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Imperially-Minded Britons:
A Study of the Public Discourse on Britain's Imperial Presence in the Cape-to-Cairo Corridor, Military Reform, and the Issue of National and Provincial Identity, 1870-1900

by

Timothy Ramer Lay, B.A., M.A.

A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School,
Marquette University,
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

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ABSTRACT
"Imperially-Minded Britons:
A Study of the Public Discourse on British Imperial Presence in the Cape-to-Cairo Corridor, Military Reform, and the Issue of National and Provincial Identity, 1870-1900"

Timothy Ramer Lay, B.A., M.A.

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The Victorian era was marked by the incremental expansion of the British Empire. Such developments were not only of enormous importance for government officials and the contributors of that expansion, but for the broader general public as well, as evidenced by the coverage and discussion of such developments in the Cape to Cairo corridor in the national and provincial presses between 1870 and 1900. Transcending the discussions surrounding the politics of interventionism, the public's interest in imperial activities—such as the annexation of the Transvaal, the First Anglo-Boer War, the Zulu War, Gordon's mission into the Sudan, the Jameson raid and the Second Anglo-Boer War—also led to debates about the status of military institutions and the necessity for military reform. Lastly, although these debates reflected on public understandings of British national identity, they also demonstrated specific provincial sympathies, suggesting that national identity was constituted differently in England and Scotland.

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INTRODUCTION

Beginning on the evening of 19 May 1900 and lasting over a period of several days, the streets and squares of British cities, towns, and villages were awash with merriment as the British public responded to the news that the town of Mafeking in South Africa which had been besieged by Boer forces for 217 days had finally been relieved by the British army. In London, the "unparalleled demonstrations" included spontaneous parades of men, women and children marching throughout the city.[1] In the city of Bristol, thousands turned out for a formal parade led by the Lord Mayor of the city, and in Kirkaldy, the event was marked by parading, setting out decorations, the ringing of town and church bells, and the setting off of fireworks.[2] Elsewhere, in East Peckham, a village of 2,000 people in Kent, the residents likewise took part in celebrations such as spontaneous parading, setting out decorations, ringing the town and church bells, setting off fireworks, and cancelling school.[3]

Assessing the events surrounding Mafeking Night, numerous scholars have contended that those activities were an isolated event and that the British public was detached from and relatively disinterested in the empire. For instance, in examining Britain's small wars of the Victorian era, Byron Farwell asserted that the "long peace" associated with the *Pax Britannica* left the British public largely unaware that from Waterloo to the end of the nineteenth century the nation was almost constantly at war

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[1] *Times* (London), 21 May 1900, 12.
[2] *Bristol Mercury*, 21 May 1900, 5; *Fife Free Press* (Kirkaldy), 26 May 1900, 2.
[3] Donald Hodge, interview April 1995, Imperial War Museum (IWM), catalogue #11341; *Census of England and Wales, 1901. County of Kent. Area, Houses and Population*, Cd. 1171 (1902), 27.

some place on the globe.[4] Focusing on economic matters, Lance Davis and Robert Huttenback have argued that the empire comprised only a small part of the British economy, and that for the most part the British public was not concerned with imperial markets.[5] More recently, Bernard Porter's inquiry into the Victorian culture and social awareness has boldly characterized the British public at that time as being largely "absent-minded" about imperial concerns.[6]

Even so, while the British Isles were certainly detached from the peripheral empire due to the delay in communication during the first part of the nineteenth century, it is untenable to believe that the British public was oblivious to and unconcerned about the imperial wars, that the mere frequency of those wars did not leave indelible marks or impressions upon British society, and that the occurrences of Mafeking Night emerged spontaneously without a pre-existing cultural foundation. Muriel Chamberlain has suggested that, instead of reflecting Britain's indifference to the imperial wars, the idea of a *Pax Britannica* recognized that those wars posed little threat to the British homeland.[7] In that way, the effectuation of a *Pax Britannica* coincided with interests in extending a British hegemony, which was often ensured at the point of the sword.[8] Other scholarship, such as that offered by John M. MacKenzie and Andrew Thompson, has done much to

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[4] Byron Farwell, *Queen Victoria's Little Wars* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 339. Farwell's interpretation of the meaning of long-peace is to say the least remarkable, given that earlier in the same work he contended that in the second half of Queen Victoria's reign the British public was increasingly aware and concerned about the imperial wars. Farwell accounted for this apparent contradiction by contending that by the early 1890s the constant imperial wars caused Britain to become numb to such developments. Ibid., 218, 295.

[5] Lance E. Davis and Robert Huttenback, *Mammon and the Pursuit of Empire: The Political Economy of British Imperialism, 1860-1912* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

[6] Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain* (Oxford: University Press, 2004).

[7] Muriel Chamberlain, *'Pax Britannica'? British Foreign Policy, 1789-1914* (London: Longman, 1989), 9.

[8] Sir Francis Patrick Fletcher, *Pax Britannica in South Africa* (London: Archibald Constable and Co., 1905), x-xi; H. Whates, "A Year of Lord Lansdowne," *Fortnightly Review* 70 (1901): 593; Bill Nasson, *Britannia's Empire: Making a British World* (Stroud, UK: Tempus Publishing Ltd., 2004), 135-36.

show that, to varying degrees, the British public was engaged in imperial concerns and that the empire did exert some influence upon British culture.[9] Additionally, Paul Ward has specifically contended that public support for imperialism formed a key element of British identity in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, questions concerning the degree to which the British populace was positively disposed to the military and to the use of military force to advance Britain's imperial position and status in the international community remain underexplored.[10] Building upon the historiography, this dissertation contends that while the pageantry of Mafeking Night was certainly unique, it was far from being an isolated expression of British enthusiasm and support of the empire and the military. Rather, the phenomenon of Mafeking Night should be seen as a culmination of decades-long support, interest, and engagement by the public in the empire and the military.

The present study into the British public's attachment to the empire and the British military began as an offshoot of my master's thesis which addressed the 1916 conscription debate in Great Britain. At the time I was interested in understanding how Britain, by all accounts a non-militaristic state, came to implement a policy that was seen as the embodiment of militarism. Historians and intellectuals alike have predominantly characterized modern Britain as non-militaristic essentially because it lacked the institutionalized forms of a mass military establishment associated with the continental

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[9] John M. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984); John M. MacKenzie, "Passion or Indifference: Popular Imperialism in Britain, Continuities and Discontinuities over Two Centuries" in *European Empires and the People: Popular Responses to Imperialism in France, Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, and Italy*, ed. John M. MacKenzie (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), 57-89; John M. MacKenzie, ed. *Popular Imperialism and the Military: 1850-1950*, Studies in Imperialism, ed. John M. MacKenzie (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992); Andrew S. Thompson, *Imperial Britain: The Empire in British Politics, c. 1880-1932* (New York: Longman, 2000).
[10] Paul Ward, *Britishness Since 1870* (London: Routledge, 2004), 30-31.

powers, i.e. conscription, mass armies, and the predominance of the military over the government and national economy. In those regards, in 1914 the British military was certainly dwarfed by the military establishments of France and Germany. Its armed forces were comprised of volunteers, and the principles of liberalism and civilian governance reigned supreme. By these measures, Britain exhibited few signs of militarism, and during the Great War Britain saw itself as a bulwark against that form of militarism. Indeed the country's devotion to constitutionalism and fear of absolutism prevented its military from having an inordinate control over state affairs. Consequently, while acknowledging the occasional outburst of jingoism, most discussions of British society have insisted that it was free of the influence or presence of militarism.

But in examining the social environment of Britain at the turn of the century, I, like Anne Summers, was struck by the possibility that militaristic elements had become integrated into British society and were in part responsible for the unprecedented response to the call to arms in 1914.[11] Despite the predominant amount of literature that has either dismissed or downplayed the presence of militarism in Victorian and Edwardian society, a select number of historians have pointed to a variety of militaristic elements within British society. These have included the varied efforts of the Navy and National Service Leagues to raise awareness about the need to reform and professionalize the British military through the introduction of universal drill and compulsory military service, and the impact youth organizations such as the Boys' Brigade and Boy Scouts, which were deliberately patterned after the military. In addition, the cultural exchanges

[11] Anne Summers, "Militarism in Britain Before the Great War," *History Workshop* 2 (1976): 104-123.

between Oxford and Heidelberg Universities and the dynamics of British patriotism have also come under scrutiny for militaristic characteristics.[12]

Admittedly such cultural elements do not embody militarism in the traditional and strictest sense of the word. However, the *Oxford English Dictionary* and *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary* include in their definitions of militarism references to "military attitudes or ideas," the willingness to use the military "aggressively to defend or promote national interests, "military habits or mannerisms," and "a strong military spirit or policy."[13] Consequently, these definitions raise questions as to whether the prevailing understanding of militarism, which centers on conscription and massive standing armies, has construed the concept too narrowly. Given that some have sensed that militarism exhibited some presence in Victorian and Edwardian society, those discussions raise the question from whence did such influences arise. More importantly, the discussion about martial tones in British society opens broader questions that transcend the specific question of militarism. Namely, it invites renewed inquiries into the reciprocal relationship between the British public and the empire, especially in regards to military experiences and military institutions.

By exploring the intersection between the Victorian era's peripheral small wars and the British public sphere, therefore, the present work responds to MacKenzie's invitation for further inquiries into the intersection of Britain's colonial wars and popular culture, and Thompson's desire for attention to the impact that imperialism had on

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[12] See Hugh Cunningham, "Jingoism and the Working Class" *Bulletin – Society for the Study of Labour History* 19 (1969): 6-9; Idem, "Jingoism in 1877-1878" *Victorian Studies* 14 (1971): 429-453; Idem, "Militarism and Anti-Militarism in Britain," in *The Week of Studies on the Military Power in Contemporary Society* (Rome: Fondazione Lelio e Lisle Basso, 1983); Thomas Weber, *Our Friend "The Enemy": Elite Education in Britain and Germany Before World War I* (Stanford: University Press, 2008).
[13] *Oxford English Dictionary* [OED] (2007), s.v. militarism; *Merriam-Websters Collegiate Dictionary* (2003), s.v. militarism.

domestic politics and the empire's role in shaping national identity.[14] Taking into account that Britishness, as discussed by Linda Colley, Keith Robbins, Richard Weight, and Robert Colls, was and continues to be a construction that has existed above, and as a composite of, English, Scottish, Irish, and Welsh identities, it is only fitting to assess the British relationship with the empire along those lines.[15] Indeed, while those communities almost certainly had a common point of reference in regards to the imperial wars and their repercussions, it is also highly likely that responses would not have been uniform, and that they would have been perceived differently and possibly co-opted for entirely different purposes and ends, depending on regional allegiances within the British polity.

For simplicity's sake, this work takes particular notice of ways those elements emerged in England, the "dominant" partner in the United Kingdom, and Scotland, a nation that has been seen to have a special relationship with the military. Indeed, in contrast to England, a disproportionate percentage of the Scottish population served in the British military where they earned a reputation for being particularly hardy and seasoned warriors.[16] This study will only delve tangentially into the relationship between the empire and Ireland because the complexity of Ireland's place within the United Kingdom—as simultaneously colonized and colonizer—presents methodological issues beyond the present scope. At the same time, although Wales certainly retained a sense of British identity, especially within the military establishment, it was overshadowed by England and Scotland. Even so, inquiries into Ireland's and Wales's reciprocal

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[14] John M. MacKenzie, ed., *Popular Imperialism and the Military*, 221; Thompson, *Imperial Britain*, 1-9.
[15] Ward, *Britishness Since 1870*, 6-7.
[16] Scotland's military heritage has most recently been studied by Heather Streets in *Martial Races: the Military, Race, and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857-1914* in *Studies in Imperialism*, ed. John Mackenzie (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2004).

relationships with the military experiences of imperialism and their role in the construction of "national" identity would certainly be warranted in other studies.

In order to lend the argument some specificity, I will offer an overview of Britain's experiences in a large swath of Africa in the late nineteenth century, which reveals much about the public's awareness of and interaction with imperial questions and military capabilities. In the first place, those instances reveal a certain inclination toward the "sureness" offered by aggressive military and political action to resolve imperial questions. Such actions were frequently incentivized by promises of material gain and further underpinned by a Social Darwinist belief that British governance and rule of law were superior to what settlers and officials in Britain considered to be the barbarous and inefficient government of the indigenous populations.

Such interactions increased in frequency and severity, and drew more public concern and scrutiny after the mid-1870s, at a time when the government in London began taking a greater interest in directing imperial policy. The process culminated in 1899 with the outbreak of what was the most significant of Victoria's "Little Wars," the Second Anglo-Boer War.[17] Within that twenty-five year timeframe, a number of

[17] Although these wars collectively involved a British army that numbered close to a quarter of a million troops, the label "little wars" has been applied because these they were individually fought with relatively few forces compared with those of the Napoleonic Wars and the Crimean War. For example, the British expedition force to China in 1860 and Wolseley's command in 1874 against the Ashanti in West Africa numbered only 4,000 men. The final relief of Lucknow in 1858 was accomplished with 5,000 troops. In 1879, before additional reinforcements arrived, Lord Chelmsford defeated the Zulu armies, which numbered in the tens of thousands, with only 5,000 British Regulars and almost the same number of locally drawn Auxiliaries. British forces in the three battles of the First Anglo-Boer War (1880-1881) numbered in the hundreds. A somewhat larger military commitment was devoted to the destruction of the Mahdi in 1898, as Kitchener had under him at Omdurman 8,200 British and 17,000 Egyptians. Coming at the end of the nineteenth century, only the Second Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) was notably different as it eventually required that half a million troops be committed to the effort. This would be prefiguring the military commitment that would be required in the First World War. Aside from being a comparative term, like the origin of the term "imperialism," the "little war" label had a critical edge to it, as *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper* used it in 1881 to headline an article that highlighted Britain's ongoing military instability in

episodes stand out which provide a sufficient context for teasing out the public's engagement in imperial politics. This period can effectively be divided into three segments according to geography, and which opportunely fall in line with the general ebb and flow of Conservative and Liberal Party dominance.

Three periods will be addressed in three sequential chapters. The first, stretching from 1877-1881, contains the Annexation of the Transvaal (1877), the Zulu War (1879), and the First Anglo-Boer War (1880-81), and features the dominance of the Conservative Party under Benjamin Disraeli, a vocal advocate of the imperialist cause. The second era and chapter will focus the discussion on the questions surrounding the Egyptian Crisis and the Mahdi Wars (1882-91), during which time the siege of General Charles "Chinese" Gordon at Khartoum plagued Gladstone's Liberal Government and led to the creation of the first Salisbury administration. Returning to South Africa, the final chapter covers the years 1895-1902 , that is, the period from the Jameson Raid to the capstone event of nineteenth-century British imperialism, the Second Anglo-Boer War.

While these events represent only a segment of Britain's imperial experience in Africa, they were among the most significant of the period, not just regionally but also in relation to developments occurring elsewhere in the empire. In many ways they were representative of wider imperial events, and in order not to lose sight of that larger context, I will refer to other theaters of empire and the parallels drawn by contemporaries among those theaters. In so doing, the spelling of place names in the Cape to Cairo corridor and beyond have been uniformly modernized.

Western and Southern Africa. Farwell, *Queen Victoria's Little Wars*, 1, 16, 123, 196, 244-247, 335, 340-341. Cf. *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper* 13 February 1881, 5.

In assessing the newspaper coverage of imperial activity, we find, in the first place, that the press both commented on and sought to shape the prevailing thoughts and opinions of the British government. They thus reveal that imperial matters were a part of the national consciousness and not limited to the inner chambers of Whitehall, the veldts of South Africa, or the deserts of Egypt-Sudan. As will be shown, the reading public had its own mind and convictions when it came to matters about the British Empire as a whole and military intervention specifically. While the press did not necessarily reflect the opinion of the government, there were times when the commentary drove government policy, agenda, and action. In terms of imperial activity, it will be seen that the public favored military action only so long as it could be accomplished cheaply, both in terms of finances and blood, and when it served a purpose deemed worthier than simple economic gain. Continued colonial security, peace, and humanitarianism, all of which were then frequently augmented by a firm belief in upholding national honor, were deemed by the public to be much more important and justifiable reasons for action than economic gain alone. However, when the empire and military intervention failed in those regards, the public actively questioned such errors of judgment.

Reading newspapers and other forms of the popular press as source material on attitudes is, of course, problematic. Indeed, one of the key challenges any historian confronts is tracing attitudes through written records. Memoirs, diaries, and letters are of course vital sources in this respect, but such sources may provide only an incomplete account of a person's personal reflections and feelings. The challenge becomes even greater when attempting to ascertain the consciousness of a group of people. This is especially true when dealing with public opinions on a national level, where the so-called

"national consciousness" was often splintered by political, social, cultural, historical, geographical, and economic influences into a multitude of perspectives.

Nonetheless, as Michael de Nie has noted, the nineteenth-century British press can appropriately be seen as a reflection and product of the public's awareness and engagement in the world around it. In addition the press, in particular the local press, were for many the primary source of news and served effectively to connect the public to the societal and governmental issues of the day.[18] As Lord Lytton noted in 1833:

> Large classes of men entertain certain views on matters of policy, trade or morals. A newspaper supports itself by addressing these classes; it brings to light all the knowledge requisite to enforce or illustrate the view of its supporters; it embodies also the prejudice, the passion and the sectarian bigotry that belong to one body of men engaged in active opposition to one another. It is, therefore, the organ of opinion; expressing at once the truths, the errors, the good, and the bad of the prevalent opinion it represents.[19]

This role was not lost upon the press itself. In the summer of 1882 amid the Suez Crisis, the *Aberdeen Journal* editorialized:

> Bravo for leading articles! "The duty of newspapers is, or ought to be, to put before the public in a plain, straightforward way, not merely the news of the day, but such considerations as, because of their common sense or fairness, may assist the public to understand political and other difficulties." What wisdom! and what conscious virtue! Where but in the pages in which these words appear, are we to find the absence of prejudice, the pure love of truth, the high patriotism, the noble devotion to the good of the country, irrespective of party; or, in one word, the singlemindedness which alone can produce the "common sense and fairness" necessary for the guidance of a bewildered public in the struggle with its "difficulties."[20]

In addition, Alan Lee has contended that throughout the eighteenth century, the press served a vital function of horizontally connecting the various segments of the reading

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[18] Michael de Nie, *The Eternal Paddy: Irish Identity and the British Press, 1798-1882* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 28-30.
[19] Edward Lytton Bulwer, *England and the English*, vol. xlviii (Paris: Baudry's European Library, 1833), 245.
[20] *Aberdeen Journal*, 31 May 1882, 4.

public—a purpose that de Nie insists carried over into the nineteenth century.[21] The public then would almost certainly have gained an appreciation for that exchange of ideas through the editorials, which would refer to other concurring and conflicting opinions, or through serial columns such as the *Pall Mall Gazette's* "Epitome of Opinion," which purposefully encapsulated snippets of the editorial pages of the London and provincial papers on issues of national importance. In this way, not only did provincials gain greater access to the opinion of the Londoners, but perhaps more importantly, Londoners became connected to the opinions on the periphery of the country.

In addition to reflecting sentiments, the nineteenth-century press was also an invaluable agent for creating public opinion. Having largely been the mouthpiece of the government in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, by the mid-nineteenth century the press had effectively become a "fourth estate" and challenged parliament as the leading center of political discussion.[22] At the end of the nineteenth century, imperial critics, such as J. A. Hobson, raised concerns that the press was effectively being co-opted by imperialists in order to further to propagandize the public. More recently, John MacKenzie and others have built upon that argument and explored more deeply how the empire became popularized. The degree to which those efforts succeeded is the focus of Bernard Porter's work *Absent-Minded Imperialists.* As discussed previously, the conclusion he has come to is that the public remained mostly disinterested. However, Simon Potter contends that such efforts by their very nature were necessarily rooted in a pre-existing foundation of support.[23]

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[21] De Nie, *The Eternal Paddy*, 30.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Simon J. Potter, ed., *Newspapers and Empire in Britain and Ireland: Reporting the British Empire, c. 1850-1921* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004), 18-19.

It is those foundational sentiments and opinions that the present study is interested in exploring. Both as a reflection of public sentiment and as an important proactive agent in driving public interest, the content of the national and provincial press provides a vital conduit for the researcher to create a composite interpretation of the public discourse.[24] However, both functions have their imperfections. As a reflection, one must consider whether even the composite opinions by the press are fully representative of society as a whole. For as de Nie points out, Victorians largely regarded the public opinion associated with the press to be closely attached to the middle class.[25] As a proactive force, meanwhile, one must question—as does Porter—the degree to which such ideas were readily accepted by the public. Taking those issues into account, when this dissertation speaks of the public's opinions on the issue of imperialism, what is meant by this is the opinions of the public in so far as they were expressed by the press.

Bearing these considerations in mind, this dissertation seeks to tease out the awareness of, involvement with, and responsiveness of the British public to the small wars that spanned the nineteenth century by focusing specifically on the Cape to Cairo corridor in the period between 1870 and 1900 because that theatre was home to some of the most significant events in those years.

Second, recognizing that foreign policy was only one avenue through which the public connected with the empire, I seek to assess public concerns over questions regarding matériel and manpower. As part of his study of the impact of imperialism on British politics, Thompson focused his attention on the development and modernization of the Royal Navy, justifying this approach on the grounds that up until the First World

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[24] For the purposes of this study, the phrase "national press" refers to metropolitan papers, such as the London *Times*, that reached out to a nationwide audience.
[25] De Nie, *The Eternal Paddy*, 29.

War, the Royal Navy was the paramount branch of service concerned with imperial defense.[26] Nevertheless, from the middle of the nineteenth century onward, imperial matters raised considerable concern about the size, ability, efficiency, and professionalization of the army as well, which led to numerous calls for military reform, by the likes of Secretaries of War Edward Cardwell and Hugh Childers, as well as MPs such as Sir Charles Dilke and H. Spenser Wilkinson. This debate created opportunities for the public to engage with imperial-military questions. In such circumstances, questions regarding the appropriateness and ramifications of imposing universal military drill and service upon Britain's civil society were of particular concern. However, if connections with the military and its imperial exploits truly made inroads into British civil society, one would expect that they would transcend the context of politics and would appear elsewhere in civil society.

Indeed such permeations did occur. This dissertation argues that the public was not only aware of the empire, but deeply involved with and invested in imperial matters. Political questions and concerns regarding the place of Britain in the world were not just relegated to the halls of Parliament, but discussed and engaged by the press and the general public at large. As a part of their being politically aware in general, the British public was very much mindful of imperial matters. Moving beyond the national level, the work demonstrates that while English and Scottish communities engaged military aspects of British imperialism as a part of a national discourse and from common points of reference, those communities also engaged and consumed such matters uniquely and to varying degrees. While England tended to relate to the empire and the military as national enterprises and institutions, members of the Scottish public was made keenly

[26] Thompson, *Imperial Britain*, 110-32.

aware of their singular contributions to the empire and the military as a way of accentuating Scotland's position as an equal partner in the United Kingdom. Indeed, at the end of the nineteenth-century the press was integrally involved in promoting the martial character of the Highlander as an acceptable and esteemed symbol not only for all of Scotland, but the British Empire as well.

PART I

THE PUBLIC DISCOURSE ON IMPERIAL INTERVENTION

CHAPTER 1:
PUBLIC INTEREST IN SOUTH AFRICAN AFFAIRS (1870-1881): THE ANNEXATION OF THE TRANSVAAL, THE ZULU WAR, AND THE FIRST ANGLO-BOER WAR

From the time that Britain took possession of the Cape Colony in 1802 to the end of the nineteenth century, Britain's presence in the Cape to Cairo corridor gave rise to a series of significant interactions with the native and Boer communities.[1] In 1834, in an attempt to remove themselves from British rule, Boers began migrating northward from the Cape into the Natal, Orange River, and Transvaal regions. These treks not only upset the inland peoples; they also did little to resolve the tensions between the British and the Boers.[2] At the same time, British settler movements eastward from the Cape further unsettled relations with native and Boer populations, and by the late 1840s, settler interests, indigenous resistance, and a growing willingness on the part of the Cape government and Colonial Office to use violence often coalesced.[3] For the remainder of

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[1] At the heart of these tensions lay Boer resistance to British cultural hegemony. Ronald Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century, 1815-1914: A Study of Empire and Expansion* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 47-48; Anthony Nutting, *Scramble for Africa: the Great Trek to the Boer War* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1971), 44-47.

[2] British humanitarian sensibilities were offended by Boer policies toward black Africans, and the British believed that these policies were at the root of the recurring geopolitical problems at the Cape. In keeping with British Common Law, the Boers were considered to be British subjects. As such, Britain had a responsibility of seeing to Boer security, and common law forbade granting the Boers independence. This position resulted in the annexation of Natal by Sir George Napier, the Cape Governor, in 1843, when the Boers pressed to have the settlement recognized as an independent state. See Erik A. Walker, "The Formation of New States, 1835-1856," in *The Cambridge History of the British Empire* [hereafter C.H.B.E.], vol. 8, ed. Erik A. Walker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 324-39.

[3] Prior to 1846, Britain's frontier wars with the native Xhosa were generally reactionary in nature, and a by-product of colonial presence. The "War of the Axe" (1846-47) stands out as an exceptional instance of naked aggression to further the economic interests of the Cape. Basil Le Cordeur and Christopher Saunders, *The War of the Axe, 1847: Correspondence between the Governor of the Cape Colony, Sir Henry Pottinger and the Commander of the British Forces at the Cape, Sir George Berkeley, and Others*, Brenthurst Series, ed. Eric Axelson, no. 7 (Johannesburg: Brenthurst Press, 1981) , 16; Clifton Crais, *White Supremacy and Black Resistance in Pre-Industrial South Africa: The Making of Colonial Order at the Cape, 1770-1865*, African Studies Series, ed. J. M. Lonsdale, no. 72 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 143-146; Martin Legassick and Robert Ross, "From Slave Economy to Settler Capitalism," in *The Cambridge History of South Africa*, vol. 1, *From Early Times to 1885*, ed. Carolyn Hamilton, Bernard K. Mbenga, and Robert Ross (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 265-269, 281-285, 293-305;

the nineteenth century, Britain's relations with the Africans and Boers would intermittently be strained and frequently develop into open war, as Britons expanded their colonial boundaries in response to geopolitical threats to their hegemonic position at the Cape and in Africa as a whole, and as they actively pursued their own economic opportunities.[4]

In examining the British presence in South Africa from the annexation of the Transvaal through the First Anglo-Boer War, this chapter will focus on how the press coverage and popular opinion concerning those events are suggestive of the parameters in which aggressive or interventionist policies were deemed acceptable. The reaction of Britons to their government's interventionism at the Cape between 1877 and 1881 serves as an important foundation against which their engagement with imperial adventures in the 1880s and 1890s can be weighed. The first period included the use of coercive diplomacy against the Transvaal Boers, which led to wars against the Zulus and ultimately the Boers themselves. In subsequent decades, diplomatic efforts and military force would be used as complementary tools, and in some instances, armed conflict—including instances that were not authorized by the British state, such as the Jameson Raid—sought to drive the agenda. The varied cases and forms of interventionism in the Cape to Cairo theatre from 1877 to 1900, then, provide a discreet set of information from

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Tony Kirk, "The Cape Economy and the Expropriation of the Kat River Settlement, 1846-1853," in *Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial South Africa*, ed. Shula Marks and Anthony Atmore (London: Longman, 1980), 226-46; Walker, "The Formation of New States," 342-347; Sir Harry Johnston, *A History of the Colonization of Africa by Alien Races* (New York: Scribners, 1966), 255-256, 259-60; Richard Price, *Making Empire: Colonial Encounters and the Creation of Imperial Rule in Nineteenth-Century Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[4] Over the course of the nineteenth century Britain became enmeshed in a series of frontier wars with the Xhosa in the 1810s, '30s, '40s, '50s, and '70s, and the Zulus in the 1870s. It also used intermittent military force to curtail the Boers in the 1830s, '70s, '80s, and '90s.

which to ascertain the extents and parameters under which intervention was deemed to be acceptable by the British public.

THE ANNEXATION OF THE TRANSVAAL, 1877

The annexation of the Transvaal was, in many ways, overshadowed by the attention paid between 1876 and 1878 to the so-called Eastern Crisis. In the context of Britain's imperial experience in the Cape to Cairo corridor, however, the event was crucially significant as it set the stage for two wars with the Boers and marked the first instance when the Colonial Office and not the "man on the spot" initiated action in southern Africa. The public's apparent approval of this action undertaken with the approval of the Colonial Office helps to establish the parameters within which saber rattling remained acceptable in imperial affairs.

Only a few years after it had contained the Boer treks through a series of territorial expansions in the 1840s, the British government dramatically retraced its steps due to the increasing economic and administrative strain on the Cape Colony.[5] Ignoring the complaints of the British residents and those Boers who preferred British rule, the British government had recognized the independence of the South African Republic (the Transvaal) and the Orange Free State through the Sand River and Bloemfontein conventions in 1852 and 1854 respectively.[6] In doing so, the government hoped that the newly established republics would act as buffers between the Cape and the Basutos, and

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[5] Those territorial acquisitions were a part of a wider expansionist movement executed by Sir Harry Smith from 1847-48, that absorbed the eastern frontier, which became British Kaffraria, and the Transorangia region for the purpose of controlling the surrounding native and Boer populations.

[6] C. W. De Kiewiet, *British Colonial Policy and the South African Republics, 1848-1872* (London: Longmans, 1929), 47-49, 63-69, 79-80; William Morrell, *British Colonial Policy of Peel and Russell* (London: Cass, 1966), 302-303; Ian Morrison, "British South African Policy and the Sand River and Bloemfontein Conventions" (M.A. thesis, University of Chicago, 1961), ii-v; G. W. Eybers, ed., *Select Constitutional Documents Illustrating South African History* (London: Routledge, 1918), 281-84, 357-59.

that Boer native policies could be influenced through diplomatic pressure.[7] Those expectations fell short as persistent Boer-Basuto hostilities proved to be a growing thorn in the side of the British colonies at the Cape and in Natal.

The discovery of diamonds along the northern boundaries of the Cape Colony in 1867 significantly altered the colonial intentions of the British in the region and the nature of Anglo-Boer relations.[8] Britons and Boers alike rushed into the areas of Bechuanaland and Griqualand West in search of personal fortunes, and the Boer republican governments particularly saw access to those resources as a solution to their financial problems. These discoveries also increased the importance of southern Africa's limited number of deepwater ports, such as Delagoa Bay, which were vital in connecting the hinterlands to international trade. Recognizing that republican access to those resources would threaten the economic supremacy of the British in the region and provide immunity from British influence, Cape Governor Sir Philip Wodehouse annexed Basutoland in 1868 to block the Boers' access to Delagoa Bay.[9] Then, in October 1871 amid legal arbitration negotiations with the Orange Free State for control of Griqualand West, Sir Henry Barkly, the newly appointed High Commissioner of South Africa,

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[7] De Kiewiet, *British Colonial Policy*, 78-80.
[8] C. W. De Kiewiet, "The Period of Transition in South African Policy, 1845-1880," in C.H.B.E., 8:400-38.
[9] This action notwithstanding, like the Duke of Buckingham (Colonial Secretary 1867-1868), Wodehouse generally opposed expanding British possessions in South Africa. C. W. De Kiewiet, "The Establishment of Responsible Government in Cape Colony, 1870-1872" in *C. H. B. E.*, 8: 433-34, 446; idem., *British Colonial Policy*, 148-53; Idem., "The Period of Transition in South African Policy," 435; idem., *Imperial Factor in South Africa: a Study in Politics and Economics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1937), 107-108; Erik A. Walker, *A History of Southern Africa*, (London: Longmans, 1957), 327-34. Following the British attempt to control Delagoa Bay in 1868, Portugal reasserted its claim to the port and was ultimately awarded control of the region through an international arbitration administered by French President Patrice MacMahon in 1872. Cecil Headlam, "Failure of Confederation, 1871-1881," in C.H.B.E, 8: 463-464.

unilaterally declared British sovereignty over the region in order to pressure the Boers into participating in the formation of a confederation of South African states.[10]

Instead of succeeding in manipulating the Boer republics into accepting confederation, however, Barkly's action only encouraged their desire to remain independent and to resist calls for confederation.[11] Indeed, far from being the feeble states that they had been in the 1850s, by the 1870s the Boer republics had increased as regional powers, and they renewed their efforts to gain access to the Indian Ocean via Delagoa Bay in 1874.[12] These changed strategic circumstances roughly coincided with the beginning of Disraeli's first government, in which George Herbert, the Fourth Earl of Carnarvon, served as Colonial Secretary. Recognizing the geo-political circumstances, and motivated by socio-economic considerations, Carnarvon set in motion a confederation scheme that differed from the proposed confederation of the 1850s, in that it would necessarily have to include the Transvaal and Orange Free State.[13]

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[10] Walker, *A History of Southern Africa*, 332-37; De Kiewiet, "The Establishment of Responsible Government," 439-44; *Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of the Cape of Good Hope*, C. 459 (1871), 36-40; *Further Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of the Cape of Good Hope*, C. 508 (1872), 12, 25-26, 31-33.

[11] *Further Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of the Cape of Good Hope*, C. 732 (1873), 47.

[12] Headlam, "Failure of Confederation, 1871-1881," in C.H.B.E, 8: 463-464.

[13] Prior to taking over as Colonial Secretary, Carnarvon had previously served as Edward Bulwer-Lytton's under-secretary during the attempt at South African confederation in 1858. Peter Gordon, ed., *The Political Diaries of the Fourth Earl of Carnarvon, 1857-1890 Colonial Secretary and Lord Lieutenant of Ireland*, Camden Fifth Series, vol. 35 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 23. He was concerned with several issues specifically thwarting international interventionism, resolving the colonies' financial insolvency, promoting pacific native relations, and advancing Britain's civilizing mission. R.L. Cope, "Strategic and Socio-economic Explanations for Carnarvon's South African Confederation Policy: the Historiography and the Evidence," *History in Africa* 13 (1986): 13-14. For the various perspectives concerning the motives for South African confederation, see A. F. Hattersley, "The Annexation of the Transvaal, 1877," *History* 21 (1936): 42-43; Anthony Atmore and Shula Marks, "The Imperial Factor in South Africa in the Nineteenth Century: Towards a Reassessment," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 3 (1974): 105-139; R. L. Cope, "Local Imperatives and Imperial Policy: The Sources of Lord Carnarvon's South African Confederation Policy," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 20 (1987): 601-602; Goodfellow, *Great Britain and South African Confederation, 1870-1881* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), 70-72; Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians: the Official Mind of Imperialism* (London: Macmillan, 1961), 59-60.

Carnarvon initially intended to achieve that goal diplomatically.[14] Successive efforts in 1875 and 1876, however, failed to overcome the obstacles posed by the relative isolation and diversity of the various colonies and by stiff resistance from within the Cape Colony and the Boer republics.[15] Those failures notwithstanding, Carnarvon remained convinced that circumstances in South Africa necessitated that the Colonial Office take whatever action was necessary to force the matter through. Ultimately, he concluded that that action entailed the annexation of the Transvaal. Although Britain later insisted that the action was absolutely necessary and justifiable, Carnarvon rarely explained his specific reasons for pursuing confederation. He generally presented it as having self-evident, intrinsic value, and as being a justifiable goal in and of itself. In a letter to High Commissioner of South Africa Sir Henry Barkly, he wrote that "the safety and prosperity of the [Transvaal] would be best assured by union with the British Colonies, when no occasion for local wars would continue to exist."[16]

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[14] William Harbutt Dawson. "Imperial Policy in the Old and New World, 1885-1899," in *The Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy* 3: 201.

[15] While paying lip service to British overtures, the Boer republics remained disgruntled because of Britain's having forcibly annexed the diamond fields and had little serious interest in forsaking their independence. Individuals within the Cape Parliament, such as Sir John Charles Molteno, the president of the Cape Town Assembly, believed that confederation was at present impractical, and would be best accomplished by the colonials themselves, in order to avoid exacerbating existing problems and creating new ones. De Kiewiet, *Imperial Factor*, 85-90; Walker, *A History of Southern Africa*, 358-59; *Proposal for a Conference of Delegates from the Colonies and States of South Africa*, C. 1244 (1875), 1-3; *Correspondence Respecting the Proposed Conference of Delegates on Affairs of South Africa*, C. 1399 (1876), 9-11, 13-14, 17-24, 45-47, 84.

[16] *Correspondence Respecting the War Between the Transvaal Republic and Neighboring Tribes*, C. 1748 (1877), 103. *Correspondence Respecting the War Between the Transvaal Republic and Neighbouring Native Tribes*, C. 1748 (1877), 103-104; Cope, "Strategic and Socio-economic Explanations for Carnarvon's South African Confederation Policy," 14.

News reached London in the autumn of 1876 that a war between the Transvaal and the Bapedi was exacerbating the internal fragility of the Boer republic, and Carnarvon saw a golden opportunity.[17] He impressed upon Disraeli that

> by acting at once, we may prevent a [broader] war and acquire at a stroke the whole of the Transvaal Republic, after which the Orange Free State will follow, and the whole policy in South Africa, for which two years we have been laboring [will be] fully and completely justified.[18]

The acquisition of which Carnarvon spoke was not the voluntary cooperation of the Transvaal in a scheme of confederation, but its coerced annexation. To execute this task, Carnarvon chose Theophilus Shepstone, a man with thirty years of experience as a native agent for the Cape government.[19] Carnarvon perceived that action had to proceed quickly in order to prevent the Boer-Bapedi conflict from expanding into a broader war and drawing in the British colonies, and also to ensure that the existing uncertain situation would lead to the annexation of the Transvaal.[20] As Carnarvon wrote to Shepstone in October 1876:

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[17] By 1874, Boer investors in the South African Bank were increasingly distressed by the massive amount of debt that President Thomas Burghers had incurred while trying to construct a railroad stretching out to Delagoa Bay. There was also a growing concern about Burghers's expansionist policies and the native wars they invited. The Sekukuni War, as it came to be called, broke out in May 1876 following the Bapedi refusal to abide by treaty obligations to pay taxes to the Transvaal government, to admit prospectors, and to give up land for the projected Delagoa railway. British annexation would offer a relief from the republic's financial troubles and greater security from the native populations. See Walker, *A History of Southern Africa*, 363-64; *Correspondence Respecting the War Between the Transvaal Republic and the Neighbouring Native Tribes*, C. 1748 (1877), 100-103.

[18] Lord Carnarvon to Disraeli, 15 September 1876, in William F. Monypenny and George E. Buckle, *The Life of Benjamin Disraeli Earl of Beaconsfield*, vol. 6 (New York: Macmillan, 1920), 414.

[19] Greatly respected by Carnarvon personally, Shepstone was an unquestioned expert on South African affairs. For the previous two years he had been an eager participant in the confederation discussions. Moreover, he had recently called for the annexation of all of Zululand through a military operation, a proposition that not only demonstrated his support for expansion as a solution to frontier problems, but that also reflected his willingness to use military force in order to achieve those goals. Percy A. Molteno, *The Life and Times of Sir John Charles Molteno K.C.M.G., First Premier of Cape Colony, Comprising a History of Representative Institutions and Government at the Cape and of Lord Carnarvon's Confederation Policy & of Sir Bartle Frere's High Commission*, vol. 2 (London: Smith Elder & Co., 1900), 204. Gordon, *The Political Diaries of the Fourth Earl Carnarvon*, 23; De Kiewiet, *The Imperial Factor*, 46-47.

[20] PRO 30/6/32: Carnarvon to Barkly, 20 September 1876; Monypenny, *The Life of Benjamin Disraeli*, 6: 414-15.

> The more that I consider the prospect of Affairs, the more important does it seem to me to obtain the Transvaal. This will give us the key of the position and will solve many of our most pressing questions. Lastly we can never hope that the opportunity will, if now lost, recur.[21]

Informing Sir Henry Bulwer, the Lieutenant Governor of Natal, of Shepstone's mission, Carnarvon likewise made it clear that "under no circumstances does it seem possible to *revert* to the status quo."[22]

When he appointed Shepstone as a special commissioner on 5 October 1876, Carnarvon had instructed him that, "if the emergency should … render it necessary," to annex the Transvaal.[23] Technically, Shepstone was restrained from making any unilateral proclamation of annexation, unless he was convinced that a majority of the Boers would accept British rule, and that the annexation had been approved by the high commissioner at the Cape.[24] In any case, any resistance from the high commissioner's office was effectively removed, when in February 1877 Carnarvon replaced Barkly, with Sir Henry Bartle Frere, an individual who was a more avid supporter of confederation.[25] However, the fact that Shepstone was extraordinarily empowered to determine if circumstances were ripe for annexation essentially made the oversight of the high commissioner moot. Indeed W. J. Leyds, a man who held various offices in the Transvaal government in the 1880s and 1890s, concluded that Shepstone's instructions had essentially made him

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[21] PRO 30/6/23: Carnarvon to Shepstone, 11 October 1876.
[22] PRO 30/6/38: Carnarvon to Bulwer, 17 October 1876.
[23] *Further Correspondence Respecting the War Between the Transvaal Republic and Neighbouring Native Tribes*, C. 1776 (1877), 1-2.
[24] *Further Correspondence Respecting the War Between the Transvaal Republic and Neighbouring Native Tribes*, C. 1776 (1877), 2. Because the British had granted the Boers their independence in 1852 with the Sand River Convention, Shepstone believed that they could not unilaterally absorb the Boers as they had done with Natal in 1849. They had to proceed as though they were executing the general will of the people of the Trasnvaal.
[25] *Further Papers Respecting the Affairs of South Africa*, C. 2242 (1879), 50. Cecil Headlam, "The Failure of Confederation," 472; Cornelis Uys, *In the Era of Shepstone* (Lovedale, South Africa: Lovedale Press, 1933), 372-73; PRO 30/2/32: Carnarvon to Barkly, 4 August 1875.

"judge, jury, and prosecuting counsel in one, with the Republic as a criminal in the dock."[26]

Carnarvon rarely expressed concern that annexation without the approval of the Boers would violate the Sand River Convention. Indeed two weeks before Shepstone's commission was issued, he had informed Disraeli that he was "preparing a *permissive* bill to allow these colonies and states to Confederate."[27] By "these colonies and states," Carnarvon clearly meant the Boer republics, and yet his most recent attempt to cajole them into confederation had been rebuffed only a couple of weeks earlier. Far from offering honest assistance to the Transvaal as an equally sovereign state, Carnarvon had been working to exacerbate the troubles in the Transvaal in order to coerce it into confederation.[28] Rather, Carnarvon's reservations were rooted in the long-term viability of the annexation and whether such an action would create further turmoil in South Africa instead of lessening it.[29] Having received reports that indicated that the English residents and many of the Boers looked to Britain as their only salvation, Carnarvon had some reason to believe that the annexation would occur amicably and with Boer approval.

