‘hands across the sea’ idea sounds somewhat sentimental, it is the healthy kind of sentiment which has done so much to nurture and consolidate the numerous and widely scattered portions of our vast Empire, and the gallant fellows, who have before now proved their readiness to fight for their Queen and Empire may be sure of the kindest of greetings from the people of Aberdeen.” *Aberdeen Weekly Journal*, August 11 1899.

⁴⁷ *Daily News*, May 3 1893; NA. Imperial Institute Papers PRO 30/76/308 “Programme of the State Inauguration of the Imperial Institute, May 10 1893.”

⁴⁸ *Times*, November 9 1899; *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper*, November 5 1899. For a history of the Lord Mayor’s Show, see David Bergeron, *English Civic Pageantry, 1558-1642* (Columbia, 1971).

⁴⁹ Jeffrey Richards, *Imperialism and Music, Britain 1876-1953* (Manchester, 2001), 213-214.

tournament.⁵⁰ Australian mounted troops, Bengal lancers, Dyaks from Borneo, and Hausas from West Africa all took their turn in delighting Londoners with their choreographed presentations. The tournament also reproduced important overseas events for the metropolitan audience. For example, the 1903 event reenacted Edward VII's extravagant Indian Durbar, complete with elephants, camels, and British soldiers in black-face paint representing the various Indian regiments. This attempt to reconstruct and represent the subcontinent failed to dupe one amused reviewer, who noted that "in the vast majority of cases nothing but the brawny hands of the Britons, hands such as no Oriental could boast, betrayed their race." Nonetheless he admitted "it was brave, gallant, and gorgeous in an extraordinary degree. It will certainly go like 'wildfire.'"⁵¹

The climactic event in these martial displays was the 1910 pageant "Britannia's Muster." Conceived as a theatrical representation of imperial unity, the event took place inside the 'Olympia,' a large indoor arena in Kensington. Hundreds of British soldiers dressed in the various uniforms of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, and India paraded alongside a series of decorative floats representing the colonies. At the conclusion of the pageant, the participants congregated around an elevated platform to pay homage to a young woman dressed as "Britannia" in a symbolic representation of imperial unity. The official description insisted "Britannia's Muster is no mere pageant. It is the military Spirit of our Empire translated into flesh and blood."⁵² A *Times* correspondent agreed, adding that "'Britannia's Muster' is a

⁵⁰ Richards, *Imperialism and Music*, 213-215.

⁵¹ *Times*, May 15 1903.

⁵² *Illustrated London News*, June 25 1910, 1007.

spectacle of wonderful dignity and it should bring its lesson to us all. Not a lesson of chauvinism, but one of confidence in our great power if we are only wise enough to know how to direct it.”⁵³

It is a mistake to view these imperial spectacles as ephemeral events confined solely to the boundaries of the metropole. Indeed, military pageantry proliferated throughout the self-governing colonies as powerful symbols of an evolving imperial relationship. In 1900 New South Wales Premier William Lyne cooperated with Joseph Chamberlain to bring a large contingent of British and Indian troops to Sydney for ceremonies marking the new Commonwealth of Australia.⁵⁴ The resulting show reproduced the spectacle of the Diamond Jubilee over 10,000 miles from Trafalgar Square. Famous imperial regiments such as the Life Guards and the Queen’s Own Hussars joined Australian, New Zealand, and Indian troops in a grand celebration “which represented the founding of another British nation.”⁵⁵ The event stressed both national pride and the shared responsibility of imperial leadership. The leading newspaper of Australia, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, concluded its account of the parade by proudly proclaiming “men of British speech all over the world look forward with over-increasing confidence to that alliance of English-speaking peoples which will one day hold with secure and loyal hands the balance of the world’s peace in the interest of civilization and progress.”⁵⁶

A similar display took place at the 1908 Quebec Tercentenary.⁵⁷ Though ostensibly a celebration of Canada’s multiethnic heritage, British and Dominion authorities highlighted the

⁵³ *Times*, June 21 1910. An Australian correspondent criticized the Kangaroo-themed float as “a sorry projection of our country, aggressively unimaginative” but admitted ‘Britannia’s Muster,’ on its military side, is a fine display.” *Sydney Morning Herald*, August 2 1910.

⁵⁴ Much of the enthusiasm for the visit originated from Australian rather than British officials. The Chancellor of the Exchequer Michael Hicks-Beach questioned the costs involved, insisting “it is one thing to represent all the forces of the empire at the capital of the empire on the Queen’s Jubilee, and another to do so at Sydney on such an occasion.” JC 16/5/30 Michael Hicks-Beach to Joseph Chamberlain, September 6 1900. For a study of the opening ceremonies, see John Hirst, *Sentimental Nation: The Making of the Australian Commonwealth* (Oxford, 2001).

⁵⁵ *Argus* (Melbourne), January 2 1901. One “Old Australian” recalled boyhood memories of British troops and insisted “we care not to look upon members of Parliament and aldermen of the city in carriages but we do want to see the soldiers of Old England.” *Sydney Morning Herald*, January 2 1901.

⁵⁶ *Sydney Morning Herald*, January 2 1901.

imperial connection through a massive military review on the Plains of Abraham. Over 12,000 members of the Canadian militia from every province joined thousands of British sailors and marines in a splendid demonstration of Anglo-Canadian solidarity. The imperial connection was further emphasized through the presence of leading British figures such as the Prince of Wales, Governor General Earl Grey, and popular Field Marshal Frederick “Bobs” Roberts. Canadian press accounts of the Tercentenary celebration immediately recognized its overtly imperial component. One paper insisted “the splendor of the military pageant was worthy of the occasion and significant of the position which the Dominion now assumes in the politics of nation as the eldest daughter of the Empire.”⁵⁸ Another pointed to the intermingling of British and Canadian troops as “about as vivid a reality as we can get in this world of force.”⁵⁹

What do these examples suggest about the nature of imperial spectacles? The actions of Chamberlain and other government officials leave little doubt as to the important political and diplomatic dimensions enmeshed within these events. In a period of wavering national confidence and heightened international competition, policymakers sought to reinforce the image of the British Empire as a powerful global entity. They employed martial pageantry to present domestic, colonial, and foreign audiences with stark examples of the possibilities of imperial unity. Authorities also recognized the potential of spectacles to unify diverse groups within the boundaries of the metropole. The decisions to route military parades through the impoverished East End were unmistakable attempts to appeal to the masses in return for domestic support for

⁵⁷ For an excellent study of the Tercentenary, see H.V. Nelles, *The Art of Nation-Building: Pageantry and Spectacle at Quebec's Tercentenary* (Toronto, 1999). After the Tercentenary, one British military officer told Governor General Minto that the organizer, Frank Lascelles, “did the Pageant A.1.—and if India were not a continual pageant itself and rather a troublesome one I fear now—you would do well to have him out there and have a show of the king in India.” Minto Papers MG 27 IIB Volume 26. Charles Hanbury-Williams to Minto, September 9 1908.

⁵⁸ *Montreal Gazette*, July 25 1908.

⁵⁹ *Ottawa Citizen*, July 25 1908.

the imperial mission.⁶⁰ Yet this “top-down” approach alone does not provide a satisfactory analysis for understanding the importance of imperial spectacles. Scholars must look beyond the purely propaganda role to understand the ways in which promoters, actors, and spectators participated in and shaped the underlying messages of these grandiose pageants of empire.

Imagining an Imperial Community

Imperial spectacles served as more than opportunities for entertaining the crowds and impressing foreign dignitaries. They became important cultural performances for defining and projecting the racial hierarchy of the British Empire. Imperial elites placed a premium on cultivating solidarity with the white self-governing colonies. They regarded events such as the jubilees and the coronations as pivotal steps in the construction of “Greater Britain.” Conversely, they marginalized the role of non-white participants from India, the Crown Colonies, and the Protectorates. Popular discourse cast the non-white colonials as loyal “martial races” that required the constant application of European discipline to prevent their descent into a primordial state of decivilization. For many contemporaries, these ethnographic displays served as little more than a colorful spectacle for the masses and a splendid reminder of Britain’s civilizing mission. Within this context, imperial spectacles advertised the myriad virtues of empire while simultaneously reinforcing the wide chasm separating white society from colonized peoples.

Authorities in the imperial government cooperated to ensure proper treatment of all colonial visitors during their time in the United Kingdom.⁶¹ A Colonial Office official described

⁶⁰ CO 323/420 Undersecretary of the War Office to Undersecretary of the Colonial Office, June 14 1897.

⁶¹ Many government agencies contributed to the costs of the colonial contingents. The Colonial Office financed the visit of the Colonial premiers, the India Office assumed responsibility for all Indian troops and escorts, the War Office arranged for housing and provisioning, and the various colonial governments paid transportation. PC 22/1

their presence as “rather a big thing” and urged the Diamond Jubilee Committee to attach “the utmost importance to the character of the reception given to the colonial troops.”⁶² They arranged for tours of area attractions such as Parliament, the Tower of London, and the naval review at Portsmouth. The royal family hosted private reviews at Windsor Castle and Buckingham Palace and the Prince of Wales walked among the ranks and personally awarded each man a bronze Jubilee medal.⁶³ Even private benefactors lent their assistance to this cause of imperial propaganda. The directors of the Imperial Institute hosted an extravagant reception in their honor, and Sir Henry Irving opened the doors of his Lyceum Theater to soldiers of all races for complimentary performances of *A Story of Waterloo*.⁶⁴

For most colonial soldiers, the most common pastime was exploring the streets of London. The War Office secured comfortable accommodations at the Chelsea Barracks, conveniently situated within one of the more fashionable neighborhoods of London.⁶⁵ Not surprisingly the colonial troops became an object of local curiosity. Crowds gathered daily at the main gate to pose for pictures with the colonials.⁶⁶ A neighborhood newspaper reported that “they are quickly making friends, either with the Guards or with the civilians, many of whom are only too pleased to have for company one of the smart troopers of the Cape Mounted Rifles or one of the black soldiers.”⁶⁷ Another individual proudly proclaimed they “are fraternizing under

Memorandum of the Chancellor of the Exchequer February 2 1897; PC 22/2 Total Costs of the 1897 Jubilee by Government (undated but with handwritten note of February 6 1901).

⁶² LC 2/137 Chief Clerk of the Colonial Office William Baillie-Hamilton to Sir Spencer Ponsonby, February 3 1897; Baillie-Hamilton to Arthur Bigge, May 28 1897 in *Letters of Queen Victoria Volume III* (London, 1932), 166.

⁶³ *Times*, July 3 1897; *Times* July 5 1897.

⁶⁴ PRO 30/76/3 Executive Council Minute Book 1891-1898, Minutes of June 16 1897; *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, June 20 1897.

⁶⁵ A local paper reported that “the barrackrooms have been prepared for their reception . . . with much good taste in the way of decoration and furnishing, the gymnasium has been converted into a mess headquarters, with smoking and recreation rooms attached. The whole of the interior has been draped with bunting, in which national and colonial flags properly predominate.” *West Middlesex Advertiser*, May 28 1897.

⁶⁶ *West Middlesex Advertiser*, June 11 1897.

⁶⁷ *West Middlesex Advertiser*, June 11 1897. The same paper reported how wealthy Maoris enjoyed their time in the West End. He explained “Some of them are very well off, and they are making the most of their visit to London to

conditions which brings home to them, even more vividly than they do to us, what the British Empire means.”⁶⁸ For non-white colonials in particular, these arrangements were a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that seemed to elevate their marginalized status into what they perceived as a position of honored dignitary. It produced, according to the *Illustrated London News*, an exceptional cultural exchange in which “the color distinction was forgotten, even by a London crowd.”⁶⁹

Beneath this veneer of imperial brotherhood however lay an established racial hierarchy that emphasized the white solidarity of the empire. Imperial enthusiasts such as Chamberlain encouraged the participation of non-white representatives in order to promote the impression of widespread colonial loyalty. The Colonial Office even turned down a Diamond Jubilee offering of white volunteers from West Africa by explaining “we want a good show of Hausas.”⁷⁰ Yet the highest honors of the day were reserved for whites from the self-governing colonies.

Authorities took great care to differentiate the status of colonial premiers from visiting maharajas and other native potentates. One member of the jubilee committee even proposed housing the premiers with European princes as this elevation in status “would please them immensely.”⁷¹

They also took advantage of prevailing sentiments by convening a special colonial conference on matters of imperial politics, defense, and trade.⁷² Most importantly, imperial elites constantly

see the sights and learn something of English life, and make all sorts of purchases for their relatives and friends at the Antipodes.” The Indian contingent at Hampton Court during Edward VII’s 1902 Coronation had a similar experience. A reporter recalled how Indian troops took part in local games, noting “while those Surbitonians who were present on this ground will long remember this unique occasion, we venture to think that in their turn the picturesquely clad visitors will consider that afternoon at Tolworth as not one of the least pleasant of their memories attaching to their stay in this country.” *Surbiton Times and Surrey County Journal*, July 25 1902.

⁶⁸ *Graphic*, May 29 1897, 654.

⁶⁹ *Illustrated London New*, June 26 1897.

⁷⁰ CO 96/290 Handwritten memorandum by Permanent Undersecretary Montagu Ommaney, March 8 1897.

⁷¹ LC 2/137 Edmund Pelham-Clinton to Ponsonby, February 3 1897.

⁷² For the colonial conference, see: John Edward Kendle, *The Colonial and Imperial Conferences 1887-1911: A Study in Imperial Organization* (London, 1967); Donald Gordon, *The Dominion Partnership in Imperial Defense* (Baltimore, 1965). Defense expert George Clarke reflected the desires of many contemporaries when he stated his hopes that “so auspicious an occasion will not be lost and that the reign of the Queen will be crowned by the

emphasized the familial relationship with their overseas “cousins” and painted the jubilee as an important milestone on the path towards a future of pan-British cooperation. As one periodical explained, “no one talks of the Colonial Premiers as strangers, or of the Colonial elements of the procession as accessories . . . we have here a striking illusion of the progress of the imperial ideal.”⁷³

Despite the popular fascination with the colonial contingents, the nature of public discourse differed substantially when comparing soldiers of European descent with the non-white troops. Many witnesses at the 1897 Jubilee alluded to the overwhelming popularity of the white colonials in their fashionable khaki uniforms. One newspaper noted that colonial uniforms “have lately become almost as beloved of the Londoner as the glittering accoutrements of the Life Guards.”⁷⁴ British society also celebrated these mounted troopers as symbols of rugged colonial masculinity. As Chapter Three explained, widespread perceptions of the white colonials as “rough riders” or “Bushmen” served to reinforce common assumptions about the settler colonies as frontier communities promoting a lifestyle of hard work, virtue, and manly endeavor. Many accounts focused on physical features such as “youth, good looks, and splendid physique.”⁷⁵ An illustrated paper described the Australian soldiers as “magnificent specimens of the hard ‘wire and whip’ cornstalk,” while an Irish journalist characterized the South African troopers as “tall, erect, and forward in demeanor, without any dramatic pretence.”⁷⁶ This characterization contrasted the alleged physical superiority of white colonials with men from the metropole, which they attributed to “the effect of a more genial climate and the open air habits of

inauguration of something like a sense of Imperial Defence, supplying what is now our greatest need—organized strength.” *Proceedings of the Royal Colonial Institute Volume 28, 1896-1897* (London, 1897), 144.

⁷³ *Graphic*, June 12 1897.

⁷⁴ *Bristol Times and Mirror*, June 25 1897, June 27 1897; *Pall Mall Gazette*, June 22 1897

⁷⁵ *Glasgow Herald*, June 23 1897.

⁷⁶ *Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times*, June 19 1897; *Belfast News-Letter*, June 26 1897.

life.”⁷⁷ Despite these differences, however, contemporaries viewed these “kin from across the seas” as part of a “Greater Britain” linked by cultural and racial ties.⁷⁸ They praised the white colonials as “vigorous off-shoots of the old stock,” and considered “every man such a splendid specimen and testimony to the greatness of the British race.”⁷⁹

By comparison, European audiences emphasized the perceived “exoticism” of the non-white contingents. As Heather Streets has demonstrated, this process of those in power constructing a subaltern identity entailed a level of performance in the guise of outlandish uniforms and costumes—many of which bore little resemblance to cultural or ethnic practices.⁸⁰ Newspaper accounts of the royal procession noted the presence of “picturesque colonials” and “swarthy and bejeweled Orientals.”⁸¹ One individual insisted that “the contrast between the Chinamen in inverted pudding-basin hats, stalwart Hausas in gaudy colours, and the various East Indian detachments with the fine forms of the Canadian, Australasian, and Cape contingents, afforded a most interesting sight.”⁸² An American correspondent believed that the Zaptiehs from Cyprus and the Dyaks of Borneo represented “the real oddities in the eyes of Londoners,” but also described the Hong Kong police contingent with their “strange saucepan-like hats inverted over their immobile yellow faces.”⁸³ Spectators also focused on skin color as an inherent trait creating a clear demarcation from colonials of European descent. This practice was most readily apparent with regard to African and West Indian troops, whose “blackness” became synonymous

⁷⁷ *Illustrated London News*, June 12 1897 (807).

⁷⁸ *Judy*, June 23 1897, 298.

⁷⁹ *Times*, July 23 1897; *Daily Mail*, June 23 1897.

⁸⁰ For its application to colonial soldiery, see Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race, and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture* (Manchester, 2004). Prof. Streets explains that “this notion of performance is essential, for every soldier in the Sikh, Gurkha, and Highland regiments had no choice but to perform on a daily basis—an identity more or less chosen for him by his unit.” Streets, 201. One photographer at the Chelsea Barracks had a Dyak of the Borneo Mounted Police pose in an archaic costume with animal skins and a spear! National Army Museum, Photograph Collection 9204-273-3. For a broad discussion of this process of creating an identifiable “Other,” see Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1978).

⁸¹ *Liverpool Courier*, July 2 1897.

⁸² *County Life Illustrated*, July 3 1897, 734.

⁸³ *New York Times*, June 23 1897.

with “otherness.”⁸⁴ Mark Twain noted that the West African Hausas were “the very blackest I have ever seen,” and the queen described them as “fine looking men, but very black.”⁸⁵

This racialist discourse also employed paternalistic language that characterized the non-white troops as the beneficiaries of the benevolent imperial civilizing mission. Late Victorian accounts typically depict non-white colonial societies as effeminate, diminutive, and childlike peoples in need of proper supervision and direction.⁸⁶ In this context, the colonial contingents represented the perceived effects of European military discipline—a physical manifestation of what Michel Foucault terms “docile bodies.”⁸⁷ For example, an illustrated paper described the West African Hausa contingent as “widely different” from the white colonials, but admitted that they were “a fine black race, obedient and faithful under good officers, troops well drilled and perfectly disciplined, the steadiest, probably the most courageous of native African soldiery.”⁸⁸ Another correspondent reported similar thoughts, noting their appearance “gave one the impression of a people amenable to discipline.”⁸⁹ A writer for the *Daily News* believed that “the dusky sons of the Queen’s Asiatic Empire were justly admired for their soldierly bearing, and, in most instances, remarkably fine physique.”⁹⁰ Even the usually more restrained *Times* contrasted the regimented appearance of the Borneo Mounted Police with the fact that “one of their number is said in his uncivilized days to have taken 13 heads in his occupation of head-hunter.”⁹¹

⁸⁴ See Dana S. Hale, *Races of Display: French Representations of Colonized Peoples, 1886-1940* (Bloomington, 2008), 28-30; Jan Pieterse, *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture* (New Haven, 1992).

⁸⁵ Twain, 197; Queen Victoria’s Journal entry of July 1897 in George Buckle (ed), *Letters of Queen Victoria Volume III* (1932), 186.

⁸⁶ Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The ‘Manly Englishman’ and the ‘Effeminate Bengali’ in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester, 1995).

⁸⁷ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York, 1977).

⁸⁸ *Illustrated London News*, May 29 1897.

⁸⁹ *Belfast Daily News-Letter*, June 26 1897.

⁹⁰ *Daily News*, June 23 1897.

⁹¹ *Times*, June 23 1897.

This representation of the “civilized” native soldier ultimately rested on continued loyalty and subservience to their colonial overlords. Imperial elites sent a clear message that military service to the empire afforded non-white subjects an elevated position in the highly structured colonial hierarchy. They stressed the transformative effects of donning a military uniform and accepting a position, however marginal, of shared responsibility for the maintenance of imperial security. As one critic explained, “surely never since the black races became subject to the dominion of the dominant white man has the Englishman gazed upon an Ethiopian skin with such a feeling of almost fraternal interest, recognizing in the ‘nigger’ a soldier and a man—a soldier, moreover, who wears the Queen’s uniform.”⁹²

Of course the reality of colonial inequality illuminated the wide gulf separating Britons from their non-white “martial races.” Though applauding their colorful appearance, the *Times* admitted “it would be absurd, indeed, to expect from the Hong-Kong men or from other strange troops which have known civilized boots for a few days only the machine-like precision with which the Brigade of Guards have made us familiar.”⁹³ General Garnet Wolsey offered a similarly unsparing verdict. He praised his native African soldiers as fine warriors, but compared them to hunting dogs whose natural instincts “renders it easy to teach them their special work.”⁹⁴ Socialists also remarked upon these non-white contingents. “Marxian” of the *Labour Leader* praised the physical size of Sikh soldiers but thought “they looked like a conquered race.” He noted “their obedience to the young officer, who did not even wear their uniform,” and added that they “had none of the ‘springiness’ you see in the English Guards.”⁹⁵ Perhaps G.W. Steevens of the *Daily Mail* provided the clearest window into late Victorian ideas

⁹² *Pall Mall Gazette*, June 22 1897.

⁹³ *Times*, June 12 1897.

⁹⁴ Garnet Wolsey, “The Negro as a Soldier.” *Fortnightly Review*, December 1888, 689.

⁹⁵ *Labour Leader*, June 26 1897. The writer concluded “It was difficult to believe these servile giants represent one of the militant elements of India. Their behavior was that of a blackleg workman before a capitalist.”

about race and empire. Labeling the colonial procession an “anthropological museum,” he concluded “with them came their English officers, whom they obey and follow like children. And you begin to understand, as never before, what the Empire amounts to.”⁹⁶ Stevens, like many contemporaries, held firm to a strict racial hierarchy that prevented non-white subjects from ever assuming the privileged label of “British.”

Relationships between British women and their colonial guests further underline the delicate racial boundaries of these imperial events. White colonial soldiers arrived in Great Britain with a masculine frontier persona and high rates of pay. These troops also enjoyed greater freedom of movement than their non-white contemporaries and the opportunity to roam the neighborhoods and to interact with local women in an unsupervised environment. Given these conditions, it is unsurprising that they attracted “the whole attention of the London nursemaid.”⁹⁷ One Australian correspondent informed his readers that the white colonial troops “are having what the Americans call a ‘good time,’” and that they were “the recipients of many presents at the barracks, as well as the most oppressive kindness whenever they go abroad.” He addressed the concerns of mothers, wives, and sweethearts at home by assuring them “fortunately they are all abstemious (sic) else what would happen can be only be guessed from the effusive hospitality offered everywhere.”⁹⁸ An ebullient New Zealander wrote home about attending picnics and parties with women who were “gorgeous beyond description.” The young

⁹⁶ *Daily Mail*, June 23 1897.

⁹⁷ *Hearth and Home*, June 24 1897, 304. Another woman admitted “our aim and end was to capture a military man and keep him.” Coleman, *To London for the Jubilee*, 89.

⁹⁸ *Argus* (Melbourne), August 5 1897. These suggestive trends certainly foreshadowed the later wartime experiences on the Home Front, when ANZAC and Canadian soldiers developed a marked reputation for their sexual excesses. During the First World War, British police conducting undercover operations against prostitutes often adorned the uniform of the Canadian soldier! Wartime authorities also estimated that 33% of Australian troops returning from Egypt had contracted venereal diseases. Phillipa Levine, “Battle Colours: Race, Sex, and Colonial Soldierly in World War I,” *Journal of Women’s History* 9, No. 4 (Winter 1998), 104-130. Levine, 106, 108.

trooper concluded “a person really does not know he is alive if he has never been out of New Zealand.”⁹⁹

A more complicated matter was the interaction between British women and non-white soldiers. Phillipa Levine’s study of First World War colonial soldiery uncovers the widespread fears of racial miscegenation. She explains:

Running concurrently were the myths of uncontrolled black lust close to home, *and* white proletarian women’s curiosity about sex and, most dangerously, about interracial sex. Together these tropes and myths made for an explosive anxiety about the presence of colonial blacks on Western and especially on British, soil.¹⁰⁰

These attitudes are a bit more difficult to detect for earlier periods. No War Office records survive regarding the administration (and behavior problems) of colonial forces during the jubilees or coronations. Moreover, local newspapers around the Chelsea Barracks were unsurprisingly mum on the subject of interracial relationships.¹⁰¹ Yet one account may have betrayed deeper fears about the subject. A Jubilee edition of the *West London Press* reported the arrest of a young black merchant sailor from Liverpool for threatening several white women with a knife. The report contained all manner of sexual tropes. It noted that he “startled several ladies of locality by offering to rip them up and pay them other attentions. Every time he waved his blade, which was about two inches long, the lady squealed.” The Justice of the Peace released the man with a warning after admiring his “row of white teeth.”¹⁰²

⁹⁹ *Otago Witness* (New Zealand), August 26 1897. Other colonial soldiers undoubtedly shared his sentiments. In the aftermath of the Jubilee, the New Zealand volunteer forces reported a marked surge in applications. Ian McGibbon, *Path to Gallipoli: Defending New Zealand* (New Zealand, 1991), 102. McGibbon draws his information from G.L. Clayton, “Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee and its Importance to New Zealand’s Army” in *Defence Force Journal* 64 (1987), 56.

¹⁰⁰ Levine, “Battle Colours: Race, Sex, and Colonial Soldiery in World War I,” 110.

¹⁰¹ To gauge local reaction, I examined West London neighborhood papers such as the *West London Press*, the *Advertiser* (Westminster), the *West Middlesex Advertiser*, and the composite paper *Kensington Express, Notting Hill, and West London Examiner*.

¹⁰² *West London Press*, July 9 1897.

Of course this general omission from the public record does not preclude the probability of interracial relationships during imperial spectacles in the metropole. Indeed, a fascinating article in the national *Pall Mall Gazette* entitled “Black Troops and their Lasses” alluded to the interaction between West African troops and white working-class women during the Diamond Jubilee. The article, notable for both its tone and frankness, is worth quoting in detail. The author recounted the association of white women with men “of a breed that is not classed so high in the ethnological scale as his sweetheart *pro tem*.” He noted that “a pair of sweethearts, one on each arm—not an uncommon spectacle—is fairly convincing proof of the popularity of the Colonial.” Though acknowledging the frustration this caused British soldiers in the barracks, he explained that the colonial “takes to amorous dalliance with a natural grace a guardsman might envy,” and that “his strut is that of a man conscious of his powers of attraction.” Most surprisingly, the author regarded this interracial contact as an acceptable component of the Jubilee’s overall appeal to colonial subjects. He surmised:

The colonial trooper, pampered being that he is, would not be human if he did not depart from the shores of the mother country feeling a couple of inches taller, and conscious that he is a very important unit in the aggregate of the British Empire. His easy conquests of the fair sex are only a part of the favour shown to him by the inhabitants of Chelsea.¹⁰³

It is doubtful that most Britons shared this sanguine view of such a taboo subject. Yet even this account adopted and accentuated the racial (and sexualized) rhetoric that constructed an unmistakable difference between whites and the colonial “Other.”

More mainstream views of imperial relationships surfaced during Edward VII’s Coronation. An Australian visitor recorded his utter disgust at the prevalence of working-class white women’s interactions with black African troops. He maintained that “there is no colour prejudice just at present among the petticoated element of that part of our population which some

¹⁰³ *Pall Mall Gazette*, July 12 1897.

people refer to as the ‘lower orders.’ A temporary lover from over the seas seems to have for them an irresistible attraction no matter the colour.” Though wishing that English women would direct their attention solely to the Australian visitors, he added “doubtless the ‘nigger’ has advantages over his white brother in arms. His kiss must be truly comprehensive, for instance, and his smile really soul-satisfying.”¹⁰⁴ The veiled allusion to raw colonial sexuality is unmistakable, as is the Australian’s tendency to refer to Londoners as “our population.”

Later imperial celebrations continued to emphasize the white-dominated hierarchy of the empire. In preparation for the 1902 Coronation, the Colonial Office joined with private benefactors in sponsoring a “Colonial Troops Club” for white personnel only. The opening address by Joseph Chamberlain stressed the bonds of *white* imperial solidarity: “This club, which I now formally declare to be open, is only a proof of that feeling of brotherhood and sympathy which animates the whole British race, and which justifies our hope and confidence in the future of the British Empire.”¹⁰⁵ Unlike the Jubilee, the coronation’s logistical arrangements included segregated travel and living accommodations. These restrictive policies undoubtedly met with the approval of white colonials, who were far more sensitive to racial differences. As one Antipodean visitor happily reported, “there seems no disposition on the part of the Australians to fraternise with the ‘blackamoors’ of any shade.”¹⁰⁶ Nonwhite forces also experienced a heightened level of supervision from military and civilian authorities. During the tour of Scotland, a Glasgow newspaper assured its readers that “the evening in camp passed away quietly. The coloured troops kept pretty much to their own quarters and retired early.” At the same time, the paper noted (with a degree of admiration) that the white colonials

¹⁰⁴ *Mercury* (Hobart), August 6 1902.

¹⁰⁵ *Manchester Guardian*, June 7 1902.

¹⁰⁶ *Mercury* (Hobart), August 6 1902. With the exception of the Maoris, who travelled with the remainder of the New Zealand contingent. *Glasgow Evening News*, July 31 1902.

“notwithstanding the tiring journey of the previous evening ‘did’ the principal streets of the city.”¹⁰⁷

The 1911 Coronation of George V took this process a step further, barring the participation of most non-white colonial forces. During the planning stages, representatives from the India Office warned that “disciplinary and moral difficulties arose from the proximity of the camps occupied by the Indian troops to London, and a bad effect was produced on their return to India.”¹⁰⁸ The Colonial Office voiced similar concerns over its non-white contingents, prompting the Coronation Committee to resolve that “it is inadvisable on general grounds that native troops from India or the Colonies do attend the Coronation.”¹⁰⁹ The national press took little note of this omission, with the *Times* merely informing its readers that “there will not, on the occasion of this Coronation, be quite such numerous detachments of native soldiers as in 1902.”¹¹⁰ The Coronation of 1911, like the upper echelons of imperial leadership, was to be a whites-only affair.

Invented Tradition or Popular Celebration?

How effective were mass spectacles in transmitting a vision of imperial unity? Were these displays manifestations of a deeply and widely shared sense of imperial solidarity, or was the unity that they symbolized nothing more than an ephemeral sentiment? These questions are difficult to answer with any degree of authority, particularly in the absence of modern polling

¹⁰⁷ *Glasgow Evening News*, August 1 1902.

¹⁰⁸ For the 1902 Coronation, the Indian troops billeted at Hampton Court, and the remainder of the colonials (white and non-white) at Alexandra Palace. Once again, little evidence exists to suggest widespread problems with the non-white forces, though Australian troops did report a series of disagreements with African forces.

¹⁰⁹ PC 22/5 Minutes of Coronation Executive Committee, October 31 1910.

¹¹⁰ *Times*, January 17 1911.

data and other forms of quantitative data.¹¹¹ One explanation is that many Britons ignored the obvious propaganda message.¹¹² This conclusion seems plausible as the sheer scope and magnitude of the “show” likely attracted people who lacked any emotional investment in the deeper messages of imperial unity. At the same time, the documented responses from the primarily working-class crowds who attended these events cannot be overlooked. Ample evidence exists to suggest that large components of the audience eagerly embraced the broader themes resonating throughout the imperial spectacles. While acknowledging the inherent limitations of this “top down” approach, this section advances several ways in which Britons experienced and interpreted these messages of imperial (and racial) unity.

Certainly some individuals actively resisted the imperial propaganda message.

Organized labor and other socialist voices deprecated imperial pageants as the sinister devices of bourgeois hegemony. As the mouthpiece of the Independent Labour Party, the *Labour Leader* launched a vitriolic attack on the supposed imperial community of the Diamond Jubilee:

These had no place in the process: the poorest class of English prostitutes; the luckless criminals whom poverty and unfortunate conditions of life have landed in jail; the workhouse paupers, byproducts of capitalist civilization; the asylum lunatics, increasing in number every day; the hospital wrecks of industrialism, and so forth. No doubt such people do not exist. The Jubilee has banned them.¹¹³

Another socialist journalist proudly assured his readers he had skipped Edward VII’s coronation and read *Don Quixote* instead.¹¹⁴ Adopting the same racial rhetoric of his bourgeoisie opponents, he compared imperial pageants to native rituals and insisted “it’s really time we

¹¹¹ Not so the case for the 1936 Coronation of King George V, where historians can employ oral history surveys from the “Mass Observation Project” of the 1930s.

¹¹² See for example Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists* (Oxford, 2006). Rüger takes a more balanced approach, showing the limitations of viewing these spectacles as simple expressions of “popular imperialism” and instead shedding light on alternative explanations. See Rüger, *The Great Naval Game*, 93-139.

¹¹³ *Labour Leader*, June 26 1897.

¹¹⁴ *Labour Leader*, August 16 1902.

began to behave like white men.”¹¹⁵ One amusing anecdote from the socialist weekly *Clarion* featured two working-class men in pub praising the king’s health in order to solicit free drinks from the wealthier patrons. The paper denounced other working-class periodicals for their interests in “a passing show.”¹¹⁶ Independent Labour Party member Keir Hardie consoled himself with the thought that “the cheering millions would be there and cheer just as lustily if the occasion were the installation of the first President of the British Republic”¹¹⁷

Though socialist leaders hoped to paint imperial spectacles as objects of class oppression, many working-class Britons participated in these events. Newspapers and popular accounts of the Diamond Jubilee routinely employed terms such as “loyal,” “patriotic,” and “enthusiastic” to describe the predominately proletarian crowds that lined the streets. For example, Leo Maxse’s account of the Diamond Jubilee noted “as the Queen approached the more democratic quarters of the metropolis, the more demonstrative became the enthusiasm.” He concluded “no event in our time has given so much general enjoyment, or has done so much to knit all classes of the community together.”¹¹⁸ The *Times* echoed these sentiments, believing that “the thronging multitude, full of the same thoughts, the same hopes, and the same confidence, was, indeed, a more striking sight than any mere scenic display.”¹¹⁹

This enthusiasm occasionally accelerated into a jingoist fervor that foreshadowed the

¹¹⁵ *Labour Leader*, July 5 1902.

¹¹⁶ *Clarion*, June 20 1902; *Clarion*, July 4 1902; *Clarion*, August 15 1902. Not all socialist groups turned against imperial pageantry. In 1897 the reform-minded Fabian Society hosted colonial leaders from Australia and New Zealand in a special luncheon. They explained “the Jubilee is a national festival from which we, as socialists, should not dissociate ourselves.” *Fabian News*, June 1897, 17; *Fabian News*, July 1897, 17.

¹¹⁷ *Labour Leader*, June 19 1897.

¹¹⁸ *National Review*, July 1897, 641.