Further, while Shepstone's mission cannot be seen as a military intervention, it was not a purely diplomatic affair either, as the government deployed forces to the Cape

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[26] W. J. Leyds, *The Annexation of the Transvaal* (London: Fisher and Unwin, 1906), 170-71. The extraordinary nature of Shepstone's powers was also not lost upon Percy Molteno, the second son of Sir John and a future Liberal M.P. (1896-1918), who noted that "surely no commission was ever granted before or likely to be again." Percy A. Molteno, *The Life and Times of Sir John Charles Molteno*, 2: 204.
[27] Monypenny, *The Life of Benjamin Disraeli*, 6: 415.
[28] For instance, he had ordered British subjects in the South African Republic to refuse to serve in the military and informed the Transvaal government that British military aid would not be forthcoming except in exchange for confederation. At the same time, he successfully prevented the Transvaal from receiving any aid from the Orange Free State by threatening to withhold compensation for Griqualand West if the Free State assisted the Transvaal. Finally, Carnarvon also sought to convince the Portuguese to deny the importation of arms into the Transvaal through Delagoa Bay. See R. L. Cope, *Ploughshares of War: the Origins of the Anglo-Zulu War* (Pietermaritzburg, South Africa: University of Natal Press, 1999), 113.
[29] PRO 30/6/23: Carnarvon to Shepstone, 4 October 1876.

to "add weight and incline obedience to any declaration which Her Majesty's Government might seem fit to make."[30] Thus, two days after Shepstone departed for the Cape, Carnarvon ordered that the 2d Battalion of the 3rd "Buffs" Regiment of Foot, then stationed in Ireland, to mobilize for the Cape.

Arriving in South Africa in early November, Shepstone waited to move until he was first convinced that his entrance into the Transvaal would not ward off the Zulus from attacking the Transvaal, and thus relieve the pressure on the Boers to accept British annexation. In late December Shepstone informed President Burghers that he was in South Africa to inquire into the causes of the present native war, to resolve those disputes, and to prevent those disputes from arising in the future. Then on 4 January 1877, Shepstone crossed into the Transvaal with an entourage of twenty-five mounted policemen.[31] While the greater part of the population was generally listless in the face of mounting external and internal problems and could be expected not to oppose adamantly what he offered, Shepstone was convinced that the sizeable number of ardent Boer nationalists in the general population, and particularly in the Transvaal government, would have to "see the strong arm before they [would] yield."[32] Any mystery as to Shepstone's real intentions evaporated when he announced to Vice-President Paul Kruger

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[30] *Further Correspondence Respecting the War Between the Transvaal Republic and Neighbouring Native Tribes*, C. 1776 (1877), 24; Lord Wolseley Papers, Carnarvon to Wolseley, 24 September 1876, Central Library, Hove. That the "Buffs'" deployment connected directly to Shepstone's mission and meant to provide whatever military support might be required in securing the Transvaal was not lost upon Major William F. Butler, a personal friend of Shepstone and a confidant of Major General Sir Garnet Wolseley, the Lt. Governor of Natal. Butler noted that the mobilization of the "Buffs" was so haphazard that, although the troops had been boarded and the ship was ready to sail, the Colonial Office had yet to decide where they were to disembark in South Africa. It was only Butler's unsolicited recommendation to communicate those orders through the telegraph service at St. Vincent that prevented further delay to the "Buffs'" deployment. William F. Butler, *William Francis Butler An Autobiography* (New York: Scribners, 1911), 194-95; *Times* (London), 17 October 1876, 4; C. R. B. Knight, *Historical Records of the Buffs, East Kent Regiment(3rd Foot) Formerly Designated the Holland Regiment and Prince George of Denmark Regiment*, vol. 2 "1814-1914" (London: The Medici Society, 1935), 524.

[31] Cope, *Ploughshares of War*, 120-22; Uys, *In the Era of Shepstone*, 242, 244-49.

[32] De Kiewiet, *The Imperial Factor*, 114-15.

and the Attorney Genereal E. J. Jorissen that he was there to resolve the weakness of the Transvaal and the danger which it presented to itself and its neighbors, by "initiating a new state of things which would guarantee security for the future."[33] His insinuation was perfectly clear to the representatives of the Transvaal government. Acting as an agent of the British government, Shepstone meant to annex the Transvaal.

Responding that it was willing to discuss the causes of the Transvaal's weakness, the Volksraad utterly refused to discuss any measures that would undermine the Transvaal's independence.[34] After meeting with President Thomas Burghers, however, Shepstone was convinced that the president himself was inclined towards embracing the security offered by British annexation, and consequently believed that he would soon be in a position to proclaim "Her Majesty's sovereignty over the country."[35] Shepstone thus bided his time, and waited for the pot to boil over. His silence not only kept the Boers off balance, but it provided him time to move the 1/13th "Buffs" up to Newcastle on the Transvaal border, with the expectation that the annexation would be accomplished more through a reliance on military power than on diplomacy.[36] Ostensibly these troops were to be deployed "for the protection of the frontier." In reality, Shepstone desired troops

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[33] *Further Correspondence Respecting the War Between the Transvaal Republic and Neighbouring Native Tribes* C. 1776 (1877), 88.
[34] Ibid., 110-111.
[35] Uys, *In the Era of Shepstone*, 254-55. That position ultimately involved a convergence of factors that had already proved problematic for the Transvaal: the ongoing Sekukuni War, the continued Zulu threat, the decay of the financial position of the Transvaal, and the alleged willingness of the majority of the Boer population to accept British rule. Leyds, *First Annexation of the Transvaal*, 175ff. For an examination of how Shepstone utilized the Zulu threat, see Cope, *Ploughshares of War*, 124-32.
[36] *Further Correspondence Respecting the War Between the Transvaal Republic and Neighbouring Native Tribes* C. 1776 (1877), 88, 101, 129, 134, 140; Leyds, *First Annexation of the Transvaal*, 172-73. While the 1/13th "Buffs" Regiment was placed at Shepstone's disposal prior to his entering the Transvaal in January 1877, Uys suggests that those troops were mobilized at Newcastle beforehand. However, the flow of information between Governor Wolseley, Secretary Carnarvon, and Arthur Cunnynghame, the commander in chief of British military forces in South Africa, reveals that Shepstone did not request that the 1/13 Regiment be moved forward to Newcastle until 7 February 1877. That move was not started until 2 March. Uys, *In the Era of Shepstone*, 224, 243; Henry Everett, *The History of the Somerset Light Infantry (Prince Albert's), 1685-1914* (London: Methuen, 1934), 274-75.

near at hand and ready to enter the Transvaal in the event "the exhibition of strong force" was needed "to control it and maintain the peace of the country."[37]

In early April, that moment presented itself. Boer attempts at cajoling the Bapedi into signing a peace treaty had failed. The Zulu under Cetshwayo were marching toward the Transvaal border; and the Boers had lost almost all confidence in Burghers's ability to lead. It was at this point that Shepstone acted. With British troops poised to invade, he promised Burghers that if the Volksraad enacted constitutional and governmental reforms, he would refrain from taking any action. Despite Burghers's attempts, the Volksraad refused to take up the legislation, utterly rejected Carnarvon's Permissive Federation Act, and issued a stern warning to Shepstone to refrain from interfering in their independence.[38] Pragmatically, however, the Transvaal was in no condition to defend its independence militarily. With British annexation immediately forthcoming, the Volksraad, in an act of desperation, gave emergency powers to Burghers in the hopes that the strength of their resolve would thwart Shepstone. It did not. Allowing Burghers to issue a formal protest for posterity, on 12 April 1877 Shepstone raised the Union Jack over Pretoria, the capital of the South African Republic. He then dissolved the representative government, installed himself as the sole administrator of the territory, and imposed martial law.[39] Brushing aside the objections of President Burghers and the Volksraad, as well as public petitions which insisted upon the independence of the

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[37] Uys, *In the Era of Shepstone*, 254-55.

[38] Released to the South African colonies and Boer States for their consideration in a draft form in mid-February 1877, the act created the apparatus by which they could unite in a confederation if they so desired. *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, vol. 232 (1877), col. 734-735; Laws, Statutes, etc., *South Africa Act, 1877*, 40 & 41 Vict., c. 47.

[39] Headlam, "The Failure of Confederation, 1871-1878," in C.H.B.E., 8: 476; Walker, *The History of Southern Africa*, 365; De Kiewiet, *The Imperial Factor*, 115-118; Leyds, *The First Annexation of the Transvaal*, 215-27; R. L. Cope, *Ploughshares of War*, 127-34. For an exhaustive examination of the last weeks leading to annexation, see: Uys, *In the Era of Shepstone*, 289-330, 337-87.

Transvaal and the rejection of British rule, Shepstone legitimized his action by insisting that "a large proportion of the inhabitants of the Transvaal…earnestly desire the establishment within and over it of Her Majesty's Government."[40]

PUBLIC REACTION TO THE SHEPSTONE MISSION, 1877-78

In one of its first assessments of the annexation, on 14 May, the *Times* astutely described the action as a "coup d'état," and numerous papers, including the *Times*, forthrightly reprinted Shepstone's own acknowledgement that he had annexed the Transvaal simply because he "could wait no longer" for the Boers to consent to Britain's demands.[41] Despite this admission, there was hardly any outcry against the action from the British public or the press, and these articles were deliberately framed to demonstrate that circumstances on the ground had forced Britain to act. The *Dundee Courier* noted:

> It is a circumstance deserving of passing notice that the news of the annexation of a republic to the British Empire fails at present to excite here even a weak and ephemeral interest. Questions are asked in Parliament about the reported annexation of the Transvaal republic, but they attract rather less attention than questions about "the Claimant" or the many other trifling matters on which Ministers are rightly catechized…The annexation of the Transvaal was of course not desired in the interests of the extension of the British empire; the act is probably one of these necessities which are so frequently devolved on powerful and civilized States coming in contact with weak, inferior, and semi-barbarous communities.[42]

While the *Dundee Courier's* observation was that the public was largely uninterested in the annexation question, the national and provincial presses did engage the issue. On the

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[40] "Government Notice" in G. W. Eybers, *Select Constitutional Documents Illustrating South African History, 1795-1910*, 446-448; "Proclamation by Theophilus Shepstone," in G. W. Eybers, *Select Constitutional Documents Illustrating South African History, 1795-1910*, 451.

[41] *Times* (London), 14 May 1877, 11; *Times* 7 May 1877, 5; *North-Eastern Daily Gazette* (Middlesbrough), 7 May 1877, 3; *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 13 May 1877, 2; *Morning Post (London)*, 7 May 1877, 5; *Huddersfield Daily Chronicle*.19 May 1877, 2.

[42] *Dundee Courier*, 11 May 1877, 2. The "Claimant" to which the *Courier* referred was the Tichborne Claimant case, which was a cause célèbre in the 1870s. See David Thomas Wayne, *Cultivating Victorians: Liberal Culture and the Aesthetic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2004), 82-117.

whole, like the *Courier*, they overwhelmingly approved of the action. While acknowledging the protests that President Burghers and the Volksraad had lodged with the British government and the international community, the papers stressed the absence of any sizeable Boer objection to British rule and that the Volksraad had ultimately instructed the population to cooperate with the British.[43] To that end, they largely reiterated Shepstone's contention that the need to overturn the Sand River Convention had been forced upon Britain by the inability of the Boers to govern themselves, and that British rule would usher in greater security and prosperity to the region as a whole.[44] That such action was enthusiastically supported at the same time that Britain was "horrified at the prospect of Russian annexations in the East" was not lost upon the editors of the *Liverpool Mercury*. Insisting that the timing of the annexation was "the only dark spot on an otherwise unexceptional transaction," the paper maintained that

> there never was an annexation accomplished with purer motives, with less resistance, or with less injury to the populations, who are not even deprived of that measure of self-government which they had always proposed to retain, but only that 'independence' which they all knew they must, after more or less troublesome negotiation, abandon.[45]

The façade of British altruism was somewhat laid bear with an acknowledgement by the *Standard* that the annexation of the Transvaal had, at least in part, been made necessary

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[43] *Bury and Norwich Post*, 15 May 1877, 2; *North-Eastern Daily Gazette* (Middlesbrough), 19 June 1877, 3; *Dundee Courier*, 30 May 1877; *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 13 May 1877, 2;

[44] *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 13 May 1877, 6-7; *Daily News (London)*, 21 May 1877, 6; *Yorkshire Herald*, 21 May 1877, 6; *Leeds Mercury*, 22 May 1877, 3; *Hampshire Telegraph*, 26 May 1877, 7; *Northern Echo* (Darlington), 12 Jan 1878, 3; *Essex Standard*, 18 Jan 1878, 2. Anticipating that the Transvaal would be annexed, the *Pall Mall Gazette* had written in April that it expected that Shepstone would only make that move after having first been overwhelmingly convinced of its necessity. Subsequently, however, the paper acknowledged that from the time of Shepstone's departure, the annexation of the Transvaal had never been in doubt. *Pall Mall Gazette*, 13 April 1877, 1; 8 May 1877, 1.

[45] *Liverpool Mercury*, 30 May 1877, 6.

by the Boer government's obstruction of British capitalists, who sought to profit from the mineral riches which lay within the territory.[46]

The one small glimmer of opposition in parliament came primarily from a small contingent of the Irish Home Rule Party. Identifying the plight of the Boers with Britain's oppression of Ireland, Home Rule Leaguers Charles Stewart Parnell, Purcell O'Gorman, Frank Hugh O'Donnell, and Joseph Biggar hotly contested the annexation of the Transvaal.[47] When Carnarvon's South Africa Bill, which would allow for establishment of a South African Confederation, came before the House in July 1877, it became the occasion for an epic display of parliamentary obstruction.[48] Amid considerable commotion and distraction, Parnell declared to the Commons that:

> As it was with Ireland, so it was with the South African Colonies…Therefore, as an Irishman, coming from a country that had experienced to its fullest extent the results of English interference in its affairs and the consequences of English cruelty and tyranny, he felt a special satisfaction in preventing and thwarting the intentions of the government in respect to this Bill.[49]

He further accused the government of acting "on the immoral doctrine that the interests of the people of South Africa were subservient to the interests of the Empire at large."

> The House was asked to sanction the annexation of the South African Republic, not because it was for the benefit of the Colonies, but because it was alleged that it would be beneficial to the Empire generally.[50]

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[46] *Standard*, 14 July 1877, 2.
[47] As a whole, Irish politicians were much more interested in drawing connections between broader imperial developments and Ireland in the 1880s than in the 1870s. Collectively Isaac Butt, Charles Stewart Parnell, Frank Hugh O'Donnell, and Alfred Webb were keenly interested in imperial matters and their implications for Ireland. Individually, their interests represent the divergent ways in which Irish nationalism viewed and engaged British imperialism. See Jennifer Regan-Lefebvre, *Cosmopolitan Nationalism in the Victorian Empire: Ireland, India and the Politics of Alfred Webb* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 132-36.
[48] Robert Kee, *The Laurel and the Ivy* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1993), 145-51; F. S. L. Lyons, *Charles Stewart Parnell* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 63-69.
[49] *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 3rd ser. vol. 235, col. 1809.
[50] Ibid., col. 1834

In addressing what he considered to be the transgressions of the British government more specifically, O'Donnell charged that the "forcible annexation of the independent Republics of South Africa had taken place in a time of peace, and [was] in violation of the most solemn covenants entered into by Her Majesty's Government."[51] This point, he insisted, had not gone unnoticed by continental powers, namely the Republic of the United Provinces, and he presented to the Commons protests from the Dutch government. In appealing to "the free people of England," the Dutch expressed their hope that the British would denounce the annexation as "an odious attempt and act of brigandage," which violated "the guarantees given to the South African Republic in the name of the British Crown."[52] Even if the "Government had a right to declare war against the Transvaal Republic," O'Donnell insisted that there was an enormous distinction between limited conditions that might be imposed after a "righteous war," and "the needless exaction of unjust conditions." To that end, he rhetorically asked whether Germany or the United States would be justified in blotting out the Swiss Republic or federalizing Jamaica, respectively, for the only reason that it was in their best interest to do so.[53]

These few Home Rulers were joined in their protests by the Liberal M.P. from Liskeard, Leonard Courtney, who would later become a leading figure of the Pro-Boer party. While not interested in the ramifications for Ireland, he was nevertheless deeply

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[51] Ibid., col. 1771.
[52] Ibid., col. 1771-72.
[53] Ibid., col. 1772. It should be noted that O'Donnell's reputation for controversy in parliamentary circles was such that he had received the nickname of "Crank" Hugh O'Donnell.

concerned about the implications of the Transvaal annexation.[54] "The Government," he explained,

> has just annexed an independent Republic in South Africa. It may be said that it will involve no risk; but to that I reply, Wait till the end. That act, without any justification of policy or principle, exposes the country to greater peril of war than my suggestions for the coercion of Turkey.[55]

The majority of parliament and the general public were largely deaf to these voices. In parliament Parnell and O'Donnell were consistently rebuked and informed that, because the annexation of the Transvaal was not pertinent to the Bill at hand, they were out of order to raise the issue; nevertheless, they held up the third reading for forty-five hours.[56] This type of criticism is of course highly ironic given that the Bill was meant to retroactively justify the annexation. The select few M.P.s who did actually engage the issue, such as William Forster, a former Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies in the Gladstone administration, and imperialist Liberals Joseph Cowen and Alexander McArthur, insisted that such an action was necessary to prevent utter anarchy, that it prevented a "most destructive and bloody war," and that the majority of the white population appeared to be in favor of annexation.[57] Cowen went a step further to object to Courtney's use of the term "annexation" to describe what had taken place in the

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[54] Andrew Lang, ed., *Life, Letters, and Diaries of Sir Stafford Northcote, First Earl of Iddesleigh*, vol. 2. (London: Blackwood, 1890), 130. Susan Magarey, ed. *Ever Yours, C. H. Spence: Catherine Helen Spence's An Autobiography (1825-1910), Diary (1894), Letters (1894-1910)* (Kent Town, Australia: Wakefield Press, 2005), 179; *The Annual Register of World Events: a Review of Public Events at Home and Abroad for the Year 1877* (London: Rivington, 1878), 81. Courtney's pro-Boer positions later forced him to resign his seat in 1900 amid the Second Anglo-Boer War.

[55] G. P. Gooch, *Life of Lord Courtney* (London: Macmillan, 1920), 131, 140-141. Having opposed the initial act of annexation, a year later Courtney would nevertheless recommend that independence should not be restored to the Boers, but that their disaffection with British rule should be recompensed with some degree of local autonomy. On that occasion, Sir Michael Hicks-Beech, the colonial secretary, accused him of "trespassing on the patience and forbearance of the House," and insisted that his protest "was not only unnecessary, but that it was absolutely mischievous." Quoted in *Times* (London), 16 August 1878, 4; *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, (15 August 1878), 3rd ser., vol. 242, cols. 2061-81.

[56] *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 3rd ser. vol. 235, cols. 1784-85, 1797, 1834-35; Lyons, 64.

[57] Ibid, cols. 1758-59, 1773-79. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th ed., s.v. "Cowen, Joseph"; *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 5 (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1966), 121-22.

Transvaal because that label incorrectly "presupposed the exercise of physical force." Instead, Cowen preferred the label of "incorporation," which entailed a "union of mutual consent."[58] Cowen's confidence notwithstanding, he was hardly the only critic to brush aside Courtney. Thus, the *Morning Post* expressed its hope that the criticisms of the member for Liskeard would be the last heard in the present session of parliament, and that before the next session, Shepstone's action would "come to be regarded by the present objectors as *fait accompli* that it is useless any longer to question."[59]

Notably absent from the discussion were the voices of the Peace Society and Workingman's Peace Association which had been vocal in denouncing the "bellicose policies of theatrical Imperialism," which were associated with Beaconsfield imperialism in other spheres during those same years.[60] Between 1876 and 1878, Henry Richard, a Liberal M.P. and Secretary of the Peace Society, along with the broader peace movement had aggressively engaged the jingo call for war against Russia over the Eastern Question. Similarly, they had been and would be highly critical of the government's aggressive imperialism in China, West Africa, Afghanistan, and toward the Zulus in South Africa.[61]

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[58] *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 3rd ser. vol. 235, cols. 1779-80. Cowen's parsing of terms conveniently overlooked the fact that Sir Edward A. Cunynghame, Lord Carnavon, Sir Bartle Frere and Shepstone consistently used "annexation" to describe their designs and actions in South Africa, and the South Africa Bill which legalized the annexation of the Transvaal after the fact also used that language. *Further Correspondence Respecting the War between the Transvaal and the Neighboring Native Tribes*, C. 1776 (1877), 70, 97, 139, 149, 151; *Further Correspondence Relative to the Affairs of South Africa*, C. 1814 (1877), 12; *Further Correspondence Relative to the Affairs of South Africa*, C. 1883 (1877), 4-5, 8, 10-19, 21, 23, 26-27, 29-30, 33, 43, 47; *South Africa Bill*, H.L. 195 (1877), 18-19.

[59] *Morning Post (London)*, 9 August 1877, 4.

[60] *Herald of Peace* (May, 1879), 233-4, quoted in Martin Caedel, *Semi-Detached Idealists: The British Peace Movement and International Relations*, 1854-1945 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 110.

[61] Lewis Appleton, *Memoirs of Henry Richard, the Apostle for Peace* (London: Trubner, 1889), 30-34, 155-64, 168-69; Paul Laity, *The British Peace Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 70-84. In opposing the aggressive imperialism of Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, the peace movement drew alongside Liberalism and co-opted mainstream politics. In 1880, they found an ally in William Gladstone, who made an indictment of imperialism a major part of his Midlothian Campaign in a successful bid to oust the Conservatives from power. The result of this alliance was that pacifism became identified with the Liberal Party, while the Conservatives were associated with imperialistic power-politics. Caedel, *Semi-Detached Idealists*, 110-11.

In so doing, the peace movement attacked on two fronts. On the one hand, the Peace Society, which depended on the support of the Quaker community, took a peace-at-any-price position on the government's pursuit of Britain's imperial wars.[62] Others, such as Henry Richard and the Workingman's Peace Association, however, took a more nuanced stance and emphasized a need for greater arbitration and a reduction of armaments, as well as pressing for non-interventionist policies on the grounds of "reason, justice, humanity, and the interests of mankind."[63] Richard consistently focused on the lack of sufficient justification for the extension of brute force. To him, the Arrow, Ashanti, Second Afghan, and Zulu Wars were completely unnecessary wars of imperialism. He contended that the Arrow War, sometimes called the Second Opium War, had been contrived to further the immorality of the opium trade.[64] Similarly, he viewed the Ashanti, Second Afghan, and Zulu Wars as unnecessary and unrighteous; further, they had also been contrived by the men on the spot and then condoned by the government.[65] The onset of the Zulu War (about which more below) and British conduct in it were so egregious that Richard branded that war "the most inglorious war waged by the arms of England."[66] The results of such unjustified wars, Richard insisted, "were not triumphs of Christian civilization, but of barbarism and brute force."[67]

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[62] Caedel, *Semi-Detached Idealists*, 108-109.
[63] *Herald of Peace*, (January 1879), 184, quoted in Caedel, *Semi-Detached Idealists*, 109;
[64] Appleton, *Memoirs of Henry Richard* (London: Trübner, 1889), 33-34.
[65] Fought between 1873 and 1874, the Second Ashanti War involved suppressing a uprising of West Africans which threatened the British protectorate in the region. The Second Afghan War, (1878-79), was fought on the part of Britain to prevent the encroachment of Russian influence and advance its own influence in Afghanistan. Both of which were deemed necessary for the greater security of the British Raj. As will be seen, the Zulu War (1879) was initiated by the High Commissioner of South Africa, Sir Barkly Frere, who sought to eliminate any military threat from the Zulu nation and advance British civilization. Farwell, *Queen Victoria's Little Wars*, 190-91, 202-3; Thomas Pakenham, *Scramble for Africa, 1876-1912* (New York: Random House, 1991), 53-55.
[66] Quoted in Appleton, *Memoir of Henry Richard*, 168-9; Charles Miall, *Henry Richard, M.P.: a Biography* (London: Cassell, 1889), 307-9; Laity, *The British Peace Movement*, 80.
[67] *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, vol. 218 (1874), col. 1634.

However, Richard voiced no opposition or concern about the annexation of the Transvaal in parliament until after the First Anglo-Boer War broke out in December 1880. On that occasion, he submitted a memorial to Lord Kimberley, the Colonial Secretary, on behalf of the Peace Society and signed by twenty-five other Members of Parliament. Richard insisted that the Transvaal had been fraudulently obtained, and that as such, Britain should renounce its aggression and restore Boer independence.[68] Yet he had not expressed such views at the time of the annexation or during the debate over the South Africa Bill. What Richard had petitioned for at the time of the South Africa Bill was the extension of a selective franchise to "native Africans who [had] acquired both education and property" in establishing a confederated government of South African States.[69]

Given their consistent track record of vocally opposing untoward intervention and the opportunistic use of brute force to further British imperialistic interests, why then did the peace movement not levy charges against Shepstone and the British government for annexing the Transvaal? Certainly the events of 1877 were well known to the British public. The fact that there were individuals, such as Parnell and Courtney, who spoke out against the annexation on the grounds that it was an unrighteous act, only makes their silence all the more remarkable. We have seen that although the annexation was effected by Shepstone with only a small police escort, with a contingent of the British army on the Transvaal border, Shepstone effectively telegraphed to the Transvaal government that refusal was not a viable option, but those troops did not intercede. To be sure, regardless

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[68] Appelton, *Memoirs of Henry Richard*, 178-79; *The Arbitrator: Organ of the Workman's Peace Association*, January 1881, 4.

[69] *Times* (London), 23 July 1877, 10. In the present discussion, it is somewhat ironic to note that this petition appeared in the London *Times* directly beneath an "appeal of Dutch citizens to public opinion in Great Britain on behalf of the Transvaal."

of how the press spun the incident, the annexation was certainly not agreeable to the Boers, and the British absorption of the Transvaal was hardly altruistic or honorable. But the peace movement's silence was in all likelihood based on the fact that no actual fighting occurred, especially when compared to the Afghan and other campaigns.

Taken together, that silence juxtaposed against the overwhelming approval of the press suggest a number of key components to the British attitude toward the use of coercive military force. First and foremost, the largely one-sided reception of the annexation strongly indicates that the normal grounds for objecting to "war" and brute military force were largely mitigated by the specific circumstances of the annexation. Namely, the annexation was not hampered by moral questions of the sort that had accompanied British interventionism in China or the destruction and bloodbath that accompanied other concurrent episodes of Beaconsfieldism, such as the Ashanti, Second Afghan, or Zulu Wars. The complete lack of armed exchange, furthermore, almost certainly made the annexation of the Transvaal more palatable to the country. Had there been a strong demonstration of military opposition by the Boers, the incident would likely have garnered more searching public commentary, if not outright, criticism, by the British public as a whole and by concerned pacifist groups. As there was virtually none, the public was free to assume that British rule was completely acceptable to the Transvaal Boers, and therefore to assert that Britain was innocent of violating the Transvaal's sovereignty.[70]

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[70] In 1896, this point did not go unnoticed by Leander Starr Jameson, who referred to the annexation when he was questioned in regards to his failed attempt to lead an Uitlander revolt against the Transvaal Government. *Second Report from the Select Committee on British South Africa; Together with the Proceedings of the Committee, and Minutes of Evidence***,** 311 (1897), Q. 4605, 26 March 1897, 265.

Given the relatively positive response at home, high-ranking officials within the Colonial Office declared that protests levied by the Boer government, Dutch citizens, and Transvaal Boers, and presumably those issued by the handful of critics in parliament, "were not worthy of consideration."[71] The end result was that in this instance, there was an almost universal acceptance of using strong-arm negotiating tactics to advance British humanitarianism and security, even by papers, such as the *Leeds Mercury*, which had—like the Peace Society—staunchly criticized aggressive interventionism on the occasions of the Opium and Arrow Wars in 1840 and 1857. Significant differences certainly distinguish the annexation and the Opium Wars, most importantly that in one case intervention was accomplished peacefully and in the other it resulted in war. Still, the criticism of the *Leeds Mercury* for Palmerston's China policy went further than merely condemning the expense of blood and capital; it challenged the justification of Britain in interfering in the right of the Chinese to self-government.[72]

Further evidence that public attitudes about saber rattling were determined on a case-by-case basis and not on a systemic feature of British governance is suggested by the circumstances of Carnarvon's resignation in January 1878.[73] Just one year after his directives had provoked the absorption of the Transvaal, Carnarvon willingly resigned as Colonial Secretary as a protest to the rising tide of jingoism and the willingness of Disraeli and his cabinet to use force to defend British interests in the Near East amid Russian encroachments on the Ottoman Empire.[74] Carnarvon's resignation was

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[71] Quoted in *Times* (London), 23 July 1877, 10. See also *Leeds Mercury*, 5 July 1877, 3; *Times* (London), 20 July 1877, 9; *Further Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of South Africa*, C. 1883 (1877), 34-35, 43-51. These officials included Under-Secretaries James Lowther and Robert G. W. Herbert.
[72] *Leeds Mercury*, 15 February 1840, 4; 9 October 1841, 7; 22 February 1857, 4.
[73] In his stead, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach took charge of the Colonial Office.
[74] Gordon, ed. *The Political Diaries of the Fourth Earl of Carnarvon*, 26-33.

noteworthy as it exemplified a characteristic of British belligerence. While he was perfectly willing to use the threat of military force to pressure the Transvaal into compliance, that mindset was far from a philosophical precept for him. Instead, the decision of whether or not to use force was determined by the immediate circumstances, including the potential foe to be confronted, and the ends which were sought.

THE ZULU WAR OF 1879

Despite Carnarvon's belief that the expansion of British hegemony would bring more tranquility and security to southern Africa, that desired effect did not materialize. In annexing the Transvaal, Britain now assumed responsibility for protecting the region from threats posed from Zululand. In his former capacity as the commissioner of Native Affairs, Shepstone had developed cordial relations with the Zulu. But as the self-appointed administrator of the Transvaal, he took up the cause of the Boers in their border dispute with the Zulu, and convinced Sir Bartle Frere, who had been appointed high commissioner of South Africa, to effect the confederation of the subcontinent. Shepstone's motivation was that he believed that no long-term peace could be found so long as the Zulu kingdom remained intact. When the Boer-Zulu border dispute was put to an arbitration commission, its members ruled in July 1878 in favor of the Zulus.[75] Had the ruling been allowed to stand, it might have led to peace in South Africa. However, Frere perceived it to be a humiliating impediment to his and Carnarvon's confederation designs for South Africa. As such, although he had built a reputation as an evangelical defender of the oppressed, over the next several months Frere began taking

[75] The arbitration commission was comprised of Colonel Anthony Durnford, who would fall in action at Isandhlwana; Michael Henry Gallwey, a lawyer; and John Shepstone the brother of Theophilus Shepstone. Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa*, 53.

steps to subjugate the Zulus. Emphasizing the menace posed by the Zulus, Frere asked that reinforcements be sent to southern Africa, and continued to present himself publicly as someone who desired to maintain peace through diplomacy.[76] Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, Carnarvon's successor as the colonial secretary, responded that the government would not send troops and that—in addition to the Eastern Crisis and the brewing war in Afghanistan—it could not "now have a Zulu war in addition to other greater and too possible troubles."[77] That warning notwithstanding, when Frere informed the Zulu chief Cetshwayo of the commission's findings, he inserted an additional set of stipulations, which were designed to dismantle the Zulu military and essentially strip the kingdom of its sovereignty.[78] Submitted in the form of an ultimatum, those stipulations did not preclude the Zulus from requiring universal service in times of war, but they admonished that "the regiments were not to be called up without permission of the great council of the Zulu Nation assembled and the consent of the British government." In addition, the missionaries who resided within Zululand were to be protected, and Zulus were to be allowed to marry and attend school as matters of free choice. To ensure that these terms were adhered to a British resident was to be stationed either within Zululand or on its immediate border.[79] Confident that the Zulu would not comply with his demands, Frere ordered British forces to mobilize along the border of Zululand, and when the ultimatum expired on 11 January 1879, a force of 5,000 British Regulars and roughly the same

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[76] Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa*, 53-54

[77] Hicks-Beach to Frere, 7 November 1878, Victoria Hicks-Beach, *The Life of Sir Michael Hicks-Beach*, vol. 1 (London: Macmillan, 1932), 104.

[78] Headlam, "The Failure of Confederation," 484-85; Leonard Thompson, "The Subjection of the African Chiefdoms, 1870-1898," in *The Oxford History of South Africa*, vol. 2 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 262-63.

[79] *Further Correspondence Respecting the Affairs in South Africa*, C. 2222 (1879), 133-134, 186-189; John Martineau, *The Life and Correspondence of Sir Bartle Frere, bart., G.C.B., F.R.S., etc.* vol. 2 (London: John Murray, 1895), 247-248; Hicks-Beach, *The Life of Sir Michael Hicks-Beach*, 1: 116-19.

number of Auxiliaries crossed over the Buffalo and Tugela Rivers into Zululand and instigated hostilities.[80]

Despite the high commissioner's expressed "fear" of an imminent invasion from Zululand, most Natal colonials believed that their neighbors posed little, if any, substantive threat to the British presence in Natal. Indeed, in early November 1878, a month before Frere delivered his ultimatum, the *Natal Witness* concluded that, while hostilities were a possibility, it would take "an overt act of defiance … or some violation of British territory" by the Zulus to instigate a war.[81] Shortly thereafter, it noted that any fear of a Zulu invasion had all but subsided, and the paper reiterated its confidence that Cetshwayo would not initiate hostilities. It went on to assert that "things were not yet ripe enough" to warrant a British invasion of Zululand and seemingly suggested that the mere mobilization of the British forces on the border would be enough to cause Cetshwayo to back down.[82] Even after Frere had sent the ultimatum to the Zulus, the *Witness* argued that the chances of the crisis leading to violence were still quite remote.[83]

Likewise, Lt. Col. Anthony Durnford of the Royal Engineers also believed that a war was completely unnecessary. Durnford personally found Frere's approach to native affairs in South Africa distasteful. As a member of the arbitration commission that had decided the Blood River Territory dispute in favor of Cetshwayo, he attempted to adjudicate the matter fairly and opposed Frere's belligerent posturing. Moreover, he was concerned that the British public was being swayed by what he considered to be false and exaggerated reports from the Cape. As late as mid-November 1878, Durnford believed

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[80] Adrian Greaves, *Crossing Over the Buffalo: the Zulu War of 1879* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2005), 80-82, 84, 95.
[81] *Natal Witness*, 9 November 1878, 2.
[82] *Natal Witness*, 30 November 1878, 3.
[83] *Natal Witness*, 26 December 1878, 4-5.

that there was utterly no reason for an offensive war against the Zulus because they posed no threat to Natal. However, once the movement toward war was set in motion, the dutiful soldier kept any continuing reservation about the commissioner's policies to himself.[84] Given the weight of public opinion in Natal against any military action, it is likely that Frere deliberately fomented the myth of a Zulu threat in order to court British public opinion and government support for his plan to expand British hegemony and solidify South African confederation.[85]

In the event, colonists and officials alike were confident that, although the Zulu army vastly outnumbered British forces in the colony, Britain's technological advantage assured that the Zulus could be subjugated with relative ease. The *Natal Mercury* went so far as to claim arrogantly that "this army could not be beaten the world over."[86] Likewise, although Durnford believed the war to be unnecessary, he felt that if handled correctly, the invasion could be a bloodless affair and amount to nothing more than a "military promenade."[87]

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[84] His reservations about the politics notwithstanding, Durnford was dismayed at being initially stationed in the rear at Rorke's Drift to protect the approach to Natal as Lord Chelmsford's column advanced into Zululand. Subsequently being recalled to the main British camp at Isandhlwana on the morning of 22 January he was among those who fell in the ensuing massacre. Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa*, 54-55; Edward Durnford, ed., *A Soldier's Life and Word in South Africa, 1872-1879: A Memoir of the Late Col. A. W. Durnford, Royal Engineers* (London: Sampson Low, 1882), 181-191; *DNB*, 16: 264-65.

[85] Arlene Isaacs, "The Zulu Threat to Natal – 1878-9: an Analysis" (B.A. honours thesis, University of Natal, 1980), 1-4, 7-16, 45-47; Robert B. Edgerton, *Like Lions They Fought: The Zulu War and the Last Black Empire in South Africa* (London: Free Press, 1988), 21.

[86] *Natal Mercury*, December 1878, quoted in Grieves, *Crossing the Buffalo*, 116.

[87] Pakenham attributes Durnford's "military promenade" remark to a letter home to his mother in the summer of 1878. However, the exact origin and context of the phrase is unclear from Durnford's posthumous memoir, Pakenham's source. While the phrase may very well be attributed to him, given its appearance in Frances Colenso's defense of Durnham, which was published before the Durnford memoir, the phrase appears in other contemporary accounts with no direct connection to Durnford. The origin of the phrase aside, Edward Durnford contended his brother was well aware that the Zulu would be a formidable foe if provoked to fight. See Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa*, 55; Edward Durnford, ed. *A Soldier's Life and Word in South Africa, 1872-1879*, 207-208; Frances E. Colenso, *My Chief and I, Or, Six Months in Natal after Langalibalele Outbreak: and Five Years Later: a Sequel* , edited by M. J. Daymond (London: Chapman and Hall, 1882, reprint South Africa: University of Natal Press, 1994), 149; William Moorsom Laurence, ed. *Selected Writings of the Late William Moorsom Laurence, Major Commanding*

Reports from the high commissioner's office and the Cape press, took time to reach Britain, arriving a little more than a week before the ultimatum was set to expire. But once the government and the British public became aware of Bartle Frere's provocation, they became keenly interested in the developing controversy.[88] In stark contrast to the overwhelming approval of Shepstone's use of heavy-handed coercive diplomacy to expand the boundaries of British territory in southern Africa in 1877, the public was divided over the legitimacy of Frere's instigation of a war with the Zulus. The perception was that the region was unstable and that the threat to Natal was questionable. In general, editorial stances were split along party lines. Liberal presses such the *Bristol Mercury*, *Lloyd's Newspaper*, *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper*, and the *Daily News* had track records of opposing the use of military force to advance British interests elsewhere in the world. Earlier, they had come out against the Opium Wars in China in the 1840s and 1850s, which had been instigated by the men on the spot and approved by the Whig governments of Lords Melbourne and Palmerston.[89] In 1879, meanwhile, the parallels and resemblances between the concurrent overreaches of Bartle Frere and Lord Lytton in issuing ultimatums to Cetshwayo and the Afghan Ameer, respectively, to force their compliance with British interests were not lost upon Liberal papers such as *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper*.[90] Noting that the ultimatum issued by

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Left Wing Kimberley Horse and Editor of "Diamond News" (Grahamstown: Richards, Slater and Co., 1882), 18.

[88] *Pall Mall Gazette*, 26 March 1879, 1. Sir Michael Hicks-Beach received a memorandum from Bartle Frere detailing the ultimatum on 2 January 1879. Sir H. B. E. Frere to Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, 12 December 1878, in *Further Correspondence Respecting the Affairs in South Africa*, C.2222 (1879), 186-189.

[89] *Daily News (London)*, 26 March 1857, 6; *Daily News (London)*, 30 April 1857, 5; *Leeds Mercury*, 15 February 1840, 4; 9 October 1841, 7; 22 February 1857, 4; *Liverpool Mercury*, 29 November 1839, 387; *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper*, 15 March 1857, 9.

[90] As was the case in South Africa, Lytton's issuance of an ultimatum to the Afghan Ameer and its subsequent rejection preceded a British invasion of Afghanistan in the autumn of 1878. Anthony Wood,

Lytton had led to a second war in Afghanistan, *Reynolds's* expressed little doubt that Bartle Frere's action would likewise result in a war, if one had not broken out already, and the paper charged that "Beaconsfield's 'ultipomatums' [sic] which were marked by "blood, slaughter, and pensive devilment," were "as efficacious as a dose of forked lightning in a powder magazine."[91] *Reynolds's* further insisted that there was no justifiable pretext for war, and decried the history of Disraeli's government for being traced in blood, arguing that "Britain was reaping the bitter fruits of imperial jingoism" by "continually drifting into costly wars, debt, distress, and destitution."[92]

While they may have acquiesced to the annexation of the Transvaal, Liberal papers found Frere's arguments vapid and condemned him for exceeding his authority and for acting in conflict to the wishes of the Colonial Office. For instance, in 1877 the *Daily News* had seemingly concurred with the *Cape Times's* belief that "the annexation [of the Transvaal] gives peace to South Africa," and "wars with the natives are things of the past."[93] Subsequently, they questioned the annexation policy, with the *Reynolds's Weekly* arguing that it had done nothing but continue the contentions between the European and native communities, a sentiment which was echoed in the *Daily News*.[94] In assessing the gravity of Frere's ultimatum, the *Daily News* concluded that war with the Zulu was all but certain, if it had not already broken out. Emphasizing the indefensibility of Frere's demands, the editors argued that Britain would never have been drawn into a

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Nineteenth Century Britain, 1815-1914 (New York: McKay, 1960), 308. For a detailed examination of British policy in Afghanistan, see T. A. Heathcote, *The Afghan Wars, 1839-1919* (London: Osprey, 1980, reprint Staplehust, UK: Spellmount, 2003); and Christopher M. Wyatt, *Afghanistan and the Defense of Empire: Diplomacy and Strategy During the Great Game* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2011).

[91] *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper*, 5 January 1879, 3.

[92] Ibid., 2 February 1879, 1-2; 9 February 1879, 3; 16 February 1879, 4..

[93] *Daily News (London)*, 21 May 1877, 6

[94] *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper*, 1 December 1878, 4; 2 February 1879, 2, *Daily News (London)*, 28 January 1879, 4.

war with the Zulu had it not assumed responsibility for the Transvaal. It further charged that, given the recent developments in South Africa, it was clear that insufficient attention was being devoted to assessing the means and consequences of territorial expansion:

> We can hardly want another South African kingdom on our hands. As it is, our territories in that continent are too wide for the European population, which sparsely inhabits them; and it has been most desirable that the most friendly relations should be kept with the vast native population.[95]

Likewise, the *Bristol Mercury* charged that the High Commissioner had instigated the imbroglio without the permission of the Government, precisely because he knew that they would not support his assessment of the situation or the use of force to resolve the matter.[96] On the other hand, however, the paper charged that Frere *had* acted in concert with colonial public opinion. The *Mercury* labeled colonists at the Cape as jingoes who believed that a successful war against the Zulu was essential for the future security of British South Africa.[97]

In contrast, the Conservative press generally had fewer qualms about a military solution. Writing just one day after Frere's ultimatum was announced in Britain, the *Standard* upheld that action and argued that the mobilization of troops against the Zulu was justified in light of the "absurd and insolent claims of Cetywayo [sic]."[98] Noting the lockstep opposition of the Liberals to "another little war," the *Derby Mercury* condemned those who would put party matters before patriotism and objected to those who took the side of the "savage" in any colonial or foreign policy dispute. The war at hand, the paper claimed, was not one of Britain's making, but rather had been forced upon the country by the aggressiveness of Cetshwayo. Moreover, while the paper acknowledged that

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[95] *Daily News (London)*, 28 January 1879, 4.
[96] *Bristol Mercury*, 11 March 1879, 2.
[97] *Bristol Mercury*, 22 February 1879, 8.
[98] *Standard*, 3 January 1879, 3.

developments at the Cape raised questions about colonial self-rule and the financial burdens of imperial defense, such issues did not outweigh Britain's responsibility to protect the Transvaal.[99] The Conservative presses were joined in their support of the High Commissioner by at least some of the independent presses. For example, the *Huddersfield Chronicle* insisted that there was plenty of evidence to prove a war with the Zulu was not a war of aggression. The *Chronicle* claimed, moreover, that this conflict was not designed to advance imperialism, nor was it intended to keep the nation in an excited state.[100]

This variegated public response to the outbreak of the Zulu War differed considerably from the more unified and apparently sympathetic reaction to Shepstone's annexation of the Transvaal. The difference can, in no small way, likely be accounted for by the courses of the respective enterprises. Whereas Shepstone had been able to achieve his mission without mishap and without an actual battle, Chelmsford's invasion of Zululand was beset by numerous setbacks, which shocked the British at home and British colonials, who fully expected the invasion to be nothing short of a complete success. The greatest shock, and arguably one of the most humiliating and unexpected military disasters in any theatre in the Victorian era, came eleven days into the campaign.[101] On 22 January nearly half of Lord Chelmsford's central column was annihilated at Isandhlwana en route to the Zulu capital at Ulundi. In that battle, nearly 1450 out of 1800

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[99] *Derby Mercury* 5 February 1879, 5.
[100] *Huddersfield Daily Chronicle*, 18 February 1879, 3.
[101] Mike Snook, *Into the Jaws of Death* (London: Frontline Books, 2008), 41. While Snook points out that a number of military disasters could be labeled as "the worst," he allows for Isandhlwana to hold a unique place in British military history, in that it was the only engagement where not one of the regulars who stood on the firing line survived.

officers and men were massacred by a force of roughly 20,000 Zulus.[102] The gallant defense of 140 men of "B" Co. 2/24th Regiment of Foot at Rorke's Drift against 4,000 Zulus mollified the sting of the disaster at Isandhlwana only slightly.[103] Regrouping after Colonel Henry Wood's decisive victory over the Zulus at Kambula (29 March), Chelmsford launched a second invasion of Zululand at the end of May, and by the middle of July his forces had secured the country after defeating Cetshwayo at Ulundi.

As was so often the case in Britain's small imperial wars, the opening shots at Isandhlwana and Rorke's Drift took place before the government in London and the British public even knew for certain that war had erupted.[104] Coming so soon after the start of the war, those events did much to shape, fuel, and encourage public interest in and the debate over the war. If the public had been too preoccupied with the Afghan War, the Eastern Crisis, the collapse of the Glasgow Bank, and labor strikes to notice yet "another little war" in South Africa, it could hardly have failed to become astutely aware after Isandhlwana and Rorke's Drift as the details were splashed across the pages of the provincial press. The press's interest in the Zulu war was evident in the personal tone with which the satirical journal *Punch* covered developments. It claimed that Sir Garnet Wolseley himself had desired "Punch" at his elbow when he embarked at Portsmouth for

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[102] Of the roughly 1800 men posted at the Isandhlwana camp (six companies of the 1/24th and 2/24th Regiment numbering almost 950 men and the 850 men of the Native Natal Contingent), only 55 Europeans survived, five of whom were officers, and not one of the survivors wore a red coat on the day of the battle. In the aftermath of the massacre, Chelmsford was forced to retreat to Natal to defend against a possible Zulu invasion. Elsewhere, Col. Charles Pearson's coastal column was besieged at Eshowe (22 January to 3 April). In the north, on 12 March a supply column was massacred at Meyer's Drift, and two weeks later Lt. Col. Redvers Bullers's cavalry command was routed at Hlobane on 28 March. Donald R. Morris, *Washing the Spears: A History of the Rise of the Zulu Nation under Shaka to Its Fall in the Zulu War of 1879* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965), 381, 387, 428-30, 454-59, 471-91; Greaves, *Crossing the Buffalo*, 238-41, 257-64, 267-78

[103] In recognition for their gallantry, the defenders of the Rorke's Drift were awarded eleven Victoria Crosses, the most ever issued for a single engagement. James Stuart Olsen, *Historical Dictionary of the British Empire*, volume 2 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), 956.

[104] Edgerton, *Like Lions They Fought*, ix.

South Africa, insisting that "if anyone [could] make things straight" it was "Punch." The paper then pictured Mr. Punch variously offering advice to both Zulu and Afghan leaders, crushing of the Zulus single-handedly, and yet tipping his hat to the beleaguered figures of Bromhead and Chard at Rorke's Drift.[105]

For those already disposed against the war, these setbacks were seen as irrefutable proof of the incompetence of Frere and Chelmsford, respectively, as colonial administrator and military strategist. In that vein, a chorus of voices in Parliament and the general public began calling for Frere to be censured on the grounds that he had failed to abide by the will of the cabinet and Parliament and that his unsanctioned and precipitous actions had been completely unnecessary to secure Natal against an invasion.

While *Lloyds' Newspaper* paid homage to the heroic stand of the 2/24th at Rorke's Drift, it blamed Frere for that near disaster and the earlier catastrophe at Isandhlwana, and insisted that there were "few men in the country indeed who would not condemn the war as a most reprehensible and a wanton act of mischief on the part of Bartle Frere."[106] Even if that estimation of public opinion was accurate, such beliefs certainly did not prevent the public from enthusiastically sending off British regulars from Southampton bound for the Cape. Indeed, while the paper reckoned that these new reinforcements would provide Chelmsford the means to "scatter the barbarous legions of the Zulu King," it denounced the pattern of bombastic bluster and disastrous chauvinism which on so many occasions led Britain into trouble. Frere's actions were therefore only the most recent instance in which a government official had defied the Government's

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[105] *Punch*, 76 (1879): iii-iv, 54-55, 127. See figures 1.3, 1.4, and 1.5 at the end of the chapter.
[106] *Lloyds' Weekly Newspaper*, 23 February 1879, 1; 30 March 1879, 1.

warnings and devoted himself to war and one can imagine that the shadow of the Afghan War loomed large in this judgment.[107]

The editors of *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper* broadened their earlier attack and linked the most recent failure in South Africa to what they saw as the systemic and inescapable failures of Beaconsfieldism and Tory governance. Such actions made Britain financially poorer and morally weaker.[108] In particular, the mounting costs and the disaster at Isandhlwana were, in their minds, the "bitter fruits of imperial jingoism." The editors of *Reynolds's*, along with those of the *North-Eastern Daily Gazette*, pointedly charged that the Government had blood on its hands for sanctioning the High Commissioner's "mischievous policy." As such, it should thus share in the blame for the South African debacle.[109] Furthermore, in reflecting upon Lord Derby's insistence that Britain's first interest was peace and how men in the Government had recently dragged the country into wars with the Ashanti, Afghan, Zulu and Burmese, *Reynolds's* subsequently argued that decisive action must be taken to "make it impossible for men like Sir Henry Layard and Sir Bartle Frere to call up fleets, or to send for reinforcements to execute a policy which the British people have never had the opportunity of considering in Parliament."[110]

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[107] Ibid., 30 March 1879, 1.
[108] *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper*, 9 February 1879, 4; 2 March 1879, 1.
[109] Ibid., 15 February 1879, 4. *North-Eastern Daily Gazette* (Middlesbrough), 22 March 1879, 2.
[110] *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper*, 16 March 1879, 1. The inclusion of Layard in their criticism is certainly intriguing, as he was not the most vocal and militant imperialist. Known more for his archaeological discoveries than his political and diplomatic contributions, as an M.P. he was highly critical of Lords Aberdeen's and Palmerston's "chauvinist diplomacy" toward Russia and China in the mid- to late-1850s. As the Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire at the height of the Eastern Crisis in 1878, however, Layard's philo-Turkish sympathies led to his urging the government to take a much more aggressive and interventionist stance against Russia. Jonathan Parry, 'Layard, Sir Austen Henry (1817–1894)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online ed, May 2006 [http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.libus.csd.mu.edu/view/article/16218, accessed 26 April 2012].

The disaster of Isandhlwana, however, did little to dissuade the Conservative *Aberdeen Journal* and the Liberal *Pall Mall Gazette*, which had broken ranks with the other Liberal presses, from supporting the embattled high commissioner from the start. Arguing that Frere should be given the benefit of the doubt until the facts became more fully known, they encouraged the public not to rush to judgment. They argued that Frere had not overestimated the Zulu peril, and postulated that, while it may have been rash to invade Zululand, a delay may have proved to be a far more dangerous course of action.[111] Even after Parliament moved to censure Frere in April 1879, the *Pall Mall Gazette* continued to defend him. It insisted that it was completely disingenuous and "the wrong mode of … treating public servants abroad" for officials, such as Lord Salisbury, to tout Frere's "patriotism" and to refuse his resignation on the grounds that he continued to have confidence in his abilities, having voted earlier to censure the administrator.[112]

While much of the public's attention was focused on Frere's supposed intention to foment another colonial war, Chelmsford did not escape criticism for his part in the disaster at Isandhlwana. Despite Chelmsford's attempts to lay the blame for the disaster on Durnford, the senior officer in the camp when the Zulus attacked, Liberal and Conservative papers alike, including the *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper* and the *Standard*, concurred that a more able commander needed to be assigned.[113] This stance was

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[111] *Aberdeen Journal*, 19 February 1879, 4; *Pall Mall Gazette*, 18 February 1879, 11.
[112] *Pall Mall Gazette*, 26 March 1879, 1
[113] *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper*, 16 February 1879, 4; 2 March 1879, 3; *Standard*, 8 March 1879, 4. Other papers that voiced a desire to see Chelmsford replaced included: *Aberdeen Journal*, 7 March 1879, 4; *Belfast News-Letter*, 20 March 1879, 4; *Daily Gazette* (Middlesbrough), 2 March 1879, 2; 8 March 1879, 3; *Daily News* (London), 6 March 1879, 5; 25 March 1879, 5; *Dundee Courier*, 7 March 1879, 5; *Lancaster Gazette*, 8 March 1879, 8; *Liverpool Mercury*, 10 March 1879, 7; *Morning Post*, 6 March 1879, 4; *Nottinghamshire Guardian*, 7 March 1879, 6; and *Pall Mall Gazette*, 7 March 1879, 10. These opinions echoed the statements from Regulars and Auxiliaries stationed in Natal, who expressed "a general want of confidence in the authorities, civil and military, Colonial as well as Imperial, extending to honesty of purpose no less than to agility in action. Also, see *Times* (London), 28 March 1879, 10.

particularly noteworthy coming from the *Standard*, a paper whose correspondent Charles "Noggs" Norris-Newman had accepted the mobilization of British troops as an appropriate reaction to the "absurd and insolent claims of Cetywayo [sic]."[114] The obvious choice for this assignment was Britain's premier military commander Major General Sir Garnet Wolseley, who had become a household name after proving himself against the Ashanti in West Africa in 1873-74. So confident and familiar was the public with Wolseley's abilities that some provincial newspapers argued that had he been in charge from the beginning, Isandhlwana would never have happened.[115]

While the London and provincial press brought the war and the questions surrounding it home to the public through news reports, editorials, and occasional maps, illustrated broadsheets such as the *Illustrated London News*, the *Graphic* and the *Penny Illustrated Paper* effectively brought the public more intimately into contact with the dramatic course of the Zulu and other wars by splashing engravings of maps, the terrain, the events, and the personalities involved alongside written reports and analyses of the war. In the case of the Zulu War, these included depictions of troop activity and battles, the embarkation and transit of the 91st Highlanders and 60th Rifles to South Africa, Buller's defeat of the Zulus at Kambula, as well as the military and social life of Britain's African adversary.[116] In the aftermath of Isandhlwana and Rorke's Drift, mosaics of the tragic and auspicious heroes of those incidents, appeared in the *Graphic*, *Illustrated*

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[114] *Standard*, 3 January 1879, 2.
[115] *North-Eastern Daily Gazette*, 28 March 1879, 2; *Hampshire Advertiser*, 31 May 1879, 2.
[116] "Zulu-Land" *Graphic* 22 Feb 1879, 185-90, 192-93, 196-97, 200-201; *Illustrated London News*, 22 February 1879, 172-73, 187; "Zulu War Reinforcements," *Graphic*, 1 March 1879, 201, 208-209; *Illustrated London News*, 1 March 1879, 190, 196-97, 203, 208-9; "Zulu War," *Graphic* 8 March 1879, 236; *Illustrated London News*, 8 March 1879, 220-21, 225, 232-33, supplement; *Illustrated London News*, 29 March 1879, 285, 292-3; "Zulu War," *Graphic* 5 April 1879, 329-30; "Zulu War," *Graphic*, 12 Apr 1879, 355-58, "Pictoral Chronicle of the Zulu War," *Penny Illustrated Paper*, 17 May 1879, 308-13; "Zulu War – Royal Scots Fusiliers," *Graphic* 2 Aug 1879, 97; "Our Illustrations," *Penny Illustrated Paper*, 27 Sep 1879, 196, 198.

London News, and the *Penny Illustrated Paper*.[117] The overall effect of such publications was that many of those who fell at Isandhlwana, along with those who successfully fended off the attack at the mission station at Rorke's Drift, were quickly elevated to hero status. Significantly, the mosaic which appeared in the *Graphic* on 1 March integrated the heroes of the Zulu War with those of the war in Afghanistan, which was an unrelated but contemporaneous affair, and strongly suggests that the public understood the breadth of imperial activity within an interconnected framework.[118]

IMPERIAL RETREAT:
MIDLOTHIAN AND THE FIRST ANGLO-BOER WAR, 1879-1881

Just a little more than a year after the close of the Zulu War, public interest was again focused on the African subcontinent as war erupted between the Boers and Britain. The public's interest in South African affairs in the years leading up to the war and during the war itself cannot be divorced from the broader framework of empire and public awareness. Moreover, the backdrop for the war and the public discourse about it, illustrate the reciprocal relationship that existed between imperial developments on the periphery and local matters in Britain itself, both on personal and national levels.

That intersection is most clearly seen in the life of William Ewart Gladstone between 1879 and early 1880. In February 1879, to Gladstone's dismay, Britain was awash with jingoistic fervor as Prime Minister Disraeli authorized £6 million for a naval expedition to intervene on behalf of Turkey against Russian encroachment. That fervor put Gladstone at odds with his own Greenwich constituency, some of whom

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[117] "British Officers Engaged in the Zulu and Afghan War," *Graphic*, 1 Mar 1879, 212; "Officers Killed in the Late Disaster," *Illustrated London News* 1 March 1879, 193; "Officers Killed at Isandula," *Illustrated London News*, 8 March 1879, 216; "Officers Killed at Insandhlwana," *Illustrated London News*, 22 March 1879, supplement.
[118] *Graphic*, 1 March 1879, 212.

demonstrated in a mob-like fashion in front of his house, requiring police intervention to disperse the crowd. In turn, Gladstone found that his political future depended upon severing his ties with Greenwich. Turning down an opportunity to represent Leeds, Gladstone ultimately decided to challenge Lord Dalkeith for the Midlothian seat. As Gladstone biographers H. G. C. Matthew and Roy Jenkins have noted, this move marked a pivotal turning point in parliamentary history. It exemplified the tendency of Liberals to focus on deriving influence and power from more agrarian and non-English constituencies instead of potentially less predictable English constituencies, such as Leeds. Indeed after Gladstone's premiership of 1868-1874 all future Liberal prime ministers emerged from non-English constituencies.[119]

In the forthcoming campaign, Gladstone made imperial affairs a central issue because he believed that the preceding years of Conservative governance had had the "effect of vexing and alarming the people of this country and compromising the interests of the empire."[120] He, therefore, denounced the jingoism associated with Disraeli's Eastern policy, and what he believed were unjustifiable wars against the Zulu and Afghan peoples. In addition, he accused Disraeli of fiscal mismanagement, by emphasizing that during his premiership the government had gone from enjoying a £6 million surplus to an £8 million deficit.[121] Further, although he had publicly remained silent on the Transvaal

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[119] H. C. G. Matthew, *Gladstone, 1878-1898* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 38-40; Roy Jenkins, *Gladstone* (London: Macmillan, 1995), 420-21.
[120] William Ewart Gladstone, *Political Speeches in Scotland: November and December 1879* (London: W. Ridgeway, 1879), 22-23.
[121] Gladstone, *Political Speeches in Scotland*, 34-38, 43-49, 63-66, 90-94, 114-118, 132-56, 167-76, 190-209.

at the time of its annexation and throughout the debate over the South Africa Bill, Gladstone now added that action to the list of Beaconsfield's imperial missteps:[122]

> They have annexed in Africa the Transvaal territory inhabited by a free European Christian republican community which they have thought proper to bring within the limits of a monarchy, although out of 8000 persons in that republic qualified to vote upon the subject we are told—and I have never seen the statement officially contradicted—that 6500 protested against it. These are the circumstances under which we undertake to transform republicans into the subjects of the monarchy.[123]
>
> In the Transvaal we have chosen most unwisely – I am tempted to say insanely – to put ourselves in the strange predicament of the free subjects of the Monarch going to coerce the free subjects of the Republic and to compel them to accept a citizenship which they decline and refuse. If they refuse, it must be done by force. And if we pass into Afghanistan and occupy Kabul and Kandahar, and, as some say we are going to do, occupy Heart – and I can see no limit to these operations, everything of that kind means a necessity for more money, and means a necessity for more men.[124]

Such actions, he insisted, did not strengthen the empire; instead, like the threads holding down Gulliver in *Gulliver's Travels*, they would coalesce and thereby considerably weaken Britain to the point where the country would become practically incapacitated.[125]

Gladstone intended that his Midlothian bid would represent more than a contest for a single seat in Parliament. In headlining what he believed were the imperial and domestic failures of Beaconsfieldism, Gladstone intended to launch a popular crusade, and in so doing he revolutionized British electioneering. While popular political crusades had been seen before, most notably with the Chartist movement of the 1830s, it was

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[122] John Nixon, *The Complete Story of the Transvaal, from the 'Great Trek' to the Convention* (London: Sampson Low, 1885), 140-42. Gladstone subsequently explained that he had remained silent on the issue during the debate on the South Africa Bill because, "it having been done, no good, but only mischief, was to be done by the intervention of the house." *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 3rd Ser., vol. 252 (1880), cols., 145-46.

[123] "First Midlothian Speech Delivered in the Music Hall, Edinburgh," 25 November 1879, in Gladstone, *Political Speeches in Scotland*, 48-49.

[124] "Second Midlothian Speech Delivered to the Corn Exchange, Dalkeith," 27 November 1879, in Ibid., 64-65.

[125] Ibid., 66.

unprecedented for a former prime minister to lead such a movement. It was also innovatory, as Gladstone did not restrict his campaign speeches to the Midlothian electorate. On the way to Edinburgh on 24 November, he gave campaign speeches at Carlyle on the English-Scottish Border, and then at Hawick, and at Galashiels in the Scottish Borders. After spending only a week in Midlothian itself, Gladstone then headed north into the Central Lowlands and southern Highlands of Scotland, stopping along the way to speak in Inverkeithing, Dunfermline, Perth, Aberfeldy, and Taymouth. He then turned south and finished off the campaign with six meetings in Glasgow and Motherwell in Lanarkshire. His campaign, however, reached out even more broadly than that, as the national and provincial press made his speeches available throughout Britain. Indeed it was this wider readership that was Gladstone's intended audience.[126]

When the final votes were tallied, in April 1880, Gladstone and the Liberals were swept into power. Receiving 55% of the popular vote and winning a net gain of 110 seats, they quite literally reversed the results of the 1874 election. Moreover, while the voting returns in Midlothian did not exhibit a drastic shift from previous years, the effect of the campaign could be seen elsewhere. In Scotland, Conservatives retained only six of the eighteen seats they had won in 1874, the first and only time before the twentieth century that Conservative representation was held to single digits in Scotland. In Wales, Tory candidates lost ten seats and were left with only four. In England, for only the second time since 1832, Conservative representation dropped below 200 seats, something that would not be repeated until 1906 and then again in 1945. Losing only three seats in Ireland, the Conservatives continued to outnumber the Liberals, but they themselves were

[126] Matthew, *Gladstone, 1875-1898*, 41-51, Jenkins, *Gladstone*, 424-26.

drastically outnumbered by the Home Rule party of Charles Stewart Parnell, who held 63 out of the 103 seats.[127]

Between 1877 and 1880, meanwhile, Boer nationalism and resentment of British rule had percolated in the Transvaal, and the Boers were encouraged by the Gladstone's repudiation of the annexation. Those condemnations, however, did not lead to an attempt by Gladstone to undo the annexation. After the Queen's Speech of 20 May 1880, Gladstone explained that his new administration would not endeavor to undo that legacy of Beaconsfieldism. While he had personally disagreed with it in the first place, the positive consequences from that action, he argued, could not be denied. He and others had promised to protect the native populations of the region, and British sovereignty provided that security.[128] Believing that they had been betrayed by Gladstone, the Boers revolted against British rule in December 1880 and announced the reestablishment of a republic to be led by a triumvirate executive of Paul Kruger, Piet Joubert, and ex-President J. W. Pretorius.[129] Within days of that declaration, the Boers had ambushed and effectively wiped out a detachment of the 94th Regiment at Bronkhorstspruit; had laid siege to British army garrisons at Potchefstroom, Pretoria, and five other towns in the

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[127] Jenkins, *Gladstone*, 435; Colin Rawlings and Michael Thrasher, *British Election Facts, 132-2006* (London: Ashgate, 2007), 11-12. Some very minor discrepancies exist between the numbers referenced by Jenkins and those complied by Rawlings and Thrasher, which were in turn drawn from F. W. S. Craig's *British Parliamentary Election Results, 1832-1983*, 5 vols. (1971-1984). However, those differences do not change the sweeping nature of the 1880 election.

[128] *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 3rd ser., vol., 252 (1880), cols., 145-146; *Parliamentary Debates, Lords*, 3rd ser., vol. (1880), col., 66.

[129] John Nixon, *The Complete Story of the Transvaal, from the 'Great Trek' to the Convention*, 140-47; Charles L. Norris-Newman, *With the Boers in the Transvaal and Orange Free State in 1880-1* (London: Wm. H. Allen, 1882), 107-108. According to their most vocal champion in parliament, Leonard Courtney, the Boers believed that Gladstone had misled them in the Midlothian campaign, deliberately or not. Matthew, *Gladstone*, 102; *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 3rd ser., vol. 252 (1880), cols. 268-71.

Transvaal; and had taken command of Laing's Nek, effectively controlling the approach into the Transvaal from Natal.[130]

The Boers struck at a time when the Cape was also woefully unprepared and undermanned, a point that was not lost upon the British public.[131] London had drawn down the forces deployed in South Africa in the aftermath of the Zulu War to 3,500 men, and the Cape government was then involved in suppressing an uprising of the Basutos. Convinced, however, that the Boers were inferior fighters and insufficiently supplied, British leaders in South Africa overlooked their own shortcomings, and the public in Britain effectively lulled themselves into a false sense of security.[132]

Throughout the Zulu War, Gladstone's Midlothian Campaign, the Basuto War, and its correlations to the Government's policies in Afghanistan, the questionable annexation of the Transvaal had never completely disappeared from the public discourse.[133] The rising of the Boers, however, quickly returned that issue to the forefront of public discussion. Far from being satisfied with merely relaying the news from Cape Town, Durban, and Potchefstroom, the national and provincial papers engaged the implications of the annexation, and expressed a variety of opinions, while offering myriad interpretations of events in South Africa that both reflected and shaped public awareness of imperial affairs.

To be sure, the British public was concerned about the security of the nation's imperial holdings. The Boer rebellion coincided with the Cape's war with the Basutos, exacerbating the challenge to Britain's position in South Africa. Some also claimed that

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[130] Walker, *A History of South Africa*, 378, 383-384; Thomas Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa*, 92-96.
[131] *Glasgow Herald*, 21 December 1880, 4; *Yorkshire Herald*, 22 December 1880, 5.
[132] Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa*, 96-7.
[133] For instance, see *Times* (London), 15 November 1880, 4.

the rebellion was also deliberately timed and influenced by the Land War in Ireland, though the *York Herald* thought that it was highly unlikely that the Boers were paying that much attention to the domestic concerns of Britain.[134] Even so, newspapers did their utmost to allay fears about the situation on the ground, with papers such as the *Bristol Mercury* and the *Glasgow Herald* insisting that British supremacy would be upheld.[135] The *Huddersfield Daily Chronicle* and the *Standard*, which likewise recognized the seriousness of the situation and acknowledged that imperial troops would likely be needed, nevertheless insisted that it did not believe the British "position in the Transvaal was in any immediate danger."[136] Holding the military ability of the Boers more openly in contempt, the *Standard* emphasized the inability of the Boers to protect themselves against native attacks, an issue which had made the annexation of the Transvaal necessary in the first place. The need for additional troops, rather, was due to the vastness of the region and not to the fighting prowess of the Boers.[137] Meanwhile, the *Times* assumed inaccurately that Britain possessed enough in the way of military resources in the region to disperse the Boers quickly.[138] So convinced were Britons at home in the superiority of their forces that when news of the attack on the 94th Regiment filtered back to Britain, a few presses questioned the accuracy of the report. The *Glasgow Herald* was convinced that, if it were true, confirmation would have been provided by the Governor at Natal. At the same time, there were reports that the Boers had been repulsed by British troops at Potchefstroom, whose commander, Colonel

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[134] *York Herald*, 22 December 1880, 5.
[135] *Bristol Mercury*, 22 December 1880, 5; 3 January 1881, 5. *Glasgow Herald*, 21 December 1880, 4
[136] *Huddersfield Daily Chronicle*, 22 December 1880, 3; *Standard*, 21 December 1880, 4-5.
[137] *Standard*, 21 December 1880, 4-5.
[138] *Times* (London), 21 December 1880, 9; Specifically, those forces entailed Regular Army battalions from the 24th and 94th Regiments, and Sixtieth Rifles, the Natal Mounted Rifles, a unit of Dragoons, and artillery.

Lanyon, sent reassurances that the "forces of the enemy cannot hold together."[139] While the editorial staff of the *Times* was forced to admit that its earlier dismissal of the Boers had been inaccurate, it nevertheless found it impossible to believe that the Boers were capable of launching simultaneous operations against both Heidelberg and Potchefstroom, while also coordinating an attack strong enough to wipe out the detachment of the 94th Regiment. It was much more likely, or so the editors of the *Times* initially thought, that those accounts had been fabricated by the Boers to elevate their abilities in the eyes of their enemies.[140]

But if papers such as the *Times* and *Huddersfield Daily Chronicle* insinuated that the Transvaal was secure for the time being, others were not so confident. Taking the reports of the Boer movements against Potchefstroom and Heidelberg as accurate, the *Daily News* insisted that they proved that the Boers felt strong enough to assume the offensive, and that the elements committed there were "a part of the troops at their disposal."[141] Likewise, the *Morning Advertiser*, the voice of the London Society of Licensed Victuallers and the second-most read paper in the nation, insisted that "if the Boers have not reasoned all the chances out, and struck just at the right moment to enforce their arguments upon the cabinet, they are less clever than we take them to be."[142] Indeed almost everyone, including the optimistic *Huddersfield Daily Chronicle* recognized quickly that the long-term pacification of the region would require the deployment of imperial reinforcements.[143]

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[139] *Glasgow Herald*, 24 December 1880, 4.
[140] *Times* (London), 24 December 1880, 7.
[141] *Daily News (London)*, 23 December 1880, 5.
[142] *Morning Advertiser* (London), December 1880, reprinted in *Pall Mall Gazette*, 23 December 1880, 2.
[143] *Standard*, 22 December 1880, 4; *Huddersfield Daily Chronicle*, 22 December 1880, 4.

Press attention to calls for reinforcements also raised the public awareness about the costs, both fiscal and material, and Britain's imperial responsibilities. Acknowledging the public's aversion to and weariness at having to rescue colonial administrations repeatedly from their own missteps, many papers insisted that this was not such a case. The *Huddersfield Daily Chronicle* reminded the public that the annexation of the Transvaal had been undertaken by the government and was not a decision of the colonial administration at the Cape.[144] Still, as far as the editors of the *Standard* were concerned, even though the government bore responsibility for the annexation, the acquisition of the Transvaal had been the "result of an accident, rather than a deliberate design."[145] The Boer rebellion was brought on by the actions of an ungrateful people, who had ignored the sacrifices that Britain had made on their behalf, and had rebelled against British rule despite being forewarned that such an action would be nothing but "folly."[146] For these reasons, the government and the nation had legitimate interests in taking steps to preserve the territory.

Whether intervention would happen under a Gladstone administration was apparently of some concern to at least a portion of the public, who were no doubt mindful of the premier's strong anti-imperial stance in his recent Midlothian Campaign. Putting any such fears to rest, the *Huddersfield Daily Chronicle* insisted that despite Gladstone's denunciation of imperial entanglements, he now showed signs that he was reconciled to defending the ground that had been previously acquired. True, the paper acknowledged,

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[144] *Huddersfield Daily Chronicle*, 22 December 1880, 3.
[145] *Standard*, 21 December 1880, 4; 22 December 1880, 4.
[146] Ibid., 22 December 1880, 4.

the British were withdrawing from Kabul in Afghanistan, but no move had yet been made to withdraw entirely from the Transvaal.[147]

Another issue that emerged in the pages of the newspapers involved the need to uphold the nation's honor. Bemoaning on 22 December that the decisions of Lords Carnarvon and Kimberley had given rise to yet another imperial war, the Independent *Dundee Courier* contended:

> It would thus appear that troops will be required from home. That is an unfortunate necessity, but perhaps it will not occur to anybody in this country to say that we should rather let the Transvaal go than be at the trouble and expense of recovering it. There will doubtless be persons, however, who would give such advice were it not for the shame of the thing, and whose first thought, on hearing of the rebellion, will be that we should never have had this trouble at all if it had not been one of the iniquities of the late Conservative Government that they annexed the Transvaal. But responsible statesmen will not speak in that way.[148]

They were joined in this regard by the *Manchester Guardian* which, while arguing that Britain had never been justified in annexing the Transvaal and that it had no "clear right to overrule [the Boers'] will," nevertheless insisted that "whatever may be done hereafter, they must not be allowed to show an example of successful rebellion."[149] The insinuation clearly was that if Britain acquiesced to the Boer demands other parts of the empire would find encouragement in this sign of national weakness. The *Birmingham Daily Post* also feared that the success of the Boers would raise the hopes of natives living in the region and thus appeared conflicted over what Britain's recourse should be.[150] Such ramifications were brought closer to home by the *Standard* and the *Aberdeen Journal*, which placed the rising of the Transvaal alongside the disturbances in Ireland over rents and the land tenures, a situation that editors believed might also require the deployment

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[147] *Huddersfield Daily Chronicle*, 22 December 1880, 3.
[148] *Dundee Courier*, 22 December 1880, 2.
[149] *Manchester Guardian*, December 1880, reprinted in *Pall Mall Gazette*, 23 December 1880, 3.
[150] *Birmingham Daily Post*, 22 December 1880, 4.

of troops, and the ongoing war in Afghanistan.[151] The *Journal* conceded that while the "pestilent class of professional [Boer and Irish] agitators had different motives for resisting British rule, it insisted that as "men who are strangers to honest industry, whose heads are as light as their pockets, and who having nothing to lose were not indisposed to have their little world turned upside down."[152]

Newspaper readers, meanwhile, did not have a compartmentalized view of the empire, but placed specific imperial developments within a much broader framework. Thus, the *Dundee Courier* expected that the Boers were not only motivated to rebel when they did because of the preoccupation of the Cape with the Basutos, but also because they believed that the "strange immunity which the authors of treasonable disorders in Ireland have hitherto enjoyed, from any serious action on the part of the executive government, would also be extended to them."[153] Such views were not held by Conservatives alone, as they were also expressed by Liberal-minded papers such as the *Leeds Mercury* and the *Newcastle Courant*, which insisted that after the Boers had been shown the "folly of their ways" with a "prompt display of vigour," the questions regarding Britain's long-term position in the Transvaal would have to be rethought.[154] At the time, however, the papers did not speculate as to the precise form the British position in South Africa should take.

Still another segment of the press argued against taking any action at all against the Boers. Trumpeting the false promises and what they portrayed as the proven failures of the Conservatives' imperial policy in South Africa, many Liberal papers argued that

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[151] *Standard*, 21 December 1880, 4; *Aberdeen Journal*, 24 December 1880, 4.
[152] *Aberdeen Journal*, 28 December 1880, 4. Given the recent attention by the paper on the Land Question, the linkage between the developments in Ireland and the Transvaal served as an effective segue to acquaint the public with the quickly developing situation in South Africa.
[153] *Dundee Courier*, 27 December 1880, 2.
[154] *Leeds Mercury* 22 December 1880, 4; *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*, December 1880, reprinted in *Pall Mall Gazette*, 23 December 1880, 2.

military intervention would only validate the injustice and blunders that had previously been committed against the Boers and the Basutos. The *Daily News*, for instance, insisted that the Boer demand for independence was legitimate and in accord with the Sand River Convention, so long as the Boers acceded to Britain's demands that the native populations should be protected and that a "uniform system of native government" could be agreed upon. Even with this stipulation, the paper believed that it was highly likely that a compromise could and should be struck.[155] The *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent* concurred and boldly stated:

> We do not want the Boers…Why in the world can we not acknowledge, honestly and frankly, that Sir Theophilus Shepstone made a blunder, and declare that we will not supplement it by greater?[156]

Insisting that the government should take a position of magnanimity, the Liberal *South Wales Daily News* called for the "authors of mischief" to be punished and argued that others should be ordered to make peace.[157]

Taken as a whole, the variety of positions in print demonstrates that the public was neither mindless about the imperial issues, nor was it of entirely one mind when it came to how Britain should respond to the Boers. To that end, the public was keenly interested in reforming the relationship between the administration at the Cape and the government in London, so that the Cabinet would have more direct oversight of colonial affairs. The hoped-for result was that the home country would be less likely to be drawn into wars and military interventions against its better judgment.

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[155] *Daily News* (London), 22 December 1880, 4-5.
[156] *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 23 December 1880, 4.
[157] *South Wales Daily News* (Cardiff), December 1880, reprinted in *Pall Mall Gazette*, 23 December 1880, 2-3.

Given the speed with which the Boer uprising escalated, it is difficult to assess properly the public's awareness of or interest in events as they unfolded. The content and editorial pages of London's daily papers indicate that on a broad national level, metropolitan readers were certainly attuned to what was going on in the Transvaal. The degree to which provincial readers discussed the issue is more difficult to ascertain. Many of the provincial papers were published only weekly, and only days elapsed between when the first announcements of the Boers' declaration of independence and the confirmation of the attack on the detachment of the 94th Regiment at Bronkhorstspruit reached Britain. The result was that the first reports by many provincial papers on developments in the Transvaal came after the attacks had been confirmed.

Provincial attentiveness became more acute when the rumors of the Boer attack on the 94th Regiment were proved accurate. Between 20 and 24 December, the editorial columns of the Conservative *Aberdeen Journal* had been silent on the developments in South Africa, because they focused on the violence in Ireland over the land-tenure question. Nevertheless, its readership would have seen coverage of the Transvaal rebellion in its news pages.[158] On 28 December, however, the editorial page erupted. Labeling the the Boer attack at Bronkhorstspruit a "massacre" and that on Potchefstroom a "ruthless assassination," the paper demanded an energetic response.[159]

Concerned with the impact of recent developments on Britain's national prestige and imperial mission in South Africa, the presses increasingly became consumed with the question, as repeatedly phrased by the *Pall Mall Gazette's* "Epitome of Opinion" column,

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[158] *Aberdeen Journal*, 21, December 1880, 4; 22 December 1880, 4; 23 December 1880, 4; 24 December 1880, 4.
[159] *Aberdeen Journal*, 28 December 1880, 4.

"Should We Give Up the Transvaal?" [160] For those papers that had already come out in favor of military intervention, the Boer attack quite naturally did little to alter their views. Continuing to lament Britain's past history with the Boers and admitting that the annexation had been a mistake, the *Times* nonetheless held firm that the "reconquest of the Transvaal was a necessary act." In appealing to the sword, the Boers gave Britain no choice but "to meet force by force." Under no circumstances could Britain allow the Transvaal to boast that their independence came as a result of "their own forwardness in asserting it for themselves by arms."[161] The *Standard*, meanwhile, advanced that the annexation of the Transvaal should be protected on the grounds that British control provided necessary security not only for the Boers but for the native communities as well.[162]

To a limited extent, the Boers' opening attack did cause some presses to shift their opinion on the matter in favor of a more aggressive policy. Just one day after arguing that the annexation should be reversed, the *Daily News* reacted to the news from Bronkhorstspruit by saying that it had eliminated any chance that the situation could be resolved peaceably now that the Boers had proved that they were fully committed to armed rebellion. Moreover, because the Boers' success would only further encourage their efforts and make it impossible for them to draw back, Britain had no choice but to crush the rebellion:

> A terrible calamity has befallen our arms … [but] it will be a still greater calamity for the Boers. Their one victory will cost them as dearly in the end, as much his one success cost Cetewayo [sic]. But it will bring little satisfaction to Englishmen to feel that the Boers will be defeated and crushed before long.[163]

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[160] *Pall Mall Gazette*, 31 December 1880, 2; 3 January 1881, 2; 4 January 1881, 2.
[161] *Times* (London), 3 January 1881, 9.
[162] *Standard*, 3 January 1881, 5.
[163] *Daily News (London)*, 25 December 1880, 4.

To that end, the paper insisted that Britain took no satisfaction in the "petty, although sanguinary and costly, struggle," or the success which would inevitably come. Nor was it sympathetic to the policies which gave rise to the war. Rather, the *Daily News* justified crushing the Boers on the grounds that Britain had been drawn into the war by circumstances beyond its control, namely, by the aggressive actions of the Boers themselves. Further, because the Boers remained in a position where they were essentially the masters of the Transvaal, it maintained that "it is all the more difficult for us to discuss terms of reconciliation."[164] Indeed, by early January, a consensus point was seemingly reached—with Liberal papers such as the *Aberdeen Free Press*, the *Daily News*, the *Leeds Mercury*, the *Bradford Observer*, and the *Scotsman*, as well as Conservative papers like the *Aberdeen Journal*, the *Standard*, and the *Daily Telegraph*, and independent papers such as the *Times*—all collectively arguing that the question of the Transvaal's independence could and should only be sorted out after Britain had reestablished its dominance in the area.[165]

Despite this apparent coming together, press opinion remained anything but unified. Papers which had opposed the military suppression of the Boers from the onset deftly rebutted the arguments of those who favored it. The Liberal-minded *Northern Echo* continued to question the legitimacy of Britain's original act of annexation and argued that the security of Natal no longer depended on British overlordship of the

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[164] *Daily News (London)*, 3 January 1881, 5.
[165] *Aberdeen Free Press*, January 1881, reprinted in Pall Mall Gazette, 4 January 1881, 2-3; *Bradford Observer*, January 1881, reprinted in *Pall Mall Gazette* 3 January 1881, 2; *Daily Telegraph* (London), 3 January 1881, 4; *Leeds Mercury*, 1 January 1881, 4; *Scotsman* (Edinburgh), 3 January 1881, 4; *Standard*, 3 January 1881, 5; *Times* (London), 3 January 1881, 9.

Transvaal.[166] Speaking to the issue of national prestige and honor, the Liberal *Weekly Dispatch* advanced that Britain had sacrificed neither in granting the Orange Free State its independence in 1854, and that there was thus no reason to think that Britain would lose prestige by again granting the Transvaal's demand for independence.[167] Additionally, the two Liberal papers from Liverpool, the *Daily Post* and the *Mercury*, commiserated with the plight of the Boers and held that those who would deny them their right to self-government were taking a position that was antithetical to British principles of liberty. That position, the *Mercury* asserted, had caused the nation to be "so far steeped in blood as Macbeth was."[168] The only proper recourse was for the government to ignore the howls of the jingoes and to move forward by confessing past mistakes and reconsidering the situation of the Transvaal. Thus, the *Daily Post* insisted, "anything is better than that England should exhibit herself to the world as the crusher of national feeling, the enemy of self-government."[169]

The defense of the Boers, also enjoyed the support of C. E. Trevelyan, who had previously served as governor of Madras and as the Indian finance minister. In a letter to the *Times*, Trevelyan reminded readers of missteps in imperial administration and insisted that the war with the Zulu and the recent rebellion of the Boers warranted a complete reconsideration of Britain's "shortsighted" imperial policy:

> We make ourselves directly responsible for preserving order over widely-extended regions inhabited by warlike races with various conflicting interests, and forcibly compress springs of action which recoil in augmented force whenever an opportunity offers.[170]

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[166] "What Right Do We Have to the Transvaal?" *Northern Echo* (Darlington), 30 December 1880, 2-3.
[167] *Weekly Dispatch* (London), December 1880, reprinted in *Pall Mall Gazette*, 31 December 1880, 2-3.
[168] *Liverpool Mercury*, 1 January 1881, 4.
[169] *Liverpool Daily Press*, January 1881, reprinted in *Pall Mall Gazette*, 3 January 1881, 3
[170] *Times* (London), 29 December 1880, 4.

Trevelyan thus encouraged Britons to apply what had been learned from their experiences in India, and to allow self-rule to flourish under an umbrella of British influence and protection. The *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper* took an even more pronounced and demonstrative pro-Boer stance, when it not only criticized the original annexation of the Transvaal but congratulated the Transvaalers for "the calm courage they have displayed in proclaiming the republic of which they were some four years ago defrauded."[171] In making this declaration the paper expressed its hope that the Boers would thus be conscious that not every Briton supported the policies of Sir Bartle Frere.

ON THE WAR AND PEACE: JANUARY – MARCH 1881

In the first two weeks of January the British government announced that reinforcements, which included the 92nd (Gordon Highlanders) Regiment and the 83rd (County of Dublin) Regiment of Foot, were being dispatched to Natal.[172] Otherwise, as it had been throughout the greater part of 1880, Gladstone's attention remained focused on trying to keep his government together as the Irish Land League's demands for greater tenant rights threatened to split the Liberal Party and drag Ireland into civil disorder.[173] Indeed, while matters such as Ireland and the withdrawal from Afghanistan made were addressed in the Queen's Speech and the subsequent parliamentary debates, the issue of the Transvaal was remarkably not discussed or even mentioned.[174] But if Gladstone was deprioritizing the Transvaal matter in deference to other concerns, in practically every

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[171] *Reynolds Weekly Newspaper*, 26 December 1880, 4.
[172] *Times* (London), 3 January 1881, 5; 4 January 1881, 5; 10 January 1881, 6.
[173] Matthew, *Gladstone*, 186-193; Pakenham, *The Struggle for Africa*, 98-99; D. M. Schreuder, *Kruger and Gladstone: Liberal Government and Colonial 'Home Rule' 1880-1885* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), 83. Gladstone's need to hold the government together led to his decision to placate the Radicals by withdrawing from Afghanistan. Thus we see yet another instance where imperial matters concerning one locale became intricately interwoven into the imperial affairs elsewhere and even into the political concerns on the domestic front.
[174] Pakenham, *The Struggle for Africa*, 99.

edition, whether it was a daily or a weekly, the national and provincial news pages included full reporting on the latest happenings in the Transvaal.