¹¹⁹ *Times*, June 23 1897. One public suggestion at the 1902 coronation to arrange a colonial military review in the East End, as “the presence there of Colonial troops would fire the enthusiasm of the masses, who are, above all things, patriotic.” *Daily Mail*, July 3 1902.

later “Mafficking” celebrations of the Boer War.¹²⁰ During the Diamond Jubilee, an American witness in the East End overheard numerous calls for the appearance of “Dr. Jim” in the procession.¹²¹ Upon further inquiry, he discovered that “Dr. Jim” was none other than Dr. Leander Starr Jameson, the disreputable leader of a failed filibustering invasion of the Transvaal the previous year. A New Zealand soldier recorded a similar experience. While parading through a working-class neighborhood, his unit was mistaken for the frontier veterans of the Jameson Raid. Surprised by their “patriotic” spirit, he recalled how one old Cockney implored him “not to forget to cut old Kruger’s wizen when I got back to Africa.”¹²² It seems implausible in retrospect that “patriotism” could be associated with an illegal invasion of a sovereign state. But as one Canadian visitor explained, “in spite of trials and sentences, and other portentous proceedings, ‘Dr. Jim’ occupied a very warm corner in the hearts of the English people, who rightfully forgive everything to the man whose motto is the sacred monosyllable ‘Pluck.’”¹²³

At times these outbursts threatened to undermine the carefully choreographed ceremonies of state pageants. In 1902 the City of Liverpool arranged a welcome ceremony for the vessel conveying the Canadian contingent to King Edward’s coronation. Authorities cleared a space around the Alexandra Dock to accommodate local dignitaries and a military band. Upon its arrival, however, the ship was surrounded by a host of small pleasure boats and other watercraft that prevented safe debarkation. Further difficulties emerged when crowds swamped the narrow wharf. One angry “Liverpudlian” insisted “they had not right to show any gratification by such means without getting the ‘tip’ from the only and proper place at the only

¹²⁰ For a discussion of “Mafficking” disturbances and other popular outbursts, see Paula Krebs, *Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire: Public Discourse and the Boer War* (Cambridge, 1999).

¹²¹ *New York Times*, June 23 1897.

¹²² *Otago Witness*, August 26 1897. A reference to President of the Transvaal Paul Kruger.

¹²³ Coleman, *To London for the Jubilee*, 114.

and proper time! What effrontery! What amazing audacity!”¹²⁴ A similar incident occurred at the Diamond Jubilee naval review in Portsmouth Harbor. When informed of the lack of charter boats, thousands of angry spectators engaged in unruly behavior which local authorities characterized as “disgraceful scenes.”¹²⁵ The most illustrative example of popular intrusion into state pageantry occurred during a ceremony for the visiting New South Wales Lancers in 1899. Thousands of eager spectators lined the streets as “sober-serious looking business men vied with their enthusiastic juniors in the endeavour to shake hands with the willing Lancers.”¹²⁶ However this patriotic fervor marred the official arrangements. In the midst of the Lord Mayor’s speech, the crowd began to call for the Coldstream Guards Band to play “Soldiers of the Queen” (a popular music hall tune). When the bandmaster refused, thousands of voices erupted in boisterous song. Most appallingly, the Australian troopers had to push their way through an unruly crowd to ascend the train platform, and many had their expensive ostrich plumes plucked from their hats. One press account dryly noted that the crowd “had again got beyond the bounds of ordinary enthusiasm.”¹²⁷

While many people admired the “patriotism” of the masses, others resented what they saw as an unwarranted intrusion into a respectable celebration of empire. The editor of a ladies’ journal hoped that the Diamond Jubilee procession would not pass by their office as “I should object to the crowd making a hideous noise for three hours or so.”¹²⁸ In the aftermath of a colonial military review at Chelsea Barracks, an indignant Londoner suggested that future reviews require purchased seats which would “prevent the admission of an unruly crowd.”¹²⁹

¹²⁴ *Liverpool Courier*, June 19 1902.

¹²⁵ *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle*, July 3 1897.

¹²⁶ *Daily Mail*, October 11 1899.

¹²⁷ *Pall Mall Gazette*, October 10 1899. Also see *Times*, October 11 1899. When Australian troops visited Manchester in 1897 they experienced similar trouble disembarking the train due to the crowds. *Manchester Guardian*, August 21 1897.

¹²⁸ *Hearth and Home*, June 24 1897, 304.

During the 1902 coronation, one Scottish newspaper reminded its readers of the “rowdyism which has disgraced London on recent festive occasions” and insisted “the wise man will do well to avoid London during the Coronation week unless the King invites him as an honoured guest.”¹³⁰ These critics clearly viewed these imperial spectacles as privileged spaces not to be disturbed by the masses.

The important role of extra-political agitation also points to the popularity of imperial spectacles among different elements of British society. Other scholars have recognized the importance of the “radical right” in advancing imperialist and militarist ideas during the Edwardian era.¹³¹ Certainly pressure groups such as the Navy League, the National Service League, the Imperial Federation (Defence) Committee, and the Tariff Reform League cooperated with government officials to promote imperial spectacles. However, much of this agitation operated contrary to the wishes of policymakers in Whitehall. During the Diamond Jubilee rumors began to emerge about the mistreatment of white colonial forces at the hands of British authorities. On June 15 the *Daily Mail* published a story of rampant dissatisfaction among the Australian troops at having to march behind black African troops. The editors condemned the government for its poor reception and concluded “there is not an Englishman but feels that we have, so to speak, invited our guests to our private residence and relegated them to the stables.”¹³² Several days later the paper reported on arrangements which prevented the colonial soldiers from attending the Jubilee naval review in Portsmouth.¹³³ Though the issue was quickly addressed by the proper authorities, the report sparked a media firestorm which forced the

¹²⁹ *Morning Post*, June 9 1897.

¹³⁰ *Glasgow Evening News*, June 13 1902.

¹³¹ See Geoffrey Searle, “‘The Revolt from the Right’ in Edwardian Britain,” in *Nationalist and Racialist Movements*, eds. Paul Kennedy and Anthony James Nicholls (London, 1981), 21-39; Ann Summers, “The Character of Edwardian Nationalism: Three Popular Leagues,” *ibid.*, 66-87; Andrew Thompson, *Imperial Britain: The Empire in British Politics* (London, 2000), 38-59.

¹³² *Daily Mail*, June 15 1897; *Daily Mail*, June 16 1897.

¹³³ *Daily Mail*, June 22 1897.

government to defend its position in Parliament and collect statements from colonial officers who insisted that the accusations were “entirely devoid of foundation.”¹³⁴

The most notable component of this agitation was that it encompassed a wide spectrum of British public opinion.¹³⁵ The normally satirical magazine *Judy* adopted a serious tone towards the alleged mistreatment of white colonial troops. It praised the “warm-hearted loyalty of our kin from across the sea,” and warned that “the idiot responsible for any insult, whether of omission or commission, towards our Colonial visitors . . . will have to be sent about his business.”¹³⁶ The radical *Reynolds’s Newspaper* also expressed its consternation over the “meanness of the Tory Government” towards fellow Britons from overseas. In Glasgow angry residents convened a public meeting to protest the government’s refusal to send the colonial contingents to Scotland. The local papers threw their weight behind this effort, insisting that “there were amongst the Colonial troops a great many Scotsman, and to deny these men a sight of their native land at this time was most unfair, and he might say also showed a lack of appreciation of patriotism on the part of the officials concerned.”¹³⁷ The most unexpected support for colonial soldiers came from the *Labour Leader*. Though condemning the overall Jubilee festivities, the socialist paper directed particular attention to the “many petty slights inflicted on the premiers and troops of Britain’s great self-governing colonies.” It praised white colonials for their “healthy devil-may-care and pride of life,” and concluded “the new democracies of Australia can breed men indeed. My heart went out to the boys.”¹³⁸ In this specific instance, the desire to accommodate their colonial “cousins” during their sojourn in the

¹³⁴ *Hansard Parliamentary Debates Serial 14 Volume 50*, June 28 1897, 634. In reality the Admiralty intended to provide colonial troops with a private review several days following the main events.

¹³⁵ Leo Maxse, the iconic voice of the “radical right,” supported the Unionist government by crediting these complaints to “a cheap sensational press” and the “exceedingly lively fancies of the new race of journalists.” *National Review*, July 1897, 772. Also see the *Times*, June 21 1897.

¹³⁶ *Judy*, June 23 1897, 298.

¹³⁷ *Glasgow Herald*, Monday July 5 1897.

¹³⁸ *Labour Leader*, June 26 1897.

Mother Country provided a cause that temporarily unified conservatives, liberals, radicals, and socialists alike.

One final issue for consideration is the influence of imperial spectacles on visiting white colonial soldiers. This topic demands additional research, particularly in locating the letters and diaries of various colonial subjects who attended the jubilees and coronations. Yet the example of the New South Wales Lancers provides one tangible connection between the lure of imperial spectacle and the underlying sentiments of imperial unity. The lancers—a volunteer force of part-time soldiers—traveled to England on multiple occasions to take part in ceremonies such as the opening of the Imperial Institute and the Diamond Jubilee procession. Their frequent visits to the Mother Country prompted one London paper to proclaim that “no colonial corps is better known in England than the NSW Regiment of Lancer Volunteers!”¹³⁹ In the summer of 1899 approximately one hundred members (mostly Australian born) came “home” to participate in the Royal Military Tournament and train alongside British forces at Aldershot. The lancers were still in England in the fall when hostilities erupted with the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. While the British government scrambled to secure military support from the self-governing colonies, the entire contingent volunteered for service in South Africa.¹⁴⁰ Their celebrated departure from London generated a crowd of one hundred thousand spectators, one of which proudly proclaimed that they reflected “the unity of the Empire, for which all of us in our inmost hearts feel a pride.”¹⁴¹

The case of the New South Wales lancers offers a microcosm study for assessing the possible impact of imperial spectacle on white colonial subjects. On the one hand, their

¹³⁹ *Graphic*, June 19 1897, 755.

¹⁴⁰ See Craig Wilcox, “The New South Wales Lancers in England and South Africa, 1899: an episode in imperial federation,” *London Papers in Australian Studies No. 1* (London, 2000).

¹⁴¹ Quoted in Wilcox, “The New South Wales Lancers in England and South Africa,” 29.

participation in the South African War reflected a broader phenomenon throughout the far reaches of the empire. As Chapter Two demonstrates, thousands of other white colonial soldiers volunteered to fight the Boers in what was widely construed as an “imperial” conflict. Evidence also exists to suggest that their commanding officer, Captain Charles Cox, goaded the men into service by emphasizing their sense of “duty” and other masculine notions.¹⁴² But the manner in which an entire contingent of Australian troopers, thousands of miles from home, stepped forward *en masse* for service under British authority cannot be discounted as mere wartime opportunism. Though this subject demands far more research, the incident does suggest a possible link between spectacle and the sense of belonging in the wider imperial community.

These trends point to the powerful undercurrents of mutual affection that existed between the white residents of the metropole and the self-governing colonies. This is not to argue that all Britons supported the monarchy, the government, the armed forces, or imperialism (in its myriad forms and definitions). But it does support the idea that a common identity and a belief in the inherent unity between the disparate white English-speaking peoples of the empire undergirded a world view shared by many (if not most) Britons. Imperial spectacles thus promoted and, at the same time, reflected a particular vision of empire based on racial unity and the perceived bond of “Britishness.” As one participant at the 1902 coronation later concluded, “in the last resort it is on sentiment, on the passionate, well-nigh religious attachment of the British subject to England and the British crown, on their pride of race and of communion in a great past, that the empire rests.”¹⁴³

¹⁴² Wilcox argues that distrust of their leader rather than anti-imperial sentiments led to hesitation among the unit.

¹⁴³ “Sigma” (Pseud. Thomas Wetherell), “Empire and the Coronation,” *Fortnightly Review*, July 1902, 30.

CONCLUSION

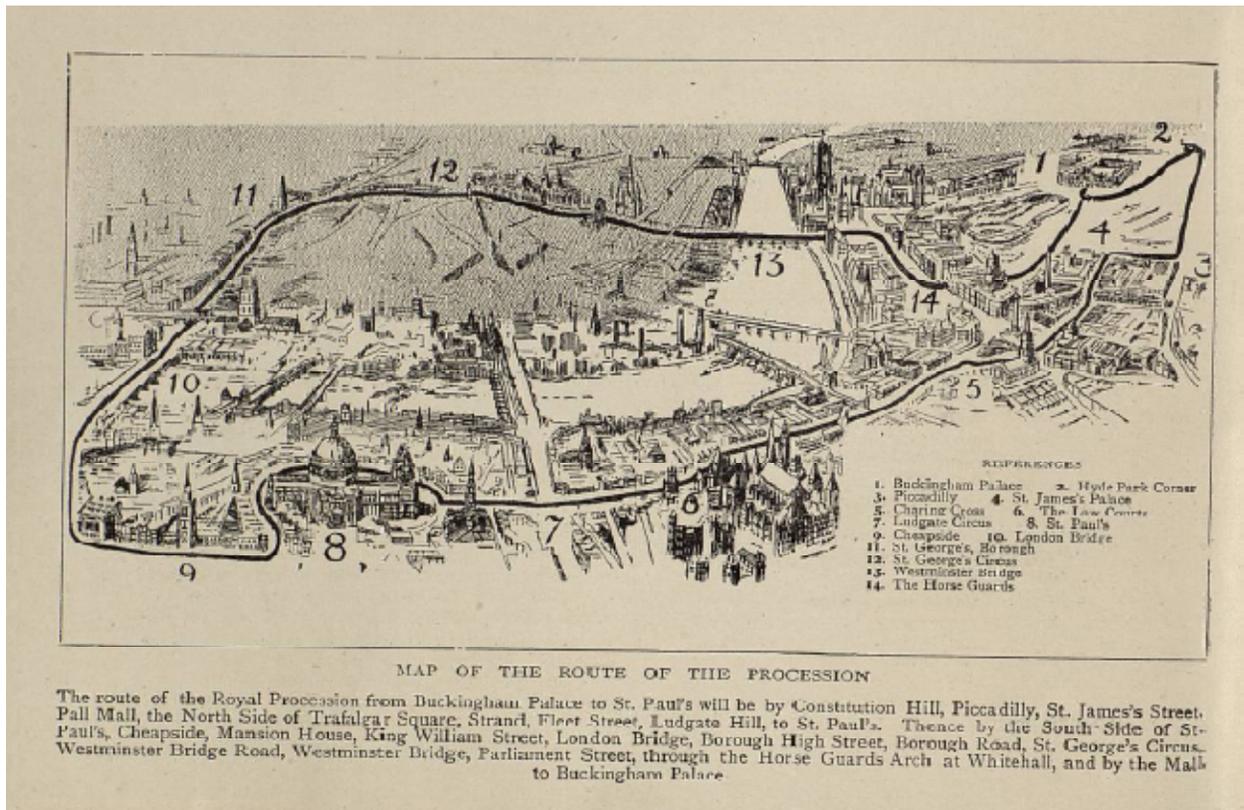
In the aftermath of the Diamond Jubilee, Mark Twain reflected on the use of pageantry and ritual as a form of mass communication. He concluded “so far as I can see, a procession has value in but two ways—as a show and as a symbol; its minor function being to delight the eye, its major one to compel thought, exalt spirit, stir the heart, and inflame the imagination.”¹⁴⁴

Twain shrewdly captured the essence of British imperial spectacle in the Age of Empire. Large-scale public celebrations such as the Diamond Jubilee provided extraordinary venues to showcase themes of imperial unity to foreign and domestic audiences alike. At the same time, these events revealed the inherent limits for non-whites to participate in a shared imperial connection. To many Britons, these “colorful” displays reinforced prevailing sentiments of pan-British racial superiority and the imperial civilizing mission. This was the lesson for at least one young Etonian, himself destined to a career in imperial propaganda. As one of millions of spectators watching the empire on parade, he concluded “we are the people of destiny. It is evidently our job to run the world.”¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴ Twain, “Queen Victoria’s Jubilee,” 189.

¹⁴⁵ John Evelyn Wrench, *Uphill The First Stage in A Strenuous Life* (London, 1934), 28. Wrench later founded the Royal Overseas Club and the English Speaking Union.

FIGURE 4:1¹



¹ *Illustrated Programme of the Jubilee Royal Procession* (London, 1897).

FIGURE 4:2¹



Members of the Natal Contingent at Chelsea Barracks, 1897

FIGURE 4:3



Members of the Canadian Contingent at Chelsea Barracks, 1897

¹ Photos courtesy of the National Army Museum

FIGURE 4:4¹



West African Hausas at the Diamond Jubilee, 1897

FIGURE 4:5²



Illustration of Troops from Hong Kong and the Straits Settlements

¹ Photo Courtesy of the National Army Museum.

² *Programme of the Jubilee Royal Procession* (London, 1897).

Chapter Five

“Of the Blood of Sea Peoples:” Navalism and Greater Britain

So shall that seapower whence our Empire and our freedom came not only continue to be the strong shield of our defence, but become also a living bond of union, linking ever more closely the groups of our widespread race.

W.F. Wyatt, 1902¹

In the summer of 1897, a magnificent demonstration of British naval power assembled at Spithead to celebrate Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee. Over 165 warships entertained the masses with fireworks, searchlight displays, and carefully orchestrated drills.² Within this “invented tradition,” colonial representatives occupied a prominent position.³ The leaders of the self-governing colonies accompanied the Prince of Wales behind the procession of the royal yacht *Victoria and Albert*, while chartered trains transported several hundred colonial soldiers from the Jubilee contingents to attend the naval spectacle. The usually satirical *Punch* celebrated this gathering for its message of imperial unity, chiefly the importance of seapower as part of a shared maritime heritage. Its cartoon depicted a rowboat full of lion cubs cast in naval cadet uniforms and waving the pennants of Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the Cape Colony. An adult “British Lion” directed the boat through the assembled fleet, exuberantly proclaiming “this is the proudest moment of my life!”⁴ (Figure 5:1) The meaning was clear to

¹ *Spectator*, July 5 1902, 15.

² *Times*, June 25 1897.

³ Eric Hobsbawm and Terrance Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983); *Times*, June 28 1897. Naval reviews certainly meet Hobsbawm and Ranger’s understanding of ritual as modern inventions, as they only dated only to the mid-nineteenth century.

⁴ *Punch*, June 26 1897.

contemporaries: Great Britain was spreading the lessons of naval power to the young Dominions in order to foster interest in this common bond of empire.

The end of the nineteenth century witnessed a wave of intense public interest in the navy. This phenomenon—what contemporaries termed “navalism”—transcended mere matters of propaganda and party politics to play a central part in the ongoing construction of “British” identity.⁵ Other historians, most notably Jan Rüger, have shown how Britons eagerly embraced their historical connections to the sea, with warships, sailors, and other maritime icons occupying sacred places in the national pantheon. The self-identification of an “Island Race” possessing the world’s greatest navy and commercial fleet influenced the development of sense of global “Englishness” and “Britishness” during the “long eighteenth century.”⁶ Imperialists in the age of Gladstone and Disraeli continued this trend, with prominent theorists such as James Anthony Froude, John Seely, and Charles Dilke depicting the empire as a transoceanic entity of self-governing states linked by a common race, culture, and connection to the sea.⁷ Within the construct of “Greater Britain,” the Royal Navy was a highly visible symbol, safeguarding the interests all Britons. This popular association of the navy with imperial unity became an easily identifiable motif in late Victorian middle-class discourse; it was no coincidence, after all, that

⁵ The classic text on naval propaganda is W. Mark Hamilton, *The Nation and the Navy: Methods and Organization of British Naval Propaganda, 1889-1914* (New York, 1986). Hamilton eschews a wider cultural framework and focuses exclusively on naval propaganda in the press aimed at greater procurement of warships. More recent works rectify this situation by examining the powerful influence of the “Cult of the Navy” in Edwardian society. See Jan Rüger, *The Great Naval Game: Britain and Germany in the Age of Empire* (Cambridge, 2007); Mary Conley, *From Jack Tar to Union Jack: Representing Naval Manhood in the British Empire 1870-1918* (Manchester, 2009).

⁶ Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire, and Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 2003); P.J. Marshall, “Empire and British Identity: The Maritime Dimension,” in *The Empire, the Sea, and Global History*, ed. David Cannadine (New York, 2007).

⁷ See, for example, James Anthony Froude, *Oceana, or England and Her Colonies* (London, 1886); John Seeley, *Expansion of England* (London, 1883); Charles Dilke, *Greater Britain* (London, 1868); Charles Dilke, *Problems of Greater Britain* (London, 1890); Henry Newbolt, *The Island Race* (London, 1898); Cynthia Behrman, *Victorian Myths of the Sea* (Athens, 1977).

organizers of the first Empire Day celebration in 1902 adopted the slogan “One King, One Flag, One Fleet, One Empire.”⁸

The gradual evolution of a white Commonwealth of self-governing Dominions only reinforced these connections among race, empire, and navalism. The challenges of the Anglo-German naval arms race, combined with a relative decline in British industrial and economic power, cast significant doubts upon the island state’s capacity to defend its overseas possessions. As the “Weary Titan” struggled under its burden, many people in Great Britain looked to the Dominions for assistance in maintaining naval supremacy. Government authorities, journalists, and colonial statesmen alike employed all manner of propaganda and education to promote the navy as a vital imperial institution worthy of the towering levels of expenditure. The resulting outburst of navalism in the Dominions was widely interpreted through a racial lens, stressing the natural solidarity of the British people. Popular discourse celebrated Dominion financial assistance during the 1909 dreadnought crisis as the prophetic awakening of seafaring traits throughout the global British Diaspora. Moreover, the emergence of independent Australian and Canadian navies, which had historically evoked fears of imperial dissolution, now sparked widespread discussions of a new maritime alliance between free “British” states. Colonial nationalism embraced these new navies, operating under the full authority of the Dominion governments, as ample proof of their autonomy and evolving presence on the world stage. Yet by ensuring imperial coordination in wartime and by maintaining exceptionally close links with the Royal Navy, these forces symbolized traditional connections within the empire, often blurring the line between “national” and “imperial” allegiances.

⁸ J.O. Springhall, “Lord Meath, Youth, and Empire” *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol. 5, No. 4 (1970), 97-111.

This chapter explores how the public celebration of the navy in the decades preceding the First World War provided a symbolic point of reference for maintaining the sentimental ties of imperial solidarity. It provides a valuable cultural component to existing studies of Edwardian naval policy.⁹ As the empire's fate became strongly associated with the preservation of naval supremacy, Britons at home and abroad sought reassurance through greater support of the Royal Navy. Unlike local defense initiatives, naval cooperation translated into truly "imperial" cooperation, safeguarding the common preserve of all Britons. At the same time, the growing popularity of navalism encouraged some colonial populations to acquire and maintain separate navies. In this light, British efforts to procure greater naval cooperation in the years 1897-1914 centered on identifying and cultivating a supposed common maritime inheritance in the Dominions—an inheritance that satisfied colonial nationalism while at the same time positing a distinctive "Britishness." Navalism thus became a powerful discursive tool offering amended versions of the same message to staunch imperialists and colonial nationalists alike.

Navalism and the Empire

Modern warships constituted the most visible tool for reinforcing the connections among the empire, the sea, and the British race. These massive steel bastions of state of the art technology served as floating symbols of progress and modernity, and as a visual reminder of why "Britannia" ruled the waves. And in an imperial network in which "Britannia" increasingly encompassed the white residents of Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and South Africa, the

⁹ See for example: W.C.B. Tunstall, "Imperial Defence, 1897-1914" in *Cambridge History of the British Empire Volume I* (Cambridge, 1929), 563-604.; Donald Gordon, *Dominion Partnership in Imperial Defense 1870-1914* (Baltimore, 1965); Arthur Marder, *From Dreadnought to Scapa Flow Volume I* (Oxford, 1966); Richard A. Preston, *Canada and Imperial Defense 1867-1919* (Durham, 1967); Jon Sumida, *In Defence of Naval Supremacy: Finance, Technology, and British Naval Policy 1889-1914* (London, 1989); Rhodri Williams, *Defending the Empire: Conservative Party and British Defense Policy, 1889-1915* (New Haven, 1991); Nicholas Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution* (Columbia, 1999).

modern warship also represented a common link traversing the global highways of the empire. The naming of individual warships reflected this cultural association of the navy as an agent of imperial unity. Admiralty officials christened new vessels with names such as HMS *Commonwealth*, HMS *Dominion*, and HMS *Prince of Wales*, emphasizing a mutual loyalty to monarchy and empire. More specific names such as HMS *New Zealand*, HMS *Natal*, and HMS *Canada* established a special connection between the colonies and individual ships.¹⁰ By reserving these titles for the navy's most powerful battleships and cruisers, they ensured that colonials "would take much greater pride and interest in knowing that HMS "So and So" and HMS "Something-Else" were *their* Ships and a visible tangible object lesson of the Dominion's part in the Empire's defence."¹¹

Fleet reviews and naval demonstrations provided venues for the Admiralty to display seapower to a wider imperial audience. This public celebration of the navy—what Rüger terms "naval theatre"—constituted a form of mass spectacle while "offering an icon, at once modern and romantic, for the imagination of a shared imperial vision."¹² Much of this imperial propaganda focused on high-ranking white colonial visitors to the United Kingdom. Royal celebrations and coronations offered periodic opportunities to expose Dominion leaders to the lessons of navalism. After the successes of the Golden and Diamond Jubilees, even larger and more grandiose reviews took place for the 1902 and 1911 royal coronations. When King Edward

¹⁰ For the identification of warships with various components of the empire, see Jan Rüger, "Nation, Empire, and Navy: Identity Politics in the United Kingdom 1887-1914," *Past and Present*, November 2004, 170-176. Admiralty officials devoted considerable thought to naming capital ships, which required the approval of the sovereign. In 1912, First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill submitted a recommendation to George V to name one of the navy's new battleships HMS *Oliver Cromwell*. The king, clearly not amused by Churchill's antics, denied the request. CHAR 13/10/99-100 Winston Churchill to King George V, October 28 1912; CHAR 13/11/8 Lord Stamfordham (Private Secretary to King George V) to Churchill, November 4 1912.

¹¹ CO 209/270 Governor General of New Zealand Lord Plunkett to Colonial Office, June 14 1909. Emphasis in original.

¹² Rüger, *The Great Naval Game*, 13.

VII fell ill only days before his coronation, the naval review proceeded without him.¹³ Denied the ceremonial participation of the monarch, the review became a spectacle solely for the assembled masses, including many visitors from the Dominions. Indeed, Admiralty officials alluded to this important colonial audience in justifying the expenses of the Diamond Jubilee.¹⁴ The review for the 1911 coronation of the “Sailor King” George V surpassed all other naval pageants in its scope and imperial connection. The Colonial Office requested accommodation for over 750 colonial guests, and arranged specially chartered trains to Portsmouth on the day of the review.¹⁵ Upon arrival, spectators gazed upon a magnificent display of 167 warships arranged in seven rows each over five miles long. A *Times* correspondent reveled in its impact on Dominion guests, one of whom admitted “I have seen some sights in my time . . . but *never* (with deep emphasis) ‘have I dreamed of anything like this.’”¹⁶ The 1911 coronation also featured a new imperial dimension: the participation of several hundred sailors and naval cadets from the recently formed Royal Australian and Royal Canadian navies.¹⁷ Though small in number, their appearance represented to many contemporaries the first indication of navalism’s influence in the self-governing communities across the seas.

The Admiralty took this message of navalism abroad to the Dominions. Upholding a long-standing tradition of “showing the flag” in far-flung possessions, the Royal Navy employed warships to serve as goodwill ambassadors and symbols of imperial unity. Many spectacles combined naval pageantry with that other emblem of imperial loyalty, the monarchy. British warships routinely conveyed members of the royal family on grand imperial tours of the empire.

¹³ John Bodley, *The Coronation of Edward the Seventh: A Chapter of European and Imperial History* (London, 1903), 319.

¹⁴ Rüger, *The Great Naval Game*, 178.

¹⁵ National Archives. Admiralty Files (Hereafter cited as ADM) 116/1157 Hartman Just (Assistant Undersecretary of State) to Secretary of Admiralty, March 16 1911.

¹⁶ *Times*, June 26 1911

¹⁷ *Times*, February 21 1911.

The navy played a highly visible role in the Royal Tour of 1901 and the 1911 Delhi Durbar. Indeed, the appearance of the sleek new battlecruiser HMS *Indomitable* at the 1908 Quebec Tercentenary attracted as much attention as its most prominent passenger, the Prince of Wales.¹⁸ In a more common scenario, the navy acted as a representative of royal authority in distant colonial locations. Admiralty instructions for the 1902 Coronation of Edward VII required warships on colonial stations to visit the principal cities and perform small-scale reviews for the local inhabitants.¹⁹ At the appointed hour of the coronation, naval vessels would coordinate with land batteries in firing a royal salute. In this manner, the residents of Auckland, Vancouver, and Melbourne could share in the cloistered ceremonies of Westminster Abbey through the common intermediary of the Royal Navy.

Despite the concerted efforts of the Admiralty to foster navalism in the Dominions, it is a mistake to view these policies as a propaganda campaign fueled solely within the corridors of Whitehall. Non-governmental actors were equally crucial in “selling” the navy to overseas audiences. Extra-parliamentary organizations such as the Imperial Federation (Defence) Committee, the Imperial Maritime League, the Society of Islanders, and the British Navy League flourished amidst the anxieties of the Anglo-German naval arms race. The last organization, with a membership of over 100,000 by 1914, made significant efforts to reach out to white subjects throughout the empire. In 1902, Navy League member H.F. Wyatt embarked upon a tour of the Dominions to establish chapters and preach the gospel of imperial defense cooperation. Some conservative voices within Britain expressed disappointment with this popular crusade, worrying that the League’s actions might circumvent government efforts to

¹⁸ See Philip Buckner, “The Royal Tour of 1901 and the Construction of an Imperial Identity in South Africa” *South African Historical Journal* 41 (2000), 324-348; ADM 116/1126 for Delhi Durbar arrangements; For a survey of the imperial dimensions of the Quebec Tercentenary, see H.V. Nelles, *The Art of Nation-Building: Pageantry and Spectacle at Quebec’s Tercentenary* (Toronto, 1999), 213-233; *Winnipeg Free Press*, July 23, 1908.

¹⁹ ADM 116/1148 Copy of Admiralty Instructions dated May 14, 1902.

reach a consensus with Dominion leaders on naval defense.²⁰ Nonetheless, Wyatt's tour saw considerable success in establishing overseas chapters and influencing public opinion.²¹

Avoiding controversial issues, he emphasized the navy's role in protecting all Britons, characterizing it as "the engine that was externally responsible for the well-being of the race."²²

Most importantly, Wyatt appealed to popular emotions by highlighting the romantic aspects of navalism. Subsequent trips by Navy League envoys mirrored this approach, showing lantern slides of famous warships and encouraging schools to establish prizes for essays on British naval history.²³ As one local observer approvingly noted, "sentiment plays an all important part in the propaganda of the Navy League."²⁴

British and Dominion journalists also assumed major roles in propagating the message of navalism to an imperial audience. In 1909, leading members of the British press orchestrated the empire's first Imperial Press Conference in order to strengthen the bonds of imperial unity.²⁵

Conference organizers worked in conjunction with government officials to advertise the navy

²⁰ *Times*, September 27 1902. Some colonials disagreed. A New Zealand editor noted "on the contrary, it will be welcomed, and unless we have entirely misread public opinion, welcomed heartily." *The Star* (Canterbury, NZ), October 1 1902.

²¹ W. Mark Hamilton. *The Nation and the Navy: Methods and Organization of British Navalist Propaganda, 1889-1914* (New York, 1986), 129. By 1906 the league boasted overseas chapters in South Africa (Cape Town, Durban, Pietermaritzburg, Orange River Colony), New Zealand (Wellington, Auckland, Canterbury, Southland, Otago, Otago Ladies, Otago Boys' High School, Collegiate School of Wanganui, Boys' High School of Christchurch, Nelson), Australia (Melbourne, Adelaide, Tasmania, Hobart), Canada (Quebec, Victoria Esquimalt, Montreal, Kingston, Toronto, Toronto Daughters of the Empire, St Alban's Cathedral School of Toronto, Halifax, Vancouver, Winnipeg, Ottawa) and other crown colonies and protectorates (Hong Kong, British Guiana, Singapore, Barbados, Malta, Perak, Napier, and Bombay.) Resident Britons also established branches in Japan, Shanghai and Chinkiang. *Navy League Journal*, April 1906 (101).

²² *Advertiser* (Adelaide), September 15 1903.

²³ See for example the 1909 New Zealand tour of Navy League member T.C. Knox in *The Colonist* (Nelson, NZ), January 9 1909; *Evening Post* (Wellington), January 25 1909; *Wanganui Herald*, January 20 1909.

²⁴ *Evening Post* (NZ) 14 June 1912. The league congratulated Wyatt, noting his work "has been of a nature to leave its mark on the history of the British peoples, and has tended to the solidarity of the Anglo-Saxon Race." *Navy League Journal*, August 1904.

²⁵ Imperial defense became the most popular topic of discussion. In his "Welcome Home" speech to conference delegates, Liberal former Prime Minister Lord Roseberry insisted "it may be your duty to take back to your young Dominions across the seas this message and this impression: that some personal duty and responsibility for national defence rests on every man and citizen of the Empire." Thomas Hardman, *A Parliament of the Press* (London, 1909), 14. For a recent study of the conference, see Simon Potter, *News and the British World* (Oxford, 2003), 132-159.

through lectures, informal discussions, and a massive naval review at Spithead.²⁶ Unlike previous reviews, this spectacle lacked a celebratory *raison d'être*, and instead focused solely on “educating” the Dominion delegates. In this regard, the event was a success. Conference leaders noted that their colonial cousins gleefully “picked out the ships whose names made an appeal to their respective geographical interests—the *Dominion*, the *New Zealand*, *Africa*, *Commonwealth*, *Natal*, and so forth.”²⁷ British journalists such as Arnold White, Archibald Hurd, and J.L. Garvin reinforced this theme in their detailed coverage of the review—with full knowledge that Dominion papers typically republished their articles. White’s editor encouraged him to make his account “as picturesque as possible, conveying to the reader vivid impressions of the magnificent display.”²⁸ Hurd of the *Daily Telegraph* characterized the review as “a broad lesson in Imperial Duty” and hoped that delegates were “intent upon finding some means by which the whole undeveloped capabilities of the race might be gathered together and organized for the protection of the common highway.”²⁹

Australian author Frank Fox serves as a prominent example of how this personal dialogue between the British press, the Admiralty, and Dominion journalists could establish imperial networks of cooperation with the common goal of promoting navalism. An Australian nationalist, Fox wrote for the anti-imperial Sydney *Bulletin* and produced several books critical of British leadership, including the famous *Bushman and Buccaneer* about Australian national martyr Harry “Breaker” Morant.³⁰ Possibly influenced by the emotional appeal of the Imperial

²⁶ The powerful “press baron” Lord Northcliffe informed First Sea Lord Sir John Fisher “this is one of the most important gatherings that has (sic) ever taken place in England, and your demonstration will be the most important part of that gathering.” Northcliffe Papers. No. 62159 Northcliffe to Fisher, March 12 1909.

²⁷ Hardman, *A Parliament of the Press*, 70.

²⁸ National Maritime Museum. Arnold White Papers (Hereafter cited as WHI) 77 Robert Donald to Arnold White, May 10 1909. The editor of the *Daily Chronicle*, Donald served on the Executive Committee of the conference.

²⁹ CCA. Archibald Hurd Papers (Hereafter cited as HURD) 2/3 Clipping from *Daily Telegraph* of June 14 1909.

³⁰ An Australian officer executed by British authorities in the 2nd Anglo-Boer War. Frank Renar (pseudonym) *Bushman and Buccaneer* (Sydney, 1902).

Press Conference, Fox soon secured employment with the powerful Northcliffe press organization and composed articles with imperial and naval themes for the *Times* and the *Daily Mail*.³¹ His subsequent proposal to write a book about the navy “from an imperial standpoint” prompted Northcliffe to lobby on his behalf for Admiralty support. Northcliffe lauded Fox as “the man who completely converted the ‘*Sydney Bulletin*’ from its anti-English views to its present patriotic note.”³² The result was a brief work aimed at a Dominion readership and promoting the Royal Navy as a common instrument of Empire. Fox employed colorful illustrations and paid the requisite homage to Britain’s naval hero Admiral Horatio Nelson. He connected England’s naval heritage to a broader imperial audience, describing its warships as “wonderful as manifestations of human energy and human genius, more wonderful as manifestations of pride of race.”³³ Significantly, Fox—an avid supporter of an independent Australian navy operating in conjunction with imperial forces—avoided controversial claims and instead focused on the popular fascination with warships. His book was generally well-received in Australia, where reviewers noted its particular appeal to children.³⁴

It is misleading to imply that the Admiralty, the Navy League, and other imperialist groups forced this propaganda campaign on unwilling colonials. On the contrary, Dominion populations actively consumed the message of navalism. In 1907, Australian Prime Minister Alfred Deakin broke Colonial Office protocol by inviting the United States Navy’s “Great White Fleet” to visit the Commonwealth during its worldwide tour.³⁵ A staunch proponent of an independent Australian navy, Deakin’s actions constituted a calculated political maneuver

³¹ Northcliffe Papers, 62178 Fox to Northcliffe, June 22 1909; Northcliffe to Fox, July 24 1909.

³² Northcliffe Papers, 62159 Northcliffe to Fisher, July 29 1909.

³³ Frank Fox, *Ramparts of Empire* (London, 1910), 102-103.

³⁴ *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 9 1910; *The Mercury*, July 11 1910; *Sydney Mail*, July 13 1910; *Brisbane Courier*, July 20 1910.

³⁵ CO 418/60 Alfred Deakin to Consul General United States, Melbourne Office, December 24 1907. Deakin expressed his belief that Australians “are anxious to have some opportunity of expressing our sympathy with our kinsmen in their demonstration of naval power.”

intended to spark Dominion interests in naval affairs.³⁶ This carefully orchestrated event certainly entailed the necessary ingredients, as the grand reception afforded to American sailors demonstrated Australia's desire for naval pageantry. In its aftermath, Australian ministers attempted to exploit this sentiment by requesting a British fleet visit the principal ports of the Dominion, assuring the Admiralty of its "beneficial influence upon public opinion."³⁷ Yet British officials politely declined. The Royal Navy commander on the Australian station warned against any half-hearted attempt to "show the flag," explaining that Australians would naturally and invidiously compare any visiting squadron to the imposing American fleet.³⁸ British officials secretly advised the Governor General to withdraw the request before the public became aware of its existence, but not before its publication generated great speculation about a possible naval tour.³⁹

Where Dominion enthusiasts failed to procure warship visits for public consumption, they sought to bring home detailed descriptions of the naval reviews in Europe. In preparation for the 1909 Cowes Naval Review, colonial press representatives experienced trouble securing credentials from the Admiralty. An agitated member of the New Zealand Associated Press pleaded "that it would be an excellent thing for the Imperial Navy (sic) movement if a colonial writer could send out a series of articles on the work of the Navy written from observation."⁴⁰ Another press agency specializing in photographs and illustrations for overseas audiences appealed to the Admiralty for press credentials by providing a substantial list of colonial patrons.

³⁶ The move also sent a pointed reminder to the British Government that Australia might rely on another "Anglo-Saxon" power for protection against Japanese expansionism. See James Reckner, *Teddy Roosevelt's Great White Fleet* (Annapolis, 1988).

³⁷ CO 418/61 Governor General Dudley to Colonial Office, September 14 1908.

³⁸ CCA. Reginald McKenna Papers (Hereafter cited as MCKN) 3/8 Richard Poore to McKenna, September 14 1908.

³⁹ CO 418/61 Colonial Office to Governor General, Australia, September 23 1908. For the public speculation, see *Sydney Morning Herald*, September 11 1908; *West Australian*, September 11 1908; *The Argus* (Melbourne), September 11 1908.

⁴⁰ ADM 1/8049 G.H. Schofield to First Lord of the Admiralty, July 5 1909.

They insisted “at the present the navy is extremely interesting to the Colonies where these Newspapers circulate and they would much appreciate the photographs which we could send them.”⁴¹ Dominion organizers of the 1910 Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto even sought to transport the spectacle of British naval reviews to the Great Lakes, albeit in a reduced scale. Citing the clauses of the Rush-Bagot Treaty demilitarizing the Great Lakes, they requested the Admiralty loan the large and intricate ship models used for naval construction. They admitted to widespread Canadian ignorance of naval affairs, and hoped that the models would trigger popular interest in this common imperial institution.⁴²

The 1913 world tour of the HMS *New Zealand* demonstrates the popular appeal of the navy in the overseas Dominions. A gift from the New Zealand Government to the Royal Navy, the battlecruiser embarked upon an imperial goodwill cruise after Dominion authorities voiced repeated complaints about the lack of British warships in the Pacific.⁴³ The voyage provided the Admiralty an opportunity to advertise this new vessel as a physical manifestation of imperial loyalty. In planning the itinerary, Captain Lionel Halsey suggested visiting as many New Zealand ports as possible, insisting “it would be the means of creating a great wave of Imperial Loyalty.”⁴⁴ Dominion Prime Minister Joseph Ward agreed, emphasizing the need for people of “all ages having an opportunity of seeing warships and having the advantage of witnessing Naval parades.”⁴⁵ Shortly before departure, South African officials submitted their own request to be added to the warship’s itinerary, explaining that the battlecruiser’s image “could not fail to have excellent effect in impressing popular imagination and quickening interest in the Navy.”⁴⁶

⁴¹ ADM 1/8049 Halftones, Limited to First Lord of the Admiralty, July 22 1909.

⁴² CO 42/937 J.O. Orr to Governor General Edward Grey, February 11 1910 (letter sent to ADM).

⁴³ See for example ADM 116/1148 Governor General New Zealand to Secretary of State for Colonies, October 25 1910; CO 209/271 Governor General New Zealand to Secretary of State for Colonies, October 11 1910.

⁴⁴ ADM 116/1285 Lionel Halsey to Admiralty Secretary Graham Greene, October 12 1912.

⁴⁵ CO 209/273 Governor General New Zealand to Secretary of State for Colonies, January 6 1911.

⁴⁶ ADM 116/1285 Governor General South Africa to Secretary of State for the Colonies, January 3 1912.

Further requests arrived from Australia, forcing the Admiralty to choose between several locations and expressing deep regret that time constraints precluded a more thorough tour.⁴⁷ Far from being passive victims of “imperial propaganda,” naval enthusiasts in the Dominions vied for the honor (and the visual splendor) of hosting the navy’s newest warship.

The *New Zealand*’s arrival in “home” waters in April 1913 represented the pinnacle of British and Dominion cooperation in the promotion of navalism. The vessel spent three months cruising the islands and visiting many coastal cities.⁴⁸ In most ports, the navy opened the battlecruiser to public tours. Approximately 400,000 New Zealanders out of a total population of one million explored “their” ship, surely making this event the largest spectacle in the Dominion’s history.⁴⁹ Local organizations and government agencies also came together to promote this historic event. Extravagant parties, parades, and dances greeted the men of the *New Zealand* at every port of call. The Dominion’s Education Department worked in conjunction with the New Zealand Navy League to print and distribute free half-tone picture cards of the battlecruiser to school children.⁵⁰ In Wellington, the Navy League and the local education authorities cooperated to transport over 5,000 children to an auditorium, where Halsey lectured on naval history and suggested an exchange of flags between British and New Zealand schools.⁵¹

⁴⁷ ADM 116/1285 Admiralty Memo, February 21 1913.

⁴⁸ Including Wellington, Napier, Gisborne, Auckland, Lyttelton, Akaroa, Timaru, Otago, Bluff, Milford Sound, Nelson, Picton, Wanganui, New Plymouth, and Russell. ADM 116/1285 Halsey to Admiralty, July 1 1913.

⁴⁹ ADM 116/1285 Estimates of People who visited onboard ship. For a detailed account of the tour of the HMS *New Zealand*, see National Maritime Museum. JOD/213 Diary of Bandsman A. E. Crosby (Royal Marines) on HMS *New Zealand* November 1912-January 1915.

⁵⁰ *The Navy*, Vol. XV. No. 9, September 1910.

⁵¹ *Evening Post* (Wellington), June 14 1912. The Admiralty resolutely approved of the successes of this tour and Churchill recommended Halsey as a Companion of the Order of St. Michael and St. George (CMG). CHART 13/6B Churchill to Harcourt 23 August 1913.

An Imperial Navy or Separate Navies?

On February 6 1909, the Australian Government placed an initial order in Great Britain for three *River*-class destroyers—the foundation of an independent Royal Australian Navy. Later that month, Her Majesty’s Theatre in Melbourne presented a short production celebrating “the Australian Navy: Its Beginnings and Fulfillments.” An illustrated backdrop depicted a powerful battlefleet of the Royal Navy accompanied by a small flotilla of destroyers with the large caption “Made in Australia.” An actor dressed as a British Jack Tar joined a “tiny Australian sailor” in a chorus with the striking and reassuring refrain “this part of the world belongs to us!”⁵² Once again, this symbolism alluded to the popular vision of a young nation preparing to assume responsibility for a common imperial task.

Most scholars of imperial defense focus on the incessant debate over colonial subsidies towards an Imperial Navy, versus the creation of small independent navies.⁵³ These works treat the evolution of Commonwealth naval defense schemes as a monolithic struggle pitting Admiralty “experts” against troublesome Dominion statesmen bearing the banner of colonial nationalism. This interpretation however overlooks the unprecedented level of imperial cooperation in naval defense. Leaders on both sides recognized the need to foster navalism in the Dominions in order to strengthen the collective defense of the empire. Many colonial nationalists predicated their support of independent navies in the expectation of cooperation with the Royal Navy, fulfilling their vision of the new imperial system as a loose global alliance of inherently “British” states. In a similar vein, many imperialists in the metropole came to embrace separate Dominion navies as a manifestation of Britain’s maritime heritage exported to the overseas possessions. They overlooked matters of strategic orthodoxy to emphasize the common

⁵² *The Argus* (Melbourne), February 22 1909.

⁵³ For example: Gordon, *Dominion Partnership in Imperial Defense*; Preston, *Canada and Imperial Defense*; Tunstall, “Imperial Defence, 1897-1914.”

racial and cultural links binding the “Mother Country” and her white colonists. In many cases, politicians, pressure groups, and the popular press signified support for autonomous Dominion naval forces long before the Admiralty “surrendered” to the whims of public opinion.

Chief objections to independent navies centered on two essential points: first, the argument that modern naval warfare required a concentration of force, and second, the fear that independent navies would accelerate imperial dissolution. Supporters of centralized forces drew upon the popular ideas of American strategic theorist Alfred Thayer Mahan, who argued for a decisive fleet engagement against the enemy’s main force, reducing its subsequent naval activity to sporadic raids against merchant shipping.⁵⁴ Colonial navies, scattered and isolated amongst the various coastlines of Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, they believed, would provide little assistance and might fall prey to larger enemy formations. Other critics, who often represented the thwarted proponents of the Imperial Federation movement, insisted that a decentralized naval system would impede common imperial goals and might dissolve the bonds of empire.⁵⁵ Significantly, opponents of colonial navies typically remained confined to educated high-brow society, who resented any pandering to public opinion at the expense of effective naval strategy. As the venerable defense theorist Sir John Colomb aptly stated, “it is lamentable that any naval authority should appeal to the judgment-seat of the Caesar of popular ignorance.”⁵⁶

Late Victorian imperial defense policy reflected this devotion to a single unified navy.⁵⁷ Though the Colonial Naval Defence Act of 1865 permitted the self-governing states to maintain

⁵⁴ Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Influence of Seapower upon History, 1660-1783* (Boston, 1890). Other major strategic theorists echoed this sentiment towards colonial navies. See for example: John Colomb, *Defence of Great and Greater Britain* (London, 1880); George Clarke and James Thursfield, *The Navy and the Nation* (London, 1897); P.A. Silburn, *The Colonies and Imperial Defence* (London, 1909).

⁵⁵ For a survey of these ideas, see John Kendle, *Federal Britain* (London, 1997).

⁵⁶ *National Review*, June 1906, 694.

⁵⁷ For an excellent backdrop to late nineteenth century imperial defense policy, see Donald Schurman, *Imperial Defence 1868-1887*, ed. John Beeler (London, 2000).

naval forces for local purposes, most colonies opted to pay subsidies towards the Royal Navy instead.⁵⁸ In 1887, New Zealand and the Australian states consented to an annual payment of £126,000 for an auxiliary squadron stationed in Australasian waters.⁵⁹ Viewing imperial defense through parochial lenses, Antipodean leaders envisioned this force as a local defense measure and secured a hard-fought concession from the Admiralty for consultation regarding its movements and composition. At the 1897 Colonial Conference, delegates agreed to continue this policy and reaffirmed the right of colonial oversight. For its part, the Admiralty took what it could get, but clearly indicated its preference when the Cape Colony voted to fund the construction of a warship for the Royal Navy on an unconditional basis.⁶⁰

The 1902 Colonial Conference resulted in even greater Dominion contributions towards naval defense. Faced with a growing Anglo-German arms race, the government pointed to the heavy burden on British taxpayers to defend the empire, claiming it was “a state of things which cannot be permanent.”⁶¹ They presented Dominion delegates with statistics illuminating the significant discrepancies in per capita naval expenditure between the “Mother Country” and the Dominions.⁶² The Admiralty also reiterated the imperative for a single imperial navy. Addressing conference delegates, First Lord of the Admiralty the Earl of Selborne explained that “in time of war there must be only one authority with full power and responsibility to the Empire to move the ships, to concentrate them where they can deal the most effective blow against the

⁵⁸ Several Australian states employed small gunboats for harbor defenses.

⁵⁹ Gordon, *Dominion Partnership in Imperial Defense*, 92. For a survey of the Royal Navy on the Australian station, see John Bach, *The Australia Station* (New South Wales, 1986).

⁶⁰ Gordon, *Dominion Partnership in Imperial Defense*, 135. Due to growing tensions with the Boer republics, the money never materialized.

⁶¹ CAB 18/10 Minutes of the 1902 Colonial Conference, Volume II., 5.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 42. Great Britain spent 15s 1d per capita to New South Wales’s 8d, Queensland and Victoria’s 1s, Western Australia, Tasmania, and New Zealand’s 6d, and Cape Colony/Natal’s 3d. Canada made no formal contribution to the Royal Navy.

forces of the enemy.”⁶³ He lectured colonial leaders on the strategic folly of restricting naval vessels to backwater theaters for purely defensive purposes. Armed with this powerful rhetoric, as well as promises to supplement the number of British warships in the Pacific, the Admiralty succeeded in increasing the annual Dominion subsidy while eliminating the restrictive clause requiring consultation over naval movements.⁶⁴

Despite its emphasis on naval concentration, the Admiralty sought to increase colonial interest in the navy as part of a shared maritime heritage. Selborne viewed the colonial subsidies with their inherent restrictions on force deployment as the lesser of two evils (the alternative being independent navies) and worried that payments alone would preclude active participation in the Royal Navy. He expressed his desire for the colonies “to regard the Navy as their own” but agreed “it cannot be done, I opine, so long as we are only receivers of money.” Moreover, Selborne worried that the vast inland geographies of Canada, Australia, and Africa would diminish the “maritime spirit” of colonial émigrés and lessen their understanding of the importance of seapower. As he explained, “I want to bring Australasia, Canada, and South Africa to understand, in the sense that the average Englishman understands it, that the sea is the one source of our greatness and our power, the one bond of union; the real source of our strength—if I may use such a mixed metaphor—that the sea is to the Empire as the breath of life.” In addition to subsidies, Selborne urged the Dominions to establish overseas sections of the Royal Naval Reserve. He allocated naval cadet positions for colonial boys, and pledged to train Australian sailors aboard two British warships in the Pacific Ocean.⁶⁵

⁶³ CAB 18/10 Minutes of the 1902 Colonial Conference, Vol. II, pg. 19.

⁶⁴ Gordon, *Dominion Partnership in Imperial Defense*, 189.

⁶⁵ CAB 18/10 Minutes of the 1902 Colonial Conference, Vol. II., 20. Newfoundland already operated a small branch of the Royal Naval Reserve.

These gestures were met in a cooperative spirit by some Dominion authorities. The future founder of the Royal Australian Navy, Captain William Creswell, advocated an Australian branch of the Royal Naval Reserve, insisting “from the sentimental and patriotic aspect there could be no plan more certain to bind us to the motherland than one by which our own seamen will take place in the fleet that ‘holds the command of the sea as a trust for the civilized world.’”⁶⁶ Australia’s Minister of Defence J.A. Forrest seconded this opinion, proclaiming that “our aim and object should be to make the Royal Navy the Empire’s navy, supported by the whole of the self-governing portions of the Empire.”⁶⁷ Even Canada, which relied on the Monroe Doctrine and its proximity to the United States for naval protection, agreed to form a rudimentary force out of its existing Fisheries Protection Service.⁶⁸

Meanwhile, growing agitation in some Dominion circles laid the keel for separate naval policies. Other historians have chronicled the complicated sequences of events that gave birth to independent Australian and Canadian navies, but a short survey is warranted.⁶⁹ The material demands of the Anglo-German naval arms race required a greater concentration of naval power in European waters, with fewer resources to spare for the defense of far-flung colonial locations.⁷⁰ Most importantly, sentimental factors clearly influenced the desire for the self-

⁶⁶ CAB 18/9 Reports of a Conference between the Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain, M.P. and the Premiers of the Self-Governing Colonies of the Empire, 123-124.

⁶⁷ JC 17/2/2 J.A. Forrest to Chamberlain, April 30 1902.

⁶⁸ William Glover, “The RCN: Royal Colonial or Royal Canadian Navy?” in Michael Hadley, Rob Heubert, and Fred Crickard (eds.), *A Nation’s Navy: In Quest of Canadian Naval Identity* (Montreal, 1996), 71-90.

⁶⁹ G. N. Tucker, *The Naval Service of Canada* (Ottawa, 1952); Roger Sarty and Michael Hadley, *Tin Pots and Pirate Ships: Canadian Naval Forces and German Sea Raiders 1880-1918* (Montreal, 1991); Marc Milner, *Canada’s Navy: The First Century* (Toronto, 1999); Nicholas Lambert, *Australia’s Naval Inheritance: Imperial Maritime Strategy and the Australia Station, 1880-1909* (Canberra, 1998); David Stevens and John Reeve, eds., *Southern Trident: Strategy, History, and the Rise of Australian Naval Power* (New South Wales, 1998), *The Royal Australian Navy* (Oxford, 2001).

⁷⁰ The elimination of obsolete vessels and the launch of the all “big gun” battlefleets resulted in a centralization of naval force in European waters. See Marder, *From Dreadnought to Scapa Flow Volume I* and Lambert, *Sir John Fisher’s Naval Revolution*.

governing communities of the empire to have navies “of their own.” As one sympathetic voice explained:

From childhood onwards, the love of possession is one of the most masterful sentiments of our nature, and our children in Australia have shown that they possess it in a marked degree. Young Australia wants something in the shape of a navy which it can call ‘my own.’ A mere toy at first, something to play with, something to learn upon of little or no use at first, but growing rapidly, with the energy of a go-ahead people into a powerful factor of imperial defence.⁷¹

In this void, many Dominion statesmen pushed for independently-administered naval forces. This movement found the most fertile ground in Australia, where Captain Creswell circulated several schemes for a local navy intended to support a larger British fleet.⁷² With few exceptions, Australian leaders stressed their desire to make the force “an integral part of the Imperial Navy.”⁷³ Though successive ministerial changes delayed a final decision, by 1909 the Australian Government decisively embarked on its new course and solicited tenders for their first three warships.

Gradually and grudgingly, the Admiralty began to acknowledge the unpopularity of the naval subsidies among colonial states. Though still demanding unified control in wartime, it recognized the necessity of cultivating local sentiments if the colonies were ever to commit to a true naval program. They began to view the Dominion navies, if properly managed, as a substantial addition to imperial strength without burdening the British taxpayer. Indeed, the creation of these forces would enable British authorities to withdraw the Australian squadron—a hefty expenditure never fully met by colonial subsidies alone.⁷⁴ By the time of the 1907

⁷¹ *National Review*, July 1906, 880.

⁷² Stevens, *The Royal Australian Navy*, 14-18.

⁷³ CAB 17/48 Minutes of a Meeting between Alfred Deakin and the Naval Intelligence Department, April 24 1907. For further evidence of this spirit of imperial cooperation, see the naval debates in Australian Parliament on December 13 1907 in *Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Debates Vol.XLII*, 7509-7526.

⁷⁴ A point made in an Admiralty memorandum, which noted their major goal was “to promote to the utmost a cordial understanding between the Australian colonies and the motherland.” ADM 116/1241B Admiralty to Colonial Office, October 18 1906.

Colonial Conference, the Admiralty had decided that it “should not seek to further oppose the legitimate Colonial aspirations to naval power.”⁷⁵ Instead, Admiralty officials would provide technical advice and send experienced officers to any Dominion expressing desire for closer imperial naval coordination. As one official privately admitted, “a system of cooperation which would provide a local defence force independently administered, but closely identified with the Imperial navy would be the soundest policy to encourage. It is desirable from an Imperial point of view that a country like Australia should foster a maritime spirit, and this ought not to be lost sight of.”⁷⁶

By comparison, middle-class opinion in Great Britain eagerly embraced the prospects of this new imperial partnership. Much of this transformation was reflected in the changing attitudes of the British press. In March 1903, the *Spectator* condemned the subsidies policy as “radically bad”—a position that earned its editor a private note of praise from Admiral Sir John Fisher.⁷⁷ The journal explained “this naval spirit we do practically nothing ourselves to encourage in the Colonies, and when local attempts are made we frown them down with academic dissertations.”⁷⁸ Leopold Maxse, the influential editor of the Conservative journal *The National Review*, originally predicted Dominion naval programs would lead to “waste, confusion, and ultimately disaster.”⁷⁹ Nonetheless, Maxse became a proponent of more sophisticated schemes of separate navies operating with avowedly imperial interests, and he provided editorial space for Dominion writers to make their case. Similarly, the *Morning Post* prominently championed the cause of an independent Australian navy. Its chief colonial writer,

⁷⁵ ADM 116//1241B Admiralty Memorandum by C.L. Ottley, February 27 1907.

⁷⁶ MCKN 3/13 Graham Greene to Reginald McKenna, October 22 1908.

⁷⁷ House of Lords Archives. John St Lo Strachey Papers (Hereafter cited as STR) 6/2 John Fisher to Strachey, March 29 1903.

⁷⁸ *Spectator*, March 21 1903, 438.

⁷⁹ *National Review*, January 1903, 842.

Richard Jebb, advocated an imperial alliance based on sentiment and racial ties.⁸⁰ He hoped that an Australian navy “might eventually release the Empire from dependence upon other allies in that quarter of the globe.”⁸¹ Jebb also drew support from the *Morning Post*’s anonymous colonial correspondent, who produced expert testimony about the evolving Australian naval project. Few readers ever learned the true identity of this high-placed correspondent: Australian Prime Minister Alfred Deakin!⁸² Even more skeptical reactionaries such as Howell Gwynne of the *Standard*, Leo Amery of the *Times*, and J.L. Garvin of the *Observer* and *Outlook* ultimately voiced their support for Dominion navies, once assured of their cooperative intentions.⁸³

Other prominent public figures admitted the inevitable triumph of local sentiment in crafting this new imperial partnership. Leading members of both the Conservative and Liberal parties indicated their support for Australia’s efforts to work alongside the Royal Navy. These men included the chief ministers of the new 1905 Liberal Ministry such as Herbert Asquith, Reginald McKenna, Lewis Harcourt, Richard Haldane, and Lord Crewe, as well as other influential figures in imperial defense administration including Joseph Chamberlain, Viscount Esher, Arthur Balfour and John Fisher.⁸⁴ The Navy League and other pressure groups also

⁸⁰ Jebb amassed a degree of colonial fame through his influential book *Colonial Nationalism* (London, 1905).

⁸¹ A blatant jab at the 1902 Anglo-Japanese Alliance, which was deeply unpopular in the Dominions. *Morning Post*, October 16 1908.

⁸² Jebb’s diary preserves the nature of this secret agreement. On meeting Deakin in Australia, he wrote of the Australian leader: “rather a shifty, uneasy eye—doubtless restless to discover ‘whether I knew’ a certain secret. Absolute innocence on both sides. Very cordial and frank to protestation degree. Emphasized the immense importance to Australia of getting fair treatment from the English press.” Jebb Papers, Diaries B/3/4, January 27 1906.

⁸³ For Gwynne, see his speech to the Imperial Press Conference in Hardmann, *Parliament of the Press*, 160-161; For Amery, see AMEL 1/2/16 Amery to Jose (?), November 16, 1906. Garvin’s *Observer* became a strong supporter of navalism in general. In 1911 he assured Navy League Secretary Patrick Hannon “the *Observer* will never fail the Navy League, and when I become the editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* in January, I shall never forget that, as you know, the Navy League was suggested, named, and practically founded by the paper. So I shall feel a sort of family obligation towards it.” Harry Ransom Center. University of Texas. J.L. Garvin Papers. Garvin to Hannon October 25 1911. For an example of Garvin’s attitude towards Dominion navies, see “Keepers of the Sea,” *Observer*, June 13 1909.

⁸⁴ NA. Baron Northcote Papers 30/56/1 Chamberlain to Northcote, December 23 1904; BL. J.A. Spender Papers 46392 Esher to Spender, June 5 1912; Jason Tomes, *Balfour and Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, 1997), 74-75. Speech by Lord Crewe to Liberal Imperialist Club in *Manchester Guardian*, May 7 1909.

signified their approval, interpreting Australia's actions as a navalist victory in shaping national policy. The league published a number of potential plans for local navies, including one submitted by prominent Canadian imperialist H.J. Wickham.⁸⁵ Its endorsement provided a significant boost to the cause of Dominion navalism, as its monthly journal *The Navy* was read by many Britons interested in naval affairs. Even the Round Table Movement, with its continual emphasis on imperial centralization, recognized the powerful sentiments for local autonomy in imperial defense. In 1912 it called on the Imperial government and the Dominions to convene a naval conference in Ottawa to plan for closer coordination between the Royal Navy these new Dominion forces.⁸⁶

This new attitude towards imperial defense attracted the attention of colonial audiences, who celebrated the changing attitudes in the metropole.⁸⁷ In particular, colonials embraced the emotional elements of navalist rhetoric and grew increasingly excited about the future of Anglo-Dominion defense relations. This response prompted Jebb to explain that "no greater disservice could be rendered by any State Department . . . than to delay or prevent the beginnings of an Imperial Naval alliance, which alone can ultimately secure to the Empire, including this country, a perpetual command of the sea."⁸⁸ Though some reactionaries in favor of centralized imperial authority bemoaned this appeal to Dominion sentiments at the expense of sound strategic policy, most contemporaries recognized it as the natural stage in the evolution of the empire.

⁸⁵ *Navy League Journal*, April 1907 (89); *Navy League Journal*, May 1907 (117-118); *Navy League Journal*, October 1908 (213-214); *The Navy*, April 1909 (110); *The Navy*, May 1909 (121); *The Navy*, December 1909 (361-362). Also see the general support of the Society of Islanders in *The Islander: Journal of the Society of Islanders* No. 2 (March 1911), 5-7. Found in NMM. Lionel Horton-Smith Papers 1. Prof. Andrew Thompson acknowledges this change of attitude in the Navy League. Andrew Thompson, *Imperial Britain: The Empire in British Politics 1880-1932* (New York, 2000), 124-125.

⁸⁶ BD. Lionel Curtis/Round Table Papers MSS 777 Minutes of the Round Table Committee, May 30 and May 31 1912.

⁸⁷ See for example: *Advertiser*, September 1 1906; *Brisbane Courier*, September 21 1906; *Brisbane Courier*, November 14 1906; *Sydney Morning Herald*, May 19 1906; *The Age* (Melbourne), June 14 1905. Jebb recorded that one Australian "thinks it curious that London Conservative papers should be before the Liberal Papers in taking a sympathetic view of Australian affairs." Jebb Papers, B/3/3 Diary, January 28 1906.

⁸⁸ *Morning Post*, August 21 1908.

1909: Year of Crisis

Public interest in the navy reached its climax during the height of the 1909 dreadnought crisis. On March 16, First Lord of the Admiralty Reginald McKenna announced in the House of Commons that an acceleration in German naval construction required a substantial increase in the navy estimates for the coming year. In a compromise reached with the economic wing of the Liberal Party, McKenna proposed to lay down four dreadnoughts, with an additional four at the end of the year contingent on German progress. This platform failed to mollify the Unionist opposition, who joined their navalist allies in the press and launched a vitriolic campaign under the battlecry “We Want Eight and We Won’t Wait!” This phenomenon represented the culminating episode in a series of popular intrusions into defense policy dating back to the French invasion scares of the 1840s and most famously expressed in W.T. Stead’s “Truth About the Navy” articles in 1884.⁸⁹ With discussions of peacetime defense policy typically confined to a small and informed populace, the 1909 “scare” drew widespread attention to the questionable state of naval supremacy. As one historian explains, “the naval crisis was endlessly discussed in buses and railroad carriages, in West End Clubs and county pubs, in theatre foyers and on factory floors, at football matches, trade union meetings, and market ordinaries.”⁹⁰

Amidst this public dialogue, dreadnought fever spread across the seas to the Dominions. On March 22, New Zealand Prime Minister Joseph Ward announced his government’s intention to finance “a battleship of the latest type” for the Royal Navy.⁹¹ Within two weeks, the Australian states of New South Wales and Victoria joined their counterparts across the Tasman

⁸⁹ For the 1884 scare see Arthur Marder, *The Anatomy of British Seapower: A History of British Naval Policy in the Pre-Dreadnought Era, 1880-1905* (Connecticut, 1964).

⁹⁰ G.J. Marcus, “Naval Crisis of 1909 and the Croydon By-Election,” *Royal United Services Institute Journal*, November 1958, 505-511, quoted in Gordon, *Dominion Partnership in Imperial Defense*, 221.

⁹¹ CO 209/270 Governor General New Zealand to Secretary of State for Colonies, March 22 1909.

Sea in promising funds for a second dreadnought.⁹² Even in Canada, public agitation caused the government to begin exploring options to improve the collective security of the empire.⁹³ These unprecedented displays of imperial solidarity left an indelible mark on a British public hungry for support against a perceived German naval threat. Joyous acclamations in the popular press lauded the Dominion actions, prompting one journalist to exclaim, “once more a national emergency has called forth those feelings of loyalty and affection for the Motherland which animate the people of our colonies, and which, when rightly welcomed and appreciated, form a stronger bond of Empire than any that could be forged by legislation.”⁹⁴

The initial reaction to the dreadnought gifts celebrated the naval “coming of age” of the young Dominions. Indeed, this popular discourse of racial solidarity through naval cooperation often transcended the dominant issue of German competition. Two days after Ward’s announcement, the *Times* insisted “there can be no Briton worthy of the name who has not felt a redoubled pride in his lineage this week . . . The Mother Country can make no answer to this splendid demonstration which would do full justice to its significance. She can only welcome it with pride.”⁹⁵ The *Pall Mall Gazette* noted that “it is an event which ought to silence the last of those who asperse the genuine spirit of Imperial Unity, and accentuate the determination of all true Englishmen to let nothing come between them and the Empire’s common welfare and security.”⁹⁶ Other commentators emphasized the familial links of the imperial race. Garvin of the *Observer* proudly proclaimed that “in the struggle for sea power . . . we shall not stand alone. Seaborn, this Empire of ours remembers its common birthright.” He praised Australasian

⁹² The Federal Government still sought to build their Australian Navy but eventually agreed to discuss terms for a dreadnought. CO 418/70 Governor General Australia to Secretary State for Colonies, June 4 1909.

⁹³ Gordon, 215-241.

⁹⁴ *Illustrated London News*, March 27 1909.

⁹⁵ *Times*, March 24 1909.

⁹⁶ *Pall Mall Gazette*, March 25 1909.

contributions, suggesting that “the Commonwealth will do its part in this gathering of forces.”⁹⁷ Still glowing from the successes of the naval agitation, the Navy League proudly telegraphed its gratitude to Dominion chapters.⁹⁸ It characterized the recent events as “proof to the ambitious nations of the world that it is the British flag with which they have to deal, not alone with two little islands in the North Sea.”⁹⁹

Partisan politics quickly capitalized on this enthusiasm for the Dominion dreadnoughts. Conservatives cast the Dominions as providing a proper lead to the government for greater naval expenditure. One political cartoon expressed this message by depicting a rugged New Zealand farmer handing money to a caricature of Prime Minister Asquith. As the politician seemed reluctant to accept the funds, the farmer explained “don’t worry, old chap, I’m not exactly flush, but hang it, I’ve got enough ‘dust’ to buy you a boat or two when you want one.”¹⁰⁰ Another writer was more forceful, lamenting that “we have lived to be taught our duty by our children, and the shame is upon us.”¹⁰¹

At the same time, advocates of arms limitations also applauded this new level of collective imperial security. The Liberal *Manchester Guardian* staunchly supported the government’s restraint, and worried that New Zealand’s efforts might accelerate the panic. Nonetheless, it admitted “it is at any rate a symbol of unity of which any Englishman may be proud.”¹⁰² Another Liberal organ, the *Westminster Gazette*, emphasized the symbolic meaning of colonial contributions. It maintained that “such a voluntary and timely demonstration of loyalty and affection for the Motherland on the parts of these great British Colonies or

⁹⁷ *Observer*, March 28 1909.

⁹⁸ *Times*, March 25 1909.

⁹⁹ *The Navy* Vol. XIV No. 4 April 1909, 89-90.

¹⁰⁰ *Pall Mall Gazette*, April 1 1909. The Unionist *Daily Express* proclaimed that “imperial preference must be the outcome of the colonial dreadnoughts.” *Daily Express*, March 31 1909.

¹⁰¹ Harold Lake, “New Spirit” *Westminster Review* July 1909, 48.

¹⁰² *Manchester Guardian*, March 31 1909.