In the month following the disaster at Bronkhorstspruit, discouraging news from the front flooded the pages of the national and provincial presses. In the first place, Major General Sir George Pomeroy Colley, who had recently been appointed high commissioner and who was recognized as one of the most capable of the "Wolseley Ring," was failing in his attempt to crush the rebellion.[175] Setting out for the Transvaal on 10 January, Colley was soundly beaten at Laing's Nek on 28 January and then at Ingogo on 7 February. Second, and more disturbing, were reports that the Orange Free Staters were mobilizing to support their fellow Boers to the north. These developments forced South African affairs onto the ministerial front burner, alongside the Irish and Afghan issues.[176] Influenced by his colonial secretary, Lord Kimberley, the prime minister believed circumstances had changed to such an extent that it was now more advantageous for Britain to negotiate a settlement with the Boers, through which they would be granted independence so long as they agreed to permit British "suzerainty."[177] In 1881, as defined by Sir Evelyn Wood, "suzerainty" meant that the Transvaal would have complete "self-government as regards its own interior affairs, but that it cannot take action against or with an outside Power without the permission of the suzerain," Great

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[175] Colley along with the other members of the Wolseley Ring, which included future generals Henry Brackenbury, Redvers Buller, William Francis Butler, John Carstairs MacNeil, John Frederick Maurice, and Henry Evelyn Wood, had all served with Wolseley in the Ashanti War of 1874. This group of officers was also known as the "Africans" in contrast to the rival "Indian Ring" of Field-Marshal Lord Roberts and Herbert Kitchener who had risen through the ranks in the Indian Army. Halik Kochanski, *Sir Garnet Wolseley: Victorian Hero* (London: Hambledon Press, 1999), 62; Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War* (New York: Random House, 1979), 71.
[176] Pakenham, *The Struggle for Africa*, 99.
[177] Walker, *A History of Southern Africa*, 384-85.

Britain.[178] The precise meaning of suzerainty, however, remained undefined and would be debated by Boer and British officials in the decades to come.

Kimberley therefore ordered Colley to present the Boers with the British offer and see if terms could be established. Colley, however, was convinced that Britain should not abandon its position in the Transvaal in such an ignominious fashion. To that end, he sought to put Britain on a stronger footing in negotiating a peace. He placed an impossibly short deadline of forty-eight hours for the Boers to respond to the peace overtures, something he had been told would take at least six days. When the Boer response was not forthcoming, Colley launched another offensive at the Boer line at Laing's Nek, having been reinforced by the troops from Europe.[179] Positioning his troops atop the dominant Majuba Hill on the night of Saturday 26 February, Colley was confident because of his position atop the hill, the quality of his men, and the inferiority of the Boer forces. Fully expecting the Boers to withdraw at finding their position at Laing's Nek compromised, he took no precautions in preparing his position against an attack. Instead of fleeing at the sight of the British position, the Boers attacked the following morning, making use of abundant cover and their expert marksmanship.[180] The result was a rout: Of the 27 officers and 568 men who had moved out with Colley the night before, 20 officers and 261 men, including Colley himself, became casualties. The

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[178] *Further Correspondence (Telegraphic) respecting the Affairs of South Africa*, C. 2837 (March 1881), 29. Major-General Sir Evelyn Wood, along with Sir Henry de Villiers, and Sir Hercules Robinson were appointed by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Kimberley, to serve as the British commissioners in the peace negotiations held between 13 June and 3 August 1881.

[179] Pakenham, *Struggle for South Africa*, 99-102

[180] Snook, *Into the Jaws of Death: British Military Blunders, 1879-1900*, 189-218; John Laband, *The Transvaal Rebellion: The First Boer War, 1880-1881* (London: Pearson Educated Ltd., 2005), 198-211. For a full account of the Majuba Hill campaign see, Oliver Ransford, *Battle of Majuba Hill: the First Boer War* (London: John Murray, 1967).

Boers, attacking with some 300 men, suffered only one man killed and six others wounded.[181]

As they had done during the Zulu War, illustrated presses, including the *Graphic*, the *Illustrated London News*, and the *Penny Illustrated Paper*, encapsulated the course of the war with descriptive narratives and vignettes, complete with engravings of maps, fallen heroes, and troop movements. In the case of the *Penny Illustrated Paper*, these were packaged into a section called "The Pictorial Chronicle of the Boer War."[182] Examples of these works included the *Graphic's* depiction of Colley's 8 February assault on Laing's Nek which included notations on specific troop positions. Illuminating Colley's stand on Majuba Hill, the *Illustrated London News* portrayed the general's last minutes as those of a gallant hero who unswervingly faced the enemy with calm determination.[183] These incidents would leave an indelible mark in the minds of the British public. More than eighteen years after the fact, as Britain was on the verge of another war with the Boers, the *Penny Illustrated Paper* depicted these battlefields, with a caption "Places Tommy Atkins Doesn't Forget; Laing's Nek and Majuba Hill."[184]

In the spring of 1881, the nation was stunned and horrified by the sudden turn of events. For the second time in three years the British military had been humiliated in the field by an opponent they had presumed to be inferior. While Conservatives and Liberals pointed fingers at whose imperial policies were more to blame for getting the country into such a position, they were nevertheless largely unified on the question of how Britain

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[181] Snook, *Into the Jaws of Death*, 197, 204, 216; Laband, *The Transvaal Rebellion*, 198, 210. At the summit of Majuba Hill itself, Colley's force numbered 23 officers and 385 men, as four companies had been detached to protect Colley's lines of communication and were not engaged in the battle. These troops became engaged as the Boers pursued those fleeing from the summit.
[182] *Penny Illustrated Paper*, 5 February 1881, 81-84.
[183] *Graphic*, 19 March 1881, 290; *Illustrated London News*, 14 May 1881, 409. See images at the end of chapter.
[184] *Penny Illustrated Paper*, 30 September 1899, 200.

should proceed. In harkening back to the original motives for refusing to recognize the independence of the Transvaal and with the cognizance of the interconnectedness of the empire, British honor had to be preserved in order to prevent future disturbances in the region. The *Times* summarized the position:

> Unless we are prepared to retire from South Africa immediately and unconditionally, we must restore our authority where it has been defied, and treat only with those who submit to the representatives of the Queen.[185]

This insistence came despite the paper having previously called Colley's taking an aggressive forward position "unnecessary," although "not without some appearance of justification," given that it was fully known that reinforcements under General Wood were being more forward.[186] Whether the *Times* was aware that Colley had been expressly ordered to wait for Wood is not certain, but its 21 February editorial indicates that the paper fully expected that Colley would wait, and that their combined forces would then move against the Boers.[187] That reinforcements were required to handle the Boer rebellion was in and of itself cause for great concern and, according to the Times, ratcheted up public attention to events in South Africa.[188]

The attention of the press more generally was focused less on Colley's rashness than on the need to redeem British honor.[189] The Liberal *Daily Chronicle* insisted that "Englishmen are not in the least likely, after what has occurred, to listen to proposals of independence until after the Boers have laid down their arms and submit – a contingency, it is to be feared, rather remote until they have received a severe repulse at the hands of

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[185] *Times* (London), 2 March 1881, 9.
[186] *Times*(London), 18 February 1881, 9.
[187] *Times* (London), 21 February 1881, 9.
[188] *Times* (London), 15 February 1881, 9.
[189] *Times* (London), 1 March 1881, 9.

the British Army."[190] The Conservative *Standard* likewise maintained that the "English people" would not allow their honor to be trampled upon and that therefore the Boers had to be beaten to such an extent that they would be convinced of their complete inability to resist the power of Britain.[191] Firing a direct rebuke at Gladstone's calculation to withdraw from the Transvaal and echoing Disraeli's Crystal Palace speech, the Conservative *Daily Telegraph* was so adamant that Britain effectively respond to the humiliation that it demanded that "the united nation proclaims that there must be no more of this piecemeal half-hearted policy, which is utterly disastrous to a great empire." Charging that Gladstone's imperial policy was wrongfully being dictated by financial considerations, the *Telegraph* further demanded "there must be no more counting by sixpences the cost of the things and reckoning up over narrowly to see that victory abroad may not compromise budgets at home."[192]

Provincial newspapers expressed similar sentiments, suggesting that such opinions were widely held. Applauding the appointment of Sir Frederick Roberts to continue the war against the Transvaal, the *Scotsman* maintained that "unless Great Britain is prepared to give up her colonies in South Africa, and to bear the stain of defeat at the hands of a few hundred Boers, she must make her power felt."[193] In assessing the implications of Colley's defeat, papers such as the *Leeds Mercury*, Manchester's two Liberal papers, the *Guardian* and the *Examiner*, and its Conservative paper, the *Courier Gazette*, all expressed the belief that there was no hope of a quick end to the war because

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[190] *Daily Chronicle* (London), March 1881, reprinted in *Pall Mall Gazette*, 2 March 1881, 3.
[191] *Standard*, 2 March 1881, 5.
[192] *Daily Telegraph* (London), 2 March 1881, 4. While Gladstone had often expressed concern for the financial costs of empire, he had always seen the annexation of the Transvaal as being "an invasion of a free people" and incompatible with British principles. Shannon, *Gladstone*, 242; Jenkins, *Gladstone*, 500. As such this last accusation of the *Telegraph* may well have come from a conflation of Gladstone's general concern for the financial cost of maintain the empire and the specific issue of the Transvaal.
[193] *Scotsman* (Edinburgh), 1 March 1881, 4.

it was utterly impossible for Britain to pull back. To do so would welcome greater losses than just the Transvaal. As the *Manchester Courier Gazette* concluded, the government is obligated "to secure speedy and effective victory, in order that our military credit may not fall into universal discredit."[194] The *Essex Standard* put the matter succinctly: an armistice and peace process at that time would be "hollow, humiliating, and ominous."[195] And one "W. B. D." even submitted a cautionary fifty-nine line poem entitled "Peace with Dishonour" to the *Morning Post*.[196]

Even so, not everyone believed that the defeat at Majuba Hill demanded a military response. The editors of *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper*, for instance, hoped that the disaster would convince the government of the errors of the "military spirit" which they believed had permeated British society and advance the cause of peace:

> This is our danger – that the military spirit, thinking only of conquest, of victory, of marches, and countermarches, decorations and promotion, may conduct England to ruin by the same road that Rome went to destruction.[197]

The idea that a final peace would ensure British suzerainty also seemed to soothe some of the hot tempers. Only a week after it expressed its conviction that Colley's defeat made it impossible to proceed with peace negotiations, the Liberal *Birmingham Daily Post* changed its position:

> If the Boers are willing to subscribe to such terms of peace as are consistent with the national dignity and the particular merits of the case, Government, we are convinced, will not be deterred from doing its duty by the clamour of an interested party, however active and influential.[198]

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[194] *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 1 March 1881, 4. This opinion was reprinted by the *Pall Mall Gazette*, 1 March 1881, 3.
[195] *Essex Standard*, 26 March 1881, 5.
[196] *Morning Post* (London), 11 March 1881, 6.
[197] *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper*, 13 March 1881, 5.
[198] *Birmingham Daily Post*, 1 March 1881, 4; 8 March 1881, 4.

The *Daily News* also took confidence in the knowledge that the peace negotiations were being led by Sir Evelyn Wood, who seemed assured that the peace concessions would in no way demonstrate British weakness.[199]

Queen Victoria, meanwhile, was particularly upset at what she perceived as the government's weak policies that had led to the disastrous war and which now seemed ready to ignominiously withdraw from the region:

> I do not like a peace before we have retrieved our honor…I am sure you [Gladstone] will agree with me that even the semblance of any concessions after our recent defeats would have a deplorable effect.[200]

Yet Gladstone and Kimberley resisted such pressure and assessed the situation pragmatically. They realized that Britain risked losing all of its holdings in South Africa if the Orange Free State entered into the war on the side of the Transvaal. Concurrently, the Boers feared they would lose any leverage they had gained whenever British reinforcements under Roberts would arrive in the region.[201] Thus, both sides had reasons for concluding a peace as quickly as possible. The final peace treaty emerged in August and stayed true to Kimberley's initial peace feelers, by providing for the independence of the Transvaal while insuring that Britain would retain the rights of suzerainty.[202] By that time, the public had mostly lost its revengeful attitude and found the terms to be acceptable.[203] It was, after all, what most of the country had favored at the onset of the

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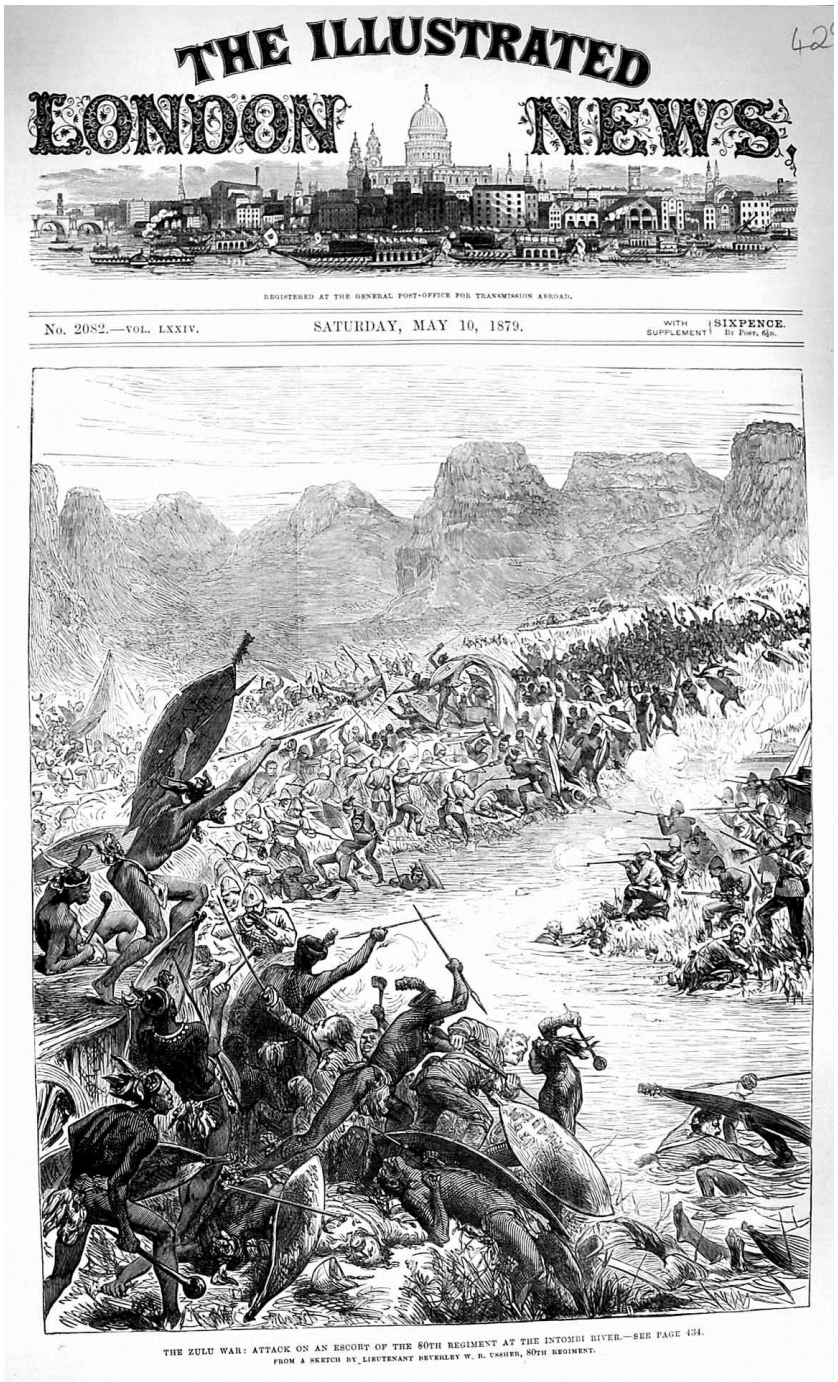
[199] *Daily News* (London), 25 March 1881, 5.
[200] George Earl Buckle, ed. *Letters of Queen Victoria*, 2nd Ser., vol. 3 (London: John Murray, 1926), 199-201; Pakenham, *The Struggle for South Africa*, 106; John Powell, ed., *Liberal By Principle: The Politics of John Wodehouse, 1st Early of Kimberley, 1843-1902* (London: The Historians Press, 1996), 153-54.
[201] Headlam, "Failure of Confederation," 495; Thompson, "Great Britain and the Afrikaner Republics," 300. For an exhaustive examination of the British government's handling of the Transvaal rebellion, see Schreuder, *Gladstone and Kruger*, 83-168. Other works pertinent to the peace process and the impact of Majuba Hill include, De Kiewiet, *The Imperial Factor*, 277-88; Ransford, *The Battle of Majuba Hill*, 125-33; Laband, *The Transvaal Rebellion*, 213-28.
[202] "Convention of Pretoria, 3 August 1881," in Eybers, *Select Constitutional Documents*, 455.
[203] *Times* (London), 5 August 1881, 9-10.

crisis. But while that finalized peace treaty resolved the immediate conflict of 1880-1881, the meaning of "suzerainty," would continue to be a contentious thorn in Anglo-Boer relations, as we will see in Chapter Three.

In assessing the public's attitude toward military interventionism in South Africa between 1877 and 1881, we find a number of consistencies. In the first place, as evidenced by the widespread approval of the annexation of the Transvaal, the public was more likely to endorse coercive diplomacy or military force to advance the British position when it was apparent that the action would result in little or no added cost, either in blood or capital. It was only when that action led to further disturbances and failed to resolve contentious relationships, such as during the Zulu War and the Transvaal rebellion that the public began to rethink the legitimacy of its aggressiveness toward the Boers. Secondly, the press coverage and leading articles regarding the annexation of the Transvaal, the Zulu War, and the First Anglo-Boer War showed that the economic opportunities associated with imperial expansionism in South Africa factored very little if at all into the public debate. What was a concern to the general public was the advancement of British humanitarianism toward the native populations, along with continued peace and security both within the Cape and Natal and in surrounding territories. To that end, what the public in Britain desired for the colonials was peace through a live-and-let-live imperial philosophy, so long as humanitarianism did not conflict with a need for security. If that type of peace could only be obtained via the point of the sword, then so be it, but only if Britain and the colonial administration had done nothing to provoke the conflict, and the motivation for the using military force had proved to be sufficiently legitimate and virtuous.

That the opinion of the general public mattered to government officials and colonial administrators is borne out by the lengths to which policy-makers went to present the appearance of acting in self-defense, even when Britain's motives and actions were very much on the side of the aggressor. In explaining the action he had taken toward the Transvaal, Shepstone insisted that he had the overwhelming support of the Boers themselves. In dealing with the Zulu, Bartle Frere constructed an ultimatum that he knew Cetshwayo could not possibly agree to, and thus he could defend the invasion of Zululand on the premise that the noncompliant and militant Zulus had made a war necessary. And while public opinion factored less in Britain's response to the Transvaal rebellion in 1881, the public was certainly active in attempting to drive and influence the government's response. Lastly, taking into account the myriad instances of British belligerence throughout the latter nineteenth century, one finds that policymakers, such as Carnarvon and Frere, were much more likely to take—and the public to support—an aggressive stance and to use either military force or diplomatic coercion to settle a dispute when the country faced an adversary that was considered to be an inferior power and the circumstances of immediate importance to British interests.



THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS

REGISTERED AT THE GENERAL POST-OFFICE FOR TRANSMISSION ABROAD.

No. 2082.—VOL. LXXIV. SATURDAY, MAY 10, 1879. WITH SUPPLEMENT SIXPENCE. By Post, 6½d.

THE ZULU WAR: ATTACK ON AN ESCORT OF THE 80TH REGIMENT AT THE INTOMBI RIVER.—SEE PAGE 434.
FROM A SKETCH BY LIEUTENANT BEVERLEY W. R. USSHER, 80TH REGIMENT.

Figure 1-1: *Illustrated London News*, 10 May 1879, 429. Caption reads: "The Zulu War: Attack on an escort of the 80th Regiment at the Intombi River – See p. 434. From a sketch by Lieutenant Beverley W. R. Ussher, 80th Regiment."

Figure 1-2: "British Officers Engaged in the Zulu and Afghan War," *Graphic*, 1 March 1879, 212. From left to right: Col. C. H. Palliser, Maj. Gen. E. F. Maude, Lt. Francis Pender Porteous, Lt. Herbert Valiant Willis, Lt. Henry Julian Dyer, Lt. Col. Pulleine, Col. A. W. Durnford, Capt. John Cook, Lt. Chard, and Lt. Gonville Bromhead.

Image 1-3: "The Rebellion in the Transvaal - The Attack on Laing's Nek Under the Late Sir G. P. Colley, January 28 1881," *Graphic*, 19 March 1881, 290. Engraving is further labeled designating troop locations.

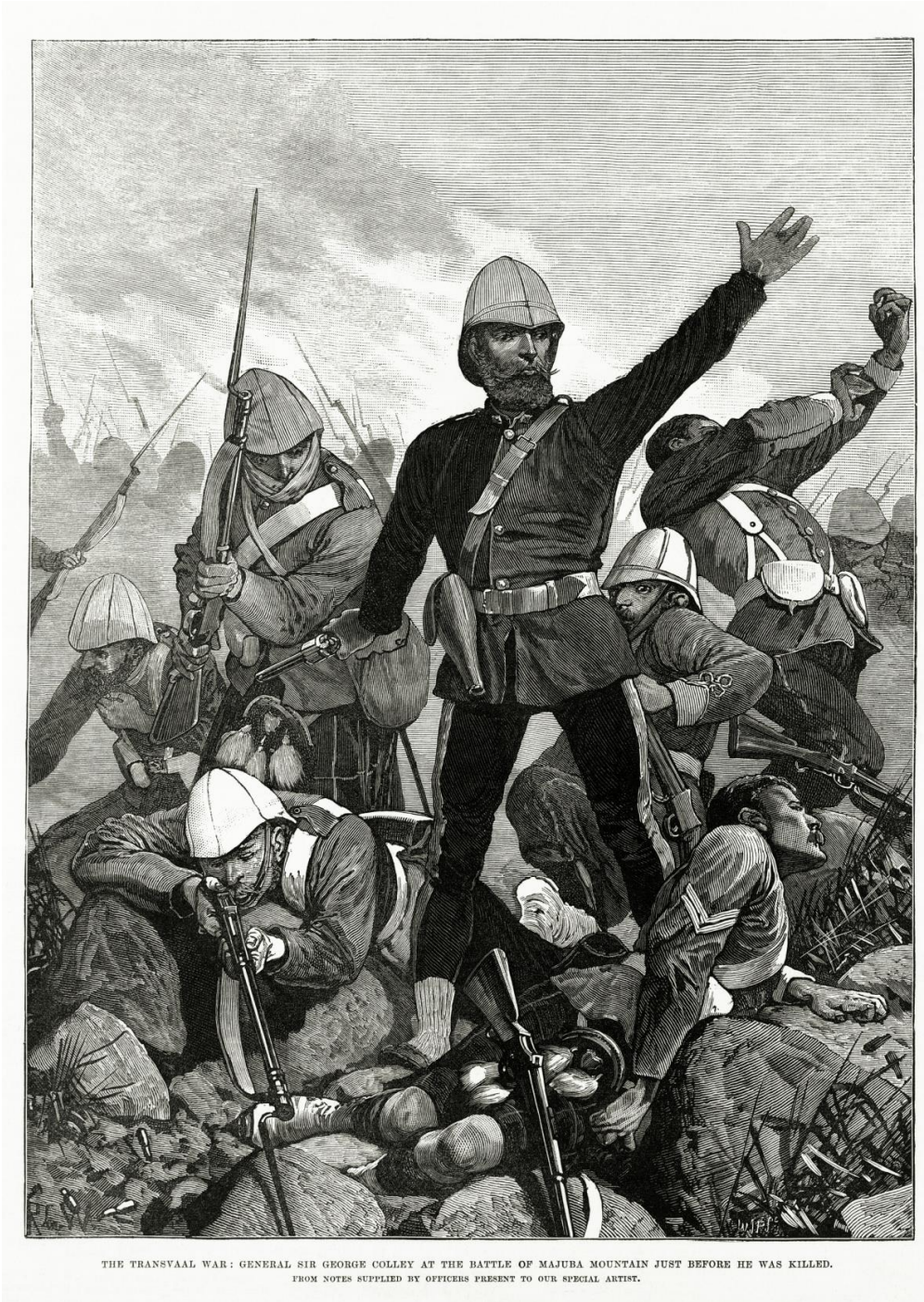


Figure 1-4: "The Transvaal War: Major General Sir George Colley at the Battle of Majuba Mountain just before he was killed," *Illustrated London News*, 14 May 1881, 409.

CHAPTER 2:
BRITISH INTRIGUE AND INTERVENTION IN EGYPT AND THE SUDAN, 1882-1898

In December 1881, Gladstone wrote to his son relishing the success he had had thus far in dismantling the imperial politics associated with Beaconsfieldism and contemplating his own retirement from public life.[1] But, given the expanse of Britain's imperial reach, it was all but certain that the retreats from Afghanistan and the Transvaal would not remove the empire from public attention. Indeed Irish Home Rule remained an ever-present issue, and while the Indian, Chinese, Afghan, and South African theatres had been the focus of public attention throughout much of the nineteenth century, a new theater had opened since mid-century, Egypt. Within months of the resolution of the South African War, affairs in Egypt and the Sudan would come to transfix the attention of the country and vault one man's reputation to that of national hero. Aside perhaps from the Second Anglo-Boer War, no greater example of the intersection of public interest and imperial policy exists than that which involved Major General Sir Charles "Chinese" Gordon's mission to the Sudan and the subsequent debate over relieving the besieged general at Khartoum.

THE SUEZ CRISIS, 1882-1883

Since the late-eighteenth century, Britain had had an interest in preserving the power of the Ottoman Empire in order to protect British India. This interest had led to British intervention on behalf of the Turks in 1854 in the Crimean War. In the resulting peace negotiations the Palmerston administration had worked to ensure that the European

[1] Matthew, *Gladstone*, 102.

powers would respect the integrity of the Turkish Empire, and prior to the 1870s neither Conservative nor Liberal administrations had any real interest in expanding British influence over the Turks.

The completion of the Suez Canal by the French in 1869 caused Britain to begin readdressing its strategic interests and priorities in the Near East as they pertained to India. Consequently, when the Egyptian khedivate offered to sell its shares in the canal in 1875 in order to resolve its financial difficulties, Disraeli took the opportunity to cement Britain's position in the region. Thereafter, the khedive's continued financial problems led to the establishment of joint Anglo-French oversight of Egyptian finances in 1879. Even so, the Disraeli government had no real desire to bring the Egyptian government directly into the Empire. Instead, the British and French governments intervened for the purpose of liberalizing the Egyptian government and strengthening the khedive's fiscal position.[2]

The Anglo-French presence in Egypt, however, actually served to undermine the tenuous authority of the khedivate by rallying rival nationalist elements against foreign direction. These elements included Egyptian liberals, who opposed the nominal overlordship of the Turks and favored western constitutionalism, as well as Muslim conservatives, who condemned the encroachment of Christianity. Landlords also rallied in order to preserve their traditional privileges against the fiscal reforms of the khedivate, while the peasantry bore the brunt of funding the government's industrial schemes and paying off its debt. More importantly, Western intervention drove a wedge between the khedive and the Egyptian military upon which much of his authority rested. In April

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[2] Robinson and Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians*, 76-86. For a more recent survey of the British imperial experience in Africa during the late-nineteenth century see Thomas Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa, 1872-1911* (New York: Random House, 1991).

1879, the Khedive Ismail attempted to resist Western reforms, but the European powers were able to pressure the Turkish sultan into replacing Ismail with his eldest son Tewfik. Simmering beneath the surface throughout 1880, nationalist sentiments boiled over in 1881. On 1 February Colonel Ahmed Arabi and a number of fellow officers forced the khedive to replace the minister of war. Eight months later, on 9 September the army surrounded the palace and demanded to be restored to its former status and compelled the khedive to replace his entire ministry.[3]

Due its financial investments with the khedive and its strategic interests in the canal, Britain's position in Egypt was severely complicated by these developments. Prime Minister Gladstone was philosophically opposed to the imperial interventionism promoted by his predecessors Palmerston and Disraeli. Nevertheless, British interests demanded that some action be taken, if for no other reason than to prevent France from acting unilaterally and gaining sole control over the canal. To that end, throughout much of 1881, at the same time that he was heavily involved in calming down tensions in Ireland, Gladstone was also engaged in complex negotiations with the French government to carve out an Egyptian policy that would be mutually acceptable.[4]

The result of the complicated Anglo-French diplomatic wrangling was the issuance of a Joint Note in early January 1882, which declared the powers' intent to defend the khedivate and threatened a future military expedition to restore order.

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[3] Robinson and Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians*, 84-87.

[4] In those negotiations Gladstone and his Foreign Minister Granville preferred that any action in Egypt be done in accordance with the Concert of Europe, in order to prevent Chancellor Bismarck of Germany from using the situation to drive a diplomatic wedge between Britain and France. Moreover, Gladstone desired that any military operations be handled by the Ottoman Empire, since it was the suzerain power over Egypt. On the other hand, the French Government feared that Turkish intervention in Egypt would encourage the Turks to interfere with France's imperial interests in North Africa. Robinson and Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians*, 89-97.

The Joint Note, however, did little to quell the situation. Instead it emboldened the nationalists to be more assertive in throwing off foreign oversight and it served to galvanize support around Arabi who was named minister of war in early February 1882. With the Joint Note failing to have any effect on its own and fearing that the Egyptian developments would increasingly threaten Anglo-French dual control, British and French officials once again struggled to carve out a mutually agreeable course of action. In the middle of May, the two powers agreed to send an Anglo-French squadron, commanded by British and French officers, which would precede a Turkish military expedition. Those forces would then restore order in Egypt under a European mandate. That plan fell through after the Germans and the French legislature raised objections. As a result, the Anglo-French force arrived off Alexandria without a clear mission and without the prospect of relief from a Turkish force. The squadron's mere presence, however, emboldened the khedive, and he summarily dismissed his Arabist ministers. This action set off a powder keg of Egyptian nationalistic fervor, and on 11 and 12 June rioting erupted in Alexandria, which left fifty foreign residents dead.[5] Faced with the outbreak of such violence, the British and French governments renewed their efforts to work out a viable solution to the unrest in Egypt.[6]

By early July, a group of key cabinet officers had become convinced that Britain needed to act with or without France and without the approval of the Concert of Europe. Although these officials presented a united front, the specific motivations which brought

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[5] Robinson and Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians*, 98-103; Edmund Fitzmaurice, *The Life of Granville George Leveson Gower Second Earl Granville*, volume 2 (London: Longmans, 1905), 257-63; F. H. Hinsley, "International Rivalry in the Colonial Sphere, 1869-1885," in C. H. B. E., 3: 109-11.

[6] Stephen Lucas Gwynn and Gertrude M. Tuckwell, *The Life of the Rt. Hon. Sir Charles W. Dilke*, volume 1 (New York: Macmillan, 1917), 463-64. Ramm, *The Political Correspondence of Mr. Gladstone and Lord Granville*, I: 381..

them together varied. Whereas Joseph Chamberlain, president of the Board of Trade, and Charles Dilke, president of the Local Government Board, were primarily concerned with the broader strategic importance of the Suez Canal, Lord Hartington as secretary of state for India and Lord Northbrook in the Admiralty were attuned to the financial implications of the canal.[7] Meanwhile, Admiral Seymour, who commanded the Alexandria squadron, worried about its long-term security, and indeed Arabi anticipated a naval action and he began strengthening the coastal forts at Alexandria in the aftermath of the 11 June riots. If completed, those fortifications would have posed a significant threat to the anchorage of the British warships and to their ability to support any future land operations. Seymour, therefore, called for authorization to issue an ultimatum to the khedivate to halt those efforts. This activist group of officials pressured Gladstone to issue an ultimatum to Arabi, recognizing that such an action might well escalate the crisis, and that British troops would be needed to ensure the security of the canal.[8]

Although Gladstone remained reluctant to intervene, he recognized that he would need to authorize the ultimatum in order to keep the cabinet together. He again sought French support and invited them to join in presenting the ultimatum. The French government, however, did not believe the situation was serious enough to warrant a military option. Rather, it was inclined to negotiate a settlement with Arabi, and thus rejected the British offer. With little option but to proceed alone, Gladstone authorized the ultimatum, and when it expired, he authorized Seymour to fire on Alexandria's defenses.[9]

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[7] Matthew, *Gladstone*, 133.
[8] Robinson and Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians*, 107-11.
[9] Robinson and Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians*, 109-12; Matthew, *Gladstone*, 137; Jenkins, *Gladstone*, 504.

The British bombardment of Alexandria on 11 July did little to resolve the situation on the ground in Egypt. Outraged that Britain had proceeded to act alone, the French government immediately withdrew its warships in remonstration.[10] In Egypt, the bombardment incited further nationalist riots and forced the khedive to flee to Alexandria and seek the protection of the British fleet. Assuming power, the Arabist regime declared war against Britain and the Western powers, and warned that it would destroy the canal. Such developments left little doubt in the minds of Gladstone's cabinet that a military expedition would have to be sent immediately to Egypt to secure the canal and the Egyptian interior as well. John Bright, the chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and a Quaker with a lifelong aversion to the use of military force, was the lone exception to this decision, and he resigned from the cabinet in protest.[11]

With the rest of the cabinet behind him, Gladstone pushed Parliament to authorize the expedition.[12] Having abstained from participating in the naval action, the French promised through Charles Freycinet, the foreign minister, to support this operation, but the French legislature again refused to authorize the necessary credit, and the ministry fell from office. Italy also decided not to answer Britain's request for a joint action.[13] With the other powers not willing to offer assistance, therefore, Gladstone insisted to Parliament that Britain had no choice but to act alone.

Parliament authorized the expenditure of £2.3 million on 27 July, and on 2 August Major General Garnet Wolseley left for Egypt to take command of an expeditionary force

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[10] Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, 289.
[11] Robinson and Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians*, 113-14.
[12] Jackson, *The Last of the Whigs*, 150.
[13] Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, 289; E. Malcom Carroll, *French Public Opinion and Foreign Affairs, 1870-1914* (London: Century, 1931), 92-94; Fitzmaurice, *The Life of the Second Earl Granville*, 2: 270.

of over 30,000 men.[14] Arriving in Egypt later that month, Wolseley's force defeated Arabi's decisively at Tel El-Kebir on 13 September. Two days later, the British commander entered Cairo, declared the war over, and helped to reinstate Tewfik as khedive. With its unilateral action effectively abolishing Anglo-French dual control, the British government assumed sole responsibility for rebuilding the Egyptian government. By the end of October, the bulk of the expeditionary force withdrew, and under the direction of Sir Evelyn Wood, who had been appointed sirdar (or commander), the process of rebuilding the Egyptian army under British officers commenced in December 1882. As that force took shape, the gradual drawing down of the British garrison continued throughout 1883.[15]

Still, questions lingered concerning Britain's longstanding presence in Egypt. Having reluctantly led Britain into Egypt, Gladstone and the bulk of his cabinet preferred to leave a token military force there in order to maintain the khedivate as a British protectorate.[16] Outspoken supporters of withdrawal in the cabinet included Granville, Hartington, Home Secretary Sir William Harcourt, Chamberlain, Dilke, and Northbrook in the Admiralty. For his part, Hartington believed that the primary necessity for British dominance was political rather than military, and consequently he encouraged the

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[14] Kochanski, *Sir Garnet Wolseley*, 121, 134-36. At the time of his appointment, Wolseley was serving as adjutant general of the forces. As a supporter of Egyptian nationalism, he had warned against intervention at the onset of the crisis. When it became clear that some form of intervention was needed, he was particularly concerned that naval operations did not commence before sufficient forces were in the region. His warnings however went unheeded. The expeditionary force was comprised of 16,400 troops stationed in Britain and a further 14,400 from the Indian Army. Unable to name his own division commanders, Wolseley nevertheless found places for a number of "Wolseley Ring" officers.

[15] Kochanski, *Sir Garnet Wolseley*, 133-144, 147-48.

[16] Matthew, *Gladstone*, 138-39; Shannon, *Gladstone*, 318. Robinson and Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians*, 124; Peter T. Marsh, *Joseph Chamberlain: Entrepreneur in Politics* (New Haven: Yale, 1994), 157-58.

drawdown of British forces during 1883.[17] However, as circumstances on the ground in Egypt changed and Britain's colonial relations with Germany shifted in 1884, Hartington, Chamberlain and Dilke reversed their position and began insisting upon maintaining a permanent British military presence not only in Egypt but elsewhere throughout the Empire to present a strong front against German imperial designs.[18]

Outside the cabinet, Lord Randolph Churchill also strongly favored a British withdrawal, but he argued that the administration had falsely represented the necessary importance of the canal to India and the need to place Egypt under sole British protection. He instead favored establishing Egypt as a protectorate under all of the European powers.[19] Wolseley was sympathetic to the cause of "Egypt for Egyptians" and had opposed British intervention before being sent to quell the Arabist revolt. With that mission accomplished, he urged that all British troops be withdrawn as soon as possible and warned Hartington in February 1883 that "these small detached forces are … always a source of danger to a nation like ours whose army is so small."[20] On the other hand, Sir Evelyn Baring (later the earl of Cromer), who had served as the British controller-general in Egypt from 1878-1879 and who was familiar with Egyptian affairs, insisted that the reconstruction of Egypt would be impossible without a strong continued British military presence.[21]

To Gladstone's chagrin the strongest proponent of maintaining a strong military presence in Egypt was Queen Victoria. Writing to her private secretary Sir Henry

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[17] Shannon, *Gladstone*, 318; Kochanski, *Sir Garnet Wolseley*, 148. Hartington had previously served in the War Office, first as Under Secretary and subsequently as Secretary of State of War, from April 1863 to June 1868.
[18] Hinsely, "Imperial Rivalry," 141-42.
[19] Winston Churchill, *Lord Randolph Churchill*, volume 1 (New York: Macmillan, 1906), 280.
[20] Jackson, *Last of the Whigs*, 151; Kochanski, 147-48.
[21] Shannon, *Gladstone*, 318; Evelyn Baring, Earl of Cromer, *Modern Egypt*, volume 1 (New York: Macmillan, 1916), 329.

Ponsonby on 17 September about the recent military and diplomatic developments in Egypt, the queen included a note to be sent to Granville:

> Think you should be very cautious in speaking of *early withdrawal* of troops. We must bind ourselves to *nothing*. We have not fought and shed precious blood and gone to great expense for nothing. Short of annexation we must obtain a firm hold and power in Egypt for the future. A large force will have to be left there for some time; and some troops, doubtless, indefinitely. If you bind yourselves beforehand you will be hampered as you were by the conference and convention. We shall be laughed at and despised by all Europe if we do not hold a high tone.[22]

Five days later in a letter to Harcourt, she insisted that Britain had to secure a position in Egypt "short of annexation" to protect "our Indian dominions and to maintain our superiority in the East, which is the greatest importance to ourselves as much for civilization in general."[23] On 26 October Lord Salisbury, the leader of the Conservatives, made similar remarks in the House of Lords, insisting that Britain could not withdraw and leave Egypt in a state of absolute anarchy:

> To do so would be utterly to condemn the whole of the policy of the war. It would be to say that all this valuable blood has been spilt, that these terrible risks have been run, that this mighty force has been dispersed, and that heavy burdens have been eased upon the English taxpayer, in vain….[It is] an historical fact that Her Majesty's government preferred to postpone the period of their intervention till the khedive was absolutely overthrown by his rebellious soldiers; that they deliberately preferred to do that rather than interfere at a time when his soldiery were submissive and his authority intact. The result of this fact is that the position of the khedive when he comes back is as far removed as possible from his position when he went away. He comes back on foreign bayonets…I do not say that after a sufficient lapse of time, if his government is strong, and firm, and equitable, he may not acquire sources of power and support which are independent of any foreign aid; but…unless we are prepared to do the business over again, and to leave Egypt to an anarchy which is inconsistent with all our professions, and fatal to our interests, he must be sustained by that which is the only thing upright in that land—namely, the power of Great Britain.[24]

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[22] Buckle, *The Letters of Queen Victoria*, 3: 334. Emphasis original.
[23] Gardiner, A. G. *The Life of Sir William Harcourt*, volume 1 (London: Constable, 1923), 460.
[24] *Parliamentary Debates*, Lords, 3rd Ser. vol. 264 (1882), cols. 156-58.

The practical considerations reflected in these arguments, combined with a petition submitted by the 2,600 Europeans residing in Alexandria, which called upon the British government to maintain a sizeable military presence, convinced those who favored an immediate withdrawal that some British forces would have to remain in Egypt for at least the time being.[25] Communicating the government's intentions to the Powers on 3 January 1883 Granville insisted:

> Although for the present a British force remains in Egypt for the preservation of public tranquility, Her Majesty's government are desirous of withdrawing it as soon as the state of the country and the organisation of proper means for the maintenance of the khedive's authority will admit of it. In the meanwhile, the position in which Her Majesty's government are placed towards His Highness imposes upon them the duty of giving advice with the object of securing that the order of things to be established shall be of a satisfactory character, and possess the elements of stability and progress.[26]

Exactly when those goals would be satisfactorily accomplished remained undefined.

PRESS COVERAGE AND PUBLIC OPINION ON THE SUEZ CRISIS

The national and provincial press kept the British public well-informed about the developments in Egypt, as well as their financial and strategic implications. Throughout the early months of the crisis, the opinions of the national and provincial press reflected the divided opinions that characterized the Parliament and cabinet over the issue of intervention. These divisions in turn reflected both party difference and the shifting political opinions within the Liberal Party itself.

Immediately following the signing of the Joint Note which formalized Anglo-French cooperation in handling the Egyptian crisis, many Conservative and independent papers responded with stiff criticism. Responding to the *Times*'s insistence that Britain

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[25] Kochanski, *Sir Garnet Wolseley*, 148.
[26] Baring, *Modern Egypt*, 1: 340.

had signed the Joint Note with the "utmost great reluctance," the *Aberdeen Journal* stressed that "there could hardly be a more cutting censure" of the British government's Eastern policy, and charged:

> Why should we be dragged 'reluctantly' into any policy whatever, or at the heels of any power on the face of the earth? If it be our duty to contemplate such an intervention as that indicated by the Joint Note, why not go to that duty like a nation of men; and, if not, why be coerced into it like a nation of children?[27]

Similarly, concerned about maintaining British prestige, *Berrow's Worcester Journal* feared that the arrangement would compromise Britain's imperial interests in the region, by giving France the power to "use the joint note as a pretext for hindering any counteraction on our part."[28] A more moderate piece appeared in the independent *Morning Advertiser*, calling the joint Anglo-French approach regretful but nevertheless prudent, and pressing for assurances that "England" would not be blindly led into a situation where "the peaceful interests of this country would be subordinated to the necessities or ambitions of M. Gambetta."[29] Acknowledging that there was as yet no consensus as to how best to resolve the developing crisis in Egypt, the *Times* likewise regretted that the country had abandoned its position of strength in the Near East:

> Before 1879 we were masters of our own action, and were at liberty to maintain in whatever way we judged best an influence in a country where our interests are beyond all comparison greater than those of all other Powers put together.[30]

In summing up Gladstone's second administration, the *Derby Mercury* declared that "two years of Liberal government have brought the country to a lower position than it occupied when Mr. Gladstone last quitted office; and the public desire to know the reason why."[31]

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[27] *Aberdeen Journal*, 10 January 1882, 4.
[28] *Berrow's Worcester Journal*, 4 February 1882, 4.
[29] *Morning Advertiser* (London), January 1882, reprinted in *Pall Mall Gazette*, 17 January 1882, 11.
[30] *Times* (London), 14 February 1882, 9.
[31] *Derby Mercury*, 25 January 1882, 5.