Commonwealths should be regarded by England as of incalculably more significance and intrinsic worth than the building of a hundred 'Dreadnoughts'."¹⁰³ An editor for the *Saturday Review* doubtless summarized the feelings of many Britons who looked askance at the dreadnought agitation yet appreciated the demonstration of imperial solidarity. Describing the New Zealand battleship as "fine proof of colonial loyalty," the author insisted "we dislike the style called jingoism; which is too often like patriotism in its cups; but the enthusiasm which this act of New Zealand has roused, we think everywhere, is wholly good and genuine."¹⁰⁴

Dominion popular discourse largely mirrored that in Britain, albeit within the confines of budding nationalism. In their unanimous vote for the dreadnought contribution, politicians in the New Zealand Parliament repeatedly emphasized their loyalty to the "Mother Country" and the "Old Country."¹⁰⁵ Another New Zealand citizen looked forward to the day when "England will yearn for an ally of her own blood, for a race of Anglo-Saxons who can sail their own ships and range their own seas and defend their own hearths, fearlessly and with self-respect, and all to uphold the same flag that the Imperial Navy flies today."¹⁰⁶ In Australia and Canada, popular sentiment remained deeply divided over the question of subsidies versus the creation of independent forces. Nevertheless, public opinion strongly supported some form of increased imperial contribution. Throughout the island, newspapers and patriotic organizations established "Dreadnought Funds" to finance the Commonwealth's offer of a capital ship.¹⁰⁷ In a street rally

¹⁰³ *Westminster Gazette*, June 9 1909.

¹⁰⁴ *Saturday Review*, March 1909. Not all public voices supported the Dominion dreadnought scheme. Independent Labour Party member Kerr Hardie, writing in *Labour Leader*, noted that Britain became "reduced to the position of a decrepit old lady who has seen better days but who is now dependent on the charity of her well-to-do daughters." Nevertheless, Hardie assured the Antipodes that "any attack by Japan upon Australia would be the signal for a rally of all white peoples to beat back the yellow peril." *Labour Leader*, April 2 1909.

¹⁰⁵ *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates Vol. 146-147*, June 11 1909. One politician noted that New Zealanders "in offering to do this work, and to do it for the love of the Old Country and their kinsmen, they recognized that they were Britishers, that they were part and parcel of the British Empire (12-13).

¹⁰⁶ *Times*, March 29 1909.

¹⁰⁷ Gordon, *Dominion Partnership in Imperial Defense*, 224.

in Melbourne, a protestor's attempt to speak against the dreadnought gift was drowned out by a spontaneous chorus of "Rule Britannia."¹⁰⁸

Similarly most Canadians agitated for greater naval expenditure, though they remained bitterly divided over the form of this assistance.¹⁰⁹ Conservatives hoped to mimic the actions of Australia and New Zealand in generating a dreadnought gift, while the prevailing liberal opinion sought the creation of a seagoing Canadian navy. Yet with the notable exception of French Canadian society, public opinion acknowledged the necessity of assuming a larger role in imperial affairs. In lieu of a dreadnought, the Canadian House of Representatives unanimously passed a resolution in favor of an independent naval service.¹¹⁰ As the liberal *Manitoba Free Press* insisted, "the British Empire is one and indivisible; and that on the seas, as on the land in the past, the sons of the race will be found in the battle line, if the need arises."¹¹¹ Though Canadians insisted upon assisting the empire on their own terms, their rhetoric largely reflected the imperialist tone fueled by the naval panic.

The Dominion actions during the 1909 dreadnought crisis placed the longstanding debate over separate navies into a new imperial framework. Convinced of their devotion to maintaining naval supremacy, the Admiralty endeavored to incorporate Dominion forces into a cooperative defense scheme. In the summer of 1909, British and Dominion authorities convened an imperial conference and agreed to maintain a series of fleet units for naval defense in the Pacific. Each fleet unit would serve as a self-contained force based around a powerful *Indefatigable*-class battlecruiser.¹¹² The Admiralty promised to provide a fleet unit for the East Indies Station, while

¹⁰⁸ Gavin Souter, *Lion and Kangaroo* (Sydney, 1976), 145.

¹⁰⁹ Tucker, *Naval Service of Canada*, 114-120.

¹¹⁰ Milner, *Canada's Navy*, 13-16.

¹¹¹ Gordon, *Dominion Partnership in Imperial Defense*, 227.

¹¹² Each Fleet Unit was to contain one battlecruiser, three light cruisers, six destroyers, and three submarines. It was originally envisioned that Canada would provide a fourth Fleet Unit on the Pacific Coast. For an excellent survey of the origins of the Fleet Unit strategy, see Nicholas Lambert, "Economy or Empire? The Fleet Unit Concept and the

the Australian Government elected to create its own unit as the mainstay of the nascent Royal Australian Navy. With far fewer resources at its disposal, the New Zealand Government agreed to subsidize the Royal Navy by partially funding a China Station Fleet Unit with the Dominion's gift battlecruiser (soon to be named HMS *New Zealand*) serving as flagship. In time of war, these fleet units would combine (with the permission of the Dominion governments) to form a powerful Imperial Pacific squadron. Most importantly, the fleet unit scheme appealed to different shades of colonial opinion by producing a naval force that was both national and imperial in context.¹¹³ As one of the architects of the fleet unit concept explained, "it means eventually Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the Cape (that is, South Africa), and India *running a complete navy!* We manage the job in Europe. They'll manage it against the Yankees, Japs, and Chinese as occasion requires out there!"¹¹⁴

Paramount in this discussion of the fleet units was an emphasis on the Dominions as part of a new maritime alliance. The popular press in Great Britain employed discursive terms such as "Sea-United British," "Empire of the Sea," and the "Britannic Alliance" to describe the imperial partnership.¹¹⁵ One critic noted "it comprised a declaration to all the world of the unity of the British Empire, and the determination of all parts of it to offer a united front to schemes of foreign aggression."¹¹⁶ A writer for the *Fortnightly Review* eagerly looked forward to an "imperial patrol" of colonial dreadnoughts as the future manifestation of this racial solidarity.

Quest for Collective Security in the Pacific, 1909-1914," in *Far-Flung Lines: Studies in Imperial Defence in Honour of Donald Mackenzie Schurman*. Greg Kennedy and Keith Nielson (eds.), (London, 1996), 54-83. Unlike many earlier scholars, Lambert fully acknowledges the Admiralty's efforts to work with the Dominion naval programs to improve collective security.

¹¹³ Future Australian Prime Minister Billy Hughes, a staunch nationalist, proudly proclaimed that "we ought to have quite a respectable fleet out here, and with the exception of Japan's, it will be the most considerable one in the Pacific." AMEL 2/5/11 Hughes to Amery, October 23 1912.

¹¹⁴ John Fisher to Viscount Esher, 13 September 1909, in Arthur Marder (ed.), *Fear God and Dread Nought: The Correspondence of Admiral of the Fleet Lord Fisher of Kilverstone* (Jonathan Cape, 1956), 266-267. Emphasis in original.

¹¹⁵ *Spectator*, June 17 1911; *Times*, May 24 1909; Richard Jebb, *The Britannic Question: A Survey of Alternatives* (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1913), Chapter IV.

¹¹⁶ *Edinburgh Review*, July 1909.

Reflecting the sentiments of many Edwardian contemporaries, he insisted “it is plain that the Sea League of All the Britons is essential to Imperial Unity.”¹¹⁷

This vision often projected a different message in the Dominions, as popular discourse blurred the lines between imperial and national identities. As Rüger has chronicled, the “homecoming” passage of the HMAS *Australia* and its accompanying vessels entailed all the pomp and circumstance of imperial propaganda.¹¹⁸ This rite of passage—the possession of a modern navy—welcomed the Dominion into the confraternity of the modern nation-state. As the future Prime Minister Billy Hughes explained, “Australia has assumed the toga of nationhood.”¹¹⁹ At the same time, most Australians cherished this new force as their special contribution towards a shared maritime and imperial heritage. References to the navy constantly enjoined a reminder of its avowedly “imperial” role. At the launching of the cruiser HMAS *Sydney*, a Commonwealth representative insisted that “the navy of England has always been justly the Englishman’s pride; that pride and that interest should now be extended to embrace the navy of the Empire.”¹²⁰ This sentiment became manifest in the ceremonies welcoming the fleet unit into Sydney Harbor. Massive crowds cheered their arrival with alternating choruses of “Rule Britannia” and “Advance Australia.”¹²¹ Many Australian newspapers celebrated the event as a momentous occasion for both “nation” and “empire,” and the *Sydney Morning Herald* included a large illustrated print of the fleet unit between the Union Jack and the Australian national flag.¹²² This imperial devotion was reflected in the Commonwealth’s decision to adopt the Royal Navy’s “White Ensign” onboard Australian warships, and to request the designation

¹¹⁷ *Fortnightly Review* April 1909, 607. Archibald Hurd insisted that the fleet units “shall advertise in the eyes of all nations the bonds which unite all the King’s Dominions.” *Fortnightly Review*, February 1913, 266.

¹¹⁸ Rüger, “Nation, Empire, and Navy: Identity Politics in the United Kingdom 1887-1914,” 179-183.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 183.

¹²⁰ Jebb Papers, Speech by R.M. Collins. Collins to Jebb, August 25 1912.

¹²¹ *Sydney Morning Herald*, October 6 1913; *Sydney Mail*, October 8 1913.

¹²² *Sydney Morning Herald*, October 6 1913; *The Mercury*, October 6 1913; *The Western Australian*, October 10 1913; *The Advertiser*, October 6 1913; *Brisbane Courier*, October 6 1913; *Sydney Mail*, October 8 1913.

“Royal” as a prefix for an inherently “national” navy. This would demonstrate, “the oneness of the Imperial fleet,” explained Admiral George King-Hall, and remind Australians “that they have inherited the fine traditions of the past, and have entered into the heritage won for them by their forefathers, and be filled with the zeal and devotion to duty which distinguished our great seamen in the past.”¹²³

This fusion of imperial and national identities is apparent throughout a popular book by Australian nationalist C.E.W. Bean. Though best remembered as the wartime progenitor of the “Digger Myth” of Australian national identity, Bean’s *Flagships Three* (1913) chronicled the birth of the Royal Australian Navy as the natural product of an Anglo-Saxon maritime culture. He traced this racial lineage from its Scandinavian origins to its most recent expression in the Antipodes, concluding that as part of the global Diaspora of Britons, the white residents of the Dominions “all were of the blood of sea peoples.”¹²⁴ His descriptive work posited an ancient Viking vessel as “the first flagship of our race,” provided a long summary of English naval history, and culminated in the launch of the powerful HMAS *Australia* as “the first born of the Royal Navy.”¹²⁵ To the remaining critics who opposed this decentralization of naval authority, Bean assured them that “so long as this despised sentiment gives the British race the same enemies to fight and the same enemies to fight about, there is no question as to the destiny of the Royal Australian Navy.”¹²⁶

Similar debates over the proper balance of “imperial patriotism” occurred in Canada. In 1912, the new Conservative ministry of Sir Robert Borden signified a radical change in the

¹²³ From an Empire Day Speech on May 24 1911, in “Addresses and etc. on Australian Naval Policy” by George King Hall (privately printed, October 1913) in BD, Lewis Harcourt Papers 467. As the senior British officer on the Australian station, King-Hall actively encouraged navalism and printed a series of speeches “to educate and form public opinion in the Commonwealth and to shape them into our naval fold.” King-Hall to Harcourt, December 20 1913.

¹²⁴ C.E.W. Bean. *Flagships Three* (London, 1913).

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, x.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 366.

Dominion's naval policy. Alarmed by the revelations of the 1912 German Naval Law, Borden announced his intentions to provide the Royal Navy with an unprecedented gift of three dreadnoughts, at a staggering cost of over \$35,000,000.¹²⁷ Borden spent months preparing his case for the Dominion Parliament, securing expert testimony and even traveling to London for high-level consultation with the Committee of Imperial Defence.¹²⁸ The Admiralty happily obliged and First Lord Winston Churchill worked under the greatest of secrecy to compose and coordinate memoranda for the Dominion Cabinet and Parliament.¹²⁹ He even offered to travel to Canada in order to lend weight to the government's position for an emergency contribution.¹³⁰ When Borden announced his Naval Aid Bill on December 5, 1912, he initiated a public controversy that would occupy Dominion politics for much of the following year. Parliamentary debate lasted for twenty-three weeks, and though the Commons passed the bill, it was ultimately rejected by the Liberal-dominated Senate.¹³¹

Historians typically view this tumultuous episode as a domestic referendum on the imperial connection.¹³² This interpretation however overlooks the reality of strong nationalist-imperial connections throughout the Dominion. Conservatives insisted that direct contributions to the Royal Navy placed the interests of the empire above all others and they savaged their opponents for their lack of imperial patriotism.¹³³ Yet a close reading of the Liberal response illuminates a similar devotion to imperial cooperation. Liberals such as Sir Wilfred Laurier

¹²⁷ The German law proposed laying down an additional three dreadnoughts in 1912, undermining British efforts to maintain a 60% margin of supremacy over any potential adversary.

¹²⁸ For the minutes of these meetings, CAB 33/22 No. 33.

¹²⁹ See Preston, *Canada and Imperial Defense*, 446-453.

¹³⁰ Gordon, *Dominion Partnership in Imperial Defense*, 263.

¹³¹ Gordon *Dominion Partnership in Imperial Defense*, 264-265.

¹³² See Gordon, Preston, and Tucker.

¹³³ See for example: Albert Carman, "Canada and the Navy: A Canadian View," *Nineteenth Century and After* LXXI (May 1912), 822-828; *Ottawa Citizen*, December 6 1912; *Mail and Empire* (Toronto) December 6 1912; *The Gazette* (Montreal), December 6 1912; *Ottawa Evening Journal*, December 6 1912; *The News* (Toronto), December 6 1912. Their American neighbors noticed the outburst of imperial sentiment, with the *New York Times* stating "it is nothing less than the rebirth of empire." *New York Times*, December 12 1912.

advocated increased expenditure towards an independent navy operating in conjunction with the Royal Navy. Indeed, Laurier surprised his opponents by proposing the creation of two fleet units (one for the Atlantic and one for the Pacific) in lieu of the dreadnought offer. He publicly denounced accusations that a Canadian navy might be “neutral” or “separatist” and assured the Dominion Parliament of his “devotion and loyalty to the British Empire.”¹³⁴ Privately he assured the Governor General “when the naval supremacy is in question . . . I am a Britisher to the core.”¹³⁵ Other liberal critics even lambasted the government plan as placing an undue burden on the “Mother Country,” as the naval bill made no provision for annual maintenance or manning requirements.¹³⁶ For many Liberals, the continuance of a Royal Canadian Navy served a dual purpose of satisfying national pride while upholding Canada’s share in the defense of the common empire. Their actions and rhetoric both in the debates and in the public arena reflected a common allegiance to the empire, albeit one which adhered to the realities of colonial nationalism. “Only in that way,” one editor maintained, “can Canadians show themselves worthy of the great traditions of their Anglo-Saxon and Norman ancestors.”¹³⁷

Navalism: The White Man’s Burden

The Edwardian obsession with navalism and the empire reinforced one overarching feature of imperial unity: that navies remained the preserve of a Westernized, European population.¹³⁸ It is significant that this concept of a “Sea Empire” stressed the racial union of its white leadership and precluded the participation of non-white elements. After all, Indians,

¹³⁴ *Debates of the House of Commons of the Dominion of Canada, 2nd Session, 12th Parliament Vol. CVII*, December 12 1912 (694, 1034).

¹³⁵ LAC George Albert Grey Papers Volume 15. Grey to Lord Crewe December 8 1908.

¹³⁶ *Ottawa Free Press*, December 6 1912.

¹³⁷ *The Globe* (Toronto), undated clipping in CO 42/961.

¹³⁸ This despite the crushing defeat administered by the Imperial Japanese Navy over the Russians in 1905.

Africans, and West Indians might serve as colonial auxiliaries, but no one expected them to establish naval academies or represent the Empire on the high seas. Despite a historical tradition of employing African and Caribbean sailors, the Admiralty maintained strict racial policies towards non-white personnel.¹³⁹ It even resolutely refused a suggestion to name a battleship “HMS *Maori*.”¹⁴⁰ In India, where colonial authorities operated a small coastal flotilla, opportunities for indigenous ratings were extremely limited, to say nothing of commissioned officers.¹⁴¹ Even the Navy League maintained strict racial boundaries on membership. When “native gentlemen” in Bombay approached the Navy League in 1905 with a request to form a chapter, the organization politely declined.¹⁴² The league later amended its tone towards a future Indian Navy, but hoped its sailors would be drawn from resident “Englishmen.”¹⁴³

A 1902 article in the *Contemporary Review* best epitomized this cultural barrier limiting non-white participation in imperial naval defense. The author reminded readers of the historical maritime achievements of Indian “Lascars” and admitted “we have never utilized them for work for which they were far better suited in some respects than Europeans.” He urged their limited employment as stokers onboard British warships (a manual labor position requiring little maritime experience) and posited that their abstention from alcohol made them better suited to the harsh and dangerous conditions of the engine rooms. The author preserved the racial

¹³⁹ CO 418/65 Colonial Office to Admiralty memo by Graham Greene 14 April 1908. Greene acknowledged “the high status of the Maori people” in the racial hierarchy but adhered to government policies.

¹⁴⁰ Rüger, “Nation, Empire, and Navy: Identity Politics in the United Kingdom 1887-1914,” 175.

¹⁴¹ The Indian Government operated a small naval flotilla known as the Royal Indian Marine, used principally for transportation duties. This force awaits a present-day historical study, though see Herbert Richmond, *The Navy in India, 1763-1783* (London, 1931) for a brief survey of its origins in the Eighteenth Century.

¹⁴² Hamilton, 128. This rejection of the Indian middle-class is all the more significant given David Cannadine’s controversial position that class trumped race in the proper ordering of imperial relations. David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (Oxford, 2001).

¹⁴³ “India and the Navy,” *The Navy* XVI, No. 7 (July 1911), 183.

integrity of the navy's image by assuring his audience that "the main work of our navy, like that of our army, must of course be done by the British races."¹⁴⁴

The case of the HMS *Malaya* further demonstrates the tension caused by non-white infringement into the sphere of navalism. In 1912, the Federated States of Malaya offered to fund a powerful new battleship for the Royal Navy.¹⁴⁵ Though the Admiralty and the Colonial Office eagerly accepted this magnanimous gift, the incident is revealing due its lack of popular response. Unlike the Dominion "gift" ships, which dominated headlines for weeks with proclamations of racial solidarity, the Malayan offer garnered only a brief announcement in the national press.¹⁴⁶ Indeed, the only substantial publicity emanated from critics who denounced the acceptance of naval assistance from native potentates. Navalists and advocates of naval disarmament alike protested "the dangerous character of the precedent involved."¹⁴⁷ This attitude reemerged when reports arrived from India that several princes were considering a pecuniary gift of three dreadnoughts and a fleet of armored cruisers—a massive force that would double British naval construction for 1913. Once again, this rumor (which proved unfounded) failed to attract significant attention or support.¹⁴⁸ Contemporaries clearly sought to limit the participation of non-white populations in the shared spirit of navalism. As one white colonial dryly noted:

¹⁴⁴ Demetrius C. Boulger, "Eastern Navy" *Contemporary Review*, October 1901, 539, 544.

¹⁴⁵ Though ostensibly a gift from the native Sultan of Perak, most contemporaries recognized the hidden hand of white colonial ministers. Jagjit Singh Sidhu, *Administration in the Federated Malay States 1896-1920* (Oxford, 1980), 98.

¹⁴⁶ See for example *Times*, November 13 1912.

¹⁴⁷ Arnold White, a leading navalist in the British press, conducted a grass roots campaign to uncover the "truth" behind the Malaya offer. Also see "Native States and the Navy: What the Malay Dreadnought Means" Peace Council Document, found in WHI 77; *The Economist*, December 14 1912, 1225.

¹⁴⁸ Ironically, the *Times* asserted that "we could not welcome it without reserve, unless we were well assured that the offering was such as not to prejudice the progress and welfare of the Indian States themselves." *Times* December 2 1912. Some socialists charged Reuters with creating the entire rumor in order to sell papers. *Labour Leader*, December 5 1912.

The example of the Malay Rulers is being used as an argument to rub into the Indian Princes that they are remiss in performing—Heaven help us—what the arguers are pleased to call their ‘duty’ to the Empire . . . Such relations as those invited by a claim, or even an expectation, of subsidy from a Protected State are incompatible with real Imperialism.¹⁴⁹

Certainly this policy of racial exclusion had its benefits as the discourse of imperial solidarity became a leading feature of the Anglo-German naval arms race. As the only European imperial power with a significant overseas white population, Britain relished the unique opportunity to share the burden of naval defense with its Dominions. Commentators routinely portrayed the Dominion naval contributions as a bulwark against the larger domestic population of Imperial Germany.¹⁵⁰ Perhaps the most salient examples of this navalist expression emanated from political cartoons in satirical papers such as *Punch*. One image entitled “Call of the Blood” depicted a lonely “Germania” gazing from the rampart walls at a steaming warship. The caption read “A *Dreadnought* for Britain from New Zealand? These Lion Clubs are Splendid! I wish I had an Eaglet or Two Like That!”¹⁵¹ (Figure 5:2) A later edition depicted the proposed Canadian dreadnoughts as the “Gift of the Sea King’s Daughter,” and lampooned Germany’s colonial enterprise: “we have not had to wait long for Germany’s answer to Canada. The German colony of the Cameroons has, it is rumored, offered to present the Imperial Navy with a dingy, free from all ‘restrictions.’”¹⁵² (Figure 5:3) In this context, the symbolism of the Dominion navies became a powerful cultural expression in the discursive war that preceded the actual outbreak of Anglo-German hostilities.

Though popular discourse emphasized the “Anglo-Saxon” features of Britain’s maritime

¹⁴⁹ *Singapore Free Press*, January 30 1913.

¹⁵⁰ As Joseph Chamberlain explained, “the total White Population under the British Flag across the seas is now some 11,000,000 and we may in the future count upon these in reckoning our comparative position with regard to our competitors.” *Times*, May 24 1909.

¹⁵¹ *Punch*, March 31 1909.

¹⁵² *Punch*, December 18 1912.

heritage, historians should exercise caution in viewing navalism as an inherently “English” affair. This strict interpretation of race fails to account for the significant Boer and French Canadian populations, to say nothing of the Celtic periphery. Within the context of the “four kingdoms” of Great Britain, great efforts were made to stress the “Britishness” of the Royal Navy, and its identification as an imperial symbol synonymous with the Monarchy, the Union, and the Empire. Smaller vessels such as cruisers of the *Devonshire*-class bore the names of Scottish, Welsh, and Irish localities.¹⁵³ In addition, the concentration of major ship-building firms in Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Belfast promoted local interest in the navy as the financial provider for thousands of workers. The navy thus shed its purely “English” traditions and reached out to the British Isles at large. “It was,” argues Rüger, “a powerful vehicle aimed at ‘reconciling the Celt.’”¹⁵⁴

The case of white subjects of non-British descent is a bit more difficult to assess. The Boers and French Canadians historically expressed little interest in a navy that represented a continuance of the imperial link. French Canadians even likened Borden’s naval bill to imperial tribute, lamenting the “imperialists, who, shutting their eyes to the lessons of human history, work to relive the traditions of Carthage!”¹⁵⁵ Nonetheless, naval enthusiasts extended their arms to the white residents of Quebec and the Transvaal in an effort to foster navalism to all white branches of the empire. British-Canadians endeavored to establish Navy League branches throughout Quebec and Governor General Earl Grey secretly approached a Roman Catholic Archbishop in an attempt to educate French Canadians on the importance of seapower.¹⁵⁶ Borden

¹⁵³ Rüger, “Nation, Empire, and Navy: Identity Politics in the United Kingdom 1887-1914,” 170-171.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 171.

¹⁵⁵ “Oh Ptétendus (sic) imperialists qui, fermant les yeux aux enseignements des siècles d’histoire humaine, travaillez à faire reviver les traditions de Carthage!” *Le Clarion* (Saint-Hyacinthe), December 6 1912. *Le Nationaliste* described the bill as “Imperialistes contre autonomistes.” *Le Nationaliste* (Montreal), December 15 1912.

¹⁵⁶ AMEL 2/5/8 Grey to Amery, May 15 1909.

even suggested naming the contingent dreadnoughts “Acadia,” “Quebec,” and “Ontario” in order to mollify diverse national sentiments.¹⁵⁷ Similarly, imperialists targeted the inland veldt in an attempt to reconcile Boer sentiments towards imperial participation. The Navy League worked with High Commissioner Lord Alfred Milner to attract Boer support for naval defense schemes.¹⁵⁸ One writer evoked the memory of the Dutch “Golden Age,” reminding Britons that “maritime traditions are not the monopoly of the British race. Are not the Boers themselves more or less descended from those dreaded ‘Beggars of the Seas’ . . . ?”¹⁵⁹

These attempts further underline the color boundaries prohibiting proper entry into the “Sea League of All the Britons.” Nineteenth-century racialist discourse of “Anglo-Saxonism,” with its emphasis on maritime tradition and democratic governance, constituted a powerful cultural element identifying and connecting geographically diverse populations from throughout the British world. Yet for many imperial enthusiasts, “color” represented a far simpler association than complicated Darwinian genres of ancient racial lineages. French Canadians, Boers, and even the Irish might become “British” through active participation in the navy, but Indian princes remained confined to producing “bejeweled” colonial auxiliaries. Navalism, like other “sacred” privileges and responsibilities of imperial leadership, was to be a whites-only affair.

CONCLUSION

Late Victorian efforts to spread navalism throughout “Greater Britain” achieved considerable success. Policymakers and imperial enthusiasts in the “Mother Country”

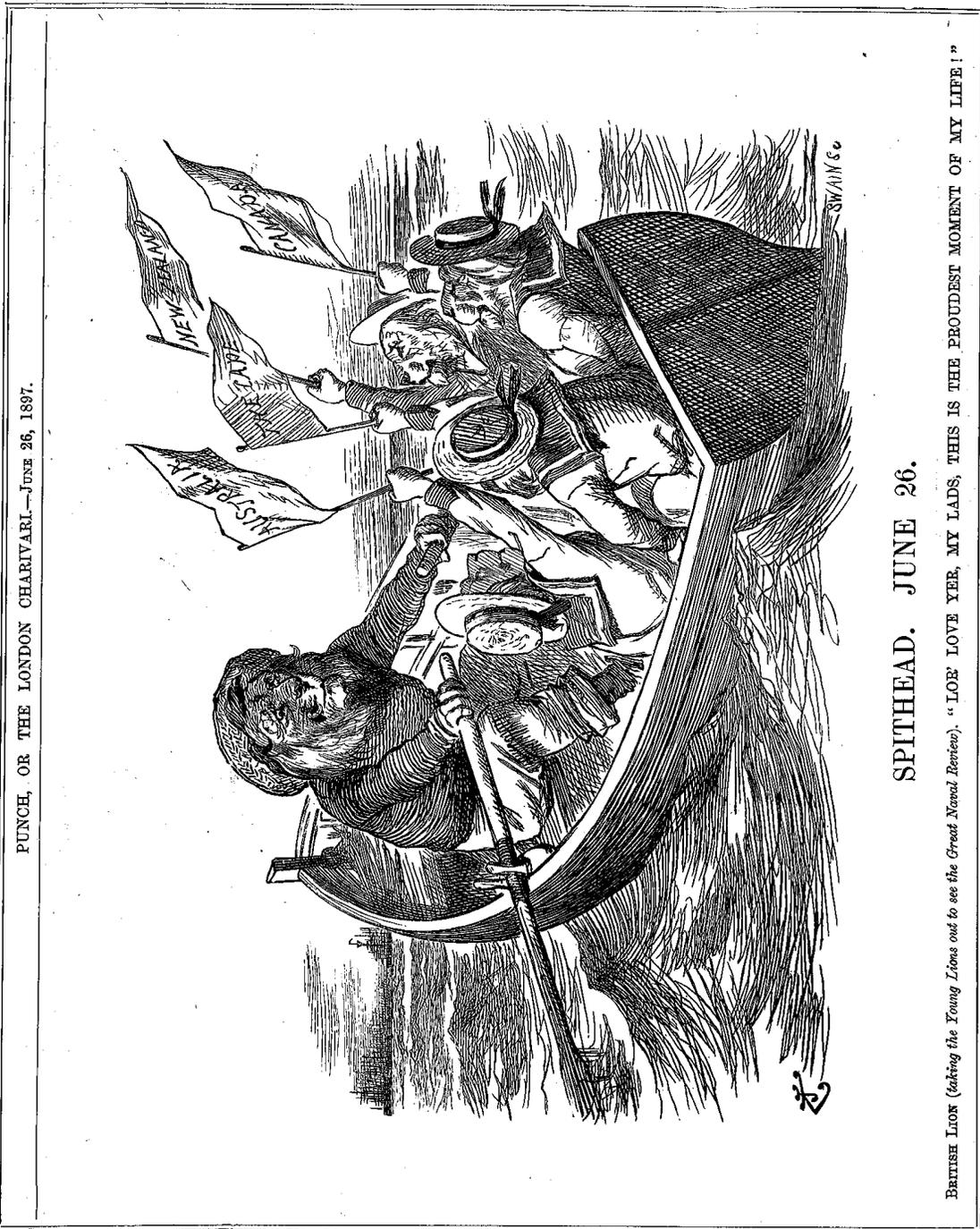
¹⁵⁷ CHAR 13/18 Borden to Churchill, November 2 1912.

¹⁵⁸ *Times*, June 20 1904.

¹⁵⁹ Jebb Papers, clipping of *Morning Post* August 10 1908. Jebb spent extensive time in South Africa attempting to promote Boer interest in the Empire.

cooperated with their counterparts in the Dominions to promote the Royal Navy through fleet reviews, education programs, and warship visits to distant colonial cities. Accompanying this aggressive propaganda campaign was a constant employment of racialist discourse that depicted seapower as the historical heritage of all Britons. By 1902, however, the realities of colonial nationalism threatened this utopian vision of imperial solidarity. Australia and Canada's decisions to form separate navies went against the traditional image of the Royal Navy as the sole shield of the empire. Proponents of navalism responded by altering their rhetoric to embrace colonial navies as the natural product of evolving "British" states and a symbol of the future of imperial cooperation. They characterized the Royal Australian Navy and Royal Canadian Navy as inherently "national" institutions while at the same time interpreting these forces as propitious indications that "British" seapower would continue to serve as a binding link between the white self-governing states of the empire well into the new century. Far from merely adding to the collective security of the empire, this shared navalist discourse provided a common means to express both a colonial identity and a patriotic devotion to a wider imperialism.

FIGURE 5:1¹



¹ *Punch*, June 26 1897.

FIGURE 5:2¹



¹ *Punch*, March 31 1909.

FIGURE 5:3¹



¹ *Punch*, December 18 1912.

Chapter Six

Future Soldiers of the King: Youth, Militarism, and Empire, 1880-1914

We want our youth to realise the greatness of this privilege—the fact that they are potential citizens of every community over which the flag flies, that in going from these islands to Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, they are not going to a strange land any more than the Canadian, Australian, or New Zealander is coming to a strange land when he comes here.

Lord Alfred Milner, 1907¹

Every boy should prepare himself, by learning how to shoot and to drill, to take his share in defence of the Empire, if it should ever be attacked. If our enemies saw that we were thus prepared as a nation, they would never dare to attack, and peace would be assured.

Scouting for Boys, 1908²

In 1909 Edwin Bigwood, a young lad of twelve in the village of Clifton near Bristol, joined a new organization called the Boy Scouts. For the next five years Bigwood and his friends spent their weekends learning woodcraft and tracking skills, playing outdoor games, and reciting tales of famous British war heroes—activities which “helped a great deal” in preparing them for future service in the army.³ The boys were camping when a farmer informed them of the British declaration of war against Germany. In a burst of patriotic bravado, the Scout Master formed the troop into military ranks and marched them up and down the beach singing “Rule Britannia.” The boys then assumed responsibility for guarding a local suspension bridge against saboteurs and other subversive agents. In the days that followed, Bigwood attempted to enlist in the British Expeditionary Force but authorities rejected him for being underage. He waited

¹ In a speech at the Guildhall, London on April 23 1907, in Alfred Milner, *Nation and Empire* (London, 1913), 171.

² Robert Baden-Powell, *Scouting for Boys* (London, 1908), 314.

³ IWM Sound Records 10115 Edwin Bigwood. Reel 1. Recorded 1988.

patiently until his nineteenth birthday, when he joined the 7th Battalion Worcestershire Regiment just in time to participate with thousands of other former scouts from Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa in the horrific carnage of the Battle of the Somme.

Historians have devoted considerable attention to the ways that adult society shaped children to produce loyal and patriotic citizens. Much of this scholarship focuses on the role of education in shaping “Imperial Mentalities.”⁴ The proliferation of compulsory state school programs in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods provided an accessible vehicle for articulating and reinforcing ideas of empire, patriotism, and civic responsibility to young audiences of all classes. At such an early age, argues Stephen Heathorn, “a framework of understandings and meanings was necessary—a vocabulary and syntax of national identity.”⁵ This “lexicon of identity” established a basic groundwork for later, deeper discussions about the importance of “Englishness” and “Britishness.”⁶ Other scholars emphasize extracurricular activities as a way of inculcating imperial loyalty and forging a domestic consensus.⁷ They demonstrate how sports teams, cadet training, and organizations such as the Boys’ Brigade and Boy Scouts all furthered a shared sense of “Britishness” and a common imperial identity. These activities also reinforced dominant bourgeois values that placed emphasis on patriotism and the

⁴ See, for example, J.A. Mangan, *Making Imperial Mentalities: Socialisation and British Imperialism* (Manchester, 1990); J.A. Mangan (ed.), *‘Benefits Bestowed?’ Education and British Imperialism* (Manchester, 1988); J.A. Mangan ed. *The Imperial Curriculum: Racial Images and Education in the British Colonial Experience* (New York, 1993); Stephen Heathorn, *For Home, Country, and Race: Constructing Gender, Class, and Englishness in the Elementary School, 1880-1914* (Toronto, 2000).

⁵ Heathorn, *For Home, Country, and Race*, 4.

⁶ Heathorn, *For Home, Country, and Race*, 19. Heathorn emphasizes the “English” dimensions that often excluded Celtic identities.

⁷ See, for example, J.A. Mangan, *The Games Ethic and Imperialism* (London, 1986); J.A. Mangan, *The Cultural Bond: Sport, Empire, Society* (London, 1992); Daryl Adair, John Nauright, and Murray Phillips, “Playing Fields Through to Battlefields: The Development of Australian Sporting Manhood in its Imperial Context, 1850-1918,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 56 (1998), 51-68; Alan Penn, *Targeting Schools: Drill, Militarism, and Imperialism* (London, 1999); John Springhall, *Youth, Empire and Society: British Youth Movements 1883-1940* (London, 1977); Michael Rosenthal, *The Character Factory: Baden-Powell and the Origins of the Boy Scout Movement* (New York, 1986); Robert MacDonald, *Sons of the Empire: The Frontier Movement and the Boys Scout Movement, 1890-1918* (Toronto, 1993); Mark Moss, *Manliness and Militarism: Educating Young Boys in Ontario for War* (Oxford, 2001).

requirements of defending the empire in the event of emergency. As John Springhall explains, “the young found themselves increasingly becoming socialized into national moulds by a committed middle-class that took its *weltanschauung* from various permutations of militant Evangelical Christianity, public-school ‘manliness,’ militarism, and imperialism.”⁸

Far less research has been done on the actual role of young boys in the future defense of the empire. The historiography on Victorian childhood acknowledges the broader militarization of boys in the period 1880-1914, though it typically focuses on leisure activities such as sports, reading, and playtime.⁹ Nor do military historians give proper consideration to the forging of boy soldiers in the Edwardian period. Historical monographs of the prewar British Army make only passing reference to the upcoming generation of young Britons who would fill the ranks of the wartime army.¹⁰ This omission leaves an enormous gap in the understanding of Edwardian culture and of imperial defense administration, as the British public as well as its politicians and service chiefs recognized that a general European conflict would require a substantial increase in the size of the armed forces. Most surprisingly, studies of the National Service League and the political crusade for peacetime conscription rarely take into account the question of universal military training for boys.¹¹ Focusing solely on the adult components of the conscription controversy, they overlook the issue of mandatory service or paramilitary training for children.

⁸ Springhall, *Youth, Empire, and Society*, 16.

⁹ See, for example, Thomas Jordan, *Victorian Childhood: Themes and Variations* (Albany, 1987); Eric Hopkins, *Childhood Transformed: Working-Class Children in Nineteenth Century England* (Manchester, 1994); Ginger Frost, *Victorian Childhoods* (Westport, 2009).

¹⁰ See, for example, Correlli Barnett, *Britain and Her Army 1509-1970* (New York, 1970); Edward Spiers, *Army and Society, 1815-1914* (London, 1980); Spiers, *Haldane: An Army Reformer* (Edinburgh, 1980); Ian F.W. Beckett and Keith Simpson eds., *A Nation in Arms: A Social Study of the British Army in the First World War* (Manchester, 1985); Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition, 1558-1945* (Manchester, 1991); Rhodri Williams, *Defending the Empire; The Conservative Party and British Defence Policy 1899-1915* (London, 1991).

¹¹ See for example Denis Hayes, *Conscription Conflict* (London, 1949); R.J.Q. Adams and Philip Poirier, *The Conscription Controversy in Great Britain, 1900-1918* (London, 1987); Matthew Hendley, “The Conscription Movement in Great Britain 1899-1914,” Unpublished MA Thesis, McGill University 1991. A notable exception is Alan Penn’s *Targeting Schools* (London, 1999). However, Penn focuses chiefly on the introduction of physical

This chapter fills a historiographical void by considering the myriad ways in which Britons at home and abroad prepared their young boys for a future role in the defense of the empire. Drawing on earlier scholarship about “cultural hegemony,” it demonstrates how policymakers, public elites, and social institutions fostered ideas about imperial patriotism, military preparedness, and “Britishness” in youth society.¹² The proliferation of state education programs in Britain and the self-governing colonies plays an important part in this analysis. Textbooks, lessons, and manufactured celebrations such as Empire Day were experienced by white students throughout “Great Britain,” reinforcing loyalty to a common identity. The chapter also considers the campaign for mandatory cadet training in Britain and the Dominions. This often neglected subject in Edwardian society played a pivotal role in disseminating ideas of empire, masculinity, and patriotic citizenship. Finally, the chapter examines widespread participation in voluntary youth organizations such as the Boys’ Brigade, the Church Lads’ Brigade, and the Boy Scouts. By analyzing these issues from an imperial and transnational perspective, it will revisit older debates about the inherent militarization of youth society throughout the empire. It argues that young Britons were instilled with ideas about a common responsibility in maintaining the empire and a broader appreciation of the global “British” connection—lessons that were manifest in widespread participation in the First World War.

An Imperial Education

British children were exposed to imperialist and patriotic ideas through a school curriculum that emphasized pride in the empire. The Elementary Education Acts of 1870 and 1880 made school attendance mandatory for all children ages 5-12 in England and Wales (a

“drill” into state schools which encompassed educational, physical, and military aims. His work has very little to say about the cadet movement or universal military training.

¹² For the foundations of the theory of cultural hegemony, see Antonio Gramsci, *The Prison Notebooks, Selections*, Quinton Hoare and Geoffrey Smith (eds.) (New York, 1971).

similar provision became law in Scotland in 1872).¹³ This seemingly benevolent byproduct of Gladstonian Liberalism produced the means for establishing cultural hegemony over a future generation of Britons. School instructors commonly instilled their pupils with lessons emphasizing the importance of “patriotic” and “imperial” subjects. Years later Robert Roberts recalled of his school days:

Teachers, fed on Seely’s imperialistic work *The Expansion of England*, and often great readers of Kipling, spelled out patriotism among us with a fervour that with some edged on the religious . . . We drew union jacks, hung classrooms with flags of the dominions and gazed with pride as they pointed out those massed areas of red on the world map. ‘This, and this, and this’ they said, ‘belongs to us!’¹⁴

School textbooks reinforced these lessons upon British schoolchildren. As John Mackenzie and James Greenlee have demonstrated, many secondary school textbooks employed a Hegelian approach that depicted the rise of the empire as the result of individual initiative by plucky male Britons.¹⁵ These works eschewed extensive facts or detailed analyses in favor of romanticized accounts of famous men, epic battles, and great deeds. They also encouraged students to consider “their” empire as part of a broader shared British heritage. Edward Parrot’s *Britain Overseas: The Empire in Picture and Story* (1908) combined the lessons of history and geography with rich illustrations to provide a visual tour of the empire. Parrot reminded young readers:

Somewhere or other on the earth, year in, year out, during every hour of the day, British hands are hoisting the Union Jack. As surely as the sun rises, so surely does the flag go up somewhere or other all over the world. The sun never sets on it, and you may travel the whole world round and never touch land on which it is not flying. Now, I think you understand that the Union Jack is not merely the flag of these small islands, but of a wonderful collection of dominions beyond the seas. It is the flag of the British Empire.¹⁶

¹³ Pamela Horn, “Elementary Education and the Growth of the Imperial Ideal: 1880-1914,” in *Benefits Bestowed? Education and British Imperialism*, ed. J.A. Mangan (Manchester, 1988), 39-55.

¹⁴ Robert Roberts, *The Classic Slum: Salford Life in the First Quarter of the Century* (London, 1971), 142.

¹⁵ John Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, 173-198; Paul Greenlee, *Education and Imperial Unity, 1901-1926* (New York, 1987).

¹⁶ Edward Parrott, *Britain Overseas: The Empire in Picture and Story* (London, 1908).

Canadian imperialist and educator George Parkin adopted a similar approach in *Round the Empire* (1892). In his introduction, Parkin insisted upon the need to promote imperial awareness as “our children cannot begin the study of the subject too soon.”¹⁷ He presented a broad survey of the empire with special emphasis on the white self-governing communities. He also stressed the racial connection between the Mother Country and colonial Britons. As he explained, “the great history of our country belongs as much to them as it does to us . . . We may well return that affection by trying to understand better and learn more of the new homes which our people have made for themselves beyond the seas.”¹⁸

Some textbooks advanced the political message of imperial federation. Many of the leading education authorities and textbook authors were former members of the Imperial Federation League, and they continued to champion their cause as the best means of securing closer imperial union.¹⁹ For example, Edward Salmon’s *The Story of the Empire* (1902) heralded the late Victorian period as the culmination of British imperial expansion. The textbook highlighted the participation of the self-governing colonies in the South African War as the prophetic sign of the coming of “Greater Britain.” Unlike many “historical” texts, Salmon’s book included a final section that called for specific political reforms, including the creation of an Imperial Parliament and separate colonial army corps intended to operate “under the aegis of the Imperial Government.”²⁰

¹⁷ George Parkin, *Round the Empire* (London, 1892), xii. In the preface, future Liberal Prime Minister Lord Roseberry explained the textbook’s “prime purpose is to remind our children that they inhabit not an island but an Empire.” Parkin, *Round the Empire*, v. At least one Conservative Member of Parliament offered prizes and financial incentives for schools in his constituency to use *Round the Empire*. LAC George Parkin Papers MG 30 D44 Vol. 15 Arthur Lee to George Parkin, December 1 1900.

¹⁸ Parkin, *Round the Empire*, 263.

¹⁹ The league’s first President, W.E. Forster, was responsible for initiating the 1870 Education Act.

²⁰ Edward Salmon, *The Story of the Empire* (London, 1902), 170. Salmon also served as the editor of *The United Empire*. For a sample of his political views, see Edward Salmon, “Imperial Federation: The Condition of Progress,” *Fortnightly Review* December 1900, 1009-1019.

Schoolbooks also instructed young Britons in their manly duties to defend the empire. Hugh Arnold-Forster's *The Citizen Reader* (1886) was one of the more widely circulated schoolbooks of the late Victorian period, selling more than 500,000 copies between 1886 and 1910.²¹ An avid imperialist and future Conservative Secretary of State for War (1903-1905), Arnold-Forster posited a masculine notion of citizenship which required all able-bodied white males to participate in common military service. He employed romanticized anecdotes of British manly patriotism from the Siege of Khartoum and the Indian Mutiny to captivate his readers, and stressed "we must never forget that the time might come when every man, rich and poor, high and low, might have to become a sailor or soldier and risk his life for the defence of the country."²² He further reminded British boys of their fellow "countrymen" overseas who "have not so changed from what their ancestors were at home that they are not ready and able to fight in their own defence for their own rights."²³ These themes resonated in a more bombastic tone in Charles Fletcher and Rudyard Kipling's *A School History of England* (1911). Their version of history interpreted the rise of the empire as the result of successful military policies engineered by patriotic Tory politicians. To the young students of the empire they issued a veiled call for compulsory military training, insisting "the only safe thing for all of us who love our country is to learn soldiering at once, and to be prepared to fight at any moment."²⁴

The message of imperial loyalty was exported to white students throughout the empire. Government authorities and imperial enthusiasts went to great lengths to provide the colonies with educational materials which promoted a closer relationship with the "Mother Country." In 1903 Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain lent official support to the League of Empire's

²¹ Stephen Heathorn, *For Home, Country, and Race*, 36.

²² H.O. Arnold-Forster, *The Citizen Reader* (London, 1886), 98.

²³ Arnold-Forster, *The Citizen Reader*, 124.

²⁴ C.R.L. Fletcher and Rudyard Kipling, *A School History of England* (Oxford, 1911), 245. John MacKenzie also makes this point in *Propaganda and Empire*, 182.

“Comrades Correspondence Scheme,” a pen-pal arrangement between British and white colonial schoolchildren. By 1913 the program claimed over 26,000 members.²⁵ The League of Empire also sponsored the publication of an imperial history textbook. It responded to common complaints from imperial administrators such as that of General Earl Grey, who explained “what we want in Canada more than anything else are good school books which will explain to the Canadian child the advantages belonging to the citizenship of the British Empire.”²⁶ The resulting product, *The British Empire: Its Past, Present, and Future* (1909), provided a standard history text for students from Liverpool to Halifax to Capetown.²⁷

Education authorities in the Dominions commonly employed textbooks which extolled the virtues of colonial nationalism within the broader context of “Greater Britain.”²⁸ Charles Roberts’ popular *A History of Canada* viewed the Dominion’s growth as a prelude to its growing leadership role in the empire. He assured Canadian students that imperial federation “would build up such a power as would secure the peace of the world. It would gain for our race a glory beside which the most dazzling pages of the earth’s history would grow pale.”²⁹ Another advertisement for the Canadian textbook *Britain and the Empire* (1904) promised stories “about great men” and assured potential buyers “special stress has been laid upon the building of the empire.”³⁰ In Australia and New Zealand, educators could rely on Oxford Professor Arthur W. Jose’s *The Growth of Empire: A Handbook to the History of Greater Britain* (1897) and *A Short History of Australasia* (1899) for a history narrative that integrated their respective colonies into

²⁵ Greenlee, *Education and Imperial Unity*, 101.

²⁶ Northcliffe Papers 62115 Grey to Northcliffe January 19 1909.

²⁷ Greenlee, *Education and Imperial Unity*, 125.

²⁸ Daniel Francis, *National Dreams: Myth, Memory, and Canadian History* (Vancouver, 1997), 52-87.

²⁹ Charles Roberts, *A History of Canada* (Toronto, 1897), 441.

³⁰ Advertisement for J. Harold Putnam’s *Britain and the Empire* (Toronto, 1904) on the back cover of *Educational Monthly of Canada* May 1904 found in LAC George Parkin Papers MG 30 D44 Vol. 86.

the wider imperial framework.³¹ He explained the empire “in all its stages from acorn to oak as an organic whole . . . nourished in every leaf by the same springing sap of British blood.”³²

In addition to receiving an imperialist education, many Edwardian schoolchildren participated in the Empire Day Movement. Though originating in Canada in the 1890s, Empire Day came to prominence in Britain under the energetic sponsorship of the Earl of Meath.³³ In 1904 Meath urged local school boards to observe Queen Victoria’s birthday with youth-based celebrations promoting the virtues of the British Empire. Students would gather around the flag pole, sing patriotic songs, recite the poetry of Rudyard Kipling, and receive special instruction on the growth of the empire.³⁴ Through performing this “invented tradition,” schoolchildren would develop an appreciation for empire. As one admiring editorial in the *Spectator* adroitly pointed out, “respect for something greater and more worthy of service than ones’ self does not come into a child’s mind by light of nature any more than good manners are instinctive. They are the result of a long and thoroughly acquired social tradition.”³⁵ Though the Liberal Government refused to invest Empire Day with official sanction, many local school boards eagerly participated in the movement. One recent study cites newspaper reports that 5.5 million British children observed the 1912 Empire Day.³⁶

³¹ Arthur W. Jose, *The Growth of Empire: A Handbook to the History of Greater Britain* (Sydney, 1897); Jose, *A Short History of Australasia* (Sydney, 1899).

³² Jose, *The Growth of Empire*, vii.

³³ For the background of Empire Day see John Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, 230-233; John Springhall, “Lord Meath, Youth, and Empire,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 5, No. 4 (1970), 97-111.

³⁴ Springhall, “Lord Meath, Youth, and Empire,” 107-108.

³⁵ *Spectator*, May 30 1908, 855. Some historians argue that the Empire Day message failed to make any significant impact on British working-class youth. See Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Class* (New Haven, 2001); Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain* (Oxford, 2004). However, more recent scholars have drawn on unpublished memoirs to demonstrate how many schoolchildren eagerly embraced this message. See Andrew Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back? The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid Nineteenth Century* (New York, 2005); Jim English, “‘Empire Day in Britain’ 1904-1958,” *History Journal* 49, No. 1 (2006), 247-276.

³⁶ Dustin Brockner, “The ‘Meaning of Empire Day’: Imperial Citizenship and Youth in Edwardian England,” Unpublished BA Thesis, Wesleyan University Department of History, 2009, 38.

The Empire Day Movement enjoyed even greater currency in the self-governing Dominions. Whereas its observance in Great Britain was voluntary, it became a statutory holiday in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.³⁷ School children continued to be the primary focus of local celebrations. For example, in 1907 the residents of Dunedin, New Zealand organized a parade of students and school cadets. After several patriotic speeches by local dignitaries, the children placed wreaths at the statue of Queen Victoria and the grave of a prominent British soldier.³⁸ Students in Adelaide, South Australia observed the 1911 Empire Day by singing patriotic songs such as “Rule Britannia,” “The Union Jack of Old England,” and the “National Anthem.” They received inspection visits from the Governor who reminded them of their duty to the empire.³⁹ Similarly the mayor of Victoria, British Columbia warned the assembled pupils of the Boys’ Central School of the fate that befell the Romans who ignored their civic responsibilities to the empire. He expressed his hope “that the young Britons present would hold this before them as an example and ever struggle to faithfully and straightforwardly perform all the duties imposed upon them.” Before dismissing for a holiday, the exuberant boys treated the visiting dignitaries to a song aptly titled “Britons All Today.”⁴⁰

Celebrations such as Empire Day created a shared experience for white students throughout “Greater Britain.” Their imperialist messages, combined with a manufactured curriculum in the classroom, cannot be divorced from the overarching desire to produce patriotic young Britons ready to answer the call of King, Country, and Empire. This process fit into the wider phenomenon of European nation-building at the end of the nineteenth century. Just as Eugen Weber’s elites transformed “peasants into Frenchmen,” the state education process

³⁷ Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, 232-233.

³⁸ *Otago Witness*, May 22 1907.

³⁹ *Advertiser* (Adelaide), May 26 1908.

⁴⁰ *Victoria Daily Colonist*, May 24 1907.

throughout the empire reinforced the common identity of “Britons.”⁴¹ As Heathorn concludes, “nationalist ideology operated with the elementary education culture in *both* a conscious *and* unconscious manner: shaping, legitimizing, rationalizing, and naturalizing the parameters of English identity that were determined by the newly established academic-cultural elite.”⁴²

The Cadet Movement and Universal Military Training

State education programs may have laid the foundation for a common imperial identity. But many Edwardians worried about the ability and willingness of young Britons to contribute to the future defense of the empire. Between 1900 and 1914, advocates of universal military service waged an unrelenting campaign in favor of mandatory cadet training for boys. Unlike the elite public school cadet corps of the nineteenth century, these state-sponsored organizations would be required of all boys in Britain. Military drill, it was argued, would improve physical fitness, reinforce social deference, and produce a future cadre of trained soldiers. Moreover, cadet programs were seen as ways to teach important civic responsibilities about a man’s duty to serve the state and the empire. The establishment of mandatory youth training programs in Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa were identified as examples of proper “British” citizenship to be emulated by the “Mother Country.” In this broader imperial context, the public debate over “boyhood conscription” is revealing not just as evidence of an Edwardian propaganda effort, but in the ways that many adults linked ideas about imperialism, military service, and “Britishness.” Youth training promised to be an imperial bond for white Britons.

Military training for boys appealed to a wide variety of audiences. Some supporters saw cadet programs as a prescription for the perceived physical deficiencies in British society. Cadet

⁴¹ Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford, 1976).

⁴² Heathorn, *For Home, Country, and Race*, 212.

training, with its emphasis on military drill and physical exercise, would improve the health of metropolitan boys and allow them to mimic the famous exploits of their military heroes in the empire. As one leading advocate for national training explained, “one generation alone would make up the difference between the student, narrow-chested, recruit-rejected, town-bred hobbledehoy of English streets to-day, and the young, up-standing, keen-eyed colonial.”⁴³ Other critics pursued the militarization of youth culture as a means to generate reliable and well-trained adult soldiers. The poor performance of British volunteers during the South African War raised considerable fears about the nation’s ability to produce a capable mass army in a true imperial emergency. A postwar royal commission examining the state of the Militia and Volunteers recommended compulsory drill in state schools as a means of bolstering Britain’s future defenses. They argued “boys of that age are very teachable, they would take kindly to the drill, and keenly enjoy the shooting; what is drudgery to the recruit of 18 would be play to him.”⁴⁴ The commission urged cadet corps and rifle instruction “so that the vast majority of those joining these forces may have learned much of their work in a convenient manner before their enrollment.”⁴⁵

Many of these supporters embraced the cadet movement as an acceptable alternative to adult conscription. During the Edwardian period the National Service League, with an impressive membership that topped 100,000 in 1913, conducted a protracted and spirited campaign in favor of universal military training for all able-bodied men.⁴⁶ The league recognized that mandatory cadet programs circumvented the deeply unpopular and “un-British”

⁴³ Letter to the Editor by Admiral Charles Beresford in *Manchester Guardian*, April 20 1903.

⁴⁴ PP 1904 Cd. 2061 Royal Commission on the Militia and Volunteers, 37.

⁴⁵ PP 1904 Cd. 2061 Royal Commission on the Militia and Volunteers, 51. For evidence from British military officials on the benefits of cadet service, see PP 1904 Cd. 2062 Royal Commission on the Militia and Volunteers. Minutes of Evidence Taken Before the Royal Commission on the Militia and Volunteers Volume I.

⁴⁶ Anne Summers, “Militarism in Britain Before the Great War,” *History Workshop*, No. 2 (Autumn 1976), 113. Summers points out that with “adherents,” a category requiring a signature and penny donation, the league’s membership amounted to 218,513.

provisions for adult compulsory service. Victorian ideas about childhood assured that few critics defended the legal rights of young boys. As Lord Meath explained, “the liberty of boys is always restrained with universal consent. They are not asked whether they will learn to read or write but are compelled to submit to tuition.”⁴⁷ In turn, cadet service offered elites an opportunity to instill the rising generation with ideas of national service and imperial patriotism—concepts that would manifest in adult participation in the part-time Territorial Army.

Prominent supporters of youth training throughout the empire commonly characterized cadet training as the first step in creating a “Nation in Arms.” One Australian advocate of cadet programs suggested that “the elastic mind of youth is particularly open to receive all the patriotic sentiments which wearing the King’s uniform and serving the flag can instill.” He explained that many adults “have a deep and lasting affection for the corps of their school days, and are often heard to say that the little khaki-clad cadet is the best man of all.”⁴⁸ The Prince of Wales put forth a similar rationale for cadet training, pointing out that “it inculcates into the coming generation that spirit of subordination and esprit de corps which is so necessary, not merely in the soldier but in the development of national character.”⁴⁹ Field Marshal Frederick Roberts emerged as one of the leading advocates of cadet training as a stepping stone to universal military service. In 1905 this future president of the National Service League wrote to Conservative Prime Minister Arthur Balfour with a list of objectives for league activities. The first addressed the need “to inculcate a spirit of patriotism amongst my fellow countrymen, most especially amongst the younger membership of the community.” Britons should be reminded of their duty “not only to protect Great Britain, but should their services be needed, to safeguard the

⁴⁷ Lord Meath, “Defence of the Empire: Universal Military Training for Lads,” *Nineteenth Century and After*, May 1905, 738.

⁴⁸ Harold Cohen, “Victorian Volunteer Cadet: An Alternative to Conscription,” *Empire Review* January 1903, 630.

⁴⁹ In a speech to Australian cadets, quoted in W. Elliot, “Cadet Corps for Schoolboys of All Ages,” *Nineteenth Century and After*, December 1901, 1037.

widely scattered possessions of this great Empire.”⁵⁰ Under these ideas, cadet programs would serve as a social laboratory for preparing a future generation of Britons to take up arms in the defense of the empire.

Ultimately advocates of universal training were unsuccessful in their efforts to introduce significant military reforms into the British education system. Individuals such as Lord Roberts and Lord Meath promoted rifle shooting as a benevolent national pastime which would “increase the intelligence of the masses, develop their physique and inculcate habits of order and discipline, besides providing a reserve of efficient marksmen.”⁵¹ But a secret proposal by the Committee of Imperial Defence to commence rifle instruction in elementary schools stalled when the Board of Education insisted that training should be voluntary, extracurricular, and limited to older boys.⁵² They followed the lead of education authorities in Scotland who had already banned the use of rifle shooting for boys under the age of fourteen. The National Service League and other organizations did succeed in promoting rifle shooting as a private pastime. By 1905 the National Rifle Association of Britain enrolled approximately 50,000 in over 650 clubs.⁵³ However, they never managed to create a government mandate for youth military training.

These activists also failed to convert physical education programs into a less overt form of schoolyard military. Since the 1880s British schools commonly employed drill techniques and exercises as a means of improving the physical health of students. Some contemporaries argued that drill should be adopted for military purposes. In 1906 one educational reformer

⁵⁰ BL. Arthur Balfour Papers 49725 Frederick Roberts to Arthur Balfour, October 3 1905. Roberts would resign his position on the Committee of Imperial Defence the following month and become the new President of the National Service League.

⁵¹ NAM. Frederick Roberts Papers 7101/23-126 Letter to *Times* June 12 1905.

⁵² CAB 38/10 Secret Memorandum: Instruction in Rifle Shooting in Schools, October 24 1905.

⁵³ Penn, *Targeting Schools*, 126.

connected the issue of physical training with “the great problem of Imperial Defence.” He explained:

To train a boy to know how to help in the defence of his country is not necessarily to implant in his bosom the seed of aggressive militarism, while the very training which renders him capable of performing the highest duty of citizenship develops his body and muscles to meet the demands of his everyday life.⁵⁴

However, the Board of Education was careful to emphasize that drill should not serve as a camouflaged substitute for military training. Its 1913 report insisted “experience shows that physical training in elementary schools should not be less and cannot well be more, than a preparation for the more specialised forms of physical training which may properly be taken at a later age.”⁵⁵ The residual influences of Victorian liberal ideology limited the reach of such an authoritarian policy, even for children.

British authorities also failed to procure a plan for a mandatory national cadet program. Liberal Secretary of State for War Richard Haldane originally envisioned a cadet corps as the central recruiting plank for his new all-volunteer Territorial Army. He yearned to forge through voluntary participation “a military structure which shall have its foundations in the nation itself, and of which every part shall bear the distinctive character of being a natural development from a nation truly in arms.”⁵⁶ The resulting Territorial and Reserve Forces Bill of 1907 contained provisions for the local County Associations to raise and maintain cadet corps out of public finances. Yet Haldane’s proposal aroused considerable opposition from Labour and Radical members of Parliament. One critic decried this “attempt to militarise our institutions” and

⁵⁴ Captain H. Worsley-Gough, quoted in Heathorn, *For Home, Country, and Race*, 196.

⁵⁵ Penn, *Targeting Schools*, 156.

⁵⁶ Quoted in Spiers, *Haldane*, 96.

insisted it was “an attempt to Germanise the British Army.”⁵⁷ Faced with intractable resistance, Haldane acknowledged defeat and eliminated the provision for a publicly-funded cadet program.⁵⁸ The War Office did succeed in creating a voluntary Army Cadet Force, though by 1913 this force enrolled only 41,000 members.⁵⁹

Mandatory cadet programs took much stronger root in the self-governing Dominions. Their geographical isolation from the “Mother Country,” combined with widespread fears about non-white invasion or rebellion, contributed to colonial military programs aimed at creating a ‘nation in arms.’ In 1909 Australia and New Zealand passed legislation requiring military training for all boys over the age of eleven.⁶⁰ The New Zealand government created junior and senior cadet corps for boys and young men ages 12-21 followed by mandatory service in the Territorial Force until the age of 25.⁶¹ The Australian government’s 1908 Defence Act required boys 12-14 to participate in a school cadet program, followed by service in a junior cadet corps for ages 14-16. At the age of sixteen boys became members of a senior cadet corps which affiliated with local units of the National Militia.⁶² The Union of South Africa followed suit with all white boys ages 13 to 17 participating in mandatory cadet programs.⁶³ Dominion authorities clearly viewed youth service as the natural precursor for universal military training as an adult. The “embryonic citizen,” explained Australian Labor politician William Hughes, would learn

⁵⁷ Hansard House of Commons Debates Volume 72, William Cremer April 23 1907.

⁵⁸ Spiers, *Haldane*, 113. The *Times* lambasted this surrender to Radical temperament, insisting that “the promotion of voluntary patriotism is, indeed, the avowed object of the whole scheme, and it is regrettable, from that point of view, that Mr. Haldane should have given way to pressure from quarters frankly hostile to military spirit in any form on the question of cadet training in national schools.” *Times*, June 20 1907.

⁵⁹ Springhall, *Youth, Empire and Society*, 138.

⁶⁰ The legislation did not come into effect until 1911. Both Australian and New Zealand measures were responses to widespread fears of invasion from Japan.

⁶¹ John Barrett, *Falling In: Australians and ‘Boy Conscription’ 1911-1915* (Sydney, 1979), 46.

⁶² Upon reaching adulthood all white Australian men served in the militia until the age of 20. In time of war this extended to age 26.

⁶³ Timothy Stapleton, *A Military History of South Africa* (Santa Barbara, 2010), 114-115.

“what is required of him. He will at once be more apt to learn and less likely to object to being asked to do so. It will seem as natural to him to learn to drill, to shoot, and to subject himself to the necessary discipline, as to learning history or grammar.”⁶⁴ The Prime Minister of Natal, F.R. Moor, advanced a more overt explanation: “we are training these young people and I think the fact of their being trained at this early age imbues them with a feeling that they do owe a duty to their country and also to the Empire.”⁶⁵

The Canadian Government eschewed a mandatory national training system on the lines of Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. The Dominion’s proximity to Great Britain as well as French Canadian resistance to British Canadian directives precluded a national cadet program as a tangible political goal. Nonetheless it actively encouraged the establishment of cadet programs in the individual provinces. In 1908 the Canadian Liberal Minister of Militia Dr. Frederick Borden assisted provincial authorities in Nova Scotia in creating a mandatory school training program. This law, the first of its kind in Canada, required all male teachers to receive instruction in physical education, drill techniques, and rifle shooting.⁶⁶ The following year Lord Strathcona lent considerable weight to the movement by offering a grant of \$500,000 towards the development of local cadet corps. Strathcona stressed the physical, moral, and practical dividends to be gained from schoolyard military training.⁶⁷ Yet he reminded Canadian leaders of a more important goal, namely “the stimulating of the feeling of patriotism among the rising generation.” He insisted that Canadian boys “should be trained to defend their country and the Empire in time of need should they ever unhappily be called upon to do so.”⁶⁸ For their part

⁶⁴ William M. Hughes, “Universal Compulsory Training for Home Defence,” *National Review* July 1907, 738.

⁶⁵ CAB 18/11A Minutes of Proceedings of the Colonial Conference 1907, April 20 1907, 113.

⁶⁶ Desmond Morton, “The Cadet Movement in the Moment of Canadian Militarism,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* Summer 1978, 61. Female teachers only had to receive instruction in physical education and drill techniques.

⁶⁷ LAC Lord Strathcona Papers MG 29 A5 Volume 24 “The Strathcona Trust For the Encouragement of Physical and Military Training in Public Schools.”

⁶⁸ Strathcona Papers MG 29 A5 Vol. 24 Strathcona to Frederick Borden, March 27 1909.

imperial authorities aptly recognized the benefit of training young Canadians as a prelude to future imperial military service and wholeheartedly lent their support. As Governor General Grey explained to the General Officer Commanding of the Canadian Militia, the cadet corps would “lay through the Schools the foundation of a future Territorial Army.”⁶⁹

The cadet movement in Canada gained considerable momentum in 1911 under the new Conservative Minister of Militia, Colonel Sam Hughes. An imperialist and ardent proponent of Canadian military development, Hughes consolidated all cadet programs under the administrative auspices of the Militia Department. He provided Canadian schools with miniature rifles and loaned experienced drill instructors.⁷⁰ He also affiliated school cadet corps with local battalions of the Canadian militia, facilitating an easy transition between youth training and adult military service. Most importantly Hughes cooperated with his older brother James, who as the Inspector General for Toronto Public Schools provided a high-ranking educational authority for touting the cadet movement in Canada’s largest city. Both brothers lauded common military service as a tool for reinforcing imperial patriotism while integrating all Canadians—even those of French descent—into the global “British” community. As James Hughes explained, “there is no other way in which I can make these boys conscious of the fact that they are British Canadian boys so quickly or so thoroughly as by training them to keep time to the old British tunes and follow the old British flag and wear the King’s uniform.”⁷¹ Hughes’s reforms were highly successful in promoting the cause of military service for boys. By 1914 every province except

⁶⁹ LAC George Albert Grey Papers Vol. 24 Drawer 4 File 3 Grey to Percy Lake, November 4 1908.

⁷⁰ Ronald Haycock, *Sam Hughes: The Public Career of a Controversial Canadian, 1885-1916* (Waterloo, 1986), 140-141.

⁷¹ James Hughes, “National and Ethical Value of Cadet Training,” in *Empire Club Speeches*, Volume 9, 107.

Manitoba and Saskatchewan required some form of drill in schools, and government-sponsored cadet programs enrolled approximately 45,000 boys.⁷²

Advocates of universal military training in Great Britain applauded the colonial cadet programs as inspiring models of civic and imperial patriotism set by fellow “British” communities. Lord Meath pointed to the “wise and patriotic example set to the Motherland by her Self-Governing Colonies.” He urged the British Government to adopt mandatory youth training, explaining “if this were done, the Empire would never need to resort to any system of compulsion in order to fill the ranks of her army.”⁷³ Similarly Lord Curzon pointed to ongoing conscription plans in the Antipodes as a guiding light for the ‘Mother Country’s’ preparations. In a speech to the National Service League, he asserted that “for my own part, I should not be ashamed that the Old Country should receive a lead in this matter from its progeny across the seas. It may be that they have a keener vision and a livelier sense of public duty, a fuller current of blood running through their veins.”⁷⁴ Perhaps the sharpest indictment of British political inaction towards youth training came from the editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*. He wrote that “the colonial energy and directness are to be concentrated upon the question of defense with a vigour which contains a lesson for ourselves. It may be wrong to teach your grandmother to suck eggs, but Australia evidently means to teach her Motherland to hatch soldiers.”⁷⁵

No entity celebrated the colonial cadets more than the National Service League. The league’s monthly journal contained extensive coverage of colonial developments, demonstrating that “the English nations beyond the sea are shaming the Mother Country.”⁷⁶ After the

⁷² Morton, “The Cadet Movement in the Moment of Canadian Militarism,” 63, 66.

⁷³ Lord Meath, “Defence of the Empire,” *Nineteenth Century and After*, May 1905, 743.

⁷⁴ *Times*, June 30 1910.

⁷⁵ *Pall Mall Gazette*, May 22 1909.

⁷⁶ *National Service League Journal*, November 1905, 466. Also see *National Service League Journal*, November 1903, 3-4.

introduction of universal service in Australia and New Zealand, the journal ran a special edition that praised what “the Empire is actually doing towards training its greatest asset, namely its youth, to take its place, soberly and manfully, in the great throng of British kith and kin.”⁷⁷ It explained that training a young boy “imbues him with the spirit of comradeship, of cooperation for unselfish ends, it implants in him the sense of duty for the sake of a cause—the greatest that can appeal to a generous mind—the cause of a common country, a common race, and a common flag.”⁷⁸ League President Lord Roberts also commended the colonial cadets as setting a “splendid and manly example.”⁷⁹ He insisted “their determination is to be efficient, and while they have no desire for war, they do not mean to be found wanting should any emergency arise.”⁸⁰

These advocates also linked universal training in the colonies with a continuation of essential “English” and “British” liberties and traditions. An Australian writer for the *Empire Review* compared the Commonwealth’s training program with the Fyrd of Anglo-Saxon England. He insisted “the argument that compulsory service is un-British, therefore, is as unhistorical as it is, many persons of quite sound minds and morals consider, unmanly and unpatriotic.”⁸¹ Another writer opined that Australian boys “love to shoot almost as keenly as the English yeoman who won the day at Poitiers.”⁸² Lord Derby adopted this message in an address to the Lancashire branch of the National Service League. He rejected notions that “compulsion was foreign to English characteristics” and pointed to programs in Natal and Australia as evidence that “we did not recognise the responsibility of defence in the way those colonies

⁷⁷ “Military Training of Lads: A Glance Over the Empire,” *Nation in Arms*, June 1909, 230. Found in BD. Alfred Milner Papers MS 156.

⁷⁸ “Military Training of Lads: A Glance Over the Empire,” 231.

⁷⁹ Roberts Papers 126/10 “Speech to Australian Cadets at the Guildhall, London, March 13 1912.”

⁸⁰ Roberts Papers 7101/23-26 Speech to Rugby School February 16 1906.

⁸¹ F.A.W. Gisborne, “An Imperial Army,” *Empire Review*, March 1913, 74-75.