After Gladstone sent warships to the region, Conservatives continued to accuse him of diminishing British prestige. Musing at the end of May that Gladstone was not being more aggressive to defend Britain's "highway to India," the *Aberdeen Journal* contended that the Arabi revolution might not have occurred at all or would have quickly collapsed had British diplomatic power been consistently and strongly exerted.[32] The *Daily Telegraph* similarly grumbled that Gladstone's "muddled" approach to the crisis was causing Britain to "sink back to play a humble part in the European concert, and above all places on earth in Egypt, where at one time our word alone was law."[33]

Moreover, Conservative papers wove Gladstone's handling of the Egyptian crisis into a broader narrative which sought to demonstrate a pattern of misguided Liberal governance at home and abroad. In an article that was reprinted by the *Derby Mercury*, a correspondent for the *Daily Telegraph* eagerly cited an article in the *Cologne Gazette* to refute the "bombastic and unfounded assertions" by A. J. Mundella that there was not a "single newspaper paragraph in any civilized country, or any legislature, decrying the magnanimity and justice of England":

> Abroad and at home alike, Great Britain's experiences during the past year were of an uniformly disagreeable character. It seemed as though the good genius of the realm had vanished with Lord Beaconsfield and closed his eyes forever on April 19. The Irish Land Bill certainly did not contribute to raise the Government in general esteem… The leaders of the rebellion [i.e., the Land War] are under lock and key, the police force has been strengthened, the last available regiment has been transferred to Irish soil. Nevertheless, outrages are perpetrated daily with impunity…*It cannot reckon the restoration of the Transvaal to the plucky Boers as a particularly meritorious achievement*; by giving up Afghanistan it has simply proved its lack of perspicacity and *has conjured up terrible embarrassments for India*.

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[32] *Aberdeen Journal*, 31 May 1882, 4.
[33] *Daily Telegraph* (London), May 1882, reprinted in *Pall Mall Gazette*, 30 May 1882, 11.

The correspondent accordingly concluded that "Mr. Gladstone's statesmanship has obviously run to the very end of its tether."[34] Querying whether Gladstone's Egyptian policy amounted to something more substantive than merely "not to quarrel with France," the *Standard* cautioned that, if British interests were sacrificed too cheaply in order to maintain that cooperation with France, Britain's position in Egypt might well "soon be as embarrassing as our position in Ireland."[35] Taking issue with Harcourt for what it considered his obfuscating the truth at a Liberal political rally in Burton-on-Trent, Yorkshire, the *Derby Mercury* reminded its readers of the "total failure of the Irish policy of the government, of their rupture of the European Concert, of the dangerous state of affairs in Egypt, and of the Russian advance in Central Asia."[36] In the aftermath of the bombardment of Alexandria, *Berrow's Worcester Journal* passionately reminded its readers of what it considered to be Gladstone's failings in Ireland, South Africa, Afghanistan, and Egypt, and lamented that the pattern of imperial retreat would not likely end so long as Gladstone remained in office:

> If John Bull hates anything, it is to be made ridiculous in the eyes of others. He has an exalted idea of his own importance, and rarely forgives those who lower his *prestige* before Europe…Since the present government came into office we have not had a single example of that British spirit and pluck which of old has carried us through all difficulties, or spirited them away even before they were fairly developed…The Boers rule the Transvaal, the Land League rules Ireland, and Arabi Pasha rules Egypt...The Government have gone on a principle of turning each cheek to the smiter, of sacrificing any interest rather than defending it with the sword.[37]

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[34] *Derby Gazette*, 18 January 1882, 3. Emphasis is original. At the time that he made his claim, A. J. Mundella, a Liberal MP for Sheffield, was serving as Vice-President on the Committee of Education.
[35] *Standard* (London), 17 January 1882, 4;
[36] *Derby Mercury*, 25 January 1882, 5.
[37] *Berrow's Worcester Journal*, 1 July 1882, 4.

The paper thus cautioned that, with Britain's prestige so diminished, that it would take "greater deeds than would have sufficed to retain it where it was three or four years ago" and urged the Conservative Party to be vigilant in safeguarding British honor.[38]

Despite insisting that the Government address the Egyptian crisis to avoid eroding British prestige, many Conservative papers were hardly cavalier about using military force to restore order. Questioning the administration's demand in January that troops would only be landed in order to secure the *status quo* and not to advance Britain's footprint, the *Aberdeen Journal* asked whether such action would in the end only further the destruction of the *status quo*.[39] The *Morning Post* similarly cautioned that, while a joint Anglo-Turkish military action might be possible, a unilateral British action invited significant risks:

> England and Turkey in alliance could hold Egypt and the Suez Canal against a world in arms. But it is a very different thing for England herself to assail the united forces of the Ottoman Empire…[it] would be no child's play, but by tremendous exertions, by the most costly sacrifices, that such adventure could be crowned with success. But even when we had occupied Egypt at the cost of thousands of lives and with the aid of a hundred thousand French 'helpmates,' what then?[40]

Conservatives, nevertheless, generally favored using a show of military strength as a tool of diplomacy, but, they argued, the application of that force would ultimately prove unnecessary. At the end of May and again in the aftermath of the bombardment of Alexandria on 11 July, the *Aberdeen Journal* criticized Gladstone's "muddled" diplomacy and the "certainly avoidable violence" by reminding its readers of how, "without firing a shot or risking a life," Disraeli had effectively used British military

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[38] *Berrow's Worcester Journal*, 29 July 1882, 4.
[39] *Aberdeen Journal*, 10 January 1882, 4.
[40] *Morning Post* (London), 17 January 1882, 4.

power to defend British interests and prestige in the Near East.[41] To that point, the *Aberdeen Journal* along with *Berrow's Worcester Journal* maintained that had Gladstone offered consistent and vigorous support for the khedive from the start rather than backing the nationalist "Egypt for Egyptians" movement, such pressure would have diffused the crisis and might even have prevented the revolution outright.[42] By sending warships into Alexandrian waters, where Britain "had no natural right," the papers maintained that the government had only invited a response by Alexandrian shore batteries and incurred an unnecessary loss of life. It would have been better, the *Aberdeen Journal* maintained, to station the vessels in the vicinity of the Suez Canal which was Britain's chief priority and interest.[43]

Concurring with that point, the *Standard* charged that "the Allied Fleets are not the protectors of order, but the instigators of disorder:

> Had it not been for the presence of the English and French squadrons in the Port of Alexandria—a feeble demonstration that has served only to irritate the Egyptian fanatics—the massacre of Sunday might never have taken place.

To that end, the *Standard* further held that the fleets would retain that "mischievous character" until a land force arrived to drive Arabi out of Egypt and to convey Tewfik back to Cairo.[44]

Speaking before a Conservative demonstration in Charlton, the Conservative MP for Exeter, Sir Stafford Northcote, told the crowd that he feared that the Government "by their vacillation and tardy recognition of the preponderance of British interests in the East, have imperiled those interests, and are mainly responsible for the present state of

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[41] *Aberdeen Journal*, 31 May 1882, 4; 13 July 1882, 4.
[42] *Aberdeen Journal*, 31 May 1882, 4; 13 July 1882, 4; 29 July 1882, 2; *Berrow's Worcester Journal*, 29 July 1882, 4.
[43] *Aberdeen Journal*, 13 July 1882, 2; 29 July 1882, 2; *Berrow's Worcester Journal*, 29 July 1882, 4.
[44] *Standard* (London), 14 June 1882, 2.

affairs in Egypt, which may involve this country in a disastrous and costly war."[45] Editorializing on Northcote's speech, *Berrow's Worcester Journal* contrasted Tory attitudes with those of the Liberals:

> However much we may lament or condemn the course of diplomacy which has led up to the crisis, if England has to put forth her strength, Sir Stafford Northcote promises that her Conservative sons will be ready to support her. The Conservatives of England will not impede or embarrass the exertion of that strength, but will show, and not for the first time, an example of loyalty to our country and our country's interests which rarely marks a Liberal Opposition.[46]

Likewise, in the aftermath of the bombardment, the *Derby Mercury* decried that little attention had been given to the consequences of sending the fleet to Alexandria without the ability to follow up the action with land forces, maintaining that the "catastrophic" incident profoundly demonstrated the administration's naïve belief that a moderate show of force would coerce Arabi to desist his activities.[47]

Confident that a strong display of military force had been needed from the start, Conservative newspapers were less certain about who should supply it. The *Daily Telegraph* had allowed in January, at a time when Gladstone was intent on cooperating with France, that such collaboration was regrettable, but that "it is, at any rate, better to have a single partner whom we may one day buy out than to admit four or five with rival claims." Even so, the paper further maintained, "we will never consent to any restoration of direct Turkish rule, to any removal of the exactions of Ismail's time, or to any intervention by the four European Powers whose interests lie outside."[48] Later, in the aftermath of the attack on Alexandria, as Gladstone worked to prompt the Turks to intervene, the *Standard* opined that if the Sultanate offered to send in troops, "however

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[45] *Times* (London), 24 July 1882, 8.
[46] *Berrow's Worcester Journal*, 29 July 1882, 4.
[47] *Derby Mercury*, 19 July 1882, 6.
[48] *Daily Telegraph* (London), January 1882, reprinted in *Pall Mall Gazette*, 17 January 1882, 11.

much we may dislike it, or suspect the motives that prompt it, we fail to see what answer can be given, save an affirmative one."[49]

Not surprisingly, when Gladstone decided to act unilaterally and called for a tax increase to fund a full military expedition to put down the Arabi insurrection, Conservative papers gleefully pointed out the irony that Gladstone's request validated their own longstanding position.

> The Conservatives are not factious when they see the policy of their late lamented Chief adopted by his opponents and successors…The very policy [the Whigs] condemned they have adopted. They raised an outcry against the bringing of native troops from India, and now they are following that wise example. There are few who will deny that whilst we hold India we must preserve our highway thither and our communications intact. We have therefore to uphold the khedive and his authority against what Mr. Gladstone calls a military faction opposed to the lawful rulers in Egypt.[50]

For the *Lancaster Gazette*, Bright's resignation from the cabinet made the Liberal hypocrisy all the more evident:

> It would seem, however, that the principles of the Peace-at-any-price Party enable its supporters to join in threats of war, and show of force, indeed all preliminaries which lead up to actual warfare; but they must [retire] ignominiously with the first shot…If he wished to have been a consistent member of the Peace-at-any-Price party, he should have withdrawn some time ago; if he wished to be a consistent member of the cabinet, the present is certainly not the time to leave it.[51]

From the start, Liberal papers throughout the country did not let Conservative accusations go unanswered. Questioning how it was that Conservatives could honestly criticize Gladstone and his ministers for "persevering in a course that had been set by Lord Beaconsfield and Lord Salisbury," the *Scotsman* insisted that such attacks would "not likely influence public opinion" against the premier. Additionally, the paper refuted the idea that France or other Western powers had a "desire to enlarge their scope of

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[49] *Standard* (London), 14 June 1882, 2.
[50] *Berrow's Worcester Journal*, 29 July 1882, 4.
[51] *Lancaster Gazette*, 22 July 1882, 4.

control," arguing that Anglo-French cooperation in Egypt did not endanger British supremacy in the region.[52] The *Daily News*, meanwhile, championed the notion that the two political parties and the country were more unified than not regarding British cooperation with France in Egypt. Further it maintained that "the interests of Britain are paramount even over that of her partner in control to a certain well-defined extent."[53] A week later the *Daily News* sounded surprisingly interventionist when it emphasized that Gladstone fully appreciated the "delicacy and difficulty" of the Egyptian crisis and would not hesitate to defend the canal and oppose misrule:

> To guard her own rights…this country would be ready and willing to act, even, if that were necessary without allies...While it is most important to keep up a good understanding with France, we cannot afford either to neglect our own position, or to violate sound principle by standing in the way of a genuine movement toward independence among the Egyptian people.[54]

The *Bristol Mercury* speculated that any direct intervention would take place only *if* the hoped-for nationalist movement became dictatorial, and it reassured readers that any such action would not be taken unilaterally, but would occur within the European concert:

> While [the government] was prepared to protect interests in Egypt which are exclusively English, they refuse to take up a dog-in-the-manger attitude toward the Powers who claim a voice in Egypt. Mr. Gladstone stated distinctly that the Government were prepared to welcome the cooperation of Germany, Russia, Austria, and Italy in dealing with the Egyptian question. This prevents jealousy, and restores the European concert at Cairo.[55]

By early summer the opinions of the national and provincial Liberal press increasingly sounded more like their Conservative counterparts as they leaned toward direct intervention. For example, in late May the *Daily Chronicle*, a paper which supported the left-wing of the Liberal Party, strongly criticized Radically-minded MPs,

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[52] *Scotsman* (Edinburgh), January 1882, in *Pall Mall Gazette*, 11 January 1882, 11.
[53] *Daily News* (London), 11 January 1882, 4.
[54] *Daily News* (London), 17 January 1882, 4.
[55] *Bristol Mercury*, 10 February 1882, 5.

such as Sir Wilfred Lawson, for opposing any display of force to stabilize the situation. "The real strength of the foreign policy of the Liberal Party," it wrote,

> lies in the fact that…it can speak clearly and distinctly when occasion arises. There are times when it is as much the absolute duty of England to be ready to intervene abroad as it is for the London police to be ready to intervene in our streets. Officious meddling in either case is to be deprecated but absolute apathy would be absurd.[56]

A few days later the paper maintained that "the first duty of our government is to remove obstacles and reassert our influence; and this to be done effectually must be done promptly."[57] The *Daily News* likewise doubted that the general public approved of using Turkish troops to maintain order in Egypt and maintained that not only was it imperative for Britain to protect the khedive, but that the nation had "a moral duty to promote the welfare of Egyptian people."[58]

At the same time, other papers resisted making such a shift in their political opinion. Regretting that unfortunate circumstances had caused Britain to take direct action by sending a naval squadron to Egypt, the *Scotsman* remained confident that the Government could be trusted to end the crisis with the "least possible friction and least danger to further complications." It then cautioned:

> The cry for more vigorous action in asserting British interests is a survival of Jingoism. It means a repudiation of the right of anyone but ourselves to interfere in Egypt, and the curious circumstance is that it is advocated by the partisans of the Ministry to whom we are indebted for the copartnership [sic] with France.[59]

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[56] *Daily Chronicle* (London), May 1882, reprinted in *Pall Mall Gazette*, 27 May 1882, 11. In protesting the dispatch of British warships, Lawson, a Radical Liberal who was a staunch advocate of disarmament and a firm supporter non-interventionism, decried the arrival of British warships as an outward sign that the government "intended to make war," and that its diplomatic dispatches to Arabi were tantamount to an ultimatum. *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 3rd ser., vol. 269 (1882), cols. 1711-1714.
[57] *Daily Chronicle* (London), May 1882, reprinted in *Pall Mall Gazette*, 30 May 1882, 11.
[58] *Daily News* (London), 27 May 1882, 4; 30 May 1882, 4.
[59] *Scotsman*, May 1882, reprinted in *Pall Mall Gazette*, 27 May 1882, 11.

The *Times* joined in opposing direct British intervention. Throwing its influence behind Gladstone by maintaining that he had "accurately estimated the situation from the outset," the *Times* shared his optimism that no force by Britain would be needed and that Turkish intervention was "the least objectionable expedient for restoring tranquility."[60]

As the situation became more serious, more papers began pointing to the need for Britain to intervene directly. As the *Bristol Mercury* contended, the unwillingness or inability of the Turkish government to stabilize the situation had moved matters to the point where the major powers needed to act more assertively.

> The conference of the powers cannot prudently maintain its present indefinite form, which leaves the Khedive open at moment to conspiracies organized in Constantinople. The mere repugnance of the Sultan to the deliberations of the Great Powers proves the absolute necessity of devising better guarantees for the existing control, for the safety of the European population, and for the constitutional system which the Turkish agents have outraged.[61]

In the immediate aftermath of the massacre in Alexandria on 11 June, the *Liverpool Post* submitted:

> We heartily regret the legacy of a French partnership in Egypt left us by the late Government…If England were alone in this adventure she would know what to do better than she does. European Concert if you please; but not partnership with one unpopular State, with all the rest looking on with ill-disguised suspicion.[62]

At the end of June, the *Pall Mall Gazette* asserted in its front page editorial that its "business [was] to point out with the light of recent published official despatches how unfortunately the influence of France has operated in the development of the present crisis in Egypt."[63] Over the next month, that aggressive shift in tone became even more pronounced after Arabi usurped control of the Egyptian government and the British

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[60] *Times* (London), 27 May 1882, 9; 30 May 1882, 7.
[61] *Bristol Mercury*, 6 June 1882, 5.
[62] *Liverpool Post*, June 1882, reprinted in *Pall Mall Gazette*, 14 June 1882, 11.
[63] *Pall Mall Gazette*, 27 June 1882, 1.

government authorized the H.M.S. Seymour to bombard Alexandria. It was at this point that the *Times* declared that "we cannot afford to allow Egypt to fall further into anarchy, as it will certainly do if the action of the fleet is not immediately followed up."[64]

While Liberal newspapers had consistently attacked Conservatives for imperial interventionism, they now found themselves advocating similar intervention in Egypt. Increasingly, as summer 1881 progressed, they rationalized such action on the grounds that it was necessary to secure British interests, that it was not inconsistent with fundamental Liberal principles, and that it furthered the cause of western civilization in the region. Assessing reaction to the bombardment of Alexandria on 11 July, the London correspondent for the *Leeds Mercury*, a paper which in January had emphasized Gladstone's commitment to direct intervention if necessary, held that the recent events had widely convinced Liberals that to uphold a "policy of absolute non-intervention would be perilous to British commerce." The correspondent further claimed that there was "no great sympathy even among the Radical Members, most of whom are capable of distinguishing between the policy of mere aggression and a policy of legitimate defence" for the positions held by peace Radicals such as Sir Wilfred Lawson and Mr. Henry Richard. "There are not ten Members on the Liberal side of the House," he claimed, "who sympathise with the views of Mr. Lawson."[65] The *Times* insisted if Britain delayed any longer Arabi would be able to greatly strengthen his position and pose a "standing menace to European life and property, and even to the existence of Cairo itself."[66] Lauding Bright's long stance against the use of military force, the *Bristol Mercury* asserted that the "popularity of the veteran statesman will not be lessened by his

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[64] *Times* (London), 18 July 1882, 10.
[65] *Leeds Mercury*, 13 July 1882, 4.
[66] *Times* (London), 18 July 1882, 10.

resignation, however little the public may share in the sentiments by which he has been actuated."[67] The *Mercury* also asserted that the "country at large, in common with the Government, may admit the principle whilst reasonably demurring to the application." Still, "in view of the extreme exigencies and almost unprecedented calamities of the moment," the paper concluded:

> We are surely entitled to avert further exigencies and perhaps more deplorable calamities, by defending—not merely the vast interests of England but imperiled civilization. One can hardly imagine any object for which a Power like Great Britain could more beneficently exercise its material resources than in preserving Egypt from the horde of savages which a military adventurer has let loose upon it.[68]

The *Pall Mall Gazette*, meanwhile, offered reassurance to its readers regarding the government's altruistic intentions for bombarding Alexandria. According to the *Gazette*,

> This then is the programme of the day:—England preparing to do the work for Europe and possibly at the request of Europe, which the Sultan refuses to do; that work, the suppression of the army; this done, the Egyptian minister and popular delegates to have wider opportunity of doing their own business. That the programme may be hindered by Turkey on the one hand and by France on the other is only too true, and there is plenty to be said on both of these hands. But the above, at any rate, describes the general drift of a policy that is not unworthy of the government of Great Britain, and to which the powers will be more likely to ascent, whether expressly or implicitly, than any other.[69]

Conveying the speeches of William Woodall and Henry Broadhurst at the Liberal Club at Hanley on 15 July, the *Bristol Mercury* reported that they insisted, "the government had done all that was possible to avoid interferences by force,…[and that] England was acting

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[67] *Bristol Mercury*, 18 July 1882, 5.
[68] Ibid.
[69] *Pall Mall Gazette*, 11 July 1882, 1.

in full command with the other powers, and the relations had not been shaken by the bombardment of Alexandria."[70]

The widespread approval for British intervention across the spectrum and the thorough coverage of Wolseley's campaign and victory at Tel-el-Kebir were also accompanied by continued concerns about the government's long-term strategy for Egypt. Agreeing with Gladstone that "anarchy must be put down in Egypt and that English interests must be protected against attack," the *Times* forcefully maintained that "the restoration of the khedive, if it is to lead to any permanent settlement of affairs in Egypt, must be supported by something more stable and lasting that the shadowy authority of the sultan or the futile approval of the Concert of Europe."[71] The paper asserted that, having taken sole responsibility for restoring order in Egypt, Britain had an undisputed right to control the future arrangements for the government of the Egyptian territory. With the vote to authorize a military expedition pending, the Liberal *Birmingham Daily Post* insisted that "it is now of much more importance that we should…ascertain definitely the objects for which we are fighting, and the conditions under which we are to lay down our arms."[72] Exhaustively engaging the dynamics of restoring order to Egypt while protecting British and European interests, the paper recognized the implication of defeating the Egyptian army:

> This leads to one of the most important points of all. Without such an army as would be sufficient to protect the internal order and the external independence of Egypt, how is the khedive to be able to perform those international duties, and protect those foreign interests, in which England is of all countries the most immediately concerned? It is not enough, then, to say that we desire to restore

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[70] *Bristol Mercury*, 17 July 1882, 4. William Woodall and Henry Broadhurst were Liberal MPs who both sat for Stoke-upon-Trent. In addition to his seat in Parliament, Broadhurst was also notably serving as Secretary of the Parliamentary Committee of the Trades Union Congress.
[71] *Times* (London), 27 July 1882, 9.
[72] *Birmingham Daily* Post, 27 July 1882, 4.

> self-government to Egypt, we must be prepared to replace the military forces which we shall have destroyed, and to define the English and the European interests which have to be recognized and preserved. It is essential that on these subjects we should be moderate and unselfish.

The *Post*, therefore, definitively held that "we shall scarcely have closed our mission in Egypt until there is established a government there able and willing to secure that object.[73] While the Liberal *Liverpool Post* approved of British intervention, it nevertheless appealed to the government and the nation:

> We have retired ere now without enriching ourselves from territories which we have seized and controlled in the interests of civilization. Let us determine to retire at the earliest possible moment from Egypt, even though under the peculiar circumstances of the case the earliest possible moment may be considerably postponed.[74]

The editors of the Conservative *Spectator* magazine, meanwhile, called upon the country to stay the course and finish what it had started in Egypt no matter the difficulty.[75]

Over the following months, as the government struggled to work out its policy concerning Egypt, the provincial presses also found it difficult to articulate a stance toward Anglo-Egyptian relations. For instance, on 7 December 1882, the Liberal *Manchester Examiner* weighed in on the queen's avowed commitment to "promote the happiness of the people and the prudent development of [Egypt's] institutions." While it gauged that nobody in Britain expected to annex Egypt formally, the paper firmly believed that the government, having "learned how to abandon the semblance of power and yet grasp the substance of power," was almost certainly "bent upon pursuing in

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[73] *Birmingham Daily* Post, 27 July 1882, 4.
[74] *Liverpool Daily Post*, July 1882, reprinted in *Pall Mall Gazette*, 27 July 1882, 6.
[75] "Egypt," *Spectator* 55 (26 August, 1882), 1100-1101.

Egypt one of those subtle and complex policies which, as developed in India, the world has come to admire as models of ingenious statecraft."[76]

Beyond the ranks of editorial writers, the public remained engaged with developments in Egypt. According to the London correspondent for the *Leeds Mercury*, "there was no part of the country where the policy of the government finds stronger approval than among the Liberals of the north of England...and if the government had shown itself indifferent to English interests, the outcry in the north of England would have been very great."[77] In addition to inferences from national and provincial papers which alluded to public sentiment, the public's active engagement in the Egyptian crisis was manifestly expressed in a number of different ways, such as the frequent publishing of letters to the editor, including those submitted by former and active government officials such as former Liberal MPs Julian Goldsmid and William H. Gregory, as well as the standing Liberal MP for Waterford, Henry Villiers-Stuart.[78] Also included were letters from individuals such as the traveler and explorer Samuel W. Baker, Charles H. Allen, Alfred J. Butler, and Robert W. Felkin.[79]

Popular opinion was dramatically evident at numerous public demonstrations. Provincial papers reported on and advertised for these events. For instance, in association with the 12 July Orange celebrations commemorating the Battle of the Boyne,

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[76] *Manchester Examiner*, December 1882, reprinted in *Pall Mall Gazette*, 7 December 1882,
[77] *Leeds Mercury*, 13 July 1882, 4.
[78] *Times* (London), 15 May 1882, 10; 29 May 1882, 10; 13 July 1882. In addition to his service in parliament, Villiers-Stuart was also a noted Egyptologist and would later go with Lord Dufferin to review the situation on the ground there. Their report was subsequently published as a parliamentary bluebook. James McGuire and James Quinn, ed., *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, vol. 9 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 136-7.
[79] *Times* (London) 2 May 1882, 5; 30 May 1882, 6; 21 June 1882, 6; 29 June 1882, 7; 4 July 1882, 10. A commentator on African affairs since the early 1870s, Allen served as secretary of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society from 1879 to 1899. A scholar on the ancient Coptic Church, Butler held fellowship at Brasenose College, Oxford University. Felkin was a member of the Stanley and African Exhibition Committee. *Times* (London), 13 Feb 1902, 7; 18 June 1885, 12; 1 March 1890, 1.

between 5,000 and 10,000 members of the Liberal Orange Institution of England turned out at Hooton Park in Liverpool to celebrate the principles of Beaconsfieldism. Occurring just one day after the bombardment of Alexandria, the demonstrators denounced "the total and disastrous failure" of Gladstone's government at home and abroad, specifically in the cases of Ireland and Egypt. The meeting consequently moved that "Gladstone's government is unworthy of the nation's confidence, and should be put an end to at the earliest possible moment."[80] At another demonstration held in Blackburn, the keynote speaker warned:

> The dishonor through which England has had to go in Zululand, in Egypt, and in other places should be a caution to the leaders in England, and should excite in the breast of every man and woman who cares for his and her country a determination to get ready for the coming conflict which might be close upon us, closer than we think.[81]

At a similar rally in Brookhill near Lisburn, spectators welcomed the criticisms of the administration's handling of Egyptian and Irish affairs with supportive cries of "Shame and put them out."[82]

Similar events continued to occur into the autumn months. For instance, on 21 July Conservatives from West Kent and the Borough of Greenwich demonstrated at Charlton Park in Wiltshire.[83] Significantly the Charlton event occurred in a district formerly represented by Gladstone. Driving home this point, identical editorials which appeared in *Berrow's Worcester Journal* and the *Isle of Wight Observer* pressed that events such as the one in Charlton, as well as in Oxford and South Lancaster, demonstrated how deeply the general public objected to the premier's handling of Egypt

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[80] *Times* (London), 13 July 1882, 6.
[81] *Blackburn Standard*, 15 July 1882, 6.
[82] *Belfast News-Letter*, 13 July 1882, 8.
[83] *Times* (London), 24 July 1882, 8. The event was also notably covered by national papers such as *Lloyds Weekly Newspaper*, the *Pall Mall Gazette*, the *Standard*, and the *Morning Post*.

and other policy matters. They further speculated that, while the premier still carried the support of his present home district of Midlothian, his backing would likely soon diminish there as well.[84] Claiming that Conservatives were resurgent and reporting that more than 30,000 individuals had attended the event in Charlton, the *Essex Standard* similarly took note of "the remarkable fact that, even where Liberalism was strongest a few years ago, there the most hostile demonstrations are made against the government."[85] On 7 August 5,000 demonstrators attended a nationally advertised event at Stoke Edith Park in Ledbury, Herefordshire, and enthusiastically approved an equally critical resolution.[86] Subsequently, on 7 October, "a great demonstration" of Conservatives turned out in Manchester to "consider the Irish and Egyptian policies of the government." The attendees unanimously resolved:

> That this meeting strongly disapproves of much of the government policy in Ireland; and while, cordially recognising the gallant conduct of Her Majesty's forces during the late campaign in Egypt, condemns the action of the administration, believing that, by judgment, firmness, and foresight, the cabinet might have secured British interests, averted the war, saved many valuable lives, and prevented much unnecessary pressure upon the national resources...This meeting is convinced that the proceedings of the government in Afghanistan and South Africa, as well at home, are calculated to bring discredit upon the country; and pledges itself to use every means consistent with law to reinstate a Conservative administration which will have an enlightened and consist[ent] regard for the honour and true welfare of the empire.[87]

Conservatives were not the only ones to demonstrate, however. If Tories capitalized on Bright's resignation to ridicule what they called the hypocritical shift in Gladstone's foreign policy, the Birmingham Reform League met to celebrate politicians such as Bright, Sir Wilfred Lawson, and Joseph Cowen, who had denounced "the cruel

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[84] *Berrow's Worcester Journal*, 29 July 1882, 4; *Isle of Wight Observer*, 29 July 1882, 4.
[85] *Essex Standard*, 29 July 1882, 5.
[86] *Berrow's Worcester Journal*, 1 July 1882, 4; *Leicester Chronicle*, 22 July 1882, 6; *Standard*, 8 August 1882, 3.
[87] *Times* (London), 9 October, 1882, 4; *Glasgow Herald*, 9 October 1882, 4.

and unnecessary bombardment of Alexandria."[88] On 15 July at Bowood Park near Chippenham and on 16 August in Brownhills in the West Midlands, other Liberals gathered amidst marching bands, in order to dismiss Conservative critics and reinforce public confidence in the government. With the bombardment of Alexandria having occurred only days earlier, the chairman of the Bowood rally insisted that there was "not the slightest discredit attached to our government under the circumstances," an assessment met with applause and cheers of "here here."[89] A month later at the Brownhills demonstration, Mr. Henry Wiggin, MP, emphatically denied that the Liberals were the "Peace-at-any-Price" party, and professed that "recent events had shown clearly that when the honour and dignity of England were about to be attacked, Liberals were willing to strain every nerve in defence."[90]

The public's engagement with Britain's presence in Egypt did not cease once the Arabi revolt had been suppressed. Over the next year provincial presses continued to engage questions about the nation's commitment to remain there, and that interest was elevated still further as complications arose in the Egyptian protectorate of the Sudan.

BRITAIN IN THE SUDAN, 1883-JANUARY 1884

Having assumed responsibility for Egypt—however reluctantly—Gladstone's administration was additionally burdened with overseeing the Sudan. Annexed by Egypt in 1821, the Sudan had been in open rebellion since 1881. That revolt was led by Muhammad Ahmad, the son of a Sudanese boat builder, who proclaimed himself the Mahdi (the Expected One), who called for a jihad against Turkish rule. Over the next

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[88] *Birmingham Daily Post*, 17 July 1882, 4. Cf., *Derby Mercury*, 19 July 1882.
[89] *Bristol Mercury*, 17 July 1882, 3.
[90] *Birmingham Daily Post*, 17 August 1882, 4.

two years, the movement gained strength. Defeating sizeable Egyptian armies that were sent against it, the Mahdi's forces contributed to and benefited from the instability caused by the Arabi revolt.[91] With his government propped up by the British military, Tewfik sought to reassert control over the Sudan and eliminate the Mahdi threat to Upper Egypt. In early 1883, therefore, he dispatched an Egyptian army of 10,000 men, many of whom were survivors of Arabi's army at Tel-el-Kebir. The army was officered by British soldiers and commanded by Colonel William Hicks, who was a veteran of the Indian Army and, in being hired by the khedive, was elevated to the rank of general. After drilling and training his army for several months in Omdurman, Hicks had succeeded in clearing Mahdists from the region between the White and Blue Niles by the end of May 1883. Encouraged by these results Tewfik and his ministers sought to reassert Egyptian control over Kordofan, a region that lay southwest of the capital at Khartoum. Gladstone, Baring and other British officials opposed such a move, because they feared the financial strain a Sudanese dependency might put on the weakened Egyptian state. However, because the British were preparing to turn over full control of Egypt to the khedive, including drawing down their military presence there, and because they wanted no part in the Sudan question, they chose to refrain as much as possible from interfering in the matter. Leaving Omdurman on 8 September with a force numbering close to 10,000 men, Hicks's expedition into Kordofan met with disaster on 5 November. Abushed at El Obeid, Hicks's force was almost completely annihilated.[92]

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[91] Robin Neillands, *The Dervish Wars: Gordon and Kitchener in the Sudan, 1880-1898* (London: John Murray, 1996), 59-67.
[92] Robinson and Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians*, 132-33; Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa*, 214; Michael Barthorp, *Blood-Red Desert Sand: The British Invasion of Egypt and the Sudan, 1882-1898* (London: Cassel, 1984), 79-80.

This defeat left 32,000 Egyptian soldiers cut off in garrisons in Khartoum, Sennar, and other places. When news of the disaster reached London about two weeks later, it immediately raised questions about Egypt's long-term presence in the Sudan and forced the cabinet to reconsider Britain's Egyptian policy. Prompted by General Wolseley, Hartington as war secretary argued that Britain was bound to support Egypt in retaining control over Khartoum and its surrounding regions for the sake of preserving British prestige and protecting the route to India,. At the same time, he believed that it was reasonable that Egypt be persuaded to evacuate from the provinces of Kordofan, Darfur, and Fashoda, which lacked strategic importance.[93] Gladstone concurred with Baring, who had recently been named British consul-general, that it would be impossible for Egypt to hold on to even those limited sectors of the Sudan without British assistance.[94] Lord Northbrook soon agreed that it would be impossible for Egypt to retain control over its southern neighbor on its own and that the operation was too costly for the Turks or Britain to pursue.[95] But when Baring advised the khedive in early December to abandon the territory south of Aswan, Tewfik's ministers summarily resigned rather than take responsibility for relinquishing Egyptian territory. Bankrupt and with his army destroyed, the khedive was powerless to defend his own borders let alone to withdraw from the Sudan without assistance. Recognizing the situation, the cabinet was obliged to assume responsibility for the protection of Egypt proper and the Red Sea coast.[96] The political effect of this decision was that instead of advancing the process of granting Egypt its independence, British oversight was all the more formalized. The khedive was

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[93] Holland, *Life of Spencer Compton*, 1: 411-12.
[94] Matthew, *Gladstone*, 143.
[95] Robinson and Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians*, 133; Bernard Mallet, *Thomas George Earl of Northbrook, G.C.S.Q,: a Memoir* (New York: Longmans, 1908), 174-175.
[96] Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa*, 214-15; Robinson and Gallagher, *Africa and the Victorians*, 134.

relegated, for all intents and purposes, to the status of a puppet ruler, with the real decision-making power residing in Baring's hands.[97]

The task of evacuating more than 33,000 Egyptian troops and civilians out of the Sudan fell to Major General Charles "Chinese" Gordon.[98] A fervent Christian who avidly supported charitable and humanitarian causes, Gordon had previously served as governor general of Equatoria and the Sudan under Khedive Ismail in the 1870s, and he had used his position to suppress the slave trade.[99]

There were initially significant reservations about sending Gordon, both in London and in Cairo. At the time he agreed to accept the cabinet's offer to go to the Sudan in mid-January 1884, Gordon had already resigned his commission in the British army to accept a contract with King Leopold of Belgium to eradicate the Afro-Arab slave trade in the Congo.[100] Aware of Gordon's tendency to interpret his orders to serve his own convictions, Gladstone was wary about giving him the power to act on his own and

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[97] Paul Knaplund, *The British Empire, 1815-1939* (London: Harper Bros, 1941), 418-19. The French and German governments protested Britain's unilateral actions, but there was little those powers could realistically do to force the British from their position in Egypt. Nevertheless, for the next twenty years France harbored a grudge against Britain, and the fracturing of the Anglo-French cordiale in Egypt caused France to gradually drift toward a military alliance with Russia. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe*, 289-90.

[98] Godfrey Elton, *Gordon of Khartoum* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1955), 280-89. Gordon's nicknamewas derived from his role in aiding the Chinese emperor's armies against the Taiping Rebellion in the 1860s. For an exhaustive study of Gordon's first governorship of the Sudan, see Alice Moore-Harell, *Gordon and the Sudan: Prologue to the Mahdiyya, 1877-1880* (London: Frank Cass, 2001).

[99] *DNB*, 8:169-73.

[100] Elton, *Gordon of Khartoum*, 225-26, 269, 271. Contrary to his public reputation, Leopold II had no care for the well-being of the Congolese and was only interested in the personal riches that could be gleaned from the region's natural resources, such as ivory and rubber. To that end, he instituted and tolerated a racist reign of terror upon the Congolese, which condoned and encouraged brutal forced labor which led to the deaths of between eight to ten million. Joseph Conrad's 1899 novel *Heart of Darkness* did much to expose the extent of the brutality and international outrage forced the Belgian government to strip Leopold of his personal colony and assume responsibility for the colony in 1908. Thereafter, the frequency of abuses diminished considerably. Even so, forced labor continued. Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1999), 3, 2, 36-38, 67-69, 119-121, 129-35, 161-66, 278.

preferred that he be given only advisory responsibilities.[101] In fact, Sir Edward Walter Hamilton, Gladstone's personal secretary, recorded that "[Gordon] seems to be a half-cracked fatalist; and what can one expect from such a man?"[102] Meanwhile, Baring had initially opposed the appointment of Gordon or any other British officer for that matter, but he also believed that the Egyptians were incapable of administering the situation, which called for both an advisory and an executive functionary. At the urging of his military advisors--some of whom had served previously with Gordon--Baring became convinced that Gordon was the only officer suitable to effect the evacuation of the Sudan.[103]

Gordon met with a select cabinet committee comprised of Hartington, Granville, Dilke, and Northbrook to finalize his commission on 18 January. The committee offered potentially conflicting instructions to him. The members told Gordon to proceed to the Sudan in an advisory capacity and to "report on the best way of withdrawing garrisons, settling the country, *and* to perform other duties as may be entrusted to him by the khedive's government" through Baring.[104] Gladstone was notably absent from that final meeting, as he was resting at his home in Hawarden, and his absence may well have contributed to his subsequent befuddlement over Gordon's actions and his persistent

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[101] Cautioning Granville about the appointment, Gladstone wrote: "While his opinion on the Sudan may be of great value, must we not be very careful in any instruction we give, that he does not shift the center of gravity as to political and military responsibility for that country? In brief, if he reports what should be done, he should not be the judge *who* should do it, nor ought he to commit us on that point by advice officially given. It would be extremely difficult after sending him to reject such advice, and it should therefore, I think, be made clear he is not our agent for advising on that point. Gladstone to Granville, 16 January 1884, in John Morley, *Life of Gladstone*, volume 2 (London: Macmillan, 1907), 390.

[102] D. W. R. Bahlman, ed. *The Diary of Sir Edward Walter Hamilton 1880-1885*, volume 2, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 545.

[103] Roger Owen, *Lord Cromer: Victorian Imperialist, Edwardian Proconsul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 191-93; Bernard Allen, *Gordon and the Sudan* (London: Macmillan, 1931), 226.

[104] Holland, *Life of Spencer Compton*, 1: 418. Dilke, who arrived late to the meeting, was under the impression that Gordon was being sent merely to "collect information and report on the situation in the Sudan." Gwynn, *Life of Sir Charles Dilke*, 2:29-30.

belief that Gordon had only been given at most advisory responsibilities. "We sent Gordon on a mission of peace and liberation," he later wrote. "I never understood how it was that Gordon's mission of peace became one of war."[105] As Elton notes in his account of Gordon's commissioning, Hartington's report to Gladstone made no mention of the reference to Gordon being authorized to perform "other duties." Consequently, Gladstone, who intended from the onset that Gordon only be sent in an advisory capacity, remained convinced that Gordon embarked on nothing more than a fact-finding and advisory mission.[106]

Gordon, however, understood his orders to be executive in nature. Recounting his meeting with the ministers to his sister Augusta the following day, he wrote:

> Wolseley came for me, I went with him and saw Granville, Hartington, Dilke, and Northbrook; they said had I seen W. and did I understand their ideas. I said yes, and repeated what W. had said to me as to their ideas, which was 'they would evacuate Sudan.' They were pleased and said, that was their idea. Would I go? I said 'yes.'
> They said 'when?' I said, 'To-night.' And it was over.[107]

Immediately following his meeting with the cabinet ministers, Gordon, accompanied by Lt. Col. J. D. H. Stewart as his staff officer, departed for Egypt by way of the evening boat-train to Calais. They arrived in Port Said on 24 January.

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[105] Quoted in Shannon, *Gladstone*, 327.
[106] Elton, *Gordon at Khartoum*, 287-88.
[107] Gordon to Augusta, 19 January 1884, in Wilfred Scawen Blunt, *Gordon at Khartoum: Being a Personal Narrative of Events in Continuation of "A Secret History of the English Occupation of Egypt* (London: Stephen Swift, 1911), 512.

THE POWER OF THE BRITISH PRESS AND GORDON'S MISSION TO SUDAN, NOVEMBER 1883-JANUARY 1884[108]

Throughout 1883, the provincial presses remained attentive to questions regarding Britain's future interest in Egypt and the Sudan. That interest only heightened after Hicks's army was massacred by Mahdist forces on 5 November 1883. In the course of printing detailed articles on the disaster, the newspapers of the country quickly reacted by calling for a withdrawal from the Sudan. The Conservative *Bury Post* asserted on 27 November that "it is no concern of ours to conquer the Sudan, and we should be stupid to attempt it."[109] The independent *Dundee Courier* cautioned against sending troops into the Sudan, insisting "we have no interest there and no right to be fighting where our interests are not threatened."[110] Declaring Khartoum to be the "extreme outpost of Egypt," the *Economist* firmly declared "[we] not only refuse to assist in any expedition, but refuse consent to it while the army is being commanded by British officers."[111] Likewise the Liberal *Daily News* insisted, "it is absurd to suppose that the policy of England can be affected by the deplorable catastrophe in the Sudan. Even if the Mahdi should be defeated in the end, there ought to be no further thought of conquering the Sudan."[112] Despite the widespread bipartisan call in the press for the British government to dispense with any responsibility for the Sudan, at least a few papers disagreed. The independent *Glasgow Herald* did not rule out the possibility of a British expedition

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[108] Todd Gray's examination of the nearly 600 publications in the London area from January 1883 to February 1884 and their interest in Gordon's mission is an insightful microcosmic look at the power of public agitation. Todd Gray, "The Agitation in Parliament and England over Charles "Chinese" Gordon and His Mission to the Soudan, January 1884 to January 1885," (Ph.D. diss., University of Iowa, 1962), 3-4.
[109] *Bury and Norwich Post*, 27 November 1883, 5.
[110] *Dundee Courier*, 23 November 1883, 2.
[111] *Economist*, November 1883, reprinted in *Pall Mall Gazette*, 24 November 1883, 11.
[112] *Daily News* (London), 24 November 1883, 4.

against the Mahdi and contested the notion that Britain had no compelling interest in the Sudan:

> Although a serious enterprise…such an effort as this would probably not be wasted as insurance against total anarchy in Egypt and still more against loss of our continuing influence there. But it must be expected to fail—and indeed it ought not to be made—unless a clear understanding is come to the Nile Valley, and still more in Downing Street, as to the real meaning and extent of that influence.[113]

Characterizing the news as "a *mene tekel* to the government scheme of withdrawal," the *Saturday Review* maintained that it would be impossible "for us to disregard an overthrow of Colonel Hicks and an advance of the insurgents on Khartoum…If Egypt under English influence, or Egypt under some influence, does not attempt the opening of the Sudan, it will be done somehow."[114]

In spite of the press's widespread call for a British retreat from the Sudan, they did not advocate a complete withdrawal from the region in the aftermath of the Hicks disaster. Rather they suggested that Britain should retain and even increase its presence in Egypt. The *Times* immediately urged that:

> We cannot believe that, in the presence of facts the significance of which only wilful blindness can refuse to see, the Ministry will persist in the project of weakening the small British force in Egypt. The policy, in which the evacuation of Cairo, recently announced, but, happily, not yet accomplished, is a step, has been adopted in defiance of the advice of every person of authority and experience in Egyptian affairs from Lord Dufferin downwards.[115]

It further held that "a sudden turn of affairs…has made the country ask whether, instead of weakening the British garrison in Egypt we shall now be compelled to face the

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[113] *Glasgow Herald*, 10 December 1883, 6.
[114] *Saturday Review*, November 1883, reprinted in *Pall Mall Gazette*, 24 November 1883, 11.
[115] *Times* (London), 23 November 1883, 9. This quote was reprinted by provincial papers such as *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 24 November 1883, 8.

necessity of reinforcing it."[116] The independent *Dundee Courier*, likewise, contended that Britain's great interest in Egypt must be preserved.[117] And the Conservative *Lancaster Gazette* warned:

> Radical non-interventionists are prompt with the assertion that British interests are confined to the Nile delta so the Mahdi leader should be permitted to freely work his will in the Sudan. But what if the False Prophet advances to Cairo?...The first result of this startling disaster is a countermand of the order for withdrawing British troops…The only method of securing order is the maintenance of the British forces."[118]

In thus engaging the mounting questions pertaining to Britain's presence in the Sudan, the press was not only highly responsive to imperial activity, but proved to be highly influential in determining British policy. Indeed, Gladstone's decision to send Gordon and his subsequent decision to dispatch a relief expedition to Khartoum was so fundamentally connected to the activities of the press, that one must account for those shifting opinions in order to understand fully the government's actions.