⁸² W. Beach Thomas, “Our Young Citizens,” *Macmillan’s Magazine*, March 1907, 400.

did.”⁸³ Similarly the *National Service League Journal* used the example of white militias in Natal to demonstrate “the absurdity of the wearisome reiteration that compulsory training is incompatible with the highly-developed conscience and the sense of freedom of the British citizen.”⁸⁴

While emphasizing the broader “British” connection, advocates of universal training went to great pains to prove that cadet service was compatible with the freedoms of “colonial democracy.” The *Saturday Review* pointed out the unprecedented bipartisan support in Australia for youth training, explaining “it is realised that it is the duty of every able-bodied citizen to qualify himself to fight for his country.”⁸⁵ Another critic insisted “the democracy of Australia has no fear of the bugbear of militarism. On the contrary, Australians realise that it is the duty of a nation to train its children to be true patriots, and, as such, ready and able to take their part in the defence of their country.”⁸⁶ Lord Curzon sardonically proclaimed that “nearly every one of our great Dominions across the seas, nurtured as they were told, in the free air of Democracy, without the counter of Toryism or Jingoism latent among them . . . recognised the obligations of military service.”⁸⁷ Some critics even employed the colonial examples to deride British socialists for their alleged lack of patriotism. As George Shee complained to an Australian

⁸³ *Manchester Guardian*, January 29 1909.

⁸⁴ *National Service League Journal*, December 1904, 263. This was a common brand of rhetoric for the league. See for example the National Service League Pamphlet “A Strong Army in A Free State: A Study of the Old English and Modern Swiss Militias” (London, Undated) in Milner Papers MS 156.

⁸⁵ “An Australian Lead,” *The Saturday Review*, October 10 1908, 443.

⁸⁶ W. Elliot, “Cadet Corps for Schoolboys of All Age,” *Nineteenth Century and After*, December 1901, 1037. Leo Amery explained to a friend at the War Office that Australians of all political shades took credit for transforming the “little hooligans and devils into the best young men that the YMCA could ever aspire to.” AMEL 1/2/17 Amery to Colonel Henry Wilson, October 14 1913.

⁸⁷ War Office Papers 105/48 “Presentation of Birthday Testimonial to Field Marshal Earl Roberts,” January 22 1913.

friend, “I wish you could send some of your Labour people over here to ‘bite’ our Labour members, and to put some ideas of Empire and national service into them.”⁸⁸

The public debate over mandatory cadet training encompassed a number of important elements. On the one hand, many advocates expected that military training for boys would facilitate the adult transition into army life. It also furthered the perceived project of national and imperial revitalization, tasked with creating a new generation of strong and masculine Britons capable of meeting the challenges of the new century. However, these factors cannot be divorced from the broader project of strengthening imperial bonds between Britain and the self-governing Dominions. Military service was seen as a common responsibility of white male Britons, one that might require exceptional sacrifices to King, country, and empire. Lord Roberts explained this idea as an “Empire united by ties not only of blood and kindred and a common history and heritage, but by the strongest of all ties—a brotherhood in arms, a brotherhood, each member of which will take pride in fulfilling his duty to his country.”⁸⁹ Though often parodied as the *par exemplar* of the Edwardian extreme right, Roberts’ vision highlighted more common views of imperial defense as the ultimate bond uniting the white subjects of the British Empire.

Voluntary Youth Movements

Cadet corps and other forms of officially sanctioned paramilitary training failed to make significant inroads in Great Britain. By comparison, hundreds of thousands of British boys participated in voluntary youth movements such as the Boys’ Brigade, the Church Lads’ Brigade, and the Boy Scouts. Youth organizations appealed to many working-class and middle-

⁸⁸ Barrett, *Falling In*, 52.

⁸⁹ Roberts Papers 7101/23-126 Speech at Edinburgh October 19 1906.

class boys, with outdoor activities, games, and weekend escapes to the countryside. They instilled the same lessons of discipline, physical fitness, military preparedness, and patriotism, but in a playful manner that appealed to boyish sensibilities and desires. These activities also reinforced ideas about the empire as global British community. For the Boy Scouts in particular, youth organizations placed an emphasis on linking white boys in the colonies with those in the “Mother Country.” Indeed, historians must study these groups through a transnational and imperial lens in order to appreciate fully their goals of producing young patriotic Britons. Voluntary youth organizations, then, must be examined in tandem with education and cadet training as a primary instrument of Edwardian social conformity.

Military authorities in Great Britain recognized the important role that youth organizations could play in imperial defense planning. The War Office typically provided money, equipment, and even experienced drill officers to various organizations whose activities advanced the cause of military training. This interest culminated in 1909 when Secretary of State for War Haldane attempted to consolidate all voluntary youth organizations into the Army Cadet Force. The revised Army Cadet Regulations of 1910 required all boys’ organizations to affiliate with the Territorial Army in order to receive financial assistance or instruction from the War Office.⁹⁰ Military authorities clearly recognized the significance of these organizations in planning for imperial defence. These boys were not just “playing a silly game,” insisted General Ian Hamilton, but were engaged in manly activities that have “a direct bearing on war and on the defence of the country.” He concluded that “the knowledge that they are doing something real

⁹⁰ Springhill, *Youth, Empire and Society*, 29-30.

and preparing themselves to come forward in England's darkest hour, and die for her, would be refreshment for their souls."⁹¹

The first uniformed youth movement in late Victorian Britain certainly resembled a militaristic body of boy soldiers. In 1883 William Alexander Smith, a Glasgow businessman and Captain in the local Volunteers, transformed his boys Sunday School class into a military-style company with a strict emphasis on personal discipline.⁹² Members of this new "Boys Brigade" received a belt, haversack, pillbox cap, and dummy wooden rifle, and engaged in physical exercise, military drill, and religious instruction. The organization proved very popular for the working and lower middle-classes throughout Scotland and England. By 1900 the movement enrolled over 45,000 boys. By the eve of war it exceeded 66,500.⁹³

Despite its overtly militaristic image, Smith rejected allegations that his organization produced indoctrinated boy-soldiers. He adumbrated a popular vision of "Muscular Christianity" embracing virtues such as sacrifice, discipline, piety, and courage. As he explained, "what the Brigade seeks to do is to train up good, true boys, well prepared, physically and morally, for the battle of life, in whatever sphere they may choose."⁹⁴ Smith further distanced the organization from Haldane's efforts to draw youth organizations into the administrative orbit of the War Office. In 1909 the Brigade voted overwhelmingly against affiliation with the Territorial Army. Nonetheless Smith acknowledged the valuable lessons in military life and social conformity that the Boys Brigade imposed on its members. He admitted that members of the Brigade would

⁹¹ Ian Hamilton, *National Life and National Training* (London, 1913), 19-20. A staunch proponent of compulsory cadet education, Hamilton chided these organizations for their occasional lack of military training.

⁹² Springhill, *Youth, Empire and Society*, 22-31. For a contemporary account, see "Story of the Boys' Brigade," *The Boys' Brigade Magazine* May 1893, 6-8.

⁹³ Springhill, *Youth, Empire, and Society*, 135.

⁹⁴ William A. Smith, "The Boys' Brigade," *Quiver* June 1909, 659.

make excellent soldiers, and added “I, for one, shall never count it any discredit to a boy to be prepared to serve his country and to wear the uniform of his King.”⁹⁵

Similar organizations flourished along denominational lines in England in Wales. In 1891 William Mallock Gee founded the Church Lad’s Brigade as the Anglican equivalent of Smith’s largely nonconformist movement. At the peak of its power in 1908, the Church Lad’s Brigade enrolled over 70,000 boys.⁹⁶ The brigade drew on the idea of Christian manliness as a means of reforming young boys and ensuring social conformity. As one supporter insisted, “they aim at teaching the great lessons of order, discipline voluntarily submitted to, and obedience,” which would produce “strong, true, and upright Christian men.”⁹⁷ But unlike the Boys’ Brigade, Gee’s organization embraced closer ties with the military and adopted a more overtly militaristic demeanor.⁹⁸ In 1911 the Church Lad’s Brigade even decided to accept affiliation with the War Office and the Army Cadet Force. The next few years saw the organization jettison its religious emphasis in favor of what one participant later characterized as “purely infantry training.”⁹⁹

Far smaller organizations existed for religious minorities in the metropole. In 1895 Colonel Albert Goldsmid founded the Jewish Lad’s Brigade along the same lines as the Boys’ Brigade and Church Lad’s Brigade. Though a committed Zionist, Goldsmid hoped that his organization would assist Jewish boys in the East End of London to assimilate with their English neighbors.¹⁰⁰ Catholic priests also organized a Catholic Boys’ Brigade with a targeted

⁹⁵ William A. Smith, “The Boys’ Brigade,” *Quiver* June 1909, 659.

⁹⁶ Springhill, *Youth, Empire, and Society*, 39.

⁹⁷ Pat Brooklyn, “The Church Lad’s Brigade: Its Work and History,” *English Illustrated Magazine*, August 1904, 511. They also placed a heavy emphasis on the Temperance Movement.

⁹⁸ Lord Methuen, a hero of the South African War and member of the Church Lad’s Brigade Council, praised the organization and added his hope “that the Government may fully recognise the cadet system as the basis of home defence.” Lord Methuen, “Training the Youth of England,” *Nineteenth Century and After*, February 1905, 239.

⁹⁹ IWM 9253/34 John William Dorgan Reel 3. Recorded 1986.

¹⁰⁰ Springhill, *Youth, Empire, and Society*, 40.

membership of Irish boys in the impoverished dockyard region of London.¹⁰¹ These organizations left little in the form of written records and failed to attract the attention of the national presses. Nonetheless their very existence speaks to the ways in which youth movements could embrace disparate groups and under the common umbrella of self-improvement, obedience to the social hierarchy, and loyalty to the empire.

The most influential and far-reaching youth organization of the Edwardian period was the Boy Scouts. The movement traced its origins to a unique social experiment on the shores of Brownsea Island near Dorset. In August 1907 British General Robert Baden-Powell, the hero of the Siege of Mafeking, assembled thirteen public school boys with nine members of the local Boys' Brigade unit for a week of outdoor activities and lessons in proper British citizenship. The boys slept in army tents, observed a morning flag ceremony, and spent their afternoons swimming, learning woodcraft, and playing wargames.¹⁰² They dedicated an entire day to the theme of "Patriotism," which included lectures on the monarchy, the empire, and the armed forces as well as rifle instruction. At night Baden-Powell, adorned in the smart khaki uniform of the South African Constabulary, would regale the boys with tales of far-flung military campaigns.¹⁰³ Years later one participant still recalled these captivating sessions in campfire patriotism, admitting "they loved every minute of it."¹⁰⁴

Baden-Powell dedicated much of the next year to promoting his "Boy Scout" scheme throughout Great Britain. Between November 1907 and February 1908 he delivered over fifty public addresses urging boys to form Scout troops. With the assistance of his publicist,

¹⁰¹ Springhill, *Youth, Empire, and Society*, 43.

¹⁰² Jeal, *Baden-Powell*, 384-386.

¹⁰³ The idea of colonial masculinity played a huge role in the origins of the Boy Scout movement. A veteran of colonial wars in India and Africa, Baden-Powell presented himself as an expert on the outdoors. He later claimed that colonial cadets during the siege of Mafeking provided the inspiration for the Scouting movement.

¹⁰⁴ IWM 985/4 Thomas Brian Evans-Lombe Reel 1. Recorded 1977. Evans-Lombe added that "it was a very happy camp and we mixed marvelously."

imperialist Arthur Pearson, he established a boys' weekly magazine, *The Scout*, which combined adventure stories with practical advice for aspiring Scouts. The most important milestone was the publication of his highly acclaimed *Scouting for Boys* (1908). Originally produced as six separate installments, *Scouting for Boys* offered boys and their adult leaders an outline for establishing independent Scout troops. Baden-Powell interspersed lessons of woodcraft, fieldwork, and other outdoor techniques with patriotic "campfire yarns" such as the Siege of Mafeking and Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*. He explained that "by means of this book I hope that anyone, even without previous knowledge of scouting, may be able to teach it to boys—in town just as well as in the country."¹⁰⁵ Though exact sales numbers do not exist, Pearsons republished the book four times during 1908, and in 1909 a second edition sold over 60,000 copies, making it one of the more successful book ventures of the Edwardian period.¹⁰⁶

Though the blueprint was crafted by imperial elites, the Boy Scouts blossomed as a largely grassroots movement. Throughout Great Britain thousands of youths eagerly acquired copies of *Scouting for Boys* and established local "patrols." The case of a young Scout named James Orton is indicative of many early members who originated independently from the national movement. After receiving a copy of *Scouting for Boys* on his fifteenth birthday, Orton and his friends quit the Boys' Brigade, dyed their shirts khaki-brown, and created homemade brimmed hats out of felt. They began following the exercises laid out in Baden-Powell's book including camping, fieldcraft, and tracking skills. Only later did they apply for affiliation with the "official" Boy Scout movement.¹⁰⁷ This trend took Baden-Powell by surprise, and he was

¹⁰⁵ Baden-Powell, *Scouting for Boys*, 4.

¹⁰⁶ Jeal, *Baden-Powell*, 396. Jeal notes the success of *Scouting for Boys* on the international market and concludes that it "has probably sold more copies than any other title during the twentieth century with the exception of the Bible."

¹⁰⁷ Orton later joined the Territorials and became a trade union activist after the war. IWM 10411/9 James Frederick Orton Reel One. Recorded 1988.

forced to create a national headquarters when his small leadership team became inundated with requests for scoutmasters, uniforms, and guidance.¹⁰⁸ Within two years the Boy Scouts surpassed the Boys' Brigade and Church Lad's Brigade with over 107,000 members. By 1913 the British movement enrolled approximately 157,000 Scouts.¹⁰⁹

Scouting quickly spread throughout the empire. In 1910 Baden-Powell embarked upon a public relations tour of Canada with a hand-picked model troop of British Boy Scouts. The contingent traveled throughout the Dominion demonstrating scoutcraft and other outdoor techniques to admiring audiences.¹¹⁰ Baden-Powell concluded the tour with a mass review of over 2,000 Canadian scouts at the Toronto National Exhibition.¹¹¹ The "Chief Scout" also made a direct appeal to Dominion lads and their parents in *The Canadian Boy Scout* (1911). Though largely a reproduction of the earlier *Scouting for Boys*, the book catered to colonial sensibilities by promoting Canadian nationalism as well as devotion to the empire. He reminded his readers that "to Canada belongs the honor of being the largest Dominion of the British Empire," and added that "if Canadian boys rise to be men worth their salt, Canada will have the place of honor in that Empire."¹¹² Baden-Powell's message found a receptive audience. As of September 1914 the Canadian organization had over 14,000 scouts in 900 troops.¹¹³

The Scouting movement also thrived in the other self-governing Dominions. As Martin Crotty demonstrates, the masculine frontier image of the Boy Scouts appealed to Australian

¹⁰⁸ Jeal, *Baden-Powell*, 398.

¹⁰⁹ Springhill, *Youth, Empire, and Society*, 138.

¹¹⁰ One of the boys kept a diary of his Canadian tour which is housed in the Scout Association Archives. See Scout Association Archives, Robert Baden-Powell Papers TC 9 "Through Canada with the Chief Scout" by S.F. Irvin.

¹¹¹ Patricia Dirks, "Canada's Boys—An Imperial or National Asset? Responses to Baden-Powell's Boy Scout Movement in Pre-War Canada," in *Canada and the British World: Culture, Migration, and Identity*, eds. Philip Buckner and R. Douglas Francis (Vancouver, 2006), 116.

¹¹² Robert Baden-Powell, *Canadian Boy Scout* (Toronto, 1911), 279.

¹¹³ LAC MG 28 I73 Minutes of the 2nd Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Canadian General Council of the Boy Scouts Association March 20 1915.

sensibilities about their own fledging national identity.¹¹⁴ Only months after the publication of *Scouting for Boys* New South Wales authorities reported over 1,200 scouts. In 1911 troops in the city of Melbourne enrolled 5,000 members. Even a rural and lightly populated state such as Queensland could boast over 2,000 scouts in 1913.¹¹⁵ In New Zealand, Major D. Cossgrove of the Dominion Territorial Force assumed control over a growing movement that by 1911 included 16,000 boys.¹¹⁶

The opportunity of Scouting was not extended to all of the young boys in the empire. Indeed, the development of movements in India and South Africa illuminated the enormous barriers to non-white participation in Scouting. The Fourth Clause of the “Scout Law” upheld that “a Scout is a friend to all, and a brother to every other scout, no matter to what social class the other belongs.”¹¹⁷ This condition, aimed at reconciling working-class youth with their social betters, apparently did not extend to boys of a different color. Scout authorities in India and South Africa were adamantly opposed to forming non-white troops. They viewed this social experiment as a dangerous transgression of the racial boundaries between white and non-white communities.¹¹⁸ Recent work by Timothy Parsons shows how in the 1920s some British colonial administrators in sub-Saharan Africa encouraged the Scout movement upon native boys as a ways of inculcating ideas about empire loyalism and forging a pro-British native elite.¹¹⁹ But for the prewar period, the bonds of imperial Scouting was confined solely to white youth.

Baden-Powell went to great lengths to ensure that the Dominion branches remained closely wedded with the movement in Great Britain. During the chaotic early years he often

¹¹⁴ For a brief survey of the Scouting movement in Australia, see Martin Crotty, *Making the Australian Male: Middle-Class Masculinity 1870-1920* (Melbourne, 2001), 196-220.

¹¹⁵ Crotty, *Making the Australian Male*, 199.

¹¹⁶ S.G. Culliford, *New Zealand Scouting: The First Fifty Years* (Wellington, 1958), 15.

¹¹⁷ Baden-Powell, *Scouting for Boys*, 49-50.

¹¹⁸ Jeal, *Baden-Powell*, 491-497.

¹¹⁹ Timothy Parsons, *Race, Resistance, and the Boy Scout Movement in Colonial Africa* (Athens, 2004).

allowed local leaders to organize their troops on their own lines and affiliate with other youth movements within their colony.¹²⁰ However, by 1910 Baden-Powell began a concerted effort to exert personal leadership throughout the empire. He secured cooperation from the Governors General of the Dominions by designating them as the “Chief Scout” and patron of their local movements. He also created a “Commissioner for Colonies” within the British movement, and his British office became the “Imperial Headquarters.”¹²¹ Documents from the 1912 tour of the empire even reveal that Baden-Powell considered changing the name to “The Imperial Boy Scouts.”¹²²

These trends reflect Baden-Powell’s considerable efforts to emphasize the Scouting Movement as an “Imperial Brotherhood” between the white boys of the empire. In 1910 he informed one supporter that he was resigning his commission in the army “with a view to working at this scheme as an “Imperial Bond.”¹²³ In *Scouting For Boys* he explained that “the Union Jack stands for something more than only the Union of England, Ireland, and Scotland—it means the Union of Great Britain with all our colonies across the seas; and it also means closer comradeship with our brothers in those colonies.” He warned his young readers of the empire’s vulnerability and insisted “we must still stick shoulder to shoulder as Britons if we want to keep our position among the nations.”¹²⁴ Baden-Powell delivered a similar message to boys in the colonies. Along with the usual rhetoric on the requirements of “defending your home and liberty,” Baden-Powell encouraged Canadian lads to establish pen pals with “brother Scouts in

¹²⁰ National Scout Museum, New Zealand . J. Archibald Kyle to D. Cossgrove, August 13 1909. This author is deeply grateful to Paul van Herpt and the volunteers at the National Scout Museum of New Zealand for their assistance in this project.

¹²¹ NSM Kyle to Cossgrove, June 27 1910. For unknown reasons, Cossgrove continued to exercise a disproportionate amount of authority in New Zealand.

¹²² SAA. Baden-Powell Papers TC 49 “Chief Scout’s Full Report on Visit to Different States in Australia,” dated June 1912.

¹²³ SAA. Baden-Powell Papers TC 9 Baden-Powell to Lord Lanesborough January 9 1910. Lanesborough served as the Military Secretary to Grey.

¹²⁴ Baden-Powell, *Scouting for Boys*, 332.

Britain, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and in the United States—for the boys of the United States are also of British Blood and speak the English language.”¹²⁵

Scouting authorities organized exhibitions and “Jamborees” for members in the metropole to assemble with their fellow Britons from overseas. In 1911 a contingent of Canadian scouts travelled to Britain for a special rally for the new king, George V. Young boys throughout the Dominion competed for the privilege of traveling to the “Mother Country.”¹²⁶ Upon arrival they joined 33,000 British scouts in a mass rally at Windsor Castle.¹²⁷ (Figure 6:1) The *Times* described this assembly of “manly children” as a “picturesque spectacle” and concluded “the Rally was admirably stage-managed.”¹²⁸ Another large display took place in Birmingham for the 1913 Imperial Scout Exhibition. Scouts from across the empire displayed their model campsites, rope bridges and fieldcraft to assembled guests. The pinnacle event was an inspection by the Duke of Connaught who reviewed 25,000 khaki-clad Britons assembled in military formation. The official welcome from the Bishop of Wakefield belied the true cause of the event. He exclaimed “we welcome you, and all connected with your movement, because we are certain that, if it is carried out in the right spirit, it makes for a fit, a disciplined, and a self-sacrificing British and Imperial Manhood.”¹²⁹

Boy Scouts or an Imperial Army?

Scholars remain divided over the degree to which the Scouting movement attempted to inculcate militarism into young boys. Historians such as John Springhall and Anne Summers

¹²⁵ Baden-Powell, *Canadian Boy Scout*, 283.

¹²⁶ F. Minden Cole, *Report of Officer Commanding the Canadian Boy Scouts' Contingent to England, 1911, with Introduction Respecting the Growth of the Movement in Canada to 1912* (Montreal, 1912).

¹²⁷ *Punch*, July 15 1911, 11.

¹²⁸ *Times*, July 5 1911.

¹²⁹ SAA Baden-Powell Papers TC 145 From *Boy Scouts and What They Do* (Oldsfield, 1913), 48. Despite its title as “Imperial,” the exhibition also included contingents from foreign countries. However, the emphasis was on the “British” connection.

argue that a prevailing spirit of militarism permeated Edwardian middle-class culture.¹³⁰ They point to the prevalence of military officers and National Service League members in the Scout hierarchy as evidence of a concerted effort to militarize British youths. As Springhall states, “the Boy Scouts were primarily intended by Baden-Powell to serve as a form of long-term insurance against any recrudescence of the political and military incompetence he came to identify with the war in South Africa.”¹³¹ By comparison, Allen Warren and Michael Rosenthal focus on Scouting’s role in promoting social conformity among working-class youths. These authors point to Baden-Powell’s successful efforts to resist absorption by the Army Cadet Force as an example of his unwavering devotion to keep militarism out of his prized movement.¹³²

For his part, Baden-Powell adamantly defended his organization against allegations that it turned out aggressive and indoctrinated boy soldiers. In an open letter to the *Times* he maintained that “the object of the movement is to help the boys of whatever class to become ‘all round’ men, to give them ‘character,’ and to make them capable of looking after themselves in whatever circumstances they are placed.”¹³³ He further insisted in *Scouting for Boys* that “the whole intention of the Boy Scouts’ training is for peaceful citizenship,” though he admitted “even if I had advocated training the lads in a military way (which I have not done), I am impenitent enough to see no harm in it.”¹³⁴ In the most powerful response to the charge of

¹³⁰ Anne Summers, “Militarism in Britain before the Great War,” *History Workshop*, August 1976, 104-123; John Springhall, *Youth, Empire and Society*; John Springhall, “Debate: Baden-Powell and the Scout Movement Before 1920: Citizen Training or Soldiers of the Future?” *English Historical Review*, October 1987, 934-942.

¹³¹ Springhall, “Debate: Baden-Powell and the Scout Movement Before 1920: Citizen Training or Soldiers of the Future?” 941.

¹³² Michael Rosenthal, *The Character Factory: Baden-Powell and the Origins of the Boy Scout Movement* (New York, 1986); Allen Warren, “Sir Robert Baden-Powell, the Scout movement and citizen training in Great Britain, 1900-1920,” *English Historical Review* 101, No. 399 (April 1986), 376-398.

¹³³ *Times*, September 25 1909.

¹³⁴ Baden-Powell, *Scouting for Boys*, 341.

militarism, the Scout movement declined official association with the Territorials or the War Office.¹³⁵

But while Baden-Powell avoided the overt military style of the cadets, it is clear that his major objective was the creation of future generations of Britons capable of defending the empire. He and his supporters placed a primary emphasis on the development of good imperial citizenship—a civic responsibility that included proper military training. For rifle training, he pointed out “every boy ought to learn how to shoot and how to obey orders, else he is no more good when war breaks out than an old woman, and merely gets killed like a squealing rabbit, being unable to defend himself.”¹³⁶ He explained that societies “must be prepared for what is *possible*, not only what is *probable* in war,” and that “we ought to be prepared in Britain against being attacked by our enemies.”¹³⁷ To prepare for this development, he insisted that “every boy should prepare himself, by learning how to shoot and to drill, to take his share in defence of the Empire, if it should ever be attacked.”¹³⁸

These ideas were presented in a 1905 appeal to young readers of the popular boys’ magazine *Union Jack*. Baden-Powell recounted the story of the white South African boys who assisted British military authorities during the Siege of Mafeking. He explained that one day England might come under attack from an outside power, and “that if this happens every boy in the country should be prepared to take his place and help in the defence like those Mafeking boys did.” Baden-Powell admitted that youth culture idolized athletic boys, but he insisted that military skills such rifle shooting, scouting, and drilling would eclipse sports in the event of an emergency. He concluded with a challenge to young Britons to prepare themselves for the

¹³⁵ Warren, “Sir Robert Baden-Powell, the Scout Movement and Citizen Training in Great Britain, 1900-1920,” 391.

¹³⁶ Baden-Powell, *Scouting for Boys*, 10-11.

¹³⁷ Baden-Powell, *Scouting for Boys*, 9.

¹³⁸ Baden-Powell, *Scouting for Boys*, 314-315.

potential needs of the battlefield as well as the athletic field. He explained “I hope that before long every eleven, whether football or cricket, will also make itself a good elven for fighting and soldiering, and therefore useful to our King and County when Needed.”¹³⁹

Ironically, the decentralized nature of the Scouting movement facilitated Baden-Powell’s desire to push the organization towards a more militarized organization. Though the Scouts resisted absorption by the Army Cadet Force, this did not prevent individual troops from cooperating with local military authorities. Indeed, Baden-Powell publicly acknowledged that “it is permissible for scoutmasters to specialize in any particular aspects of scouting that they may select, such as ambulance, woodcraft, seamanship, marksmanship, or any other item.”¹⁴⁰ Since many early scoutmasters were army officers or members of the Territorials, it is not surprising that they instructed their boys in all manner of paramilitary training. The oral recollections of many former scouts confirm this tendency. One troop near Brightlingsea focused on learning semaphore communications. At the beginning of the war they assisted the Coast Guard and Royal Navy Reserve with coastal defense operations.¹⁴¹ Another troop in Folkestone was overseen “by the Army padre” who borrowed some unspecified equipment from the military.¹⁴² Like the scoutmaster mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, he also mobilized his boys for temporary guard duties on the outbreak of hostilities. In Buckinghamshire the wealthy Rothschild family personally financed a local scout troop. They built a rifle range and hired an army drill officer to teach the boys proper military training.¹⁴³

¹³⁹ *Union Jack*, Vol. III No. 65 1905, n.p.

¹⁴⁰ *Times*, September 25 1909.

¹⁴¹ IWM 28/7 Conrad Albert Mann Reel One. Recorded 1973. Mann was an apprentice to a yachtbuilder and later joined the army in 1915.

¹⁴² IWM 8172/5 John Frederick Ford Reel One. Recorded 1984.

¹⁴³ IWM 8721/8 Thomas Henry Baker Reel One. Recorded 1985.

One Lancaster scout recalled an old Sergeant Major from the Royal Scots Grey regiment who regularly trained his troop in field ambulance work.¹⁴⁴

Scouting in the colonies adopted a more overt appeal to militarism. Baden-Powell and other scout leaders wisely recognized that compulsory training programs in the Dominions threatened the existence of voluntary youth movements. As a result they endeavored to present Scouting as a beneficial complement to cadet programs and later adult military service. In 1910 Baden-Powell explained to Governor General Grey that early participation in the Canadian organization would produce “proper cadets” at age 14. After visiting Australia in 1912 he concluded that “Scouting provides an individual and fun learning process that compulsory training does not.” As he pointed out, “discipline and a sense of duty does not become ingrained as part of a lad’s character through the obligatory performance of two hours of drill.”¹⁴⁵ His report on the South African program posited a similar view. He professed that “scouting for boys was originated in the Training that was given to Army recruits before the final instruction in drill and strictly military details. It is therefore the essential training to put into the boys before they become cadets.”¹⁴⁶ At the conclusion of his tour he summarized the “possible uses” for the Scout movement overseas with particular emphasis on “preliminary training for the Cadet service,” and the “promotion of Imperial Brotherhood.”¹⁴⁷ Baden-Powell clearly envisioned the Boy Scouts as a part of a pan-British movement in youth military preparation. He concluded: “if

¹⁴⁴ IWM 11582/10 Albert Hurst Reel One. Recorded 1990.

¹⁴⁵ SAA Baden-Powell Papers TC 49 “Chief Scout’s Full Report on Visit to Different States in Australia,” dated June 1912. New Zealand authorities worked out an arrangement with the Dominion Boy Scouts that allowed boys to substitute Scout activities for military training as long as their leader had military experience. Culliford, *New Zealand Scouting*, 18.

¹⁴⁶ Quoted in Springhall, “Debate: Baden-Powell and the Scout Movement Before 1920: Citizen Training or Soldiers of the Future?” 937.

¹⁴⁷ SAA Baden-Powell Papers TC 9-A Robert Baden-Powell, “Report on Boy Scouts Overseas,” September 1912.

this is carried out universally, in all the Colonies, we shall establish a standard and bond throughout the cadets of the coming Imperial Army.”¹⁴⁸

Despite the historiographical debate over the militarization of youth movements, most contemporaries were under no illusion about the relationship between the Boy Scouts and imperial defense. Both staunch supporters and virulent critics of the organization made repeated references to the boys as the future guardians of the empire.¹⁴⁹ This theme is conveyed in a famous political cartoon in *Punch*. The illustration showed a young scout escorting an elderly woman representing “Britannia.”¹⁵⁰ (Figure 6:2) Under the auspicious headline “Our Youngest Line of Defence,” the boy adamantly proclaims “Fear Not, Gran’ma, No Danger Can Befall You Now. Remember, *I Am With You!*” The symbolism is striking, as the now older and feeble “Britannia” must rely on a new generation of Britons to protect her well-being in an increasingly hostile world. A more comedic tone was sounded in P.G. Wodehouse’s “The Swoop, or How Clarence Saved England” (1908). A satire on Edwardian invasion literature, “The Swoop” featured iconic Boy Scout “Clarence Chugwater” saving Great Britain from an invasion by, among others, Germany, Russia, Switzerland, China, and the “Mad Mullah” of Somalia.¹⁵¹ Though both works advocated radically different messages, they operated under the same basic premise: that the Boy Scouts were intended as vehicle for preparing young boys to defend the empire.

¹⁴⁸ SAA Baden-Powell Papers TC 9 Baden-Powell to Lanesborough January 9 1910.

¹⁴⁹ This trend also occurred in the Dominions. The Mayor of Waimate, New Zealand wrote Baden-Powell on his tour that the trip would ‘result in benefit both to the military interests of our Dominion and to the entire British Nation.’ NSM John Black to Baden-Powell, June 1 1912. Another New Zealander wrote a letter to the editor supporting the Scout movement and hoped “that every young man will come forward ready and wiling to demonstrate the love of their country by keeping up the type of traditional Briton, and thus ensuring the perpetuity of our great and glorious empire.” NSM, Unidentified and undated clipping by James Healy of Linwood, New Zealand.

¹⁵⁰ *Punch*, September 1 1909, 147.

¹⁵¹ P.G. Wodehouse, “The Swoop, or How Clarence Saved England,” *The Swoop! And Other Stories* (London, 1909).

Conclusion

It is problematic to declare that state education, cadet training, or participation in voluntary youth movements motivated an entire generation of young men to volunteer during the First World War. The oral accounts of British and Dominion veterans housed at the Imperial War Museum commonly refer to fond memories of their school days or their time in the Boy Scouts and other Edwardian organizations. Some even extend a direct connection between these lessons in social conformity and their later military service. T.G. Rogers of Cheshire, England, affirmed that his experiences playing “war games” in the Boy Scouts led him to enlist in the army.¹⁵² When asked why he joined the Canadian Expeditionary Force, Howard Reid of Cape Breton explained:

When I was about 12 years of age, I read in a boys' magazine all about the invasions of Britain, 'Britain at Bay,' and 'Britain's Revenge.' I can remember all the different stories- it was quite a story. I think it was two boy scouts that held up the German army on London Bridge . . . I read those stories, and they did something.¹⁵³

However, these anecdotes cannot be employed as definitive evidence of a mass populace of indoctrinated ‘boy soldiers’ who exuberantly ‘went over the top’ in support of ‘King and Country.’ As one social historian of wartime recruitment explained, “the permutations and nuances of their motives were many. In the end all they had in common was their total ignorance of the rigours which lay ahead.”¹⁵⁴

Yet the powerful influences of this cultural hegemony cannot be discounted. The lessons of state-sponsored school, cadet training, and extracurricular activities all contributed to crafting a worldview grounded in social deference, service to the empire, and the underlying solidarity of the British race. The great mass of young men who fought in the First World War came of age

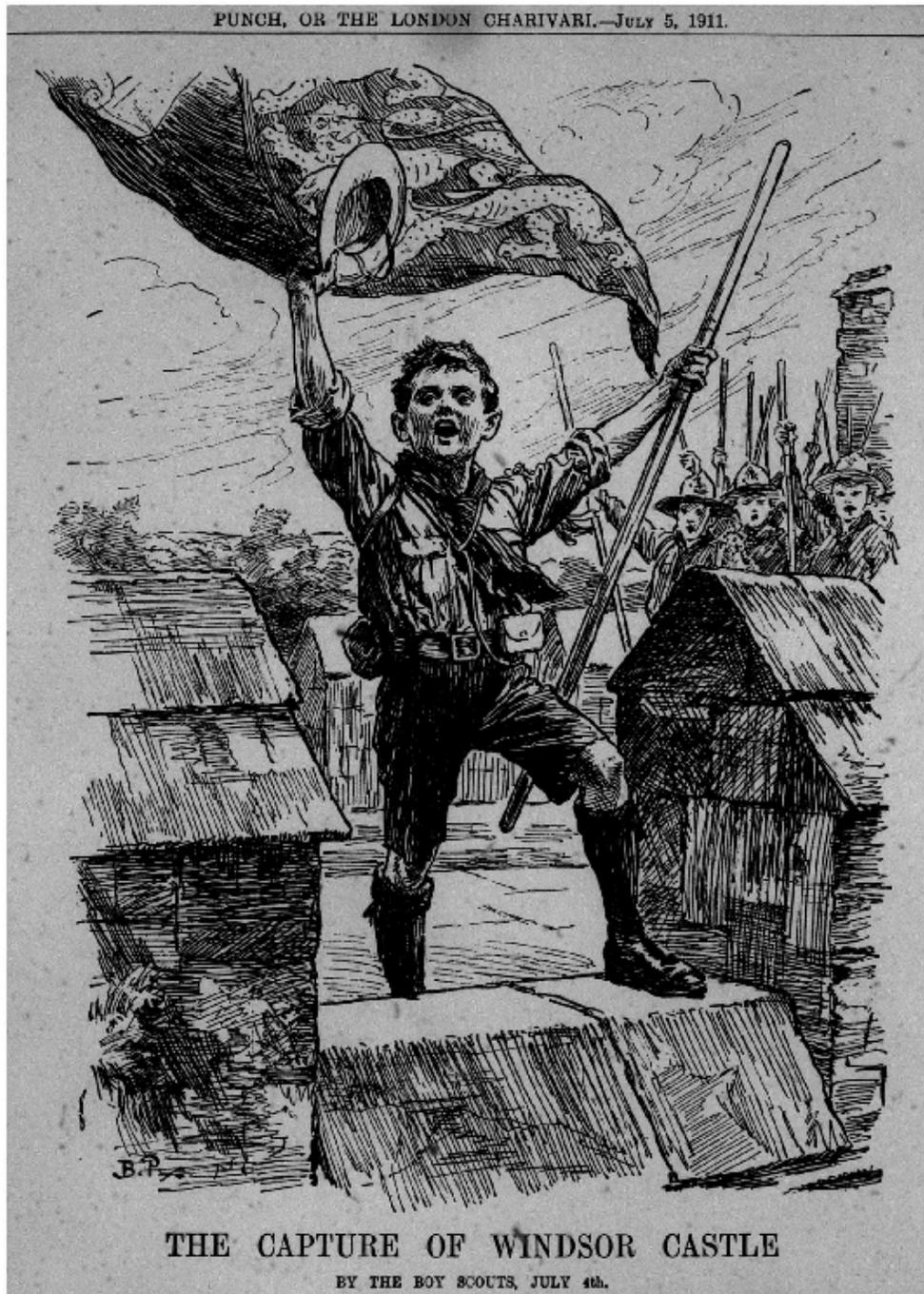
¹⁵² IWM 24875/4 T.G. Rogers Reel One. Recorded 1975.

¹⁵³ Quoted in McDonald, *Sons of the Empire*, 193-194.

¹⁵⁴ Denis Winter, *Death's Men: Soldiers of the Great War* (New York, 1978), 36.

in a period of intense public discussion about the importance of race, empire, patriotism, and military preparedness. Their surroundings shaped their understanding of the benefits and responsibilities of being a part of a broader imperial community. This cultural bedrock became a formative part of the construction of imperial “Britishness” and helps to understand the popular response to the First World War. Instruments of youth conformity may not have convinced Britons to march to war in the fall of 1914. But they did ensure that many of them marched to war as “Britons.”

FIGURE 6:1¹



¹ *Punch*, July 15 1911, 11.

FIGURE 6:2¹



¹ *Punch*, September 1 1909, 147.

Chapter Seven

A “Britannic Alliance:”

Colonial Nationalism and Imperial Defense, 1900-1914

Sentiment it is, no doubt; but not silly; for the world is largely ruled by sentiment, else men would not die by the thousands for a few pence a day.

Charles Cooper Penrose Fitzgerald, 1906¹

On March 20 1912, Viscount Reginald Esher gave a lecture at the Royal United Services Institution on “The Co-ordination of the Naval and Military Services.” An old Liberal peer with long experience in military affairs, Esher reminded his audience that defense planning had to operate within the inherent limitations of democratic society. He explained that “our system of government is based upon the representation of the People’s will,” and added “the first question a reformer has to ask himself is whether the approval of the House of Commons is likely to be obtained.” This precondition applied to imperial cooperation as well. Esher embraced a view of the empire in which the Dominions were “in reality self-governing States, in alliance with Great Britain.” He acknowledged that “we must abandon to the Dominions a certain freedom of attitude and action, both in peace and in war, although at the expense of the highest naval and military efficiency.” However, Esher, like most Britons, recognized that the Dominions would play a substantial part in a future conflict. He concluded “no one who has read the reports of what occurred at the Imperial Conference and has watched the attitude of the Dominion

¹ *National Review*, April 1906, 341.

Parliaments can be under any illusion about the nature of the ties between the Mother Country and the great self-governing communities that form part of the British Empire.”²

The rallying of the empire at the outbreak of the First World War followed upon a decade of closer coordination in imperial defense matters. Between 1900 and 1914, Britain and the Dominions gradually engineered their armed forces for mutual cooperation in a major war against a European enemy.³ British reforms focused on maintaining the supremacy of the Royal Navy and building a professional expeditionary force capable of fighting in India or the continent of Europe. Military reforms in the Dominions produced a series of independent citizen forces aimed at protecting their own respective states. Though operating along individual national lines, these defense forces were integrated into an imperial network through standardization of uniforms, organization, and weaponry. Imperial cooperation was also facilitated by the creation of an Imperial General Staff and regular exchanges between professional military and naval officers. At a higher political level, British and Dominion statesmen fostered closer personal ties through frequent “imperial” conferences in London. These developments laid the foundation for a later wartime coalition of British nations—an entity Richard Jebb labeled the “Britannic Alliance.”

This defense partnership was not a binding alliance. As the self-governing colonies evolved into autonomous Dominions, policies of imperial centralization faced the powerful currents of colonial nationalism which resented any infringements upon colonial sovereignty. This trend was most visible in defense matters. Under international law, the Dominions were bound to the foreign policy decisions of the British Parliament, but they possessed the right to determine whether or not to take part in any war. Dominion leaders recognized that strong

² CCA. Esher Papers 4/4 Lecture at the Royal United Services Institution, March 20 1912.

³ This chapter eschews a discussion of naval issues as they are examined in Chapter Five.

imperial sentiment would assure popular support in a war involving Great Britain. But they refused to offer a predetermined guarantee for military assistance. This precondition ensured that defense planning between Britain and the Dominions involved a delicate game of maneuvering that negotiated the awkward tensions between imperial unity and the protective claims of colonial nationalism.

This final chapter readdresses the prewar origins of the “Britannic Alliance.” Earlier chapters have confirmed the existence of a deep and pervasive sense of “Britishness” throughout the empire. These sentiments reinforced imperial patriotism and the tacit acceptance that the empire’s security was the civic responsibility of all male Britons. Having laid the cultural foundation for “Greater Britain,” this chapter now examines how policymakers and defense administrators crafted a defense arrangement that mollified colonial demands for autonomy. It provides a broad survey of Edwardian defense reforms in Britain and the Dominions. It also scrutinizes the actions, rhetoric, and decisions made by delegates to the various imperial conferences. By reexamining these events from the cultural lens of pan-British solidarity, it challenges the claims of some historians that wartime military commitments were foisted upon the unwilling Dominions by an imperialist British government.⁴ As Europeans marched inexorably closer to war, Britons embraced a loose imperial relationship based upon shared interests and racial/cultural affinity, and sewn together through a pragmatic understanding of mutual support in time of emergency.

The Quest for an Imperial Army, 1900-1902

The participation of white colonial troops in the South African War elevated hopes for a more permanent imperial defense arrangement. Some Britons viewed the war as a grand Anglo-

⁴ See John Mordike, *An Army for a Nation* (Sydney, 1992); Richard Preston, *Canada and “Imperial Defense”* (Durham, 1967).

Saxon crusade that would lead to formal political unity among the white states of the empire. The ensuing years witnessed a number of proposals for an imperial *Kriegsverein* based on contributions to common defense. Though most plans centered on colonial subsidies towards the Royal Navy, a number of imperialists urged the creation of a global military reserve comprising white soldiers from Britain and the self-governing colonies. While the fighting still raged on the South African veldt, some British defense administrators had already turned their attention to the future security of the empire through a unified imperial army.

Many of the schemes for an imperial army originated from British officials in the colonies. In August 1897 the Governor General of Victoria, Lord Brassey, urged the creation of an Australian brigade to be financed and controlled by the imperial government.⁵ In a private letter to Joseph Chamberlain, he expressed his desire for a stated quota of white colonial soldiers towards common imperial reserve.⁶ Another proposal came from British General Sir George French while serving as the Commandant of the military forces of New South Wales. French doubted the feasibility of maintaining a permanent force of colonial soldiers in peacetime, but believed that a great wave of imperial patriotism would produce substantial numbers of volunteers in wartime. To prepare for this inevitable rush to the colors, the colonies should organize part-time “war reserves” available for service anywhere in the empire. French appealed to public sentiment by submitting his plans to the *Times* and several leading Australian newspapers. In a passionate plea for imperial (and racial) unity, he insisted “the present war in South Africa has demonstrated the fact that the defence of the British Empire in the future is not a question to be left wholly to the people of the British Isles, but that the English-speaking

⁵ A copy of this proposal is found in CAB 8/2 “Mounted Rifles for Imperial Service in War: Memorandum by the Colonial Defence Committee.” February 25 1898.

⁶ JC 29/2/6/33 Governor General of Victoria Lord Brassey to Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain, May 3 1897.

people throughout the Empire are willing to take their share in its defence and provide the men, and possibly, the money thereof.”⁷

A more encompassing plan came from within the corridors of the War Office. In November 1901, Lieutenant Colonel E. A. Altham of Military Intelligence circulated an internal memorandum calling for greater military cooperation with the colonies. He insisted that any plan for a unified imperial defense strategy “must be able to rely with certainty on what colonial contributions would be available.” He called on the self-governing colonies to create small professional units designated for participation in overseas conflicts.⁸ These forces would be administered by the individual colonial governments but could form part of a larger imperial expeditionary corps in wartime. Altham reflected contemporary ideas about “Greater Britain” when he placed his hopes for the future of imperial security on a closer relationship with overseas Britons. He concluded “the main burden of a great struggle between the British Empire and one or more states of European race or descent must be borne by the white subjects of the King.”⁹

The most auspicious plan for an imperial reserve system came from New Zealand Prime Minister Richard Seddon. A staunch imperialist and proponent of federation, Seddon supervised the dispatch of ten different contingents for the South African War. Impressed by his colony’s devotion to the war effort, he proposed creating a local branch of the imperial reserve with

⁷*Times*, June 12 1900. The War Office encouraged French in his actions. See letter in WO 32/8302 WO Office of Commander in Chief to General George French, marked June 1900. The Overseas Defence Committee also considered several proposals during this period to raise an Australian Regiment for service in South Africa, but decided to await a colonial decision on federation. See CAB 7/8 ODC Minutes, April 10 1900.

⁸ Altham urged Australia to raise an imperial force of 9,000 men with a smaller force (4,000) coming from New Zealand. He considered the American threat to Canada sufficient incentive for the Dominion to devote its military resources to improving the militia. As for the south African colonies, he considered lingering Anglo-Dutch animosity and the presence of large non-white populations mitigating factors which would render any discussion of their imperial assistance “mere academical (sic) labour.” CO 537/300 WO Memo “The Organization of Colonial Troops for Imperial Service.” By E.A. Altham. November 21 1901. Secretary of War St. John Broderick approved of Altham’s idea and hoped to discuss it at the 1902 Colonial Conference.

⁹ CO 537/300 WO Memo “The Organization of Colonial Troops for Imperial Service.” By E.A. Altham. November 21 1901.

5,000-10,000 men.¹⁰ The cost of this special corps would be shared by the British and New Zealand governments, and the unit would be available for wartime service anywhere in the empire. Seddon eliminated any potential constitutional hurdles by supporting legislation in the New Zealand Parliament that would enable the government to dispatch soldiers overseas for imperial conflicts. The measure passed the House of Representatives by a vote of 33-22, and even the opposition couched their rhetoric in terms of unwavering devotion to empire. One man who voted against the bill claimed “we have seen in this country that if the Mother-Country is desirous that we should supply troops for her assistance we can get any number of men to volunteer and go to the front at any moment.”¹¹

The position of Britain’s Colonial Defence Committee towards an imperial reserve was a bit more circumspect. Members of the group agreed that “any system by which the millions of British-descended inhabitants in the Colonies can be given the privilege of assisting towards Imperial as well as local defence is worthy of careful consideration of Her Majesty’s Government.” They further characterized “the creation of an Imperial Army as a great step towards Imperial Unity.”¹² But the committee rejected financial subsidies for colonial forces as an unnecessary burden on the British taxpayer and inconsistent with the traditions of self-government. In August 1900 the secretary of the Colonial Defence Committee, Captain M. Nathan, summarized the group’s attitude towards the various defense schemes. He admitted that a reliable expeditionary force of white colonial soldiers would enable defense planners to

¹⁰ CAB 11/121 Memo from New Zealand Prime Minister Richard Seddon to New Zealand Governor General Lord Ranfurly, May 11 1900.

¹¹ New Zealand Parliamentary Debates. Vol. 115. John Hornsby. October 19 1900, 502. The colonial press echoed these sentiments. As one of the leading papers in New Zealand, the *Evening News* explained “it is precisely because we fear to destroy the effect of that spontaneity that we oppose a cut and dry scheme for enrolling men in this colony who shall be at the beck and call of imperial authorities.” *Evening News* (Wellington), July 27 1900. For similar views see *Colonist* (Canterbury, NZ) June 27 1900; *Otago Daily Times*, July 24 1900.

¹² CAB 8/2 “Mounted Rifles for Imperial Service in War: Memorandum by the Colonial Defence Committee.” February 25 1898.

consider “what may be termed Imperial military strategy.”¹³ He also expressed his hope that the self-governing colonies would willingly increase their military budgets to a point proportional with British expenditure. However, he criticized the various reserve plans for requiring a formal and binding agreement regarding wartime commitments. Nathan wisely recognized that “in most instances the Colonies would be counted on to give that assistance which they knew to be expected to him.”¹⁴ Until that point, he argued, British and colonial forces should devote their energies to improving military efficiency and standardization through officer exchanges and imperial training programs.

The War Office’s plans for war reflected this practical understanding of the evolving imperial relationship. In 1901 Colonel Altham abruptly abandoned earlier demands for binding defense commitments from the colonies. He conceded that in a true imperial emergency, white colonial volunteers would be forthcoming in substantial numbers, and admitted that “the South African war has shown that the loyalty of the Empire and the will and capacity to fight for the Mother Country are not lacking in the daughter lands.” His subsequent plans for a conflict with Russia and France—the most likely adversaries in 1901—suggested that any available Canadian and Australian troops should reinforce India’s northwest frontier. However, warned that relying on these forces without a formal commitment “may prove but a broken reed to lean on in a time of emergency.” As a result, colonial forces must be counted as supplemental and not taken into account when considering future British military commitments.¹⁵ Joseph Chamberlain begrudgingly accepted this position as the reality of burgeoning colonial nationalism. In

¹³ CAB 11/121 Memorandum “Colonial Co-operation in Imperial Defence.” August 30 1900.

¹⁴ CAB 11/121 “Colonial Co-operation in Imperial Defence.” August 30 1900.

¹⁵ CAB 38/1 “Military Needs of the Empire in a War Against France and Russia” Memorandum by E.A. Altham, August 10 1901.

December 1900 he advised the new Secretary of War William St. John Broderick to “follow your own lines and do not count on the colonies.”¹⁶

This aversion to including the colonies in British war plans did not deter authorities from engaging in exercises of wishful thinking. Indeed, an anonymous handwritten memorandum in the Colonial Defence Committee files sketches out the ways in which colonial troops could be employed in various war scenarios. For example, the author hypothesized that in a war against France, Canadian forces could seize the French West Indies, South African troops could reinforce the Suez Canal, and Australasian units could capture New Caledonia and French Indochina. In a war against Russia, all white colonial forces would be employed as reinforcements to India’s Northwest Frontier. The war plans for Germany remained particularly vague, with only a brief notation that colonial forces would be involved “in main operations”—perhaps a veiled and prophetic allusion to Britain’s growing continental commitment.¹⁷

Some prominent members of the British government still held out hope for a formal defense arrangement and “closer union” with the self-governing colonies.¹⁸ In 1902 Chamberlain took advantage of the heightened imperialist sentiment surrounding Edward VII’s coronation to convene another colonial conference. He coordinated with authorities in the War Office and the Admiralty to prepare detailed memoranda on British defense policy for colonial leaders. He also encouraged Seddon’s proposal for an imperial reserve on the lines of the New Zealand experiment.¹⁹ Most importantly, Chamberlain expressed his underlying belief that the future of British global supremacy relied on the participation of overseas Britons in protecting

¹⁶ JC 16/4/2 Chamberlain to Secretary of War William St. John Broderick, December 26 1900.

¹⁷ CAB 11/121 “Possible Methods of Employing Troops from the Self-Governing Colonies in a Great Way.” Unsigned and undated memo. The author was likely Captain Nathan as the memo reveals that “such schemes would form the basis of what may be termed Imperial military strategy” (identical phrase from another memorandum).

¹⁸ JC 29/2/2/179 Chamberlain to Canadian Governor General Lord Minto, March 2 1900.

¹⁹ John Mordike, *An Army for a Nation: A History of Australian Military Developments, 1880-1914* (Sydney, 1992).

their mutual empire. It was in this spirit that he issued his famous plea to conference delegates that “the Weary Titan struggles under the too vast orb of its fate. We have borne the burden for many years. We think it is time that our children should assist us to support it, and, whenever you make the request to us, to be very sure that we shall gladly call you to our councils.”²⁰

Despite this concerted campaign for imperial unity, colonial leaders resisted joining a structured defense strategy. The premiers of Australia and Canada disparaged the imperial reserve scheme as expensive, unnecessary, and out of tune with the realities of colonial self-government. They insisted that public sentiment in their respective colonies would never accede to binding military commitments during peacetime. The proposal found a more receptive audience in the leaders of smaller states such as New Zealand, Natal, and the Cape Colony. But without the cooperation of Australia and Canada, any scheme for a common military reserve would only serve to accentuate colonial differences rather than display imperial solidarity. To avoid a public embarrassment, Seddon withdrew his resolution and proclaimed that British authorities would have to trust to the future goodwill of the colonies for coordinated actions. Chamberlain’s efforts to persuade them through private conversations came to nothing, forcing him to profess “we are perfectly satisfied with the results of volunteer, purely voluntary, and spontaneous offers. We trust entirely to them in the future.”²¹

Most scholars have interpreted the 1902 Colonial Conference as a victory of colonial

²⁰ CAB 18/10 Proceedings of the 1902 Colonial Conference, July 25 1902, 3.

²¹ CAB 18/10 Proceedings of the 1902 Colonial Conference, July 25 1902, 98. Apparently this taught Chamberlain the lessons of colonial nationalism, as he displayed little enthusiasm for a future effort by New Zealand to revise the scheme. See Gordon, *Dominion Partnership in Imperial Defense*, 162-163. Secretary of War St. John Broderick, on the other hand, was incensed and blamed Chamberlain for not pursuing the issue. He informed Lord Roberts that “Mr. Chamberlain, to be frank, has spoiled our getting 4,500 men from NZ and verbally 1500 or 2000 each from Natal or Cape.” Roberts Papers, Correspondence with William St. John Broderick. St. John Broderick to Lord Frederick Roberts, August 13 1902.

nationalism over the imperial connection.²² A closer examination reveals a more pragmatic and cooperative understanding on the part of colonial statesmen. When Australian Prime Minister Edmund Barton railed against the imperial reserve, he did so in the tradition of a loyal “Briton.” Barton characterized binding military commitments to the imperial government in peacetime as an anathema to British self-governing principles. He explained that “our people are like their countrymen here, they will do much in time of warlike emergency which in time of peace they would decline to bind themselves beforehand to accomplish.”²³ A far more imperialist tone was sounded by Australian Minister of Defence John Forrest. In a private note to Chamberlain, he promised the Colonial Secretary that the new Commonwealth of Australia was engaged “in building up another Britain in the Southern Hemisphere.” He noted that both “duty and stern necessity require that we shall stand shoulder to shoulder with the Motherland in the determination to maintain the inviolate integrity of the empire.” Finally, he assured Chamberlain of the pro-imperial state of public opinion in Australia and the widespread recognition that “our interests in war as well as in peace, are indissolubly bound up with the Country from which our fathers came, and to which we are all proud to belong.”²⁴

The Canadian delegation articulated more cautious optimism on the future of the imperial bond. Before departing for London, Prime Minister Laurier assured the Dominion Parliament that he would not “bring Canada into the vortex of militarism which is the curse and blight of Europe.”²⁵ He promoted a vision of colonial nationalism in which the young Dominion should allocate its limited resources towards the development of public works and infrastructure.²⁶

²² Gordon, *Dominion Partnership in Imperial Defense*; Preston, *Canada and Imperial Defense*; Mordike, *Army for a Nation*.

²³ CAB 18/10, Proceedings of the 1902 Colonial Conference, July 4 1902, 31.

²⁴ JC 17/2/2 J.A. Forrest to Chamberlain, April 30 1902.

²⁵ O.D. Skelton, *Life and Letters of Sir Wilfrid Laurier Volume II* (Toronto, 1921), 293.

²⁶ CAB 18/10 Ibid., Second Day July 4, 28.

However, Laurier referred all matters of defense to his long-serving Minister of Militia, Dr. Frederick Borden, who adroitly negotiated the complicated lines between colonial autonomy and imperial responsibilities. Borden framed Canada's focus on improving local defense as a means of supplementing the defense of the empire as a whole. He linked his goal of building the Canadian Militia into a first-rate fighting force with the Dominion's ultimate ability to assist the empire in a major war (on its own terms, of course). He assured conference delegates that "if any emergency arises, you will always find the Militia and the country ready to do what they have done, and even more," and explained that an improved militia "will enable us to cooperate readily and with still better results."²⁷

Efforts at the 1902 Colonial Conference to create a unified imperial army were dashed on the rocks of colonial nationalism. Australians and Canadians who were otherwise loyal to the "Mother Country" were hesitant of surrendering political autonomy for a predetermined commitment to a hypothetical conflict. Their intransigence established a precedent that wartime military assistance would be made by the individual colonies on their own terms. This position certainly mollified nationalist opinion in the colonies which regarded Britain and its imperial policies with deep suspicion. The Australian anti-imperialist newspaper *The Bulletin* greeted news of the conference as evidence that "England must now recognise that Australia and Canada are only willing to give war help, after judging the merits of the war, and then in purely voluntary fashion . . . not a soldier will be pledged beforehand."²⁸ Yet with the exception of the most hardened supporters of imperial federation, colonial actions did not deter dreams of imperial unity. Many Britons at home and abroad acknowledged the arrangement as a realistic understanding of the empire as an evolving commonwealth of independent British states. They

²⁷ CAB 18/10 Ibid., July 25, 86.

²⁸ Quoted in Mordike, *Army for a Nation*, 116.

recognized that in a major crisis, the empire would rally together as a unified family. One British journalist characterized this relationship as “not only perfectly sound and reasonable from the point of view of Canada, but also that of True Imperialism.” He concluded that as Britons faced the challenges of the new century, they were “content to know that if, and when, the Mother Country finds herself in need of help, her daughter colonies will render her fully and begrudgingly the help which they are capable of rendering.”²⁹

National Defense Agendas, 1902-1907

In the aftermath of the South African War, the military forces of the empire underwent significant reforms. These movements typically proceeded along separate national lines and responded to different external stimuli. The British Army’s poor performance in South Africa launched a wave of official inquiries and parliamentary commissions on improving defense administration. Much of this concern over the army’s preparedness was in response to the potential need for dispatching a large expeditionary force to India in the event of a war with Russia. Over the next few years, the army gradually shed its Victorian role as a colonial police force and began preparations to fight in a major European conflict.³⁰ In the Antipodes, the primary catalyst for change was fear of Imperial Japan. The Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902 did little to quell concerns in Australia and New Zealand about the “Yellow Peril.” Military reforms in these two countries focused on improving existing citizen forces as the basis for a larger and more efficient national defense establishment. Even in Canada, where the threat of American invasion was minimal, the Dominion government allocated additional resources for improving the national militia.

²⁹ *Spectator*, May 17 1902, 757.

³⁰ See Rhodri Williams, *Defending the Empire: The Conservative Party and British Defense Policy, 1899-1915* (New Haven, 1991).

Great Britain took the lead in military reform by addressing the antiquated machinery of British defense administration. In December 1902, the new Conservative Prime Minister Arthur Balfour convened the first meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence. Balfour intended the committee to be an advisory body appointed by the Prime Minister and involving key members of the War Office, Admiralty, Colonial Office, and Foreign Office. Its role would be limited to war planning and devising imperial defense strategy for approval by the British Cabinet.³¹ The War Office also addressed the need for strategic planning with the creation of the General Staff in 1904. Based in part off the model of the Prussian General Staff, it served as an entity of professionally trained officers responsible for central planning, training, and administration.³² Importantly, these new bodies contained no provision for colonial representation and cannot be interpreted as a significant step towards greater imperial defense cooperation. The decisions about imperial security continued to be made by the British government with little or no input by the colonies.

Army reform also became a major goal for defense administrators. The lessons of the South African War and the perceived need to defend India against a Russian invasion pointed to the possible requirements of fielding a large expeditionary force. Indeed, a startling government report in 1901 estimated the need for 100,000 reinforcements to India in the first six months of a war with Russia.³³ In 1907, Liberal Secretary of War Richard Haldane succeeded in creating a new second-tier force called the "Territorial Army." He consolidated the moribund auxiliary forces of the Militia, Volunteers, and Yeomanry into an integrated reserve system linked with the regular army. Members of the Territorials could not serve overseas without their consent, and

³¹ The committee received some level of institutional continuity with the appointment of defense expert Sir George Clarke as Secretariat in 1904.

³² See John Gooch, *The Plans of War* (London, 1974), 32-95.

³³ Edward Spiers, *Haldane: An Army Reformer* (Edinburgh, 1980), 3-4.

Haldane publicly emphasized their role as a home defense force. However, he admitted that patriotism and volunteerism would enable the Territorials to expand the size of the regular army in time of emergency and operate as reinforcements for overseas duty.³⁴ The creation of the force added a significant component to British defense resources by providing an additional fourteen infantry divisions and fourteen mounted brigades.³⁵

Australian defense reforms were influenced by the appointment in 1902 of British General Sir Edward Hutton as the General Officer Commanding of the Commonwealth's military forces.³⁶ Hutton held strong convictions about the inherent superiority of the citizen soldier, and he looked forward to the creation of a global "Anglo-Saxon" militia.³⁷ He also lacked the requisite diplomatic skills for such a politically sensitive position. In his previous appointment as the General Officer Commanding of the Canadian Militia, he ran afoul of the Laurier government when he attempted to circumvent political authority and goad the Dominion into sending a contingent to South Africa.³⁸ Dreading the consequences of another diplomatic fiasco, Chamberlain privately warned Hutton to remain on his best behavior and to avoid any semblance of disloyalty to the Australian government.³⁹

Hutton arrived in Australia in 1902 with a mandate to create a viable national defense

³⁴ Ibid., 112-113.

³⁵ Ibid., 182.

³⁶ For Australia, see Jeffrey Grey, *A Military History of Australia* (Cambridge, 1999), 66-88. For New Zealand, see I.C. McGibbon, *The Path to Gallipoli: Defending New Zealand, 1840-1915* (New Zealand, 1991). New Zealand copied the British model by creating a "Territorial Force" under the command of British General Alexander Godley.

³⁷ See his April 19 1898 paper on "Cooperative System for the Defence of the Empire," in *Royal Colonial Institute Proceedings Volume 29* (London, 1899), 222-258.

³⁸ See Preston, *Canada and Imperial Defense*, 252-255. In 1902 he wrote the Governor General of Canada Lord Minto and celebrated their role in sending a Canadian contingent. He explained "As years pass we shall both of us (you and I) more clearly realize the importance of our successful action in indirectly forcing the weak-kneed and vacillating Laurier Government with their ill-disguised French and pro-Boer proclivities to take a part-nay even a leading part—in the great movement which has drawn the strings of our Anglo-Saxon British Empire so close that for years to come we may count upon all our elements uniting to form front to all the world combined if need be." LAC Minto Papers MG 27 IIB1 Volume 17 Edward Hutton to Minto, January 10 1902.

³⁹ BL Edward Hutton Papers 50078 "Notes of an Interview Between Joseph Chamberlain and Hutton Prior to his taking Command in Australia. At the Colonial Office 1:30 p.m. December 19 1901."

force out of existing citizen soldiers. He also harbored a personal goal to prepare Australian troops to assist imperial forces in an overseas conflict. His experiences in Canada taught him the lessons of colonial nationalism and the need to proceed with discretion. Upon his arrival, he informed British authorities that St. John Brodrick's support for an imperial reserve "showed a disregard for the Constitutional rights of our self-governing colonies which has been deeply resented." He explained that "Australia will never admit the right of the Old Country to control in any way her military resources without representatives in Imperial Council."⁴⁰ Instead, Hutton focused on improving militia forces that could serve as a cadre of trained manpower for an eventual Australian Expeditionary Force. He proposed a field force of light horse brigades which in wartime could provide 29,000 soldiers.⁴¹ He publicly characterized their role as "Australian" defense while privately assuring the British War Office "I have been careful to avoid any direct reference to assistance to the empire in time of war except inferentially."⁴² The Australian government ultimately accepted his plans but rejected any legal provisions for overseas service. Nonetheless, his policies produced an effective national defense system which would allow the Dominion, if it chose, to send a trained body of troops overseas for imperial purposes. He later claimed validation for his efforts, noting "the system of cooperation thus adopted by Australia, by Canada, by South Africa, and by the Mother Country was avowedly intended to meet such a dire emergency as that which arose in August 1914."⁴³

⁴⁰ Hutton Papers 50078 Edward Hutton to the Duke of Connaught, August 4 1902. Some members of the British Government agreed with this appraisal. Sir Montagu Ommaney, the Under Secretary of State for Colonies, called Broderick's plan "quite impractical" and admitted "I do not see how we can do more than continue to rely on their loyalty and devotion, without seeking to bind them by implicit obligations and trusting meanwhile to their recognition of the importance of placing their local defensive forces on such a footing as will make it possible for them to tender of their own free will assistance which will be as effective and valuable in the future as it has been in the past." Hutton Papers 50078 Montagu Ommaney to Hutton, November 20 1902.

⁴¹ Mordike, *Army for a Nation*, 85-108 for his plans.

⁴² Hutton Papers 50085 Hutton to St. John Brodrick, April 7 1902.

⁴³ Hutton Papers 50113 Unpublished Memoirs (undated), 2. He later became a political supporter of Haldane's Territorial policies. He explained "the great oversea Sister Nations in the Empire of Canada and Australia have

Canada also focused its reform efforts on improving the national militia. Under the direction of longstanding Minister of Militia Frederick Borden, the militia experienced a period of unprecedented expansion and modernization. It adopted the British system of a General Staff and explored plans to organize local regiments into a mobile field army.⁴⁴ Borden also secured a controversial amendment to the Militia Act that allowed a Canadian officer to command the militia, though his first choice as Chief of General Staff was General Percy Lake, a British officer.⁴⁵ In 1906 Canada expanded control over its own national defense by assuming responsibility for the defense of the imperial fortress at Halifax—the last vestige of British authority in North America.⁴⁶

National military reforms did not operate in a vacuum devoid of imperial cooperation. In 1905 Australian officials proposed a general exchange of professional military officers between the armed forces of Britain, Canada, Australia, and India. Unlike earlier failed efforts to create a regimental exchange program, this policy could be accomplished with minimal expenditure. The Colonial Defence Committee and the Committee of Imperial Defence embraced this plan as facilitating mutual dialogue and standardized training between the various states of the empire.⁴⁷ By 1906, a limited number of British and colonial officers began a regular rotation between the different military forces of the crown. A more symbolic gesture towards closer imperial ties was the creation of the regimental “alliance system” between British and

adopted this system” and he looked forward to “the adoption of a similar National Army System by the Mother Country.” This would ultimately result in “a cooperative system of defence between all the members of the Imperial Family.” Hutton Papers 50111 Speech on October 6 1906.

⁴⁴ See Stephen Harris, *Canadian Brass: The Making of a Professional Army, 1860-1939* (Toronto, 1988), 62-81. Members of the Canadian militia could not serve overseas without written consent.

⁴⁵ This was in part exacerbated by the flagrant actions of the General Officer Commanding, Lord Dundonald, who flagrantly abused the authority of Canadian civil government until recalled by British officials in 1905.

⁴⁶ This was also completed because British authorities decided to withdraw their forces as part of a general concentration of troops in Europe.

⁴⁷ CAB 8/4 “Interchange of Imperial and Colonial Military Officers,” Colonial Defence Memorandum by J.E. Clauson, June 29 1905.

white colonial forces. In November 1903 Lord Dundonald, while serving as the General Officer Commanding of the Canadian Militia, proposed an official affiliation between the Scottish Gordon Highlanders and the 48th Highlander Battalion of the Canadian Militia as a means of bridging the identity between British and Canadian forces.⁴⁸ The practice was deemed as a success and subsequent applications proceeded with the guidelines that they are “specially encouraged between corps which have some connection, or common association of any kind, either racial, or geographical, or titular, or through having served together in peace or war.”⁴⁹ By 1914 dozens of regiments belonged to this alliance system, creating a symbolic line of identity between British, Canadian, Australian, New Zealand, and South African soldiers throughout the empire.

Towards an Imperial Defense Partnership, 1907-1911

By the time of the 1907 Colonial Conference, Britain and the Dominions began a gradual process of closer coordination in defense matters. The military reforms of the preceding years continued but with an increased emphasis towards their common imperial utility. Several important factors contributed to this trend. As Chapter Six demonstrated, the “British World” experienced a trend of militarism throughout the Edwardian period. One of the offshoots of debates over universal service and military training was heightened public consciousness about imperial defense matters. These ideas were reinforced by the diplomatic situation in Europe. The public preoccupation with the Anglo-German naval arms race raised awareness that some kind of military conflict was possible in the near future. Finally, the cause of imperial

⁴⁸ Douglas Cochrane Dundonald, *My Army Life* (London, 1926), 216-221

⁴⁹ CAB 11/123 “Affiliation of Colonial Corps to Regiments of the Regular and Territorial Forces,” J.R. Chancellor, Secretary of the Colonial Defence Committee, February 10 1909. Commonwealth military forces still observe this system.

cooperation profited from the ascension of the Liberal Party into power in 1905. Liberal Unionist politicians such as Henry Herbert Asquith, Richard Haldane, Reginald McKenna, and Edward Grey were more sympathetic to colonial rights than their Tory predecessors, and they successfully guided Anglo-Dominion relations down a path of closer unity.

The British government unveiled this more conciliatory approach to imperial policies at the 1907 Colonial Conference. In advance of the meeting, the Committee of Imperial Defence presented colonial delegates with a series of papers promoting the need for greater cooperation in defense matters. They lamented that domestic political concerns would not allow the Dominions to maintain a standing army for imperial service overseas. Nonetheless they assured colonial premiers:

No fear whatever is entertained that any portion of the Empire will fail to respond to a call from the Mother Country, and it is realised to the full, as already stated, that there are at present almost insuperable obstacles—obstacles perhaps rather political than military—which prevent any sort of guarantee that contingents of any given strength and composition will be forthcoming for a great Imperial war.⁵⁰

In place of binding commitments, the committee members urged their colonial colleagues to render their military forces compatible with the British Army. They suggested standardization of firearms, ordinance, and uniforms, as well as unit structure. Authorities suggested these policies “in view of the probability that the colonies will take an ever increasing part in future wars in which the welfare of the Empire is at stake.”⁵¹

British officials also proposed the creation of an “Imperial General Staff” to coordinate military planning between Britain and the Dominions. Secretary of War Haldane explained the role of a General Staff officer as:

⁵⁰ CAB 17/77 “Strategic Conditions of the Empire from the Military Point of View,” General Staff Memorandum by N.G. Lyttelton, March 14 1907.

⁵¹ CAB 17/77 “Possibility of Assimilating War Organisation Throughout the Empire,” March 14 1907.