To be sure, while the press was not the only party interested in seeing Gordon sent to the Sudan, it would be their efforts that would prove vital to Gordon's eventual appointment. At the end of November in the aftermath of the Hicks disaster, Colonel Brevan Edwards, an officer in the Royal Engineers, and Sir Andrew Clarke, the superintendent of fortifications, recommended that Gordon be sent to Sudan to Hugh Childers, the Chancellor of the Exchequer. According to Edwards, "there was no one more qualified to deal with the question [of the Sudan] than Charlie Gordon…His name alone would do wonders, but no time should be lost." And Clarke insisted that, "if the

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[116] *Times* (London), 24 November 1883, 9.
[117] *Dundee Courier*, 23 November 1883, 2.
[118] *Lancaster Gazette*, 1 December 1883, 4.

Mahdi is a prophet, Gordon in the Sudan is greater."[119] Childers then forwarded the proposal on to Foreign Secretary Granville, who asked Gladstone:

> Do you see any objection to using Gordon in some way? He has an immense name in Egypt. He is popular at home. He is a strong but sensible opponent to slavery. He has a bee in his bonnet.[120]

On 1 December the proposition was then sent on to Baring in Cairo for his consideration. But Baring, after conferencing with the Khedive, flatly rejected the offer because he felt that appointing a Christian to deal with a Muslim uprising would be grossly counterproductive.[121] Consequently, as matters stood in early December, little was done officially to impede Gordon's intention to resign his commission and serve Leopold in the Congo. There is also every indication that the public at large was unaware of these exchanges, as no mention of the possibility that Gordon might be sent to the Sudan appeared in the press in November and December. In fact on 4 and 6 December the *Times* reported that Zubehr Pasha, a former slaver who carried considerable influence in the region, was likely to be named the commander of the forthcoming expedition into the Sudan.[122]

That changed briefly on New Year's Day. Sir Samuel Baker, an esteemed explorer and authority on the Middle East, wrote a letter to the *Times* in which he asked, "Why should not General Gordon Pasha be invited to assist the government. [sic] There is no man living who would be more capable or so well fitted to represent the justice

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[119] John Pollock, *Gordon: The Man Behind the Legend* (London: Constable, 1993), *265-266.*
[120] Granville to Gladstone, 27 November 1883, quoted in Fitzmaurice, *The Life of Lord Granville*, 2: 381.
[121] E. S. C. Childers, *The Life and Correspondence of the Right Hon. Hugh C. E. Childers*, volume 2 (London: John Murray, 1901), 176-177. Fitzmaurice records that Granville had previously considered sending Gordon back to Egypt along with another British officer in 1882. The plan fell through at the time when the Egyptian Government issued a strong statement opposing it and Gordon himself objected to the assignment. Fitzmaurice, *The Life of Lord Granville*, 2: 381.
[122] *Times* (London), 4 December 1883, 6; 6 December, 7.

which Great Britain should establish in the Sudan."[123] Privately, he also wrote on the subject to Gordon, with whom he was friends, but Gordon replied that he was intent on serving in the Congo.[124] Five days later the paper congratulated Gordon on his future post in central Africa and reported with disappointment that the government had not followed up on Baker's suggestion.[125]

The cabinet at that juncture remained intent that the khedive's ministers take responsibility for evacuating the Sudan.[126] Indeed, Baker's plea seemed to have fallen almost completely on deaf ears. Almost all other references to Gordon in the press between November and 8 January involved passing remarks concerning his upcoming assignment to the Congo, or his past work in China and the Sudan.[127] Aside from these glancing remarks, the only notable mention of Gordon and the Sudan came from a correspondent stationed in Cairo that first appeared in the *Standard* on 5 January:

> "Chinese" Gordon has left Syria in order to succeed to the functions and position of Mr. Stanley on the Congo, under the King of the Belgians. I hear, however, that proposals have been made to him by the Foreign Office which may induce him to turn his steps to Egypt. Such an appointment would be generally approved should Gordon accept it.[128]

Two days later the editors of the *Glasgow Herald* may have been hinting at this when they vaguely asked in passing, "why, by the way, was the general not bespoke for a still

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[123] *Times* (London), 1 January 1884, 4.
[124] Charles Chevenix-Trench,*The Road to Khartoum: A Life of General Charles Gordon* (New York: Norton, 1979) , 196. Garnet Wolseley, displeased by Gordon's decision, at first refused to accept his resignation and urged him to reconsider, but eventually relented.
[125] *Times* (London), 5 January 1884, 9.
[126] Chevenix-Trench,*The Road to Khartoum*, 196.
[127] For examples of these glancing references see, *Times* (London), 22 December 1883, 4; *Glasgow Herald*, 2 January 1884, 4; *Newcastle Courant*, 4 January 1884, 4.
[128] *Standard*, 5 January 1884, 5. This telegram also appeared in the *Glasgow Herald*, 5 January 1884, 4; *Leeds Mercury*, 5 January 1884, 3; *Bristol Mercury*, 7 January 1884, 8; and *Dundee Courier*, 8 January 1884, 6.

darker region of the Dark Continent."[129] The lack of attention to Gordon, especially in the wake of Baker's proposal, supports Gordon biographer John Pollock's observation, that at the time "Gordon's name had been almost completely forgotten."[130]

The tenor and direction of the public's interest and the cabinet's intentions dramatically shifted thanks to efforts of W. T. Stead of the *Pall Mall Gazette*.[131] On the eve of Gordon's departure for the Congo, Stead having learned that Gordon had arrived in Britain, showed up unexpectedly at the home of the general's sister in Southampton on 8 January, and pressed him for an interview regarding the Sudan.[132] Gordon was at first reluctant to speak and insisted that he "did not want to press [his] opinions on the public." Stead reassured him that the public was genuinely interested in his authoritative views, and Gordon obliged Stead's request. In the course of that discussion, Gordon strongly questioned the wisdom of a full British withdrawal:

> So you would abandon the Sudan? But the eastern Sudan is indispensible to Egypt. It will cost you far more to retain your hold upon Egypt proper if you abandon your hold on the eastern Sudan to the Mahdi or even to the Turk than what it would to retain your hold upon the eastern Sudan by the aid of such material as exists in the provinces. Darfur and Kordofan must be abandoned. That I admit; but the provinces lying to the east of the White Nile should be retained, and north of Senaar. The danger is altogether of a different nature. It arises from the influence which the spectacle of a conquering Mahommedan power, established close to your frontiers, will exercise upon the populations you govern.[133]

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[129] *Glasgow Herald*, 7 January 1884, 4. The editorial in which this query appeared focused primarily on French imperial designs in Africa. Gordon's presence in the Congo was raised to emphasize the point that even his presence there would not likely inhibit French designs.

[130] John Pollock, *Gordon: The Man Behind the Legend* (London: Constable, 1993), 268. Pollock specifically notes that to the considerable surprise of George Birkbeck Hill "there was not much more than a breeze" of interest in his 1881 work *Colonel Gordon in Central Africa, 1874-1879*. It was only after W. T. Stead resurrected Gordon that the work became a best seller.

[131] Frederic Whyte, *The Life of W. T. Stead*, volume 1 (London: Garland, 1971), 117-118; Shannon, *Gladstone*, 327. A prominent and groundbreaking journalist at the time, Stead is credited with devising the newspaper interview. Later, he was one of the notable individuals who perished on the *Titanic*.

[132] Elton, *Gordon of Khartoum*, 272-73. Michael Asher, *Khartoum: the Ultimate Imperial Adventure* (New York: Viking, 2005), 83-84. As a part of the interview, Gordon also recalled his past experiences in China and his upcoming plans for his mission to the Congo.

[133] *Pall Mall Gazette*, 9 January 1884, 11-12.

He also maintained that "the great evil is not at Khartoum, but at Cairo. It is the weakness of Cairo which produces disaster in the Sudan."[134] Whether Egypt abandoned the Sudan or not, Gordon asserted that financial costs would accrue regardless, but in either case he believed such costs would only be temporary. On a more pragmatic note, he insisted that it was logistically impossible to withdraw the troops garrisoned in Sudan safely, and thus concluded that "the only course which ought to be entertained" was to "defend Khartoum at all hazards."[135] Introducing Stead's interview the following day, 9 January, with a forceful leader that read "Chinese Gordon for the Sudan," the *Pall Mall Gazette* urged that Gordon's expertise made him indispensable and that he should be dispatched to Sudan immediately "to do what can be done."[136]

Intrigued with the Sudan as early as 22 November following the news on Hicks, it is not known if Stead was influenced by Baker's appeal in the *Times*. Years later Wilfred Scawen Blunt accused Reginald Brett (later Lord Esher), a personal friend of Gordon's and Hartington's private secretary, of purposefully orchestrating Stead and the other newspapers to push for Gordon's appointment.[137] When he reviewed Blunt's work in November 1911, Stead boldly claimed full credit for Gordon's appointment, including a section entitled, "My Reason for Sending Gordon to Khartoum," and declared: "I not only said so, but I was obeyed."[138] Whether or not the call for Gordon was solely Stead's own idea or was devised by others, it is nonetheless impossible to deny the impact of Stead's piece.

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[134] Ibid.
[135] *Pall Mall Gazette*, 9 January 1884, 12.
[136] *Pall Mall Gazette*, 9 January 1884, 1.
[137] Raymond L. Shults, *Crusader in Babylon: W. T. Stead and the Pall Mall Gazette* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1872), 81; Blunt, *Gordon at Khartoum*, 152-53, 162, 165-68 .
[138] William T. Stead, "Books of the Month: More About General Gordon and the Men Who Sent Him Out," *Review of Reviews* 44 (November, 1911), 511.

The day after the interview appeared papers around the country reprinted portions of the scoop and discussed Gordon's assessment of the strategic situation in the Sudan.[139] In Maryport on 10 January, at a crowded Liberal meeting that was meant to affirm confidence in the leadership of the party and return Liberal MPs to parliament, Sir Wilfred Lawson utilized Gordon's critique to heap condemnation on the premier for entering Egypt in the first place and for disgracefully "enslaving" the Sudan., He pledged "to do everything in his power to get the troops out of Egypt."[140] While it paid tribute to Gordon's expertise by insisting that "everyone ought to pay the fullest attention to any opinion expressed with regard to the Egyptian crisis by General Gordon," the *Daily News* stood firmly behind Gladstone's decision to withdraw from Sudan and dismissed the persistent accusations that the government's decisions were continuing to lead to a "loss of prestige." To that end, the papers stressed to their readers that Gordon's statements were a warning against abandoning the Sudan rashly, but that they were not, per se, directed against an orderly withdrawal.[141] Concurring with the government's decision to make Wadi Halfa the southern boundary of Egypt, the *Bristol Mercury* rejected Gordon's contention that an abrupt extraction was unadvisable when it maintained that the garrison at Khartoum "at present could be withdrawn without danger."[142] Such responses were not limited to the Liberal papers. Taking issue with a Sheffield politician who advocated sending 30,000 British troops into the Sudan to crush the Mahdi and then marching on to Madagascar to flush out the French, the *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent* declared:

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[139] Pollock, *Gordon*, 268. Examples include: *Times* (London), 10 January 1883, 4; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 10 January 1883, 5; *Bristol Mercury*, 10 January 1883, 6; *Dundee Courier*, 10 January 1883, 6; *Leeds Mercury*, 10 January 1883, 8; and *Morning Post*, 10 January 1883, 5.
[140] *Times* (London), 11 January 1884, 7.
[141] *Daily News*, 11 January 1883, 4.
[142] *Bristol Mercury*, 10 January 1884, 5.

"This…is what Tory journalism means when it insists upon the government protecting British interests and the prestige and honour of England in Egypt and the Sudan." The only sound course of action, the paper determined, was that which the government had already resolved to do, the withdrawal from the South and Western Sudan to Wadi Halfa.[143]

From the perspective of the Conservative and independent presses, which seemingly took Gordon's warnings more seriously, a military expedition to extract the garrisons or to defend Britain's position in the Sudan, was simply the responsible and necessary course of action. Claiming that the European papers widely perceived Gladstone's withdrawal from Sudan to be a sign of weakness, the *Hampshire Advertiser* exhaustively argued that it was impossible to conclude otherwise since their suppositions were supported by experts such as Baker and Gordon. The *Advertiser* went on to observe regretfully that in the long run the cabinet's "humiliating policy would hardly settle the crisis."[144]

Although many Conservative papers did not mention Gordon directly, their arguments were consistent with what he had advocated in his interview with Stead. Insisting that the entire country was amazed by the government's "resolution to leave Khartoum, Sinkat, and Tokar to their fate with humiliation and anxiety," the *Standard* hoped that the government would not "tarnish the English name by withholding assistance from the beleaguered garrisons who, with the exercise of a little spirit and the expenditure of a little money, might be—or would have been—rescued from a terrible fate." The *Standard* further contended that, if Britain gave the Sudan to the Mahdi,

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[143] *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 9 January 1884, 2.
[144] *Hampshire Advertiser*, 12 January 1884, 5.

"there would be no hope of a strong and beneficial administration at Cairo." The paper claimed that with proper governance, "there was no reason why his southern domains should not add strength and dignity to the throne of the khedive."[145] The *Daily Telegraph* similarly charged:

> It is necessary to urge that the British government shall spare no effort to rescue the victims of its tardy resolution. There are British soldiers enough in Egypt to-day to drive the Mahdi over the equator if they could only get at him; and yet, in fear as we are of hearing of frightful disasters, they are helpless at Cairo.[146]

The *Morning Post* counseled that "if the six thousand Egyptian troops at Khartoum, with the Europeans in that town…are massacred in attempting to retreat across the desert, the responsibility of the British government for such a catastrophe cannot be disavowed."[147] It therefore recommended that a force of some four to six thousand Indians and Nubians could affect the safe withdrawal of the Khartoum garrison.[148] The *Morning Advertiser* echoed those remarks stating:

> It seems to us that no effort that Her Majesty's government could make would be too great for securing the safety of the defenders of Khartoum and the remnant of the European population under its protection. If disaster, and possibly massacre, should overtake the column of fugitives from Khartoum there would be an outburst of indignation from the civilized world.[149]

The *Liverpool Courier* posited that "the abandonment of the Sudan may or may not be wise as a political step, [but] the abandonment of the imperiled garrison and the Christian people who imagined that England was ruling Egypt is a crime that will cover the British name with indelible infamy."[150]

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[145] *Standard*, 11 January 1884, 5.
[146] *Daily Telegraph*, January 1884, reprinted in *Pall Mall Gazette*, 12 January 1884, 11.
[147] *Morning Post* (London), 11 January 1884, 4
[148] *Morning Post* (London), 15 January 1884, 4-5.
[149] *Morning Advertiser* (London), January 1884, reprinted in *Pall Mall Gazette*, 11 January 1884, 11.
[150] *Liverpool Courier*, January 1884, reprinted in *Pall Mall Gazette*, 14 January 1884, 11.

That Gordon's statements had an impact on public opinion and policy decisions did not go unnoticed by a London correspondent for the *Hampshire Advertiser* who observed just a few days after Stead's interview appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette*:

> The publication of General Gordon's opinions has done a great deal to strengthen the hands of those who have all along urged the fatality of the abandonment, while the sensitiveness, even of the government itself, to the criticism on its own project, is shown by its contradiction of the suggested abandonment of Souakim [sic]. "Nothing of the kind," we are told by the semi-official journalists. Perhaps we shall be told by and bye [sic] that it is not intended to abandon Khartoum, and then that Berber is to be held, while as to Wady Halfa [sic] that is to be a mere basis of alterations.[151]

Moreover, in contrast to Baker's earlier plea in the *Times* for Gordon's services, the *Pall Mall Gazette's* demand that Gordon be sent to the Sudan provoked a great deal of positive response by the presses. For instance, the London correspondent for the *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent* reported, that

> "Chinese" Gordon and his opinions on the Sudan are on the lips of all active politicians here to-night, and the possibility of the government intercepting his projected voyage to the Congo, and sending him to Egypt with extensive powers, is being eagerly discussed.[152]

And while it noted that "some fancy the mere whisper of his name throughout the Sudan would dispel all danger," the correspondent cautioned that "a little less hysterical enthusiasm would be likelier to secure the approval of the general public to any such step being taken."[153] Dismayed by the situation in Egypt, the *Morning Advertiser* likewise wrote, "it is not too much to ask that all England has been looking for the employment of General Gordon in the present crisis in Egypt."[154] The *Morning Post* insisted that "surely it is not too late for the government to admit to their councils a man whose advice and co-

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[151] *Hampshire Advertiser*, 12 January 1884, 6.
[152] *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 10 January 1884, 6.
[153] Ibid.
[154] *Morning Advertiser* (London), January 1884, reprinted in *Pall Mall Gazette*, 12 January 1884, 11.

operation in such a crisis as the present would be of incalculable value."[155] The *Times* suggested that it was good that Gordon's resignation had not yet been formally accepted by the War Office, as it was proof that the government recognized "his eminent services and [were] unwilling to lose them." It optimistically offered that those services might not only be utilized to secure the defense of Egypt but also to effect "the restoration of the khedive's authority over a part of the Sudan."[156]

Still apparently intent upon going to the Congo, Gordon's reaction to the flurry of such articles and demands for his services was to press for Baker's appointment to the Sudan in a letter to the *Times*.[157] That suggestion, however, was completely ignored by the presses; they wanted Gordon. So too did Hartington, the war secretary, who having favored sending Gordon to the Sudan for some time, redoubled his efforts.[158] With journalistic and political pressure quickly mounting, Gladstone and Granville acquiesced and offered the Sudan mission to Gordon.[159] The aforementioned process by which Gordon was sent to the Sudan rapidly went into motion. Only nine days after Stead's article appeared in print, Gordon was on his way to the Sudan.

The significance of Stead's accomplishment in effecting the appointment of Gordon did not go unnoticed by the general public. As one observer expressed to the *Times:*

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[155] *Morning Post*, (London), 15 January 1884, 5.
[156] *Times* (London), 14 January 1884, 9.
[157] *Times* (London), 14 January 1884, 10.
[158] Holland, *The Life of Spencer Compton*, 415-17. A longtime supporter of Gordon, Hartington's efforts were not directly due to the swell of the press, as he had urged Granville to send Gordon as recently as 8 January, the day before Stead's piece appeared. Queen Victoria, also had also been quietly hoping that Gordon would be sent. Christopher Hibbert, *Queen Victoria in Her Letters and Journals* (New York: Viking, 1985), 284.
[159] It is possible that Granville expected Gordon to decline the offer with the restraints that had been placed upon him. In that event, the government would have been provided some cover in allowing Gordon to proceed on to the Congo. John Marlowe, *Mission to Khartoum: the Apotheosis of General Gordon* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1969), 129.

> The people who first obtained and forced on the attention of ministers the general's opinions were the press, and it is to them that the country owes a tardy recognition of this great man's power, and it is they who must be thanked if England and Egypt are rescued from their difficulties by his courage and gallantry.[160]

Raymond Schults has contended that Stead's efforts marked a truly significant point in the history of journalism. To be sure, this was certainly not the first time the press had influenced a government into take a certain course of action. What made it especially notable, as R. H. Gretton pointed out, was that this "was probably the first occasion on which a newspaper set itself, by acting as the organiser of opinion on a particular detail of policy, to change a government's mind at high speed. However strongly newspapers had spoken before this on political subjects, they had not adopted the method of hammering, day in, day out, at a single detail, and turning policy into a catchword."[161] That the press was so successful may have been due, as Gretton suggested, to the government being encouraged that they had been right all along to consider sending Gordon to the Sudan back in December.[162]

THE SWAY OF PUBLIC OPINION AND GORDON AT KHARTOUM, FEBRUARY 1884-AUGUST 1885

Any ambiguity concerning Gordon's orders evaporated when he arrived in Cairo on 24 January. The Egyptian government bestowed upon him the title of governor-general of the Sudan, and he was expressly charged by Baring to

> arrange for the withdrawal of the Egyptian garrisons etc. as rapidly as is consistent with (1) the saving of life and so far as possible, property; (2) the

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[160] *Times* (London), 23 January 1884, 7.
[161] R. H. Gretton, *A Modern History of the English People*, volume 1 (Boston: Small, 1913), 124.
[162] Gretton, *A Modern History of the English People*, 124; Raymond L. Schults, *Crusader in Babylon: W. T. Stead and the Pall Mall Gazette* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972), 79.

> establishment of some form of government which will prevent, so far as possible, anarchy and confusion arising out of the withdrawal of the Egyptian troops.[163]

To effect the second part of that commission, Gordon elicited the support of Zubehr Pasha, whom the government had considered as a possible leader prior to Gordon's appointment. He was also the only person, Gordon believed, who had any chance of establishing a responsible temperate government in the wake of an Egyptian exodus. On that basis, Gordon requested that the cabinet approve Zubehr's appointment.[164]

From the moment Gordon left Britain, hardly a day went by without leading articles in the British papers that reported or offered comments on his position.[165] Already successful in effecting Gordon's appointment to the Sudan, the press continued to exert influence. For example, the British government ultimately rejected Gordon's request to install Zubehr because, in the words of Granville, "the public would not tolerate the appointment of Zubehr Pasha."[166] Ostensibly this was because the public opposed the idea of an ex-slaver being named governor-general of the Sudan.[167] Leading the charge against Zubehr was the highly influential British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. In December, when it was reported that he might be named the commander of an Egyptian army in the Sudan, the Anti-Slavery Society along with the *Times* strongly protested that move on the grounds that, given Zubehr's history of slaving and resisting

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[163] Chevenix-Trench, *The Road to Khartoum*, 211. These instructions were later reiterated and confirmed by Gladstone in the Commons on 12 February. *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 3rd ser., vol., 284 (1884), col., 274.
[164] Pollock, *Gordon*, 277-78; Chevenix-Trench, *The Road to Khartoum*, 213-14; Elton, *Gordon of Khartoum*, 295.
[165] Elton, *Gordon of Khartoum*, 297, 300.
[166] Cromer, *Modern Egypt*, 2:486.
[167] Chevenix-Trench, *The Road to Khartoum*, 229-37; Elton, *Gordon of Khartoum*, 306-308, 313-15. So convinced was Gordon that Zubehr was the only real hope for the Sudan that in April Gordon attempted to unilaterally appoint Zubehr to serve as his deputy governor-general. Zubehr, however, refused to join Gordon in Khartoum because he did not want to be held responsible should anything happen to Gordon and because he believed it would be undignified for him to leave Cairo so long as he had creditors demanding money from him. Chevenix-Trench, *Road to Khartoum*, 247.

the authority of the khedive, the appointment would be "improper and dangerous in the highest degree."[168] Three months later, although the *Times* recognized that Gordon ought not leave Khartoum without first establishing a responsible government, it declared that "it is very much open to doubt whether any Government with a notorious slave-driver at its head can be fitly entrusted to take the place he vacates."[169] Reiterating its opposition to the rumored appointment, the Anti-Slavery Society firmly urged that the government not "stultify that anti-slavery policy which has so long been the high distinction of England."[170] That the public was so adamantly against Zubehr, Elton asserted, was not so much a result of a campaign by the press, as it was because the government had not done enough to "enlighten public opinion" about the necessity of the appointment.[171] Queen Victoria, meanwhile, complained to Gladstone at the end of February that "the decisive factor should be 'the *good and permanent tranquility of Egypt…and not public opinion* HERE which is fickle and changeable.'"[172]

Even while they opposed the appointment of Zubehr, the press and the public were still highly eager to see that Gordon was adequately supported in his mission. As early as 23 January the *Huddersfield Daily Chronicle* had contended that "General Gordon may have great influence among the natives, and he may know more about the

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[168] *Times* (London), 6 December 1883, 7; 10 December, 1883, 12. Despite the opinions of Gladstone's cabitnet and the press, as Pollock elucidates, the actual decision not to send Zubehr with Gordon was ultimately made by an *ad hoc* council comprised of British and Egyptain officials in Cairo. Their decision, however, was heavily influenced by the opinions of the Cabinet and the general public. Members of that conference included, Sir Evelyn Baring; Major-General Evelyn Wood, Commander-in-Chief of the Egyptian Army; Col. Sir Charles Watson, of the Royal Engineers; Lt. Col. J. D. H. Stewart, Gordon's staff officer; Carl Giegler, an associate of Gordon's, who had recently returned from the Sudan where he had served as Deputy (and acting) Governor General, and Nubar Pasha, the Prime Minister of Egypt. Pollock, *Gordon*, 277-278.
[169] *Times* (London), 5 March 1884, 9.
[170] *Times* (London), 12 March, 1884, 4; 13 March 1884, 8.
[171] Elton, *Gordon of Khartoum*, 315.
[172] Queen Victoria to Gladstone, quoted in Philip Guevalla, *The Queen and Mr. Gladstone* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1934), 130-31. Emphasis is original.

Sudan than any other officer, but unless he is well backed up by a strong force of English troops he might as well stay at home as seek to turn by his single arm the blow which threatens the chief town of the Sudan."[173] In emphasizing the humanitarian aspects of Gordon's mission in the Sudan and Gordon's future ambition to stamp out the slave trade in the Congo, one clergyman wrote to the *Essex Standard* at the beginning of February that "under these circumstances is it not a national, nay a world-wide duty that we should give him all that we can give him—all that he asks for—our prayers."[174] On 11 February, meanwhile, the Times demanded that the government support Gordon adequately:

> It is incredible that the strength of the British Empire should not be adequate for such an effort, and, if it be, the obligation upon us to use it for the purpose is dictated alike for humanity and policy…At home, practically all classes and sections are agreed in calling upon the government to recognize and give effect to that responsibility, and ministers will commit an astounding and incomprehensible error if they delude themselves with the notion that a movement of public opinion so powerful and unanimous can be defied even by this phalanx of a parliamentary majority.[175]

Gladstone's administration was extremely reluctant to offer military support directly to Gordon in the weeks following his departure, a position that left the prime minister and his colleagues open to criticism. To be sure, the Egyptian and British governments did send forces into the Sudan in 1884. At the very time that Gordon and Stewart were making their way to Khartoum, for example, General Valentine Baker led a failed attempt to relieve a garrison at Tokar. Immediately after, at the insistence of Wolseley and the Duke of Cambridge, the commander-in-chief of the army, a second expedition under Major General Sir Gerald Graham set out to relieve Suakin, a location

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[173] *Huddersfield Daily Chronicle*, 23 January 1884, 3.
[174] *Essex Standard*, 9 February 1884, 6.
[175] *Times* (London), 11 February 1885, 9.

believed vital for effecting a retreat from Khartoum.[176] This latter effort received considerable public support, as evidenced by a meeting held at the Guildhall in London and chaired by the lord mayor on 15 February.[177] Nevertheless, the Gladstone administration faced a Vote of No Confidence in the Commons four days later, and during the debate on that motion, Hartington spelled out the government's position vis-à-vis Sudan. "We are not responsible," he said, "for the relief or rescue of garrisons in either the western or the southern or the eastern Sudan."[178] He further claimed—disingenuously—that Gordon was not acting on behalf of the British government but rather for the Egyptian government, which had occupied Sudan.[179]

The day before this debate at Westminster, Gordon and Stewart arrived at Khartoum, where Gordon was received as "'father' by an adoring and enthusiastic crowd," and he immediately set about the slow process of evacuating the 11,000 Egyptian troops and civilians who resided in Khartoum down the Nile by means of government steamers.[180] When word reached him in early March of London's decision not to approve the appointment of Zubehr, Gordon informed Baring that, while he would proceed in evacuating Khartoum, he could not guarantee the completion of his instructions to leave behind a responsible government without the assistance of Zubehr. By that time he had come to understand that the Mahdi's movement was not just a

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[176] This force consisted of the 19th Hussars, 1st Black Watch, 1st Gordon Highlanders, and 3rd King's Royal Rifle Corps. It was later augmented with other forces which were on their way back from being deployed in India, 10th Hussars, 1st York and Lancaster, and 2nd Royal Irish Fusiliers.
[177] Asher, *Khartoum*, 104-5; Elton, *Gordon of Khartoum*, 304-5, 310; *Times* (London), 16 February 1884, 5. Notable speakers at that meeting included Sir John Whittaker Ellis, an influential city of London official; Edward Gibson, the Conservative MP for Trinity College; and Lord Dunraven.
[178] *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 3rd ser., vol. 284 (1884), col. 1441. The Government narrowly defeated a censure on a vote of 311 to 262. Ibid., col. 1452.
[179] Ibid., col. 1441. Elton points out that Hartington's defense involved a deliberate misconstruing of the facts. Although British troops were presently being deployed on the Red Sea coast within the Sudan, Hartington and the Government for sake of convenience considered the region to be entirely distinct. Elton, *Gordon of Khartoum*, 303-305.
[180] Elton, *Gordon of Khartoum*, 301.

response to ineffective and corrupt governance, but that it was a religiously inspired movement, and that as such the Mahdi could not be negotiated into allowing the establishment of an effective government other than one of his own making in the Sudan. Gordon consequently warned Baring that "if Egypt is to be quiet, the Mahdi must be smashed up."[181] Conveying to Baring a week later the paramount need for additional support from "the government," and specifically referencing the necessity of Zubehr's confirmation, Gordon maintained: "I will do my best to carry out my instructions, but I feel a conviction that I will be caught in Khartoum."[182]

On 12 March the Mahdists closed the siege around Khartoum—a situation that would last some 320 days. Telegraph communication between Khartoum and Cairo were severed and the only means for Khartoum to communicate with the outside world was by messenger across the desert. The plans for evacuating the city thus came to a halt. Even without the relief of Berber, there remained a window of opportunity for Gordon and a great portion of the Egyptian and Foreign contingent to escape in the early summer while the Nile remained high. Such an expedition, though, was beset with considerable danger and had no certainty of success. Weighing the risks and refusing to leave the Sudan in crisis, Gordon opted to stay in Khartoum, doing his best to secure the city militarily, attempting to ease the ever increasing fiscal and food shortages, and holding up morale.[183] All the while, he awaited the arrival of military relief—that relief, which

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[181] Gordon to Baring, 26 February 1884, quoted in Chevenix-Trench, *The Road to Khartoum*, 231. Allen, *Gordon and the Sudan*, 282.
[182] Gordon to Baring, 1 March 1884, quoted in Elton, *Gordon of Khartoum*, 314.
[183] Fergus Nicholl, *The Sword of the Prophet: the Mahdi of Sudan and the Death of General Gordon* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2004) 199-203.

messages from London during the spring and summer insisted would not be forthcoming—ultimately did come, but it came too late.[184]

Throughout the spring and summer of 1884, the cabinet continued not to appreciate fully Gordon's assessment of the impending Mahdi threat to Khartoum specifically or to the Sudan more generally. Upon receiving his warnings and pleas for military resources with which to "smash the Mahdi," the cabinet believed that Gordon was not only advising British military intervention but was announcing his intention to pursue his own course of action and willfully to disobey his orders to withdraw. To be sure, earlier transmissions from Gordon to Baring, which had been forwarded to the government in London, suggested that he was launching military attacks against the Mahdi. In truth, however, such actions were little more than intelligence gathering missions, and Gordon's warning to Baring was nothing more than a predictive assessment of the situation. In addition, messages from Gordon, such as the one that arrived on 30 March, offered reassurance that as of two weeks prior Khartoum was "quite safe."[185] The overall effect was that miscommunication greatly affected the cabinet's, and especially, the prime minister's understanding of Gordon's situation. Thus, holding firm to the belief that Gordon could come out of Khartoum if he wanted, and apprehensive about being seen giving ground to the "jingoes," Gladstone resisted sending a military expedition into the Sudan.[186]

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[184] Aware of Graham's advance toward Suakin on the Red Sea Coast Gordon may well have been encouraged into a false hope that relief was shortly coming. Chevenix-Trench, *The Road to Khartoum*, 233-34.
[185] *Dundee Courier*, 31 March 1884, 3.
[186] C. Brad Fraught, *Gordon: Victorian Hero* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2008), 85-87; Elton, *Gordon of Khartoum*, 312-13; Marlowe, *Mission to Khartoum*, 215-16; Shannon, *Gladstone*, 331-32.

That resolve came in the face of stiff pressure to act. On 25 March, the queen appealed to Hartington through her private secretary that "Gordon must be trusted and supported…if not for humanity's sake, for the honour of the government and the nation he must not be abandoned."[187] In fact, Hartington had by then been hearing from Wolseley for nearly seven weeks that a large expedition should be sent to support Gordon, and by early April a narrow majority of the cabinet, including Dilke and Chamberlain, had become convinced that action was required. They could not, however, agree on the size or scope of the relief expedition, and Gladstone and Granville took advantage of these divisions to postpone any decision into the summer months.[188]

As new information from Khartoum became scarce, the press and the general public once again set the pace for government action. Having earlier anticipated that the government would act to relieve Gordon, newspapers increasingly exerted pressure for the government to follow through when that support was not forthcoming. A Cairo correspondent for the *Standard* reported in early April: "Lord Hartington's declaration that General Gordon would receive assistance, should he claim it, has caused some amusement here. It is well known that General Gordon has already distinctly asked…for English troops, which request has been ignored."[189] On 8 April, in noting the questions posed by Lords Napier and Hardwicke in the House of Lords about preparations for a relief mission of Gordon, the *Dundee Courier* insisted that "it would be well that the government could show that they are prepared for such a contingency as the relief of Gordon and those for whose fate we have made ourselves responsible."[190] Four days

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[187] Ponsonby to Gladstone, 27 March 1884, quoted in Guevalla, *The Queen and Mr. Gladstone*, 131.
[188] Marlowe, *Mission to Khartoum*, 216-17; Chevenix Trench, 248-52; Shannon, *Gladstone*, 331.
[189] *Standard*, 5 April 1884, 5.
[190] *Dundee Courier*, 8 April 1884, 2.

later, a leading column in the same paper claimed that as Egyptian troops were inherently unreliable, any relief of Gordon would have to be effected by British troops. With that in mind, it maintained that Gordon's reports, which emphasized the security of his position, were likely not completely accurate because Gordon, as an "enthusiast" to the work he was undertaking, was likely to "face dangers lightly." Arguing that the reports from the *Times'*s correspondent in Khartorum, Frank Power, were accurately conveying the seriousness of the situation, it insisted that "the optimist views which have been continuously pressed…do not accurately outline the situation of Gordon at Khartoum." The paper urged that "if we have any responsibility for Gordon's present position…a more solicitous and anxious view of the situation by our Government would be justified than that which they appear yet to have entertained, or than General Gordon has himself seemed to hold."[191] The *Liverpool Mercury*, meanwhile, took a more sanguinary tone, assuring that "the government has done the best that could be done under the circumstances," and arguing that "Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues may be confidently trusted to take all necessary measures for the rescue of General Gordon."[192]

Not every paper, however, was convinced that a British relief expedition should be sent to Khartoum. For instance, *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper* acknowledged reports that the situation in Khartoum had become desperate and that Gordon was attempting to solicit Turkish support for the garrison by raising funds from English and American millionaires. Yet it maintained that "even *if* the English government resolved upon the relief of Berber and Khartoum, the sending of a British force is next to impossible."[193] To be sure, *Reynolds's Weekly*, like many Liberal presses, was averse to decisions which

[191] *Dundee Courier*, 12 April 1884, 2.
[192] *Liverpool Mercury*, 6 May 1884, 5.
[193] *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper*, 27 April 1884, 5. Emphasis is mine.

they saw as furthering a jingoistic fever and imperialistic encroachment. But that had not stopped other Liberal papers, such as the aforementioned *Liverpool Mercury*, from demanding that the government not abandon Gordon. Given that commentators in other papers explained that the hostile climate precluded any immediate relief, it may well have been that *Reynolds's Weekly* was assessing the prospect of an expedition pragmatically.[194] Further, the paper excused Gladstone for not responding to the opposition's demands for a full explanation of his intentions in Egypt on the grounds that circumstances on the ground there were changing on a daily basis.[195] Having already argued that a relief expedition was impossible, *Reynolds's* subsequently argued that any military expedition into the Sudan to relieve Gordon meant the reconquest of the Sudan, which would be an "utterly worthless" expenditure of blood and treasure.[196]

By the end of April, meanwhile, concerned journalists and members of the public translated their worry into civic action. Promoters eagerly sought to put together a volunteer expedition to relieve Gordon, and private citizens who were interested in volunteering wrote to the press inquiring after the qualifications for service.[197] One concerned citizen suggested to the lord mayor of London, P. N. Fowler, that he should form a "Mansion House Fund for the Relief of General Gordon." Publicizing his response in the *Standard*, Fowler insisted that as a member of Parliament, he thought that "ministers ought to undertake the rescue, and both Houses would support them in doing so." However, as the lord mayor of London, he said that he could not agree to the

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[194] See James Johnson's letter to the *Times*, 6 May 1884, 11.
[195] *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper*, 4 May 1884, 3.
[196] *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper*, 18 May 1885, 1.
[197] *Standard*, 24 April 1884, 2.

request, as it would bring him into "a collision with the government."[198] In a letter to the *Times* on 6 May a self-identified member of the Caledonian United Service Club offered that argued that the government was "paralyzed" to send any relief to Gordon for upwards of five months given the weather conditions in the Sudan. As such, the Government should make it clear to the "warlike tribes" that if harm should come to Gordon or the inhabitants of Khartoum that was "not warranted by the usages of war, no mercy will be shown to the leaders and instigators of such usage when the time arrives for the British army to advance, which it assuredly will, unless submission be made in the interval."[199]

Following Commons' Easter recess, Conservatives in the body brought additional pressure to bear by submitting a resolution of censure against Gladstone's administration:

> That this House regrets that the course pursued by Her Majesty's government has not tended to promote the success of General Gordon's mission, and that even such steps as are necessary to promote his personal safety are still delayed.[200]

With the debate over censure advertised well in advance and scheduled to begin on 12 May, the motion encouraged a wellspring of anticipatory public activity. On 8 May a well-attended meeting was held at St. James Hall in London, under the auspices of the Patriotic Association, to protest the "abandonment of Gordon." Denouncing the government's conduct for being "devoid of principle, moral courage, and statesmanship," Lord Cadogan insisted that "he mistook the character of the English people if it did not bring down the reprobation and indignation of the whole country." Condemning Gladstone's actions for being "dishonourable to the government and discreditable to the country," Henry Chaplin, the Conservative MP for Mid-Lincolnshire, expressed his hope

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[198] *Standard*, 30 April 1884, 5.
[199] *Times*, 6 May 1884, 11.
[200] *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 3rd ser., vol. 288, (1884), col. 52.

that a "feeling would be rapidly evoked which would compel the cowardly and caitiff crew who guided the helm of state to-day to take immediate action."[201] Two days later, on 10 May, a group of 3,000 people—a small number of whom were Liberals—gathered in Manchester, and the organizers of the meeting accused the government of making "Gordon responsible for his own safety."[202] Appealing to the people to "vindicate the national honour and the national traditions," and insisting that the government would be held accountable for the "liberty, the safety, and the life of General Gordon," the Hon. Edward Gibson, member of Parliament for Trinity College, Dublin, advanced a resolution that a "big expedition would have to be sent to the Sudan," and it was overwhelmingly cheered and approved by those in attendance.[203] That same day, other public demonstrations held in Hanley, Darwen, Folkestone, and Shrewsbury produced similar resolutions that called on the government to relieve Gordon.[204]

Meanwhile, on 13 May, the House of Commons debated a motion to censure the Government. In spite of their holding a majority of almost 120 seats, the Liberals survived narrowly on a vote of 303 to 275.[205] Only days later, the *St. James Gazette* reported that the cabinet had resolved to prepare an expedition to Khartoum immediately, and that it was likely to embark by the end of July. The story was subsequently picked

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[201] *Times*, 9 May 1884, 10; Pall Mall Gazette, 9 May 1884, 7. Henry Chapin had earlier called for the adjournment of the Commons in 1882 as a protest to Gladstone's reluctance to intervene in Egypt amid the Arabi revolution. Although the meeting at St. James Hall took place in London, the details of the meeting were carried by provincial papers of all political affiliations. See, *Aberdeen Journal*, 9 May 1884, 5; *Liverpool Mercury*, 9 May 1884, 6; *Dundee Courier*, 9 May 1884, 5; *Hampshire Advertiser*, 10 May 1884, 7; *Huddersfield Daily Chronicle*, 10 May 1884, 7.
[202] *Leeds Mercury*, 12 May 1884, 7.
[203] *Leeds Mercury*, 12 May 1884, 7.
[204] *Pall Mall Gazette*, 12 May 1884, 10.
[205] Despite opposing Gladstone on the issue of relieving Khartoum, Hartington, Dilke, Selbourne, and Chamberlain held firm in supporting Gladstone against censure. *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 3rd ser., vol. 288 (1884), cols., 302-306.

up by provincial presses, including the *Dundee Courier* on 19 May.[206] As we have seen, Gladstone believed into the early summer that no relief expedition was warranted, a conclusion that was bolstered by reports sent from Gordon in mid-June (and appearing in the press in mid- and late-July) indicating that Khartoum remained safe.[207] Indeed, in early July, the prime minister reassured Sir Henry Gordon that his brother was not in any immediate danger, and that "whenever and if ever, General Gordon is in danger, the whole resources of the government will be employed in his cause."[208] Confident that if messages could get out of Khartoum, then so too could Gordon, Gladstone continuously maintained that there was no need to extract him.[209]

At that very time, however, key members of the cabinet forced the premier's hand. On 31 July Hartington and the Home Secretary Lord Selborne threatened to resign if Gladstone did not agree to send out a relief expedition. Appreciating that those resignations would likely bring down his government, Gladstone presented the Commons with an appropriations bill on 2 August to fund a relief expedition. Three days later Parliament overwhelmingly approved the measure. Only a small cadre of members opposed the bill, and they were led by Henry Labouchere, who insisted that "General

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[206] *Dundee Courier*, 19 May 1884, 3. This was not the first time that that press anticipated that a relief mission was in the works. On 12 May the *Morning Post* relayed a telegram from Cairo, which stated that the Egyptian authorities were "hourly" expecting instructions for a relief expedition for Gordon, "in accordance with their recommendations to the British government." *Morning Post*, 12 May 1884, 5.
[207] *Huddersfield Daily Chronicle*, 16 July 1884, 3; 30 July 1884, 3. These messages concerned the status of Khartoum on 27 April, and 21 June respectively.
[208] Quoted in Lynn MacDonald, ed., *Florence Nightingale on Society and Politics, Philosophy, Science, and Education* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2003), 471.
[209] Shannon, *Gladstone*, 331-32; Fraught, *Gordon: Victorian Hero*, 85-87; Elton, *Gordon of Khartoum*, 312-13; Marlowe, *Mission to Khartoum*, 215-16. Upon receiving word from Baring at the end of July that the Government intended to abandon him, Gordon explicitly stated his true position: "I only stay in Khartoum because the Arabs have shut us up and will not let us out!" By the time the message was telegraphed to London from Cairo at the end of October, the relief mission was already underway. Like every other telegram from the region, the message could be found in all of the provincial press. Gordon to Baring, 31 July 1884, quoted in *Morning Post*, 28 October 1885, 5.