Trained in a great common school, recruited, it may be, from the most varying parts of the empire, but educated in military science according to common practices, he would be at the disposition of the local government or of the local Commander-in-Chief whether he were Canadian, British, Australian, or New Zealander, or South African.⁵²

He assured delegates that the General Staff was “a purely advisory organization” requiring no commitment on the part of the Dominions.⁵³ On the other hand, an exchange of expert defense administrators through an imperial system would facilitate a broader discussion of common defense problems “which is to some extent essential if there is to be effective co-operation in a great war.”⁵⁴

Dominion leaders embraced these new measures that avoided any perceived infringements on colonial sovereignty.⁵⁵ After receiving final assurances that the new general staffs would not answer to the British government, the colonial premiers gave their blessings and unanimously passed a resolution in favor of the plan. Even New Zealand Prime Minister Joseph Ward, who alone among the Dominion delegates supported closer formal ties, admitted the virtues of volunteerism. He agreed “it is far better to let the country as a whole realise, in the event of trouble arising, that we can draw upon our volunteers for wherever we are going to fight, not ear-marking them beforehand.”⁵⁶ Popular opinion in the Dominions also approved of this new development. The *Sydney Morning Herald* championed the Imperial General Staff as “surely the right way of looking at Imperial responsibility. It is the very antithesis of binding with fetters and making an Empire on the anvil.” The paper added “it must mean an Empire strong at heart and vigorous at the extremities, bound together by the ties of sympathy and good-

⁵² CAB 18/11A “Minutes of Proceedings of the Colonial Conference 1907,” Fourth Day April 20 1907, 96.

⁵³ CAB 18/11A “Minutes of Proceedings of the Colonial Conference 1907,” Fourth Day April 20 1907, 97.

⁵⁴ CAB 18/11A “Minutes of Proceedings of the Colonial Conference 1907,” Fourth Day April 20 1907, 97.

⁵⁵ CAB 18/11A “Minutes of Proceedings of the Colonial Conference 1907,” First Day April 15 1907, 7. Laurier set the tone by reminding British officials that the conference was in reality a meeting between sovereign governments—a point upheld by other colonial leaders. The Prime Minister of the Transvaal Louis Botha (a former Boer general) introduced his own form of independence by speaking in Dutch throughout the conference.

⁵⁶ CAB 18/11A “Minutes of Proceedings of the Colonial Conference 1907,” Fourth Day April 20 1907, 115.

fellowship, and certain to become one powerful unit in the event of a common need bred of some world peril.”⁵⁷

This spirit of cooperation guided the discussions at a subsidiary imperial defense conference in July 1909. Though principally concerned with the growing naval threat from Germany and the desire of Australia and Canada to establish independent navies, the conference made great strides towards military interchangeability between the “Mother Country” and the Dominions.⁵⁸ British officials acknowledged colonial autonomy in defense affairs but stated their belief that Dominion forces would participate in an imperial emergency “in 999 cases out of a thousand.”⁵⁹ Recognizing the strong sentiments that undergirded the imperial bond, they encouraged greater interchangeability and coordination so that “should the Dominions desire to assist in the defence of the Empire in a real emergency, their forces could be rapidly combined into one homogenous Imperial Army.”⁶⁰ Haldane compared Dominion forces (with their legal provisions against overseas service) to the British Territorial Army. He pointed out that Territorial units were “purely home defence force” but that members could volunteer for overseas duty in time of emergency to reinforce the Regular Army. He suggested that Dominion forces follow a similar path, and that “if you organize on such a footing that the formations are the same formations which you would use in the event of your deciding to come to the assistance of the Empire in some great crisis, there is no inconsistency in between the two.”⁶¹

⁵⁷ *Sydney Morning Herald*, April 26 1907.

⁵⁸ For the naval dimension see Chapter Six. Haldane presented Dominion representative with a memorandum on cooperation very similar to that of the 1907 Colonial Conference. WO 106/43 “Proposals for So Organizing the Military Forces of the Empire as to Ensure Their Effective Cooperation in the Event of War.” General Staff Memorandum, July 17 1909.

⁵⁹ CAB 18/12A “Minutes of the 1909 Imperial Defence Conference,” Secretary of State for Colonies Lord Crewe speaking, Second Day July 29 1909, 12.

⁶⁰ Mordike, *Army for a Nation*, 217.

⁶¹ CAB 18/12A “Minutes of the 1909 Imperial Defence Conference,” Second Day July 29 1909, 15-16.

Dominion representatives applauded these schemes for upholding the rights of colonial autonomy. Frederick Borden registered his usual rejoinder about Canada's disinclination to enter into peacetime commitments. He reminded British authorities that the Canadian militia was an instrument intended only for local defense, but conceded "if a defensive force . . . is to be of any use, it must be in a position to cooperate with the great Imperial Army."⁶² Colonel Justin Foxton, the Australian representative, also admitted "it is difficult to conceive any circumstances under which the oversea Dominions would not feel called upon to throw in their lot entirely with the Mother Country if the operations were of such a character as to menace the integrity of the Empire as a whole."⁶³ The only cautionary note came from Joseph Ward, who railed against the Anglo-Japanese alliance of 1902 (a deeply unpopular provision in the Antipodes). He warned that white New Zealanders would not support Britain in a war fought on behalf of the "Eastern Races," adding "you might just as well ask us to separate ourselves from the British Empire." Otherwise, he assured his colleagues, "if we find it necessary to come in, we would come in and do our best for the maintenance of British supremacy against the world."⁶⁴

The aftermath of the Imperial Defense Conference of 1909 conference saw closer military and naval cooperation between Britain and the Dominions. Canada, Australia, and New Zealand established official links between their general staffs and the new Imperial General Staff in London. They also increased the number of Dominion officers training at the British Staff College at Camberley. These developments greatly advanced the cause of common training and

⁶² CAB 18/12A "Minutes of the 1909 Imperial Defence Conference," Second Day July 29 1909, 18-19.

⁶³ CAB 18/12A "Minutes of the 1909 Imperial Defence Conference," Second Day July 29 1909, 21. Before departing Australia, Foxton informed the press that "the idea should be, in my opinion, to enable our troops, with the least amount of friction, to take the field side by side with the British troops." Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, 215.

⁶⁴ CAB 18/12A "Minutes of the 1909 Imperial Defence Conference," Second Day July 29 1909, 25.

standardization, and linked the professional British Army with the part-time, citizen forces in the Dominions.⁶⁵

The Dominions also pursued closer imperial ties by inviting leading British military officials to inspect their national forces. In the summer of 1909, British General Horatio Kitchener conducted an extensive tour of Australia and New Zealand. His arrival in the Antipodes garnered significant enthusiasm from Britons who clamored to see the famous “Hero of Omdurman.”⁶⁶ Kitchener’s subsequent report praised the Dominions for enacting compulsory training and forging a veritable “nation in arms.” He urged the Australian Department of Defense to increase the size of the armed forces and allocate additional money to training and equipment. Though he omitted any mention of dispatching troops for overseas services, he did recommend the creation of a “mobile striking force” of 40,000 men able to conduct operations “anywhere in Australia.” He reminded Australians that “the best defense is generally by taking the offensive, and there should therefore be no difference in the enrollment, organization and equipment of any unit.”⁶⁷ Kitchener also urged the New Zealand government to cooperate with Australian authorities and “adopt homogenous military systems in order to be able to efficiently support one another in the vent of national danger.”⁶⁸ To anyone with a basic understanding of military affairs, the underlying premise of Kitchener’s plan was obvious: the construction of national armies capable of imperial service.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ See Preston, *Canada and Imperial Defense*, 401-414. South Africa was in the midst of unification and postponed decisions about defense policy.

⁶⁶ See Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, 224-255. His trip also served as focal point for imperialist rhetoric about assuming greater share in imperial defense. As the *Sydney Morning Herald* explained, the Dominions were “an integral part of the Empire with issues of life or death waiting upon the decision of Britains beyond the seas.” *Sydney Morning Herald*, January 6 1910.

⁶⁷ NA. Kitchener Papers PRO 30/57/41 “Memorandum on the Defence of Australia,” February 12 1910.

⁶⁸ Kitchener Papers PRO 30/57/39 Kitchener to Ward, March 2 1910.

⁶⁹ After completing his tour, Kitchener assumed command of the all-important Mediterranean Garrison, which Lord Esher assured him would “form the nucleus of a great Imperial Concentration in time of war—a concentration of

In 1910 British General Sir John French completed a similar inspection of the Canadian Militia. French reported considerable problems in the training, equipment, and financing of the citizen army, though he noted that reform efforts were moving in the right direction. He recommended the consolidation of local militia regiments in Eastern Canada into six larger field divisions. He was careful to frame this policy as a measure against an unlikely American invasion, though he admitted it could be used “to furnish contingents to succour (sic) other parts of the Empire in the event the Dominion government sees fit, as in South Africa.”⁷⁰ Borden enacted French’s recommendations and even privately instructed his staff to begin mobilization plans for dispatching an overseas expeditionary force to “a civilized country in a temperate climate.”⁷¹ Canadian leaders, like their professional colleagues in Australia and New Zealand, thus began preparing their citizen forces for possible deployment overseas in connection with a imperial war effort.

The Britannic Alliance, 1911-1914

By 1911 the mechanics of an imperial defense partnership were firmly established. The following years merely confirmed the resolve of Dominion statesmen to stand by the “Mother Country” in time of crisis. Increasing tension between the Great Powers reinforced this need for imperial solidarity. The naval arms race continued to be a source of disagreement between Britain and Germany (though public interest in the subject gradually declined after the 1909 “scare”). More importantly, Britain’s open support of France during the 1911 Agadir Crisis demonstrated the solidarity of the *Entente* while highlighting the possibility of intervention in a

Imperial forces, naval and military, drawn from every quarter of the Empire.” Kitchener Papers PRO 30/57/38 Lord Esher to Kitchener July 14 1909.

⁷⁰ John French, *Report by General Sir John French, Inspector-General of the Imperial Forces, upon his Inspection of the Canadian Military Forces* (Ottawa, 1910), n.p.

⁷¹ Quoted in Harris, *Canadian Brass*, 78-79.

Franco-German conflict. These developments did not mean that war was inevitable or that diplomatic arrangements with France committed Britain into the maelstrom of the European alliance system. Nonetheless, many educated Britons recognized the growing storm clouds on the horizon.

The international situation ensured that defense and foreign policy were the leading topics of discussion at the 1911 Imperial Conference. In March of that year, the Committee of Imperial Defence assembled a subcommittee to craft an agenda for the meeting between imperial statesmen. From the outset some reactionary members of the subcommittee advocated a hardline approach towards defense concessions from the Dominions. In particular, they took issue with the notion that the Dominions could remain “neutral” in a war involving the “Mother Country.” Instead they hoped that colonial leaders would agree “to undertake certain definite responsibilities in connection with the defence of the Empire as a whole.” The subcommittee considered a few ideas, notably Australian and New Zealand troops reinforcing the Suez Canal in time of war, but ultimately arrived at no strong conclusions.⁷²

The leading members of the Committee of Imperial Defence adamantly rejected this renewed glimmer of “Constructive Imperialism.” First Lord of the Admiralty McKenna pointed to the recent level of unprecedented naval cooperation with the Dominions, and concluded that so long as the British government accept the “technical fiction” of colonial autonomy, “it was practically certain that they would always be ready to assist us.”⁷³ The Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Sir William Nicholson, agreed, and reminded his colleagues of Dominion efforts in military preparedness “which did not look as if they really entertained any idea of not taking

⁷² CAB 38/17/13 “Report of a Sub-Committee Assembled to Formulate Questions Connected with Naval and Military Defence of the Empire to be Discussed at the Imperial Conference 1911,” March 11 1911.

⁷³ CAB 38/17/12 “International Status of the Dominions During a War in which the United Kingdom is Engaged,” February 28 1911.

part in a serious struggle.”⁷⁴ Upholding this position, the Committee of Imperial Defence prepared a series of memoranda for Dominion leaders which promoted closer defense relations within the confines of existing constitutional authority. The most important document explained to conference delegates the fast-paced nature of modern warfare and insisted that colonial forces would make a decisive impact only in a prolonged struggle. It added that each Dominion had “certain possible theatres of war in which its early assistance will be extremely valuable,” and urged Dominion leaders to make plans for seizing enemy possessions within their “natural spheres of action.” However, the only concrete example it provided was that “Australian forces might not be able to reach Egypt in time to take part in a decisive action, but reinforcements from India might do so provided they started in anticipation of relief by troops coming from the Commonwealth.”⁷⁵

The conference assembled in an atmosphere of heightened imperial cooperation and trepidation about the state of international relations. After participating in the grand imperial procession of King George V’s coronation, the delegates began a serious consideration of the defense of the empire. In a closed meeting at the Committee of Imperial Defence, Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey treated Dominion statesmen to a rather frank assessment of the diplomatic situation in Europe.⁷⁶ He revealed the government’s intention to stand by France in a conflict with Germany and emphasized the necessity of maintaining naval supremacy at all costs.⁷⁷ The report left an indelible impression upon the Australian delegation, which concluded

⁷⁴ CAB 38/17/16 Minute of the 109th Meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence, March 24 1911.

⁷⁵ WO 106/43 “The Cooperation of the Military Forces of the Empire,” Memorandum by the General Staff May 12 1911.

⁷⁶ CAB 38/18/35 “Minutes of the 111th Meeting of the CID,” May 26 1911.

⁷⁷ He did not reveal the ongoing staff talks with the French Army.

“that a European war was inevitable and that it would probably come in 1915 when the preparations that Germany was making would be complete.”⁷⁸

Despite these concerns, Dominion leaders still refused to follow blindly the British government on defense matters. At a meeting on May 29th Laurier took issue with an Admiralty suggestion that the newly formed Royal Canadian Navy should automatically come under British control in time of hostilities. He admitted that in a war against Germany “probably our duty would be to go to war at once.” However, he insisted “that we do not hold ourselves bound to take part in all wars in which Great Britain may be engaged.”⁷⁹ The following day New Zealand Prime Minister Ward challenged Laurier to redefine his position in light of the startling information provided by the Foreign Office. The Canadian premier repeated his protective claims of Dominion sovereignty, but conceded:

If England were engaged today in such a war as, I would not say would imperil her existence, I do not mean that, but a war which would put her upon her mettle and force her citizens to be anxious, immediately Canada would step forward, I have no doubt at all of that, to go to the rescue and contribute, not only a small navy, but in every other way in her power.⁸⁰

British Prime Minister Herbert Asquith ended the debate with an affirmation that “we recognise to the full that it is only by spontaneous cooperation that we can proceed in this matter at all. I do not like to talk of bargains and conditions.”⁸¹

The most important conversations at the 1911 Imperial Conference took place at an ancillary meeting between British military officials and the Dominion defense ministers. In these discussions (in which the minutes were kept secret), Australian and Canadian authorities

⁷⁸ George Pearce, *Carpenter to Cabinet* (London, 1951), 81.

⁷⁹ CAB 38/17/41 Minutes of the 112th Meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence, May 29 1911, 15.

⁸⁰ CAB 38/17/42 Minutes of the 113th Meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence, May 30 1911, 8. New Zealand delegate John Findlay castigated Laurier for “a certain aloofness from the family circle—a civil or rather courtly coldness to the claims of the relationship and to any proposals for a closer cooperation.” John Findlay. *The Imperial Conference of 1911 from Within* (London, 1912), 29.

⁸¹ CAB 38/17/42 Minutes of the 113th Meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence, May 30 1911, 8.

openly registered their intentions for supporting Britain in any future war that threatened the empire. Australian Minister for Defence George Pearce reminded his colleagues that the *Defence Act of 1909* prohibited the Commonwealth's citizen soldiers from serving overseas without their consent. Nonetheless he confessed:

We know that the spirit animating the forces is such that in the event of any serious war, even without any compulsion or pressure on the part of the Government, there would be a considerable number of those forces who would volunteer for oversea (sic) service if considered necessary or advisable.⁸²

To meet this expected surge of white colonial troops, he argued, the Imperial General Staff should cooperate with the Australian General Staff to forge mobilization plans for various contingencies. This proposal met with general support from Canada's Frederick Borden, who approved closer cooperation so long as the plans did not automatically commit the Dominion to a binding wartime role.⁸³ Pearce concurred, agreeing with the Canadian minister that "there should be a general understanding—there does not need to be any resolution—that the local section of the Imperial General Staff are to work along those lines."⁸⁴

British officials congratulated Dominion leaders on these developments, though they urged them to withhold this information from the public. Chief of Imperial General Staff Nicholson pointed out that the British government never revealed the anticipated war plans for sending the British Expeditionary Force to France, and that the Dominions should follow suit. As he explained, "it is much better to hold our tongues about it and not say anything, according to the old Persian proverb 'What two ears hear, God himself does not know.'" Borden and Pearce agreed, and the group rejected a formal memorandum in favor of an "understanding that it

⁸² WO 106/43 Minutes of the Meeting at the War Office, June 17 1911, 20.

⁸³ WO 106/43 Minutes of the Meeting at the War Office, June 17 1911, 20-21.

⁸⁴ WO 106/43 Minutes of the Meeting at the War Office, June 17 1911, 21.

will be acted upon.”⁸⁵ British and Dominion officials thus entered into a gentlemen’s agreement for the future defense of a unified empire. They understood that imperial sentiment and racial affinity, to say nothing of mutual interests, would assure widespread public approval for their decisions.

Australian historian John Mordike uses this meeting as *prima facie* evidence of a sinister conspiracy to draw Dominion troops into an imperial war. This interpretation fails to stand up to closer inspection. Despite a tacit understanding that they would support Britain in a great war, colonial leaders carefully guarded their right to decide the nature of that assistance. Moreover, many Britons took for granted that they would participate in a war threatening the empire or the “Mother Country.” John Connor’s recent study shows that Australian leaders publicly discussed the likelihood of sending volunteers overseas at the outset of hostilities. He also sheds light on secret staff meetings between Australian and New Zealand military officers which created plans for a joint overseas force. The fact that Dominion authorities concealed these plans from the Committee of Imperial Defence hardly resembles an imperial conspiracy emanating from the metropole.⁸⁶

Nor did British policymakers automatically ascribe a role for Dominion forces in the prewar defense planning. The famous 1911 memorandum for dispatching six divisions of the Expeditionary Force to France included no provision for white colonial troops as reinforcements.⁸⁷ The Committee of Imperial Defence also prepared a detailed “War Book” as a guideline for wartime mobilization. Though covering nearly every area of British ministerial

⁸⁵ WO 106/43 Minutes of the Meeting at the War Office, June 17 1911, 22. Pearce speaking.

⁸⁶ The plans envisioned opening wartime recruiting to volunteers for oversea duties. Australia and New Zealand together would field a division of soldiers. John Connor, *Anzac and Empire: George Pearce and the Foundations of Australian Defence* (Cambridge, 2011), 34-37.

⁸⁷ CAB 38/19/47 “Military Aspects of the Continental Problem,” General Staff Memorandum, August 15 1911. The memo did suggest sending reinforcements from India so long as they left enough white troops in the subcontinent. For a more detailed analysis of British prewar strategy against Germany, see Gooch, *The Plans of War*, 278-295.

responsibility, the “War Book” contained no reference to the Dominions aside from a reminder for the Colonial Office to request that the Australian and Canadian governments place their navies under Admiralty control.⁸⁸ British authorities certainly recognized the likelihood of colonial participation, but declined to consider their forces in the initial strategic decisions without an official guarantee of support.

Conclusion

The execution of British war plans in August 1914 set in motion the great “Britannic Alliance” of the First World War. On the evening of August 4th a state of war was declared between Germany and the British Empire. The following morning, Prime Minister Asquith convened a “War Council” at 10 Downing Street to determine the proper course of action.⁸⁹ The meeting confirmed preexisting plans to dispatch the British Expeditionary Force to assist the French Army.⁹⁰ The council also discussed the issue of reinforcements from the empire. Churchill suggested sending Indian troops to Egypt in preparation for their eventual use in France. However, Lord Roberts (acting in an unofficial advisory capacity) stated that he had been in communication with the India Office and opined “it was most undesirable to employ native troops in a continental war.”⁹¹ Ultimately it was decided to reinforce Egypt with one

⁸⁸ CAB 15/1 “Coordination of Departmental Action on the Outbreak of War,” Report of the Standing Subcommittee on the Committee of Imperial Defence, June 30 1914; CAB 15/5 “Committee of Imperial Defence: War Book,” May 30 1914.

⁸⁹ The council included Haldane, Grey, Churchill, and many of the senior service members. The committee did not include Lewis Harcourt of the Colonial Office.

⁹⁰ The decision still required Cabinet approval, which the following day decided temporarily to hold two divisions in reserve as a guard against invasion. See Williamson, *The Politics of Grand Strategy*, 328-371.

⁹¹ CAB 22/1 “Secretary’s Notes of a War Council Held at 10 Downing Street, August 5 1914.”

The exigencies of war did force the British government to call upon the Indian Army in the early stages of the conflict. In September 1914 the government reversed its policy and deployed an Indian Corps to the Western Front as part of an “Imperial Reserve.” The Indian troops suffered from poor morale and the harsh European winter and were withdrawn in 1915 when sufficient British and Dominion reinforcements became available. Thereafter Indian troops were largely confined to extra-European theatres such as Palestine, Mesopotamia, and East Africa. The British also employed thousands of black soldiers from Africa and the West Indies in non-European campaigns.

division of Indian soldiers but to keep them there in garrison duty. The tone rapidly changed when considering offers of support from the white Dominions. Lord Haldane stated his belief that the “most advantageous use” for these troops would be to relieve British troops in overseas garrisons, but admitted “it would not . . . be popular in the Dominions.” At this point, Asquith interjected and insisted that all Dominion forces “should be sent to England.”⁹²

The Dominion governments quickly set about raising forces to assist the “Mother Country.” In Canada, the Minister of Militia Sam Hughes inexplicably abandoned prewar mobilization plans and set about raising an independent Canadian Expeditionary Force. In October a contingent of 30,000 Canadian soldiers arrived in England. It trained at Salisbury Plains during the winter before joining two battle-hardened British divisions in the Neuve Chapelle sector of Northern France in February 1915.⁹³ In the Antipodes, the Australian and New Zealand governments immediately dispatched small forces to seize German colonies in Samoa and New Guinea. They also initiated existing plans for raising a joint force of 28,500 soldiers. Though the Australian Imperial Force and the New Zealand Expeditionary Corps embarked for Europe, British authorities subsequently rerouted them to Egypt after the sudden entry of the Ottoman Empire into the war on October 29th.⁹⁴ The ANZACs thus faced their

Additional research is required in this area to understand the full context of race in the First World War. See Jeffrey Greenhut, “The Imperial Reserve: The Indian Expeditionary Corps on the Western Front, 1914-1915,” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 12 (1983), 54-73; John Morrow, *The Great War: An Imperial History* (New York, 2004), 81-84.

⁹² CAB 22/1 “Secretary’s Notes of a War Council Held at 10 Downing Street, August 5 1914.”

⁹³ For the experiences in England and early France, see Andrew Iarocci, *Shoestring Soldiers: The 1st Canadian Division at War, 1914-1915* (Toronto, 2008), 40-76.

⁹⁴ This became a contentious issue among the British leadership. Colonial Secretary Lewis Harcourt informed Kitchener that “the detention of the Australian and New Zealand contingents in Egypt will give them much dissatisfaction to them and to the Governments of the two Dominions unless you are able publicly to tell them: A) that they are wanted temporarily to assist in the defence of Egypt B) That when their training is completed they will certainly be sent to the front to fight with our forces.” BD Harcourt Papers MS 464 Harcourt to Kitchener, November 17 1914. South Africa’s role in the war paled in comparison to its Dominion counterparts. Prime Minister Louis Botha faced a revolt from some pro-German Boer communities which complicated his efforts to submit forces. Ultimately he dispatched a large army of South African troops into neighboring German Southwest

baptism of fire in the Gallipoli campaign before eventually arriving on the Western Front in February 1916.

Ultimately few Britons doubted whether Dominion support would be forthcoming. The empire had evolved into a strange anomaly of semi-autonomous states linked by a nebulous racial/cultural/linguistic bond that assured common cause in time of crisis. Within this cultural milieu, political leaders and defense administrators operated under the basic assumption of imperial cooperation while dancing around the thorny issue of colonial autonomy. Nor did Dominion assistance come as a major surprise to the British public. The national presses in the opening days of the war lacked the sensational headlines of earlier laudations of imperial solidarity. Faced with the gravity of the war and the immediate need to raise citizen armies, Britons accepted the Dominions as cherished but anticipated “Brothers in Arms.”⁹⁵ “We are proud and glad of the instant answer to a question which was never asked,” explained an anonymous writer for the *Saturday Review*, “but we expected no less.”⁹⁶

Africa and German East Africa, where a protracted guerilla war occurred. The Dominion only contributed one brigade of volunteers to service on the Western Front.

⁹⁵ *Times*, August 13 1914. For a sampling of major press reactions to the Dominions, see *Times* and *Daily Mail* from August 5th to August 16th 1914.

⁹⁶ *Saturday Review*, August 22 1914, 215.

Epilogue 1914 and After

The First World War confirmed the widespread cultural resonance of the British connection. Between 1914 and 1918, millions of Britons from across the empire volunteered for military service. Over 4.9 million men in the United Kingdom joined the armed forces out of a total prewar population of 45 million (2.4 million as volunteers, 2.5 million as conscripts).¹ Canada raised an army of 628,000 soldiers, 365,000 of whom saw action on the Western Front as part of a separate Canadian Corps. Though the Canadian government instituted conscription in 1917, the vast bulk of these soldiers voluntarily enlisted.² Australia recruited over 412,000 men, and 331,000 volunteers served with the Australian Imperial Force in France and the Middle East.³ New Zealand, with a population of only one million people, sent 100,000 men overseas during the course of the conflict.⁴ Even South Africa, which faced significant internal unrest from pro-German elements of the Boer population, raised over 136,000 troops which fought in Africa and on the Western Front.⁵ All together the white population of the empire contributed over 6,204,000 soldiers to the war effort.⁶ By the time the guns ceased on November 11 1918,

¹ Ian Beckett, *The Great War 1914-1918* (New York, 2007), 289.

² *Ibid.*, 93. Few conscripts reached the war before the end of hostilities. Newfoundland also contributed a small force that fought as part of the British Army.

³ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 92. All told nearly 128,000 New Zealanders served in the armed forces during the war.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 92.

⁶ As percentage of white male population, the totals were: Britain 22.1%, Australia 13.4%, Canada 13.4%, New Zealand 19.3%, South Africa 11.1%. *Ibid.*, 90.

over 886,000 had lost their lives on distant battlefields with names such as Mons, Gallipoli, the Somme, Passchendaele, and Vimy Ridge.⁷

Popular support for the war effort largely relied upon the sentiments of Britannic solidarity. In the United Kingdom, government appeals for military service targeted a “British” patriotism that transcended ethnic, national, or class divisions. In September 1914, the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee released its signature “Kitchener” recruiting poster.⁸ (Figure 8:1) In this famous image of wartime propaganda, the popular British Field Marshal Horatio Kitchener extended his finger directly at the reader with a firm and undeniable stare that both inspired and shamed men into enlisting. The caption reinforced the point with a declaration that Kitchener “WANTS YOU” and commanded them to “JOIN YOUR COUNTRY’S ARMY!” More importantly, though, the poster was addressed to “BRITONS”—a broad category that included the populations of England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland. In a time of national crisis, the recruiting effort abandoned regional or ethnic differences in favor of an appeal to the highest common identity.

Recruiting drives in the Dominions also catered to the emotional elements of “Britishness.” In Toronto, a recruiting poster depicted a Canadian officer pointing to the British Union Jack. “THIS IS YOUR FLAG!,” he explained to potential recruits. “FIGHT FOR IT!”⁹ (Figure 8:2) An Australian poster included another Union Jack with a brief testimonial from British General Ian Hamilton which praised Australian and New Zealand troops for maintaining “the finest traditions of our race during this struggle still in process.” The poster targeted civilian

⁷ Martin Gilbert lists military deaths as: United Kingdom, 743,000; Canada, 60,000; Australia, 59,000; India, 49,000; New Zealand, 16,000; South Africa, 8,000. Martin Gilbert, *The First World War* (New York, 1994), 541.

⁸ For a study of the Kitchener poster, see Carlo Ginzburg, “‘Your Country Needs You’: A Case Study in Political Iconography,” *History Workshop Journal* No. 52 Autumn 2001, 1-22.

⁹ IWM PST 12440 Poster for the 207th Ottawa-Carleton Battalion (date unknown).

men by insisting “AUSTRALIANS! THE EMPIRE NEEDS YOU.”¹⁰ (Figure 8:3) One famous poster employed throughout the empire characterized the war effort as a common imperial undertaking. The illustration featured a British Lion surrounded by younger lion cubs (identified as Canada, Australia, India, and New Zealand). In a proclamation of imperial unity, the poster declared “THE EMPIRE NEEDS MEN!” and explained “Helped by the YOUNG LIONS OLD LION defies his Foes.”¹¹ (Figure 8:4)

These propaganda campaigns appealed to populations that largely self-identified as “Britons.” The forging of British national identity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries gave way to a wide sense of British race patriotism. This process of identity construction was an integral part of the empire project. During the Victorian period, the British Isles unleashed a human wave of overseas emigration. In this vast diaspora, “Britishness” was an important cultural link between white colonists and the “Mother Country.” The emergence of colonial nationalism did not replace the British connection and indeed confirmed a newer idea of “Britannic” nationhood. Many Canadians, Australians, and New Zealanders embraced their new national affiliation while maintaining older sentimental and culture ties. This global imperial identity contributed to the emergence of “Greater Britain” as an international and transoceanic entity of world historical importance.

These ideas were reinforced by elites who recognized the tangible benefits of promoting social, national, and imperial unity. In this quest, they relied on wide variety of propaganda techniques such as military spectacles, naval displays, state education, and the Boy Scouts. They also advanced a masculine and patriotic ethos that projected imperial military service as a common responsibility for all Britons. These practices of cultural hegemony underscored the

¹⁰ IWM PST 12251 Poster from William Brooks and Co. Ltd, Sydney, 1915.

¹¹ IWM PST 5110 Parliamentary Recruiting Committee Poster NO. 58 WT.W 13275 March 1915.

larger project of building an imperial defense network based on ingrained ideas of pan-British solidarity. It assured that widespread sentiments of “Britishness” ultimately translated into wartime sacrifices.

In many ways, imperial cooperation during the war reinforced the idea of “Britishness.” Just as eighteenth-century conflicts against France forged Linda Colley’s “Britons,” the “Great War” solidified national consensus in Great Britain. The language of British identity was employed by the state in a manner that overshadowed lesser (and potentially divisive) identities.¹² It succeeded in merging English laborers and Glasgow merchants with suffragettes, public school boys, and Welsh farmers. As the aforementioned posters indicate, the British connection was also an important part of generating imperial support for the war. In Australia and Canada, British-born volunteers constituted the bulk of the initial overseas contingents.¹³ Similarly, “British” South Africans made up the majority of recruits for the South African Brigade on the Western Front, though Boers contributed most of the white soldiers for campaigns against German colonies in Africa.¹⁴ Debates over conscription in Australia, Canada, and New Zealand were also framed as political struggles between “pro-British” and “anti-British” elements of the population.¹⁵ For many white participants, then, the war was fought between people who largely embraced their “Britishness,” even if they also claimed affiliations as Scots, English, Australians, Canadians, or New Zealanders.

¹² David Monger, “The National War Aims Committee and British Patriotism during the First World War.” Ph.D. Thesis, King’s College London (2009).

¹³ J.L. Granatstein, *Canada’s Army: Waging War and Keeping the Peace* (Toronto, 2002), 74-75; Andrews, *The ANZAC Illusion*, 42-45. For a survey of imperial sentiments among the Canadian officer corps, see Patrick Brennan, “The Other Battle: Imperialist Versus Nationalist Sympathies Within the Officer Corps of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-1919,” in *Rediscovering the British World*, 251-266.

¹⁴ John Lambert, “Britishness, South Africanness, and the First World War,” in *Rediscovering the British World*, 291-292.

¹⁵ A point made by John Darwin in *The Empire Project*, 336-341.

Ironically, wartime cooperation also contributed to the gradual retreat away from the British connection. Many scholars argue that the conflict served as a crucible for fashioning new national identities in the Dominions. Australian war correspondents such as C.E.W. Bean and Ellis Ashmead-Barlett created the “digger myth” out of romanticized accounts that characterized Australian (and some New Zealand) troops as smarter, more egalitarian, and more physically fit than Britain’s “Tommy Atkins.”¹⁶ In most respects this imagery was a mere continuance and amplification of the “Better Britons” discourse from the South African War. Canadian military commitments also helped to enunciate a separate “Canadian” national identity. In the interwar period, many Canadians memorialized their wartime contributions as a chivalric defense of Western civilization rather than an imperial crusade on the behalf of the “Mother Country.”¹⁷ These associations between soldiers and national identity increased in the final months of the war when fresh divisions from the Dominions served as the elite “shock troops” of the empire.¹⁸ Finally, the experiences of Dominion soldiers and civilians in Great Britain during the war challenged the familial ties of the imperial relationship. Unlike the carefully planned receptions during the jubilees and coronations, these visits placed colonial Britons face-to-face with the reality of British social inequality and urban poverty—an experience that tarnished their romantic images of “Merry Ole England.” As E.M. Andrews explains, “the men had high expectations for the land they had been taught at home and in school to love. But reality, and the mischances of life, changed many of their views.”¹⁹

Ultimately the war demonstrated that being a “Briton” was, like all identities, being a part of a multifaceted and artificial community that included many diverse ingredients. Colley’s

¹⁶ John F. Williams, *ANZACS, the Media and the Great War* (Sydney, 1999)

¹⁷ Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble: Meaning, Memory, Memory, and the First World War* (Vancouver, 1997).

¹⁸ Tim Cook, *Shock Troops: Canadians Fighting the Great War 1917-1918* (New York, 1998).

¹⁹ Andrews, *ANZAC Illusion*, 181.

contention that humans bear multiple forms and identities speaks to the political success and continued viability of multi-ethnic and multi-national states such as the United Kingdom. But this paradigm also applied to larger transnational entities such as “Greater Britain.” Through an imagined cultural bond, Britons maintained a strong semblance of racial unity that could be expressed in a variety of ways. One such expression occurred in Sydney on November 12 1918. On that morning, thousands of men, women, and children filled the streets and celebrated news of the armistice by waving Union Jacks and singing “British” songs such as “God Save the Queen” and “Rule Britannia” alongside new stirring Australian tunes such as “Advance Australia!” and “The Boys of the Dardanelles.”²⁰ The crowd greeted the peace in the same way that they responded to the war—with a curious blend of national, ethnic, and colonial associations bound together by the common fabric of “Britishness.”

²⁰ *Sydney Morning Herald*, November 12 1918; *The Advertiser*, November 13 1918.

FIGURE 8:1¹

BRITONS



JOIN YOUR COUNTRY'S ARMY!
GOD SAVE THE KING

Reproduced by permission of LONDON OPINION

¹ IWM 48378A Kitchener Poster, September 1914.

FIGURE 8:2¹



¹ IWM PST 12440 Poster for the 207th Ottawa-Carleton Battalion (date unknown).

FIGURE 8:3¹



¹ IWM PST 12251 Poster from William Brooks and Co. Ltd, Sydney, 1915.

FIGURE 8:4¹



¹ IWM PST 5110 Parliamentary Recruiting Committee Poster NO. 58 WT.W 13275 March 1915.

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