Gordon had disobeyed his instructions in not quitting Khartoum, and had forfeited all claims to sympathy and help by his insane desire to 'smash the Mahdi'."[210]

But even while the press welcomed the news that Gladstone had finally decided to act and eagerly anticipated the rescue of Gordon, they remained deeply concerned. The *Huddersfield Daily Chronicle* wrote: "The nation demands that General Gordon shall be relieved from danger which has for so long threatened him, and much will depend upon the manner in which the government set to work to effect the desired result…But although the sum applied for by the government has been willingly granted, it is by no means clear what course will be adopted for carrying out the end in view."[211] If that effort should fail to bring Gordon back safely, the *Chronicle* insisted that the government would have much to answer for.[212] The enormity of the effort to relieve Gordon did not escape the *Morning Post*, which anticipated that "it will be necessary to employ a very numerous force, much greater than could without risk be spared from the present Egypt, and we may, therefore, expect Mr. Gladstone to prepare the House for the dispatch of further drafts from either England or India."[213] Indeed, despite Gladstone's willingness to move an expedition to save Gordon, the press remained skeptical. Noting that nearly everyone ridiculed Gladstone's unwavering insistence that Gordon could withdraw from Khartoum any time he wished, and recognizing that his position was not likely to change, the *Huddersfield Daily Chronicle* offered that perhaps Gordon could set Gladstone straight upon his return to Britain.[214] As it was, Gladstone remained in no hurry to move,

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[210] *Morning Post*, 6 August 1884, 4.
[211] *Huddersfield Daily Chronicle*, 7 August 1884, 2.
[212] *Huddersfield Daily Chronicle*, 7 August 1884, 2.
[213] *Morning Post*, 5 August 1884, 4.
[214] *Huddersfield Daily Chronicle*, 7 August 1884, 2.

as a further three weeks passed before Wolseley was officially named the expedition's commander on 26 August.[215]

"AGAINST NATURE AND AGAINST TIME": THE GORDON RELIEF EXPEDITION AND THE MAKING OF A MARTYR[216]

Wolseley was never one to rush into a campaign, and thinking that he still had plenty of time, he meticulously planned out the expedition to relieve Gordon and to complete the British withdrawal from the Sudan.[217] The strategic problem was how to get to Khartoum, which lay 1,200 miles from Cairo as the crow flies, but over 2,300 miles as the Nile flows. Even from Wadi Halfa, the most feasible point from which to launch a relief expedition, Khartoum was still 1,600 miles upriver. The most direct approach was to strike out across the desert from Suakin to Berber and then proceed up the Nile to Khartoum, a distance of roughly 830 miles.[218] This route had been the one favored by Major General Sir Evelyn Wood, the first British sirdar (commander in chief of the Egyptian Army), and General Sir Frederick Stephenson, the commander in chief of the British occupation forces, who had been strategizing a relief expedition since March when they became concerned that Gordon might be trapped. To facilitate that endeavor and to service Britain's strategic interests in the region, they envisioned building a railway along the Suakin-Berber route.[219]

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[215] Asher, *Khartoum*, 164-65; Chevenix-Trench, *The Road to Khartoum*, 256.
[216] H. E. Colville, *Official History of the Sudan Campaign*, volume 1 (London: H.M.S.O., 1889), 61.
[217] Winston S. Churchill, *The River War: An Account of the Reconquest of the Sudan* (New York: Carrol and Graf, 2000, reprint London: Longmans 1902), 60.
[218] Gordon had originally intended to take this approach to Khartoum and bypass Cairo altogether. He was persuaded to alter those plans after Baring requested that he stop in Cairo to confer. Elton, *Gordon of Khartoum*, 292-3.
[219] Charles Royle, *The Egyptian Campaigns 1882-1885, New and Revised Edition Continued to December 1899* (London: Hurst and Blacket, 1900), 313.

Wolseley, however, preferred to move up the Nile from Wadi Halfa to Khartoum.[220] Wood and Stephenson had previously ruled out this approach because it was longer and because the Nile's cataracts would make it impossible to move up river by steamer. Wolseley countered that the Nile route, while longer, would be easier and cheaper. To get around the difficulty of navigating up the Nile, Wolseley planned to use a fleet of 800 modified whalers that could be rowed upstream and then portaged around the cataracts by experienced Canadian *voyageurs*, a method he had used with considerable success in his 1870 Red River campaign in Canada against the Métis revolt of Louis Riel. In the end, Wolseley's powerful sway within the War Office in London as adjutant general overrode the arguments of Stephenson and others on the ground in Egypt.[221] Wolseley further sought to augment the expedition with a camel corps. Comprised of men selected from the Guards and Royal Marine Light Infantry, this desert column would take the more direct overland route and serve as an advanced guard to hold Khartoum until the rest of the forces arrived.[222]

The Nile expedition proved to be costly and, arguably, a failure. It was also to be Wolseley's last field command, and to carry out his mission, he relied upon members of his so-called "ring" and several highly competent junior officers, who would rise later in their careers to the rank of general officer. Still, the planning and implementation of the complex operations resulted in a delay of three months before the forces began to move.

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[220] Wolsley preferred the Nile route to the overland route because the Mahdi's forces controlled both ends of the Suakin-Berber road.

[221] Royle, *The Egyptian Campaigns 1882-1885*, 314-16; Asher, *Khartoum*, 167-169; Butler, *An Autobiography*, 112-29.

[222] It was by this route that Gordon was able to keep Cairo and Wolseley informed of his status as late as early November after his telegraph lines had been cut. See Churchill, *The River War*, 60.

[223] Moreover, even after the expedition pulled out from Wadi Halfa on 6 November, logistical and environmental complications, professional disagreements among the officers, and the inferior quality of the *voyageurs*, meant that the camel corps had only reached Korti in early December, while the bulk of the expedition lay scattered along the Nile all the way back to Wadi Halfa.[224]

A frustrated Wolseley ordered the desert column to strike out towards Metemmeh on 30 December, in what he confessed in his war journal was "a great leap in the dark." [225] Supply shortages and two clashes with the Mahdi's forces slowed their progress and resulted in the deaths of the column's commanding officer, Brigadier General Herbert Stewart, and the second in command, Colonel Frederick Burnaby.[226] The column, now led by its brilliant yet cautious intelligence officer, Colonel Sir Charles Wilson, finally reached Metemmeh on 21 January, where they met four steamers Gordon had dispatched from Khartoum to assist in their passage. Instead of proceeding on to Khartoum directly, however, Wilson chose to regroup and to reconnoiter the surrounding area for three days

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[223] In the first place, the British Army did not possess the necessary watercrafts that were required. These would have to be designed, built, and then shipped to the Sudan. Secondly, the 380 Canadian *voyageurs* had to be recruited and conveyed to Egypt. While approach across the Bayuda desert cut the entire distance from Wadi Halfa to Khartoum by half, the camel corps was an entirely new unit for the British army, requiring specially requisitioned animals and specially trained and outfitted guardsmen and marines. Wolseley's idea of a camel corps was received with a great deal of skepticism by the War Office. The Duke of Cambridge chafed at reform and innovation, and he balked at the idea of forming a composite unit out of the army's best units. He ultimately changed his mind, however, when he became convinced that there simply was not a better way of proceeding. Asher, *Khartoum*, 93, 189-191; Chevenix-Trench, *The Road to Khartoum*, 274-75; Churchill, *The River War*, 60; Kochanski, *Sir Garnet Wolseley*, 53, 56, 58, 160; Preston, *In Relief of Gordon*, 40-41; Royle, *The Egyptian Campaigns*, 317.

[224] The boats were so strung out on the river that the last whaler did not arrive in Korti until early February. Royle, *The Egyptian Campaigns*, 331. Butler later wrote of his frustration at the poor manner in which be believed his fellow officers, namely Buller and Wolseley, had conducted the campaign. Butler, *An Autobiography*, 277-82, 284, 286-92.

[225] Wolseley Campaign Diary, 27 December 1884, quoted in Preston, *In Relief of Gordon*, 100; Royle, *The Egyptian Campaigns*, 331-332.

[226] Responsibility for these logistical difficulties lay with Buller, whose duties included requisitioning a sufficient supply of camels for the camel corps and coal for the steamers. Failing in both of these regards, Buller did succeed in ensuring that there were enough camels to transport his personal supply of wine on the expedition. Asher, *Khartoum*, 187, 278.

before making his final push. Leaving Metemmeh on 24 January, the column reached Khartoum on 28 January, thirty-six hours after the city had fallen to the dervishes.[227]

Wolseley received word of Gordon's fate on 4 February. Having been commissioned with the task of extracting Gordon and being expressly ordered not to extend a campaign against the Mahdi, he now had to wait for word from London about how to proceed. Gladstone granted him a free hand, and although Wolseley desired to avenge Gordon, he acknowledged after a couple of weeks that the expedition was in no condition to wage a full-out campaign against the Mahdi. He therefore ordered the columns to withdraw on 24 February.[228] For several more months the last Egyptian garrison in the Sudan at Kassala continued to hold out against a Dervish siege, but was forced to capitulate on 30 July after a twenty month siege.[229] With that, Egypt and Britain had been forced temporarily from the Sudan.

ASSIGNING BLAME AND THE MAKING OF A MARTYR: THE PUBLIC'S EVALUATION OF THE RELIEF EXPEDITION AND GENERAL GORDON

The appointment of Wolseley had been well received by the press and the general public, and it instilled a strong sense of confidence that Gordon would be relieved in time. As the *Morning Post* reported on 6 August, "Mr. Gladstone has…become alive to the fact that several months ago certain pledges were given by the government that they

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[227] Royle, *The Egyptian Campaigns 1882-1885*, 333-54, 360-71, 378-85; Pakenham, *The Struggle for Africa*, 237-38. Gordon's death on 26 January 1885 came just two days before his fifty-second birthday.
[228] By early February the River column had crossed over the 4th cataract and had stormed the heights held by the Dervishes above Kirkbekan at a loss of 60 men including the column's commander Maj. Gen. Earle, was poised to make better time on the smoother part of the Nile, but it was strung out along the Nile and vulnerable to attack. Concurrently, the Camel Corps under Wilson, and later Buller, who took command after Wolseley heard of Stewart's condition, being in no condition to fend off a full attack by the Dervishes freed from the responsibility of besieging Khartoum, had already begun to withdraw back across the desert. Royle, *The Egyptian Campaign*, 386-401; Preston, *In Relief of Gordon*, xxxix-xvi; Sir William F. Butler, *The Campaign of the Cataracts: Being a Personal Narrative of the Great Nile Expedition* (London: Samson Low, 1887), 321-69.
[229] Royle, *The Egyptian Campaigns*, 528.

would consider themselves bound to take exceptional measures, if necessary, for the safety of Gordon."[230] Well-documented by the London and provincial presses, the delays and set-backs that beset the two columns were well known to the British public. Fears that Wolseley's columns would not reach Khartoum in time to save Gordon were temporarily assuaged, when, in the first week of February, papers such as the *Times*, the *Cornishman*, and the *Derby Telegraph* erroneously speculated that Colonel Wilson had been in Khartoum for a number of days.[231] These were of course ultimately proven to be unsubstantiated rumors.[232] In the case of *Punch*, on 7 February the paper grandly but mistakenly portrayed Wolseley greeting Gordon in Khartoum with the caption "At Last!" It then corrected its most unseemly error with a depiction of a grieving Britannia outside the walls of Khartoum with the caption "Too Late!"[233]

The country descended into mourning with the news that Khartoum had fallen. The *Huddersfield Daily Chronicle* observed that "since the arrival of the news of the fall of Khartoum, but little else has been talked about."[234] Weeks later, on 13 March, crowds attended memorial services for Gordon in London, Manchester, and Durham.[235] Public dismay at the fall of Khartoum led to speculation about who was accountable for the disaster. The two names which immediately rose to the surface were Gladstone and Wolseley. In his defense, Gladstone and his supporters in and outside of Parliament

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[230] *Morning Post*, 6 August 1884, 4.
[231] *Times* (London), 5 February 1885, 6; *Cornishman*, 5 February 1885, 6; *Derby Telegraph*, 5 February 1885, 4.
[232] As early as 5 February, some of the evening presses were already reporting that Khartoum had fallen to the Mahdi. *Pall Mall Gazette*, 5 February 1885, 8-9; *Edinburgh Evening News*, 5 February 1885, 3; *Nottingham Evening Post*, 5 February 1885, 3. At that time, it was still not known whether Gordon had fallen with the city, if he had been captured, or if he had somehow miraculously escaped.
[233] *Punch*, 7 February 1885, 66; 14 February 1885, 78. See images 2.1 and 2.2 at the end of the chapter.
[234] *Huddersfield Daily Chronicle*, 14 February 1884, 5.
[235] *Leeds Mercury*, 14 March 1885, 20; *Manchester Courier and Lancaster Guardian*, 14 March 1885, 4; *Hampshire Advertiser*, 18 March 1885, 3; *Pall Mall Gazette*, 13 March 1885, 8.

attempted to deflect responsibility from the government by blaming the military and specifically Wolseley. They emphasized that nearly two months passed between the time of Wolseley's commission and the point at which the expedition finally began heading up the Nile. In addition, those who deflected blame from the prime minister also focused on Wolseley's insistence to move up the Nile instead of taking the overland approach. For example, in his contemporary history of the Egyptian campaigns, Royle argued that even though Wolseley's force might well have had to fight along the Suakin to Berber to Khartoum route, that passage would still have been shorter and taken less time than the longer river route.[236] Wolseley and his supporters refuted the charges, and directed the blame back on Gladstone. If Gladstone had acted promptly, Wolseley argued, the delays incurred in preparation and in executing the relief notwithstanding, he would have arrived in Khartoum in plenty of time to save the besieged officer.[237]

In general, those who had favored sending a relief expedition long before it was authorized tended to side with Wolseley. In letters to the independent-minded *Huddersfield Daily Chronicle*, two troubled citizens eulogized the fallen soldier thusly:

ON HEARING OF GORDON'S DEATH

Brave Gordon—gone—
The Arab spear hath pierced his breast,
And freed his soul; while ever and anon
England asked why her foremost son should rest
Forsaken—pitilessly left to shift as best he might,
What days of toil, what nights of troubled rest
Were his. Khartoum his prison, treachery lurking there,
A multitude to feed. Sustained by prayer

[236] Royle, *The Egyptian Campaigns*, 315.
[237] Modern scholars remain focused and highly opinionated as to the reasons for the expedition's failure. For example, Thomas Pakenham argues that Wolseley was severely overconfident in his ring's own abilities, dismissive of the danger that Gordon was in, and committed serious mistakes that ultimately doomed the mission. Pakenham, *The Struggle for Africa*, 233-34. More recently, the circumstances of Gordon's temperament in death became the subject of a 1993 article in the *Times* and a rebuttal letter to the editor. *Times* (London), 16 July 1993, 6; 24 July 1993, 13.

And faith in God, he need his mighty skill;
Mounting each crested billow as it rose,
Almost like Him who uttered, "Peace be still."
And twice six months he kept at bay his foes,
With soldiers who had nothing save the name;
Intent to his duty, and the fame
Of his dear country to uphold. Oh shame!
Thrice shame! on those who let him die.
Britannis, blush and weep. That craven policy,
Whispering expense, delay, and peace hypocricy,[sic]
Should sacrifice thy noblest, bravest son.
Go write his epitaph. Say here lies one
Of matchless valour, infinite resource;
A lion's heart, yet gentle as the wind
Which play's on summer's eve; his force
Of mind, sustained by Him, whom well he loved.
And I—you, I!—forsook him, left him e'en to die.
Amid a scene of savage butchery.

W. H. G.[238]

GORDON

Is this the land of Nelson,
The land of Pitt and Clive,
The land of Cromwell, Raleigh,
Or Palmerston's Old Hive?...

Praying that they would send him [Gordon]
Only three thousand men,
To unbeleaguered Berber,
To smash the tiger's den.

But their good faces lengthened,
And their small hearts stood still,
They blankly gazed and blankly said,
"Twill spoil our Budget Bill."…

When school boys read the story,
The indelible shame
Will fill their souls with loathing,
Their little hearts with flame...

Some glow of pride will mingle
With shams upon each cheek,

[238] *Huddersfield Daily Chronicle*, 14 February 1885, 7.

And their little hearts will open,
    And their little tongues shall speak.

And with their wreaths they'll crown him,
    The hero of Khartoum,
And will throw the names of those men
    Into history's lumber-room.
J. M. R.[239]

Noting that the continental presses overwhelmingly condemned Gladstone for failing to act, the *Standard* argued that the government had had no case against the censure motion the previous spring.[240] On 26 February the *Huddersfield Daily Chronicle* reminded its readers of those who had "abandoned Gordon" by listing the local MPs who had sided with Gladstone during that vote.[241] Deriding Gladstone's failure to act, the public reversed the acronym of his nickname "Grand Old Man" G.O.M. to read M.O.G. "Murderer of Gordon."[242] With criticism against Gladstone mounting, in early June the Tory opposition moved against the prime minister in opposing his Customs and Inland Revenue Bill. Although the measure was not a formal vote of censure, as Sir Michael Hicks-Beach noted, the vote "carried with it the life or death of the government" and had thus had the effect of a vote of no confidence. On that occasion, Gladstone was

[239] *Huddersfield Daily Chronicle*, 14 February 1885, 7.
[240] *Standard*, 13 February 1885, 7; 24 February 1885, 4.
[241] *Huddersfield Daily Chronicle*, 26 Feb 1885, 4.
[242] Shareen Blair Brysac and Karl E. Meyer, *Kingmakers: The Invention of the Modern Middle East* (New York: Norton, 2008), 46-47.

unexpectedly and narrowly defeated, by a vote of 264 to 252.[243] Gladstone duly resigned on 9 June and Lord Salisbury began the first and shortest of his three governments.[244]

The public's fixation with Gordon since Stead's piece in the *Pall Mall Gazette* vaulted the general in death to martyr status. The *Leeds Mercury* eulogized him thusly, "that he should have closed his noble life of heroic effort by the martyr's death will strike all among us with a sense of fitness."[245] Middlesbrough's *Daily Gazette* predicted that "his country will cherish his memory. His name will live in history; his laurels will not fade."[246] And the *Suffolk Mirror* insisted that "Gordon still lives in the hearts of men throughout the civilised world, and whilst time lasts, he will stand."[247] Likewise, at a well-attended meeting of the Christian Mission Society in late March, the Earl of Cairns paid homage to Gordon's career as a humanitarian and concluded his remarks: "if these things constituted the true type of a Christian missionary, and if a violent death cheerfully met and welcomed in the midst of life constituted a martyr's death, then it was beyond all doubt that that great and noble hero whose loss England and the world were now deploring…was both missionary and martyr."[248]

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[243] *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, vol. 298, c. 1498, 1511-1514. The success of this vote was largely due to a strategic move by the Irish vote, led by Charles Stewart Parnell, to support the Conservative opposition to Gladstone. As had been the case when they had joined the Conservatives in attempting to censure Gladstone back in February 1884 over his Sudan policy, the decision of the Irish MPs to oppose the Liberal government in June 1885 was almost certainly an effort to strategically play one party against the other in order to advance their own interests. Lyons, *Charles Stewart Parnell*, 276; John Morley, *The Life of William Ewart Gladstone*, volume 3, (London: Macmillan, 1903), 200-201.
[244] Jenkins, *Gladstone*, 514-16. When elections were held between 28 November and 10 December, Liberals were once again elected into the majority, though they lost 30 seats, and Gladstone regained the premiership. Ten years later, the debate over culpability lived on as the *Leeds Mercury* resurrected the contention that Gordon's death was because Wolseley failed to take the more direct overland route. *Leeds Mercury*, 26 October 1896, 8.
[245] *Leeds Mercury*, 12 February 1885, 2.
[246] *Daily Gazette* (Middlesbrough), 12 February 1885, 2.
[247] *Suffolk Mirror*, 21 February 1885, 4.
[248] *Times* (London), 26 March 1885, 3.

In keeping with a long tradition of recognizing military and imperial heroes, the country intended to memorialize Gordon. Within weeks of the general's death, the lord mayor of London formed a committee of influential persons, including members of the royal family and government officials.[249] After deliberating on the matter for several weeks, the committee determined to open a school for orphaned boys and raised almost £16,000 in two months. On 1 May 1886, the Gordon Boys' Home held its opening festival.[250] Meanwhile, Gordon memorials were placed both in St. Paul's Cathedral and at Westminster Abbey. Adorning the cenotaph at St. Paul's were lines composed specially by Alfred Lord Tennyson:

> Warrior of God, man's friend, not here below,
> But somewhere dead, far in the waste Soudan;
> Thou livest in all hearts, for all men know
> This earth hath borne no simpler, nobler man.[251]

In mid-March the citizens of Southampton urged the commissioning of a statue to their fallen son.[252] In April, at the initiation of the Marquis of Huntly, family and members of clan Gordon eagerly proposed that a Scottish memorial to Gordon be erected in Aberdeen.[253] That same month, the citizens of Liverpool established the Liverpool

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[249] *Daily News* (London), 24 February 1885, 3.
[250] *Daily News* (London), 16 March 1885, 2; *Daily News* (London), 10 May 1885, 6; *Times* (London), 5 May 1885, 9; 1 May 1886, 14.
[251] *Times* (London), 4 March 1885, 13; 7 May 1885, 6; 9 April 1885, 8. As it was, Gordon would receive memorials in both sites. An oversized monument of Gordon lying in effigy was dedicated in St. Paul's Cathedral in 1886. In addition, a three-paneled memorial to Major General Sir Herbert Stewart was set in the wall behind the Gordon cenotaph. *Times* (London), 18 May 1886, 9. In 1892 a bust of Gordon was commissioned and placed in Westminster Abbey. Charles Hiatt, *Westminster Abbey: A Short History and Description of the Church and Conventional Buildings with Notes on Monuments*, 2nd ed. (London: George Bell, 1906), 35. In 1913 Wolseley was buried beneath the tributes to these two men in St. Paul's crypt. Connected in life, it was only fitting that the three men should thus be connected in death.
[252] Miles Taylor, "Charles Gordon: Reluctant Son of Southampton," in *Southampton: Gateway to the British Empire*, ed. Miles Taylor (London: I. B. Tauris, 2007), 87-89.
[253] *Aberdeen Journal*, 4 April 1885, 3. Completed in 1888, the statue to Gordon was placed outside the gates to what was then Robert Gordon College (now Robert Gordon University).

Gordon's Working Lads Institute.[254] In 1888 a contemplative statue of Gordon, was erected in Trafalgar Square, in the company of two of the country's other great martyrs, Admiral Lord Nelson and General Sir Henry Havelock.[255] Two years later a statue depicting Gordon sitting astride a camel was erected outside the regimental headquarters of the Corps of Royal Engineers in Chatham.[256]

For several years 26 January did not pass without a newspaper noting that it was the day on which Gordon had died in Khartoum. In 1888, for instance, the *Times* claimed that he was still very much in the hearts and minds of the British public, and the paper drew a biting contrast between the general sentiment and political actors:

> Yesterday many thousands of Englishmen, and those especially who place patriotism above party, were saddened by the memory of an event scarcely, we believe, to be paralleled in the annals of the nation…History will judge between him and those who, for the purpose of an ignoble ambition, gambled with that noble life. It is rather significant, however, of the levity of modern politics to find that among all the orators who are deafening the public ear with their speeches scarcely one was mindful of this solemn anniversary…It would be well, to be sure, for the Gladstonian party if that oblivion were complete, but notwithstanding the silence of politicians on both sides, the nation is not wholly forgetful of Gordon's devotion and Gordon's fate.[257]

On 26 January 1891, a short "in memorium" notice dedicated to Gordon appeared in the

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[254] *Liverpool Mercury*, 6 May 1885, 8.

[255] Admiral Lord Nelson was killed in action against a Franco-Spanish Fleet in 1805. When the area at the north end of White Hall, then the Royal Mews, was developed in 1826 it was renamed Trafalgar Square and a memorial column to Nelson was prominently erected in the center in 1843. It would not be until 1867 that the monument was fully completed. Major General Sir Henry Havelock died of dysentery in 1857 while attempting to relieve Lucknow during Sepoy Mutiny. Two years later a statue of Havelock, commemorating him and the other casualties of the Sepoy Rebellion, was placed on the southeast corner of the square. Thornycroft's statue of Gordon was removed from Trafalgar Square in 1943 and relocated ten-years later to its present location on the Victorian Embankment along the Thames River. A second casting of the statue was also commissioned by the residents of Melbourne Australia and placed in Gordon Reserve near Parliament House in 1888. Rodney Mace, *Trafalgar SquareL Emblem of Empire* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1976), 90, 107-108, 125-6; Ian F. W. Beckett, *The Victorians at War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 23.

[256] *Times* (London), 20 May 1890, 8. A copy of this statue was also erected outside of the Governor's Palace in Khartoum. It was subsequently removed in 1958 and placed outside Gordon's School in Woking.

[257] *Times* (London), 27 January 1888, 9.

Times for the last time.[258] Even so, Gordon was hardly forgotten. In 1899, in the aftermath of Kitchener's victory at Omdurman and in the course of delivering a sermon on Matthew 20, the Bishop of Peterborough resurrected the memory of Gordon stating: "Thank God for the Presence in His Church has touched our nation's life and worked for righteousness—only the last few years have given us proof of it. The hero of the people's hearts has been the man, Charles Gordon, whose heroic death and Christian life won men's esteem. It was to honour him that in the very flush of victory our soldiers bared their heads to join their intercessions—Anglicans, Romans, Presbyterians—and gave this tribute of their honour to a righteous man."[259] And, in 1933, on the centenary of Gordon's birth, memorial services were held at St. Paul's Cathedral and in Trafalgar Square.[260]

Even while the press ceased printing memorial notices, a long-term recognition and interest in Gordon persisted.[261] The degree to which imperialism was a fixture of Victorian society is evidenced through Victorian popular literature. While that issue will be examined more substantially in chapter 5, it is nevertheless fitting at this point to comment briefly on as to how the treatment of Gordon illustrated that wider narrative. Whereas George Birkbeck Hill's work on Gordon's early career in the Sudan failed to generate or receive much interest before he was reassigned to the Sudan in January 1884, in the aftermath of Gordon's death, the work subsequently underwent several editions.[262] In addition to the numerous contemporary works about Gordon cited earlier, Colonel

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[258] *Times* (London), 26 January 1891, 1.
[259] *Times* (London), 11 October 1899, 5.
[260] *Times* (London), 28 January 1933, 11-12; 30 January 1933, 15.
[261] For more on the memorialization of Gordon see, Stephanie Laffer, "'Gordon's Ghosts: British Major General Charles George Gordon and His Legacies, 1885-1990," Ph.D. diss. (Florida State University, 2010).
[262] Pollock, *Gordon*, 268; George Birkbeck Hill, *Colonel Gordon in Central Africa*, 4th ed. (London: Thos. de la Rue, 1885), xi.

(later Major General) Sir William F. Butler published a Gordon biography in February 1889 that became a bestseller. It was subsequently reprinted in March 1889, 1891, 1892, and 1893. After public interest in the Sudan was reinvigorated by Britain's reentry into the Sudan in 1896, the work went through additional printings in 1897, 1898, 1899, and thereafter in 1901, 1903, 1904, 1907, 1913, 1920, and 1921.[263] Speaking to the general proliferation of such works, the *Leeds Mercury* observed in 1896 that "of the making of books concerning General Gordon there seems to be no end."[264]

Extending beyond works that were solely dedicated to Gordon, other writings included noticeable references to the imperial martyr. For instance, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle subtly rounded out the Victorian attributes of his famed detective, Sherlock Holmes, by mentioning that an engraving of the late general hung on the wall of his apartments at 221b Baker Street.[265] Later when Conan Doyle was forced by popular demand to resurrect Holmes from an untimely death at Reichenbach Falls and fill in the missing years, the author wove into the detective's hiatus a fact-finding mission to Khartoum on behalf of the Foreign Office.[266] Furthermore, the Sudan, Khartoum, and Gordon also found a place in K. and Hesketh Pritchard's 1903 serial "By Tammers' Camp Fire" which appeared in *Strand Magazine* from June 1903 to November 1904.[267] To those ends, the public's longstanding interest in Gordon and his elevation to martyr status was certainly cemented by the circumstances of his death and had much to do with the fact that the public's connection with Gordon had been established and encouraged by

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[263] Butler, *Charles George Gordon* (London: Macmillan, 1892); Publication information for subsequent printings of Butler's biography derived from search of Google Books. Subsequent publications were complete reprints of the original 1889 edition, and were published without a preface revised or otherwise.
[264] *Leeds Mercury*, 26 October 1896, 8.
[265] Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, "The Cardboard Box," *Strand Magazine*, 5 (January 1893): 62.
[266] Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, "The Empty House," *Strand Magazine*, 26 (October, 1903): 368.
[267] K. and Hesketh Pritchard, "By Tammers' Camp Fire," *Strand Magazine* 26 (October, 1903), 165, 342-43, 438.

the press during the year-long siege. In this way, as John Wolfe demonstrated, Gordon had much in common with the famed explorer David Livingston, whose exploits, thanks to the efforts of Sir Henry Morton Stanley, were also fresh in the public's mind at the time of his death.[268]

EPILOGUE: BACK TO SUDAN AND FASHODA

Having expelled Egypt from the Sudan, the Mahdi and his successor the Khalifa Abdullah ibn Muhammad established and maintained an empire which for thirteen years dominated the Sudan and its neighbors. From 1885-89 it fought a war against Abyssinia from which it emerged victorious but severely weakened. At the same time, a dervish army under Osman Digna advanced into Egyptian territory in an effort to carry out the Mahdi's vision of ridding the Nile Delta of Turkish rule.[269] Since taking responsibility for the Egyptian state in 1883, Britain had done much to stabilize and strengthen the Egyptian army. In one of that force's first tests, on 17 January 1888 at Handub, a well-seasoned Dervish army overwhelmed the outnumbered force of 500 Sudanese irregulars led by the governor of Suakin, Colonel Herbert Kitchener. Though his attack was thwarted, Kitchener's bravery and example of leadership under fire earned him a great deal of recognition by the Egyptian government. Twelve months later the Egyptian army, led by Sirdar Sir Francis Grenfell and Kitchener, who had been recently promoted to adjutant-general, routed Osman Digna's besieging army at Suakin. The incident

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[268] John Wolfe, *Great Deaths: Grieving, Religion, and Nationhood in Victorian and Edwardian Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 138. Subsequently, Hall Caine's "The White Christ," dealt with fictional exploits of the British army in post-Omdurman Egypt and the Sudan. Hall Caine, "The White Christ," *Strand Magazine* (December, 1908 – November, 1909).
[269] Churchill, *The River War*, 77-83.

further elevated Kitchener's standing with his superiors, and in 1892 upon Grenfell's retirement, Kitchener became the third British officer to hold the title of sirdar.[270]

At the same time, even as Britain had withdrawn from the Sudan, other European imperial-minded powers, namely Belgium, France, Germany, and Italy, began expressing interests in extending their control over the region. Italy's colonial presence in Africa was dwarfed by its rivals, but its actions proved pivotal in compelling Britain to reenter the Sudan. The catalyst came in 1896 when Italy, seeking to expand its footprint in the horn of Africa, invaded Abyssinia. The event proved disastrous for Italy as its army was destroyed in the Battle of Adowa on 1 March.[271]

The Tories (led by Lord Salisbury) had returned to power in 1895, with the long-held belief that Egyptian suzerainty over the Sudan had merely been suspended and not completely relinquished. Concerned that France would make inroads into the Sudan and thereby threaten Britain's position in Egypt, the Salisbury government encouraged Egypt to reenter the Sudan and take back the territories that had been lost in 1885. Now concerned that Abdullah's forces would capitalize on Italy's evident weakness and expand further into the horn of Africa as well as into Egypt, the British government also feared that Italy's defeat in Africa might have dire effects on the power balance in Europe. Thus armed with geopolitical considerations and a desire to avenge the death of Gordon, it took little time for Salisbury to respond in the affirmative to Italy's request for assistance. Acting through Lord Cromer, the British government pressured the Egyptian government to send Kitchener and the Egyptian army back into the Sudan.[272]

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[270] Ibid., 95-97.
[271] Robin Neillands, *The Dervish Wars*, 171-72.
[272] Churchill, *The River War*, 99-100; Neilland, *The Dervish Wars*, 174-75, Asher, *Khartoum*, 298. In addition to strengthening the Egyptian army and learning from the failures of Wolseley's Nile Expedition,

What followed was a methodically executed three-year campaign of conquest up the Nile River. Kitchener followed the same course that Wolseley had taken thirteen years earlier, but he did so without relying on boats, following the river's course on foot. Heading south out of Wadi Halfa on 15 March 1896, Kitchener's Anglo-Egyptian army spent the next two years retaking ground. Then, on 2 September 1898, the subjugation of the Sudan was all but accomplished when the Sirdar's force of 25,000 men annihilated the Khalifa's army of 52,000 at Omdurman. The following day Kitchener marched into Khartoum and raised the British flag over the palace once occupied by Gordon.[273]

With the re-conquest of the Sudan effectively completed, the dervish power destroyed, and the death of Gordon avenged, Britain had little time to relish its victory. On 10 July a small French expeditionary force commanded by Colonel Jean-Baptiste Marchand, having marched across the desert from Gabon, claimed the fort at Fashoda for France. After his victory at Omdurman, Kitchener headed south to confront Marchand and arrived at Fashoda on 10 September. For the next six weeks the two great imperial powers of Britain and France stood on the brink of war as both powers asserted their claim to Fashoda. For Britain, the position at Fashoda was absolutely critical. If Fashoda fell into French hands, Britain feared that France would dam up the Nile River and cutoff the life blood of Egypt. For France, the issue was much more an issue of national pride and not backing down to British demands. Marchand had marched across the Sudan

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Britain had also keenly focused on expanding its understanding of the land and their intelligence gathering capabilities. These factors proved strategically invaluable as Kitchener prepared and launched his invasion into the Sudan in 1896, and politically important as the country was conditioned for the invasion. Churchill, *The River War*, 97-99.

[273] In what turned out to be one of the most lopsided victories of Britain's imperial experiences, at Omdurman Kitchener's losses amounted to 47 dead and 382 wounded, while the Anglo-Egyptian Army inflicted more than 28,000 total casualties (killed, wounded, captured) on the Khalifa's forces. For a detailed accounts of Kitchener's campaign see Churchill, *The River War*, 107-311; Asher, *Khartoum*, 298-407.

without orders to do so, and in the event of a conflict, his small force would have been no match for Kitchener's army. Moreover, France was internally in turmoil over the Dreyfus Affair, and it had few reliable European allies that could offer assistance in a war with Britain. Consequently the French government realized it had no choice but to back down.[274]

Throughout the late-1890s, echoing their earlier disputes about blame over the fall of Khartoum and the proper role of empire, Conservative and Liberal presses consistently engaged the questions of empire and diplomacy. Largely favoring reentering the Sudan in 1896, Conservative papers such as the *Aberdeen Journal* emphasized that the dervish threats to Egypt required Britain to promptly respond militarily, and that there could be "none of the disastrous delay which took place in the dispatch of the expedition for the relief of Gordon." To that end the paper found the views of those opposed to be "narrow, unpatriotic, and contemptible.[275] Moreover the *Derby Mercury* reminded its readers that it was the Liberals who were responsible for Gordon's death and allowing the dervish power to thrive in the first place. As such, they charged, the opposition was "by no means fitted…to set up as critics worthy of respect."[276] Noting that the public was fatigued by war alarms over the past months, the *Ipswich Journal* nevertheless asserted that "security for Egypt is a dominant and imperious want, and the English Government would be well justified to secure it."[277] Ever resistant to imperial interventionism Liberal papers, such as the *Leeds Mercury* and *North Eastern Gazette* remained skeptical and

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[274] Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa*, 508-518, 547-556. Despite the humiliation of conceding North East Africa to the British, the diplomatic settlement of the Fashoda Crisis had the positive effect of initiated a cooling off of the imperial rivalry between Britain and France, a development that resulted in the signing of the Anglo-French entente cordiale in 1904.
[275] *Aberdeen Journal*, 12 March 1896, 4; 16 March 1896, 4; 18 March 1896, 4.
[276] *Derby Mercury*, 25 March 1896, 4.
[277] *Ipswich Journal*, 21 March 1896, 4.

were concerned that the "Tory recklessness" had larger ambitions in marching 300 miles into the Sudan besides merely "warding off attack," and worried not only about the operation's financial cost but the political impact if it provoked French hostility.[278]

Those concerns and objections notwithstanding, there was universal rejoicing in the presses over the victory at Omdurman and the final avenging of Gordon. That celebration was quickly followed by universal concern over the presence of the French at Fashoda in the autumn of 1898. In addressing that crisis over the following months, the press and the public, via letters to the editorial pages, consistently maintained that the French had no claim whatsoever to the region and were thus obligated to withdraw. They widely insisted that Britain had no interest in going to war, but maintained that if war came it would be the French who were responsible for initiating hostilities.[279] As we shall see, the press would express a very similar attitude toward the Transvaal crisis the following summer.

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[278] *Leeds Mercury*, 17 March 1896, 4; *North Eastern Gazette* (Middlesbrough), 20 March 1896, 2; 21 March 1896, 2.
[279] *Times* (London), 11 October 1898. 7; 27 October 1898, 8; 28 October 1898, 8; *Scottish Guardian* (Edinburgh) 14 October 1898, 569; 28 October 1898, 617.

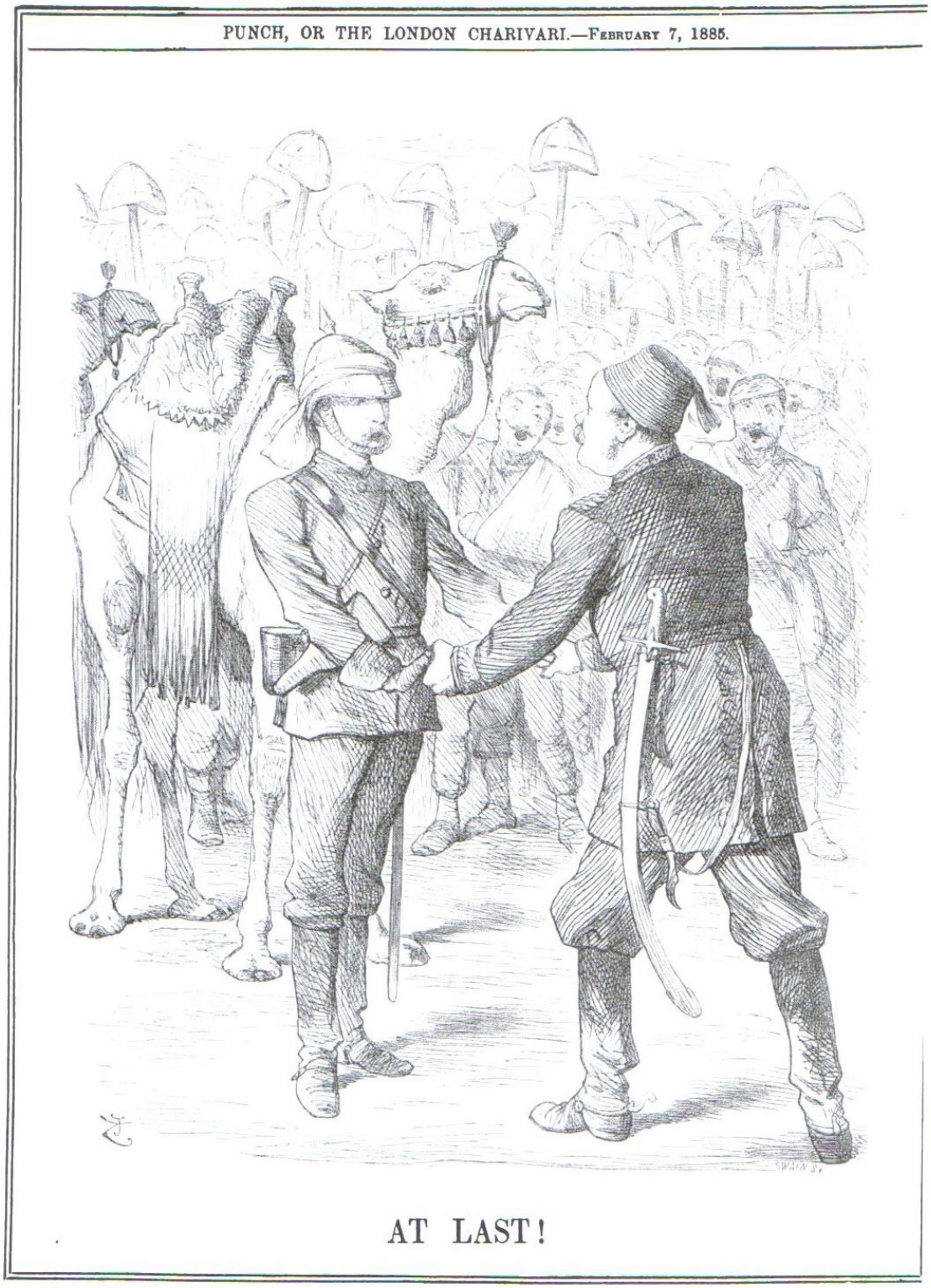

Figure 2-1 – "At Last," *Punch* 7 February 1885, 66.

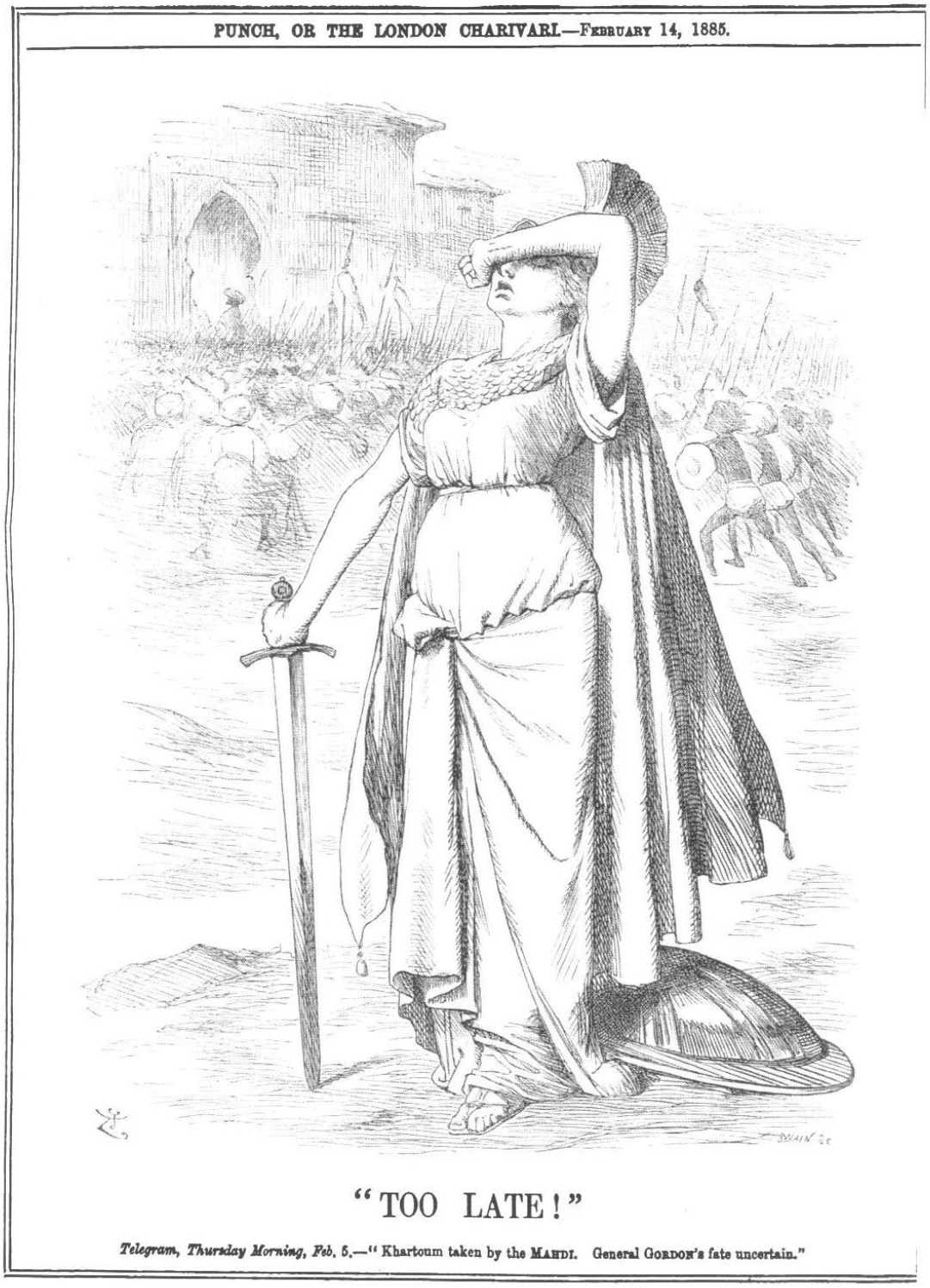

Figure 2-2 – "Too Late," *Punch* 14 February 1885, 78

CHAPTER 3:
RENEWED INTEREST IN SOUTH AFRICAN AFFAIRS, 1895-1900: THE JAMESON RAID AND THE SECOND ANGLO-BOER WAR

A great deal has been written about what led to the outbreak of war in southern Africa in 1899. For the purposes here, there is little need to reexamine exhaustively the long-term progression towards war. Among the causes cited by British actors were Uitlander grievances (i.e., that foreigners, mostly of British descent, who resided within the Boer republics were denied civil rights) and growing fears of German interference in the region. On the Boer side, the road to war lay in their consistent defense of Boer independence against what they perceived as untoward advances and interferences by the British into their internal affairs.[1] Moreover, they perceived that these broad underlying circumstances were abetted by Cecil Rhodes's naked desire for further wealth and power and supplemented by a façade of demands for equality. These elements coalesced in 1895 and inaugurated what F.W. Reitz, the president of the Orange Free State, later denounced as the first of two phases of "capitalistic jingoism" that sought to dismantle the sovereignty of the Transvaal. The first phase consisted of direct military force. The second phase entailed the use of strong-arm diplomacy.[2]

THE JAMESON RAID, 1895-96

That first phase was profoundly marked by the plot of Cecil Rhodes, the prime minister of the Cape Colony, to eliminate his economic competitors, impede the expansion of Britain's imperial rivals, and profit from the rich gold and diamond deposits

[1] Iain R. Smith, *The Origins of the South African War, 1899-1902* (London: Longman, 1996), 389-423.
[2] F. W. Reitz, *A Century of Wrong* (London: Mowbray, 1900), 37-88.

that lay to the north of the Cape.[3] Intending to capitalize on the discontent of the Uitlanders, Rhodes arranged for Dr. Leander Starr Jameson, a long-time friend and business associate, to invade the Transvaal with a small body of men. They then were to lead a larger uprising of disgruntled Uitlanders against the Transvaal government. Under the guise of restoring peace after the chaos of the invasion, Rhodes expected that the high commissioner of the Cape, Sir Hercules Robinson, would quickly announce the re-annexation of the Transvaal. A bold and blatantly illegal venture, this was not the first time that Rhodes had taken similar risks.[4] The Jameson raid (29 December 1895 – 2 January 1896), however, was a complete and utter failure. The Uitlanders failed to rise up in support, and the Transvaal government was able to crush Jameson's force quickly.[5]

In stark contrast to the way in which it reacted to the annexation of the Transvaal in 1877, the British government and certain elements of the press responded to the Jameson raid with a firestorm of criticism. For its part, Parliament launched an intense investigation into the suspected culpability of the Colonial Office and its secretary, Joseph Chamberlain, in particular.[6] The inquiry found that while Chamberlain had

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[3] Having migrated to South Africa in 1870 at the age of seventeen for health reasons, Rhodes had become one of the most powerful and influential individuals in the South African subcontinent by the 1890s. In 1885 he succeeded in pushing the colonial administration into establishing the Bechuanaland Protectorate, an area of land that lay along the Transvaal's northwestern border. Between 1889-1890, having received a royal charter for his British South Africa Company, he brokered a series of treaties with native chiefs which granted his company sole rights to the vast region that completed the encirclement of the Transvaal and stretched as far north as Lake Tanganyika and the southern border of the Belgian Congo. These efforts coincided with broader interests in establishing a Cape to Cairo railway and a north-south British corridor. Nutting, *The Scramble for Africa*, 130-42, 187-202, 227.

[4] In 1890, under a very similar combination of circumstances, Rhodes and Jameson had successfully led a coup against the Portuguese holdings of Manica-Gazaland. See Jean van der Poel, *The Jameson Raid* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951), 4.

[5] Pakenham, *The Boer War*, xxv-xxix. Just prior to the invasion, Rhodes had warned Jameson not to follow through with the plan. However, this was not out of a sudden concern for the illegality of the enterprise, but more out of concern that the Uitlanders would not rise up in rebellion in support of Jameson and the action would ultimately prove fruitless. See van der Poel, *The Jameson Raid*, 84-85.

[6] Van der Poel, *The Jameson Raid*, 155-248; Gardner, *The Life of Sir William Harcourt*, 2: 428-29; J. L. Garvin, *The Life of Joseph Chamberlain*, vol. 3 "Empire and World Policy," (London: Macmillan, 1934),

certainly been active in fomenting a racial war in South Africa, he had deliberately sequestered himself from any specific knowledge of the raid, so that he could assert plausible deniability about the affair.[7] The investigation, led by Sir William Harcourt, also directed criticism at Rhodes for "[bringing] race hatred and distrust into colonial politics, and lasting discredit abroad on English faith."[8]

As formal investigations proceeded, the public asked hard questions about events in southern Africa in the days immediately following the raid. The *Huddersfield Daily Chronicle* printed an article from the *Law Journal* which insisted that the imperial government had to bear some responsibility for its subordinate officials, even to the point of making some compensation in the event that international rights had been violated.[9] That Jameson had apparently and brazenly violated the Foreign Enlistments Act—by committing an act of war upon the peaceful Transvaal—led many national and provincial papers, Conservative and Liberal alike, to speak out against him. The *Bristol Mercury* expressed its sympathy for the Uitlanders, but charged that Jameson's action was further evidence of "the dangers of putting the power of government into the hands of a dividend earning company." By dragging Great Britain into "what might have remained a purely local dispute between the Boers and the Uitlanders," the *Mercury* argued that the raid had turned the issue into an international dispute, which only added to the difficulties of the Foreign Office.[10] The paper subsequently insisted that the country had nothing "but regret that the march should ever have been undertaken, and, perhaps, still more that it

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119-22; Peter T. Marsh, *Joseph Chamberlain: Entrepreneur in Politics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 387-405; Travis L. Crosby, *A Most Radical Imperialist* (London: L. B. Tauris, 2011), 138-42.
[7] Van der Poel, *Jameson Raid*, 82-90; Smith, *The Origins of the South African War*, 97-98.
[8] Gardner, *The Life of Sir William Harcourt*, 2: 394-95, 431.
[9] *Huddersfield Daily Chronicle*, 6 January 1896, 4.
[10] *Bristol Mercury*, 2 January 1896, 5.

should have issued in fatal conflict."[11] The *Daily News*, meanwhile, denounced the action for transgressing upon the sovereignty afforded to the South African Republic by the Convention of 1884:

> There is no right whatsoever to interfere with the internal affairs of the Transvaal, and no jurisdiction within its borders. Dr. Jameson would have had no international right to enter the South African Republic with an armed force, even if he had received the express authority of the Crown. So far from having any such authority he disobeyed the direct orders of Her Majesty's representative, Sir Hercules Robinson. He made a private raid and he came to speedy grief.[12]

The *Standard* insisted that, while the country had the deepest sympathy for the plight of its countrymen residing abroad, it was as "unpalatable a task" for Englishmen to admit they were in the wrong and that the raid was "plainly a gross violation of the rights of the Transvaal republic," regardless of what prompted Jameson to act. "To condone it—much less to encourage it," the paper continued, "would be to make a precedent utterly inconsistent with the whole course of conduct by which our empire has grown to its present bulk."[13] Thus, as one military officer feared, "the defeat of Jameson would result in a loss of British prestige in South Africa."[14]

Believing that Jameson's actions had caused considerable damage to British prestige and that they offered an opportunity for the Boers to illustrate their magnanimity, the papers consequently expressed few misgivings about his forthcoming trial . In light of the serious violations committed by Jameson against the Transvaal, the Dublin-based *Freeman's Journal* complimented the Boers for their actions in releasing him into the

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[11] Ibid., 4 January 1896, 8.
[12] *Daily News* (London), 4 January 1896, 5.
[13] *Standard*, 3 January 1896, 4.
[14] *Bristol Mercury*, 4 January 1896, 8.

custody of the British.[15] In the mind of concurring papers, such as the *Glasgow Herald* and the *Standard*, there was little doubt as to the defendant's guilt.[16] On the eve of the trial, the *Bristol Mercury* insisted that the "facts of the matter were mostly beyond dispute," and that the only question that remained for the grand jury to decide was whether "there was a *primâ facie* proof that the defendants either 'engaged, assisted, or were employed'" in the expedition.[17]

More importantly, the circumstances of the raid raised questions about the appropriateness of Britain's imperial policy. While the *Daily News* offered that "it was a fine thing to engage the world in arms," it maintained that the affair provided "food for thought to the silly and reckless advocates of war with the Boers at any price." The paper concluded that Britain needed to be quite sure that a quarrel was just before it entered into it.[18] Troubled by the inconsistency of Chamberlain's policies, H. Seton-Karr, a Conservative MP, as well as a former explorer and army officer, wrote to the *Times* and called for a clearer explanation of Britain's official policy toward the Transvaal. He noted that on the one hand, Chamberlain's denunciation of Jameson was a sign that the British government rejected any interference in the internal affairs of the Transvaal. Yet if the Boer state was incapable of effective governance, then "abstract justice [demanded] that the British government should see the matter through."[19]

Britons were also quite aware of the broader geo-political ramifications that emerged in the wake of Jameson's raid. Indeed this was one reason why the

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[15] *Freeman's Journal* (Dublin), 22 January 1896, 4. The stance taken by the *Freeman* was as much of a statement in favor of the Boers as it was a reflection of its broader criticism of Britain's imperial policy, which Ireland itself had suffered from.
[16] *Glasgow Herald*, 3 January 1896, 5; *Standard* (London), 2 January 1896, 4.
[17] *Bristol Mercury*, 23 June 1896, 8.
[18] *Daily News* (London), 4 January 1896, 4.
[19] *Times* (London), 20 January 1896, 7.

aforementioned correspondent did not favor a military policy. A localized war against the Boers could quickly become a much broader war involving black Africans.[20] Beyond the regional questions, the congratulatory telegram sent by Germany's Kaiser Wilhelm II to the Boers for their successful repulsion of Jameson's invasion also raised considerable concerns in Britain.[21] The *Daily News* hoped that the kaiser's telegram would give those who favored a war with the Boers some pause:

> There is nothing hostile to this country in the emperor's words. But they must impress upon some minds which sorely need the impression that the encouragement of filibusters is playing with edged tools.[22]

There were also some who believed that Chamberlain would be justified to intervene on behalf of the Uitlanders because they assumed that German support of the Boers was a certainty. For instance, "The Man on the Street" insisted in a letter to the *Times* that the question of such interference transcended the Transvaal and involved the whole of South Africa:

> The six years of this ministry will see South Africa either completely British-Independent or German-protected Dutch, and the action of the next six weeks will decide which.[23]

At the same time, the *Bristol Mercury* reminded its readers that although "Dr. Jameson had undoubtedly compromised the British name" and had thus raised the jingo spirit of rival powers, such hostility and jealousy "must not be taken as the deliberate expression of the German public sentiment toward this country when the excitement is over." The *Mercury* continued:

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[20] *Times* (London), 23 April 1896, 6.
[21] William L. Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism* 2nd ed. (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1968), 234-249.
[22] *Daily News* (London), 4 January 1896, 5.
[23] *Times* (London), 20 January 1896, 7.

> We must remember that our success as a colonising power is highly exasperating both to Germany and France, and this last exploit must look to them like a daring and unscrupulous attempt to add to our empire. Foreign powers must act through diplomatic channels, and by that time all that is to be known will be known, while France will not aid the self-glorification of Kaiser Wilhelm even to stab perfidious Albion.[24]

Public opinion shapers were not, however, unified in their condemnation of Jameson, as many Conservative and Liberal papers rose to his defense. Decrying the attacks on Jameson, the *Aberdeen Weekly Journal*, the *Dundee Courier*, and the *Morning Post* expressed their dismay at the failure of his "gallant" action and their expectation that, when the facts became fully known, he would be exonerated of any wrongdoing.[25] Reprinting the comments of E. P. Mathers, an individual the papers identified as an authority on South African affairs, the *Aberdeen Weekly Journal* and the *Morning Post* seemingly concurred with his assessment that Jameson's actions were no more an act of war than the invitation of the Uitlanders had been.[26] Similarly, the *Pall Mall Gazette* initially characterized the raid as an "intolerable remedy" for the Boers' intolerable treatment of the Uitlanders and as a "hopeless act of audacity." The paper also insisted that the criminal case against Jameson was far from settled.[27]

Further, Jameson's defenders elevated a number of other potential scapegoats. Noting how Chamberlain had effectively distanced himself from the "ill-fated expedition," the *Dundee Courier* criticized him for not doing more to fulfill his obligation

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[24] *Bristol Mercury*, 6 January 1896, 5.
[25] *Aberdeen Journal*, 4 January 1896, 4; *Dundee Courier*, 3 January 1896, 2; 6 January 1896, 3; *Morning Post* (London), 3 January 1896, 4.
[26] *Aberdeen Journal*, 3 January 1896, 6; *Morning Post* (London), 4 January 1896, 5. Edward Peter Mathers was an editor for the weekly journal *South Africa* and, as a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, had authored several works on the gold fields of South Africa. Fergus W. Ferguson, *Southern Rhodesia: An Account of its Past History, Present Development, Natural Riches, and Future Prospects* (Port Elizabeth, South Africa and London: South African Publishing Syndicate, 1917), 173.
[27] *Pall Mall Gazette* (London), 3 January 1896, 1; 13 January 1896, 3.

to defend the interests of the Uitlanders.[28] A similar argument was issued by E. B. Iwan-Mueller, a Unionist journalist, who criticized those who favored conciliating the Boers.[29] He wrote that the Uitlanders had exercised every legal means of appealing their unequal and unconstitutional position in the Transvaal and had been all but abandoned by their suzerain power, the British government. Outnumbering the Boers as they did, but with no political recourse of their own, the Uitlanders had no choice but to seek extra-constitutional means to ensure the equality promised to them by the Pretoria and London conventions.[30] Equally, the *Aberdeen Mercury* and *Dundee Courier* claimed that Jameson had not acted rashly, but humanely and patriotically. As such, they attributed the incursion to the tyrannical rule of the Transvaal government and its president, Paul Kruger, for refusing to treat the Uitlanders justly.[31]

Emphasizing Jameson's heroism, the *Aberdeen Journal* drew upon the provincial sentimentalities of its readership. It argued that Jameson was guilty of nothing save "having acted on the generous impulse of a brave and patriotic Scotchman," and it regretted the "almost unanimous chorus of condemnation of his action." The *Journal* noted that "some English papers [were] so unpatriotic as to suggest vindictively that the Boers would be doing a just act of retribution if they hung [Jameson] from the nearest tree."[32] Casting a favorable light upon Jameson's "quasi-triumphant" traversal of Mediterranean ports on his way back to Britain, the *Pall Mall Gazette* compared his reception and burgeoning celebrity to that of the tragic "Bonnie Prince Charlie." The

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[28] *Dundee Courier*, 3 January 1896, 2.
[29] At the time of the Jameson Raid, Iwan-Muller worked as an editor for the *Pall Mall Gazette*. He was let go in February 1896 for his anti-American positions, and was soon after employed by the *Daily Telegraph* for which he worked until his death in 1910. *DNB* (1901-1911), vol. 2. 354-55.
[30] E. B. Iwan-Mueller, *Lord Milner and South Africa* (London: William Heinemann, 1902), 396-419.
[31] *Aberdeen Journal*, 4 January 1896, 4; *Dundee Courier*, 3 January 1896, 2.
[32] *Aberdeen Journal*, 4 January 1896, 4.

paper congratulated the "dashing Scotchman" for embodying British bravery at a time when "everybody seemed to go for us, and the British public were dying to get hold of someone whom they might back against the world."[33] These efforts to shape public opinion notwithstanding, the vast majority of public discourse opposed Jameson's unilateral violation of the Transvaal's sovereignty. In contrast to the quiet acquiescence to the annexation of the Transvaal—preceded as it was by the implied threat of intervention at the time of Shepstone's mission—many papers condemned Jameson's actions in 1896. To be sure, in the years since 1877, a sizeable pro-Boer contingent had built up in Britain.[34] But even papers such as the *Daily Post* and the *Standard*, which disagreed on Britain's responsibility to the Uitlanders and the franchise question, equally condemned Jameson's raid into the Transvaal.[35]

To a degree, the early expectations of papers such as the *Pall Mall Gazette* that Jameson's actions would prove justified carried over into his trial. Formally charged in July 1896 for having violated the Foreign Enlistment Act of 1870 by engaging "in the preparation of a military expedition to proceed against the dominions of a friendly state," Jameson and five of his officers were acquitted by a jury that clearly sympathized with their motives.[36] In the end, Sir John Willoughby, the military commander of the raid, and Jameson were sentenced to fifteen months of imprisonment. Jameson himself, however, only served four months of that sentence due to ill health, and he was thus available to

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[33] *Pall Mall Gazette* (London), 17 February 1896, 1.
[34] Arthur Davey, *The British Pro-Boers, 1877-1902* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1978), 15-47.
[35] *Daily News* (London), 4 January 1896, 4; *Standard* (London), 2 January 1896, 4.
[36] van der Poel, *The Jameson Raid*, 179-181. The instructions to the jury prevented them from directly deciding Jameson's guilt or innocence. Instead, they were asked the following questions: "(1) Had the defendants been engaged in preparing at Mafeking and Pitsani a military expedition against the South African Republic? (2) Was Pitsani under the sovereignty of the Crown?" To these questions the jury responded in the affirmative but attached a qualifying rider that declared that "the state of affairs in Johannesburg presented great provocation." Given their answers to the questions presented to them, however, the prosecutor, Lord Russell, ordered the jury to return a verdict of guilty.

testify before the Parliament's select committee on the raid. The other key participants were given sentences of five to seven months.[37]

Following the trial, Parliamentary conducted its own inquiry into the matter. Established on 27 January 1897 and lasting until July, the Select Committee on British South Africa was chaired by William Jackson (MP for Leeds North) and included several prominent current, former, and future government officials, such as Joseph Chamberlain, Sir William Harcourt, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, and Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, as well as imperial critics such as Henry Labouchère.[38] Witness testimonies before the committee provide some insight into what they had assumed British sensibilities to be regarding the use of overt military force to advance political interests. Testifying before the committee, Jameson asserted that "had [he] been successful he should have been forgiven."[39] A few months later, Samuel Pope, QC, who represented Rhodes before that same committee, likewise maintained that a successful outcome would have vindicated Jameson's rash and foolish actions. He claimed that Britain would have taken full advantage of the enterprise and would not have condemned it or his client.[40]

The circumstances and issues surrounding the raid remained before the public, thanks in part to reports and leading articles about the committee hearings. While the gallery was mainly filled by members of Parliament and not the general public, the

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[37] After being released Jameson returned to the Cape where he eventually served as prime minister of South Africa, 1904-1908. van der Poel, *The Jameson Raid*, 180-181; Elizabeth Pakenham, *The Jameson Raid,* (London: Wiedenfeld and Nicolson, 1960), 336-340. For a more complete coverage of the trial see *Times* (London), 21-29 July 1896; Sir Edward Clarke, *The Story of My Life* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1919), 327-29 ; Ian Duncan Colvin, *The Life of Jameson*, vol. 2 (London: Edward Arnold, 1922), 148-56.

[38] *Second Report from the Select Committee on British South Africa; Together with the Proceedings of the Committee, and Minutes of Evidence*, 311 (1897), ii.

[39] *Second Report from the Select Committee on British South Africa; Together with the Proceedings of the Committee, and Minutes of Evidence*, 311 (1897), Q. 4605, 26 March 1897, 265. The context of Jameson's statement suggests that he was convinced that he would have been forgiven for not going through proper channels before invading the Transvaal. *The Times Law Review* 12 (1896), 551.

[40] *Second Report from the Select Committee on British South Africa; Together with the Proceedings of the Committee, and Minutes of Evidence*, 311 (1897), 508-509.

Hampshire Telegraph insisted that there nevertheless was "great public interest" in the proceedings."[41] And the testimonies of notable witnesses, such as Rhodes and Jameson, drew attention to Uitlander grievances. For instance, in covering Rhodes's testimony, the *Hampshire Telegraph* mentioned the rising discontent regarding the "restrictions upon the people, the corrupt administration of the government, and the denial of civil rights to the population."[42] Later, when William P. Schreiner testified on 26 March, the *Aberdeen Journal* keyed in on his statements regarding English parents being prohibited by Transvaal law from educating their children in the English language.[43]

The select committee issued its findings on 13 July. They included a strong censure of Rhodes for using his various positions in South Africa to advance revolution in the Transvaal and for deceiving the high commissioner of South Africa as to those intentions. At the same time it exonerated the Colonial Office of being complicit in the raid. Meanwhile, Labouchere issued a minority report, which insisted that an insufficient amount of information was available to warrant such an indictment against Rhodes.[44] These reports were duly summarized and released in the nation's press both on the national and local levels.

The committee's conclusions inspired commentary on their key points. Lord George Hamilton, for instance, expressed satisfaction that Chamberlain and the Colonial Office had been absolved "from the base and unfounded charges of complicity…which his [Chamberlain's] enemies had so industriously flung at him."[45] Others, including a

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[41] *Hampshire Telegraph*, 26 February 1897, 5.
[42] *Hampshire Telegraph*, 26 February 1897, 5.
[43] *Aberdeen Journal*, 21 March 1897, 5. A former attorney general for the Cape government, and a sitting member of the Cape parliament, Schreiner had been a close associate of Cecil Rhodes. However, in the wake of the Jameson raid, Schreiner broke ties with Rhodes in protest. *DNB (1912-1921)*, 484-85.
[44] *Second Report from the Select Committee on British South Africa*, 311 (1897).
[45] *Leicester Chronicle*, 14 July 1897, 5.

commentator to the *Dundee Courier* and the editors of the *Leicester Chronicle*, decried that the committee refusal to punish Rhodes for his culpability in what had been a "vulgar conspiracy, an outrage upon international comity, engendered, subsidised, and stimulated by men who ought to have known better, and did know better…who, in excess of ill-begotten zeal, so far forgot themselves as to countenance a scheme which might have dragged the nation into a disastrous war, for which there would not have been a shadow of an excuse on our part."[46] Another commentator insisted in a letter to the *Times* that for the sake of British honor and the dignity of Parliament, it was imperative for the people to "absolutely dissociate ourselves from anything like approval or condonation [sic] of Mr. Rhodes's actions in connexion [sic] with the Jameson Raid."[47] To that end, he completely rejected Chamberlain's insistence that Rhodes's honor remained intact:

> To justify the means by the end seems to me ridiculous jesuitry unworthy of the House of Commons. I yield to no man in my approval of the end which Mr. Rhodes had in view if I am correct in assuming that the end was the creation of a United South Africa under a British flag, and I yield to no man in my condemnation of the means employed if I am justified in accepting the decision of the committee as to those means.
>
> Grave breaches of duty, deceiving an official chief, hoodwinking colleagues, leading astray subordinates, and inducing men in a position of trust to become guilty of "grave derelictions of duty"—are these findings which in no way affect the personal honour of an English gentleman? If so, we must have either changed our language or our character.[48]

As was the case in the aftermath of Gordon's death, a multitude of pamphlets and books hit the market in the wake of the raid and the committee of enquiry.[49] Among

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[46] *Leicester Chronicle*, 17 July 1897, 8; 31 July 1897, 8; *Dundee Courier*, 15 July 1897, 4.
[47] *Times* (London), 28 July 1897, 9.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Many of these addressed lingering questions surrounding the justification for the raid and the culpability of members of the British Government, such as Chamberlain. This interest was of course only intensified when war between Britain and the Transvaal broke out in October 1899. Such works include: *From Manifesto to Trial: A Full History of the Jameson Raid and the Trial of the Members of the Reform Committee and of Dr. Jameson and his Staff* (Pretoria: State Library,1896); *Jameson's Heroic Charge: A True Story of Complete Vindication of the Reform Movement* (Johannesburg: Fenwick, 1896); George

those was Iwan-Mueller's 1902 work, *Lord Milner and South Africa*, which addressed wider Anglo-Boer relations, including the outbreak of the Second Anglo-Boer War, and explored the relationship between extra-constitutional actions and British public opinion. The author drew upon instances in which the course of history had previously excused belligerent action. These included Lord Byron's participation in the Greek war of independence in 1824, Garibaldi's invasion of Sicily in 1860, and, more distantly but nevertheless poignantly, Parliament's assistance of William of Orange in deposing James II. For Iwan-Mueller, the critical difference between such examples and Jameson's actions lay in the fact that, whereas those instances were ultimately successful, the raid had failed. Ignoring the illegality of the action, Iwan-Mueller thus insisted that "it was the folly of the raid and not its immorality which ought to have been bemoaned," and that "the vital mistake made by the majority of Englishmen was the confusion of folly with wrong-doing."[50]

Iwan-Mueller's conclusion seems off-base for several reasons. In the first place, the success or failure of the raid made no apparent difference to the Colonial Office because it ordered Jameson to withdraw before the matter had been militarily decided, and the British public had almost no time to react to the raid without being aware that the effort had failed. Thus, instead of being guided by the success of military action, it is

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Seymour Fort, "The True Motive and Reason of Dr. Jameson's Raid," *Nineteenth Century* 39 (1896): 873-80; James King, *Dr. Jameson's Raid: Its Causes and Consequences* (Manchester: George Routledge, 1896); Charles G. Thomas, *Johannesburg in Arms, 1895-96: Being Observations of a Casual Spectator* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1896); P.E. Aston, *The Raid on the Transvaal by Dr. Jameson* (London: Dean, 1897); Richard Harding Davis, *Dr. Jameson's Raiders Vs. the Johannesburg Reformers* (New York: Robert Howard Russell, 1897); Fydell Edmund Garrett and E. J. Edwards, *The Story of the African Crisis: Being the Truth about the Jameson Raid and Johannesburg Revolt of 1896* (Westminster: Archibald Constable, 1897); Sir Charles Prestwood Lucas, *The History of South African to Dr. Jameson's Raid* (London: Frowde, 1899); Joseph Chamberlain, *Was Mr. Chamberlain Privy to the Jameson Raid?* (London: n.p., 1900); Poultney Bigelow, *White Man's Africa* (London: Harper, 1900); William Thomas Stead, *Joseph Chamberlain, Conspirator or Statesman?* (London: Review of Reviews Office, 1900).

[50] Iwan-Mueller, *Lord Milner and South Africa*, 378-88, 419.

more likely that British animosity toward Jameson was influenced by deep-seeded concerns for British prestige and the irreproachableness of Britain's national character. As things stood in the mid-1890s, the British public, though perhaps sympathetic toward the Uitlanders, was not yet convinced that the franchise question warranted extreme military measures. They were also made aware that Rhodes had ordered Jameson not to invade in the first place, and that Chamberlain had likewise ordered Jameson to withdraw after he had breached the border. All of this worked against Jameson in the eyes of the public, whose full attention was directed towards the blatant illegality of the raid.

Concurrent with the sitting of the select committee, South African correspondents for British papers kept the Uitlander issue before the public, making it more likely that the franchise question eventually would take on greater importance. For instance, writing more than a year after the raid, a *Times* reporter submitted that the English settlers were convinced that the "only hope for the settlement of differences and for a restoration of confidence was for the British government to 'have it out' with the Transvaal, to insist by force that the British subjects should be treated as liberally in the Transvaal as the Dutch are treated in the Cape Colony."[51] The correspondent went on to insist that there was no doubt that Britain had the "power" to force the Transvaal to comply. British territory surrounded the Transvaal. Britain had greater wealth and larger numbers of men for the prosecution of a war. In weighing the question of whether Britain *should* use the power it had at its disposal, the correspondent concluded that a complete hands-off policy was impossible, asserting that the inability for the Boers to govern the territory called for a response. It would only encourage them to reject further British paramountcy in South Africa and further destabilize the region not to intercede. At the same time, he argued

[51] *Times* (London), 23 April 1897, 6.

that Britain had a moral obligation to look after the political and social well-being of the Transvaal. Instead of war and the subjugation of the Boers, the correspondent insisted that the better policy was to sway Boer opinion toward accepting British principles concerning the development of South Africa. Only then, with the full weight of "Dutch opinion" against them, he argued, would those Boers who stood in the way of progress give way.[52] Although such sentiments had no demonstrable impact on policy in the immediate aftermath of Jameson's failed raid, they would gain greater currency in the run-up to the Second Anglo-Boer War.

"Tricky Diplomacy," "Turning the Screw," and Public Opinion: the Outbreak of the Second Anglo-Boer War in 1899[53]

For Boers such as Jan Smuts, state attorney general of the Transvaal (1898-1899), the Jameson Raid was "the real beginning of the [Second Anglo-Boer] war" because it revealed Britain's intent to completely absorb the Transvaal.[54] In the face of such a threat, Boer nationalist sentiments heightened to the point that many in the Transvaal believed that any attempt by the British to ameliorate the conditions for the Uitlanders

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[52] *Times* (London), 23 April 1897, 6.

[53] Sir Alfred Milner frequently used the phrase "turning the screw" in revealing his intentions toward the Transvaal throughout the summer of 1899. Cecil Headlam, *The Milner Papers*, vol. 1, "South Africa, 1897-1899 (London: Cassell, 1931), 445-46, 516; Pakenham, *The Boer War*, 64, 73.

[54] Jan Christian Smuts, "Memoirs of the Boer War," in W. K. Hancock and J. van der Poel, eds., *Selections from the Smuts Papers*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 624; P. J. Joubert, "An Earnest Representation and Historical Reminder," in *A Century of Injustice: Synopsis of a Message to the People of South Africa, sent by the Government of the South-African Republic*, ed. Jan Smuts (Baltimore: n.p. 1899), 28. At the time of the raid Smuts was employed as Rhodes's personal legal advisor for the De Beers Company. Losing all respect for Rhodes, Smuts subsequently left De Beers and championed the cause of Boer nationalism. After the war Smuts became an ardent advocate of the British Commonwealth, a term he coined in May 1917. Jan Smuts, *The British Commonwealth of Nations: a Speech Made by General Smuts, 17 May 1917* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1917).

was a direct assault on the sovereignty they had been granted by the Pretoria and London conventions.[55]

Although the raid raised questions about the means by which Britain pursued its imperial aims, the long-term goal of British expansionists to severely reduce if not completely eliminate the independence of the Transvaal remained unchanged. As Henry Labouchère reflected later, the only adjustment in policy was the means to achieve the government's designs: military force was exchanged for "tricky diplomacy."[56] That effort was immediately preceded by the issuance of the so-called Second Uitlander Petition in early May 1899, a document that was signed by upwards of 21,000 British residents and demanded that non-Boer residents of the Transvaal immediately be granted the same franchise rights and representation in the Volksraad as the burghers enjoyed.[57]

Over the course of the summer of 1899 Chamberlain and Sir Alfred Milner (governor of the Cape Colony and high commissioner of South Africa) outwardly demonstrated a sincere interest in compromise, but in truth they had no such intentions. In what Milner called "the great game for the mastery in South Africa," they believed that the Transvaal could not be allowed to continue to suppress English subjects, even if preventing that suppression meant war.[58] In many of his communications with officials

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[55] At the same time, relations between the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, which had remained neutral in the First Anglo-Boer War, were solidified so that the destiny of one was increasingly tied to the other.
[56] *Baltimore News*, 7 November 1899, quoted in Smuts, *A Century of Injustice*, 29. See Bill Nasson, *The South African War, 1899-1902* (London: Arnold, 1999), 15-17, 31-32. Henry Labouchère was a member of the Select Committee that investigated the Jameson Raid. His uncle and namesake, Henry Labouchère, 1st Baron Taunton, served as President of the Board of Trade and Colonial Secretary during the First and Second Opium Wars, respectively.
[57] A. F. Madden, "Changing Attitudes and Widening Responsibilities1895-1914," in *C.H.B.E*, 3:362-363; Percy FitzPatrick, *The Transvaal From Within: a Private Record of Public Affairs* (London: W. Heinemann, 1899), 334-35. While Uitlanders did not hold the same rights granted to the burghers, those inequalities could also work in their favor. They were not liable for conscripted military service, nor were they subject to the same level of taxation. In arguing for Uitlander equality, however, the British never insisted that these responsibilities should also be applied.
[58] Pakenham, *The Boer War*, 60; Headlam, *The Milner Papers*, 1: 267.

in London and at the Cape, Milner insisted that he did not want to aggravate the situation unduly, and that if war came, it would "not come from any spirit of jingoism in me."[59] At the same time, he believed that the Transvaal would back down when faced with the prospect of war. But, even if the crisis resulted in war, Milner maintained that it would be better to fight the Transvaal in 1899 than to wait five or ten years, when the Boers would certainly be "stronger and more hostile than ever.[60]

Indeed, Milner had sought to shape opinion against the Boers since his arrival at the Cape. As early as February 1898, he had actively worked to turn Britain toward what he called the "right views." He encouraged the printing of inflammatory articles in South African papers, such as the *Cape Argus*, the *Cape Times*, the *Star* (Johannesburg), and the *Transvaal Leader* (Johannesburg), knowing that they would be reprinted by the national and provincial papers back in Britain. Consequently, by the summer of 1899 the public had become more aware of the plight of the Uitlanders and more committed to upholding Britain's prestige as the paramount power in South Africa.[61]

Pakenham has made a strong circumstantial case that the governor intended to annex the Transvaal and to have himself installed as the overlord of a new crown colony, knowing full well that it would require a war to achieve this end.[62] Chamberlain, on the

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[59] Headlam, *The Milner Papers*, 1: 443, 477-79.
[60] Ibid., 1: 359, 384-85.
[61] J. Lee Thompson, *Forgotten Patriot: A Life of Alfred, Viscount Milner of St. James and Capt Town, 1854-1925* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2007), 126. J. A. Hobson, *The War in South Africa* (London: George Allen, 1900; reprint, New York: Fertig, 1969), 215-217. In this work, Hobson was unsparing in his critique of the press action to influence public opinion.
[62] Pakenham, 60-61, 640-41 n.25. Subsequent scholarship has borne out Pakenham's assessment of Milner's policies. Keith Surridge has argued that as early as February 1898, Milner believed that the reelection of Paul Kruger as president of the Transvaal made it increasingly likely that it would take a war to resolve the political troubles in South Africa. At the same time, Milner saw that the mere existence of an independent Transvaal threatened the dominance of the empire in South Africa. Keith Terrance Surridge, *Managing the South Africa War*, Studies in History New Series (London: Boydell Press, 1998), 31-32. For an assessment of Milner's mindset in entering the Bloemfontein Conference, see Thompson, *Forgotten Patriot*, 130-34.

other hand, would have been satisfied just to see the Transvaal government accede to British demands for an extension of franchise rights. But while their personal goals differed, the tactics by which they worked remained largely the same: a progressive tightening of diplomatic pressure that would force Kruger to comply or to react with war. Either way, Britain would effectively dominate the Transvaal's internal affairs through external influence or through reabsorption and direct governance.[63]

The result was that, as negotiations over Uitlander rights progressed throughout 1899, Kruger's government increasingly found itself backed into a corner with few options. Each time Kruger made a small concession, Milner and Chamberlain added new demands that would extend Britain's suzerain rights and powers even further.[64] If it accepted Chamberlain's demands, the Transvaal effectively would have to concede the nation's sovereignty. But to reject Britain's demands outright in all likelihood meant war.[65] Faced with this predicament in mid-August, the Boers made a final bid to disarm the situation when they offered to expand the Uitlander franchise and Volksraad representation on the condition that Britain agreed:

a) Not to interfere in the internal affairs of the republic
b) Not to further insist on the assertion of suzerainty
c) To arbitration (excluding a foreign presence other than the Orange Free State).[66]

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[63] Pakenham, 60-61, 77; Smith, *The Origins of the Boer War*, 317-18.
[64] J. S. Marais, *The Fall of Kruger's Republic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 298-304.
[65] *Correspondence Relating to the Bloemfontein Conference*. C. 9404 (1899), 14-19; Erik A. Walker, *Lord de Villiers and His Times: South Africa 1852-1914* (London: Constable, 1925), 346-47; Pakenham, *The Boer War*, 60, 64.
[66] Quoted in *Further Correspondence relating to political affairs in the South African Republic* C. 9521 (1899), 44-45. From the perspective of the Boers, this demand asked nothing more of Britain than to abide by the terms of the Pretoria and London conventions which, while granting Britain the right to oversee matters of foreign and native policies, provided the Transvaal retained self-determination over internal affairs. Marais, *The Fall of Kruger's Republic*, 308-11, 14; W. K. Hancock, and Jean van der Poel, eds. *Selections from the Smuts Papers*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 283-99.

Milner and Chamberlain considered these conditions to be direct challenges to Britain's position as the paramount power in South Africa and to the empire's right to interfere in the internal affairs of the Transvaal.[67]

Meanwhile, as early as June Milner and Wolseley (who had been the governor of Natal in 1877 and who was serving in the War Office as commander in chief of the forces in 1899) began pressing the cabinet to send 35,000 troops to South Africa. Wolseley maintained that such a move would cause the Transvaal to think twice about a war and quell a war scare.[68] While Milner concurred with Wolseley that such a move was necessary for security and that the threat of military force would further compel the Transvaal to capitulate, he did not shirk from the prospect of war. In the event that such pressures provoked the Transvaal into an act of aggression against Natal or the Cape, Britain could easily claim that the Boers had instigated the war.[69] Seeing that the Transvaal had given ground, Milner communicated to Chamberlain on 16 August that the whole matter rested on "staying power" and Britain's determination not "to weaken," but to "go on steadily turning the screw."[70] To that end, sensing that diplomatic pressure had pushed the Transvaal as far as it could without the British army on its border, Milner called for military reinforcements.

> The position at present seems to me a threatening one, as we are face to face with the question of our *right* to put things straight in the T.V.—our virtual nominal suzerainty—and, on this, agreement is, I believe, impossible without war; or at least the verge of war; —an army in S.A.[71]

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[67] Marais, *The Fall of Kruger's Republic*, 304, 310.
[68] Smith, *The Origins of the Boer War*, 323, 340.
[69] Pakenham, *The Boer War*, 60, 70; Smith, *The Origins of the Boer War*, 278-79, 288-90.
[70] Headlam, *Milner Papers*, 1: 516.
[71] Quoted in Ibid., 1: 519; Smith, *The Origins of the South African War*, 362-63.

Chamberlain, who had been concerned in early August that indefinite negotiations would cause Britain's *casus belli* to slip away, likewise came to believe by the end of August that the British position was now considerably strengthened.[72] This did not necessarily mean a war was inevitable, since he believed that the Boers still might yield. Nevertheless, he communicated to Milner on 23 August that he was going to initiate plans to send an initial 10,000 troops to South Africa, a force he believed would be sufficient until a full army corps could be deployed to the region for the purpose of achieving a "complete solution."[73] Two weeks later, the cabinet authorized Chamberlain's request for troops.

Milner and Wolseley were certainly not alone in their inclination toward a tangible threat of war to force Kruger's hand.[74] As early as 25 June, Lord Selborne, the under-secretary to the colonies, wrote to Milner:

> The idea of war with the S.A.R. is very distasteful to most people. Consequently, the cabinet have undoubtedly had to modify the pace that they contemplated moving at immediately after the Bloemfontein Conference … [Kruger] will never yield until he feels the muzzle of the pistol on his forehead, or that the surest way to avoid war is to prepare openly for war … We have entered a lane, you have entered a lane, the Cabinet has entered a lane, the country has entered a lane, where no turning back is possible without humiliation or disaster. We must eventually force the door at the other end, by peaceful pressure if possible, but if necessary by war.[75]

Likewise, Sir Edward Hamilton, the permanent secretary to the Treasury, noted in his diary on 30 July that, while nobody in Britain wanted war, he believed that some "military demonstration" might prove necessary "before Kruger comes to terms."[76]

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[72] Marais, *The Fall of Kruger's Republic*, 312; Smith, *The Origins of the Boer War*, 357.
[73] Smith, *The Origins of the South African War*, 363-64.
[74] Smith, *The Origins of the Boer War*, 318-20; Pakenham, *The Boer War*, 93; Hicks-Beach, *Life of Sir Michael Hicks-Beach*, 2: 108.
[75] Headlam, *Milner Papers*, 1: 445-46.
[76] Smith, *The Origins of the South African War*, 323.

Even so, other well-positioned officials took a far less belligerent stance. While ultimately in agreement that Britain could not back down in the face of Boer rejection of British suzerainty, Hicks-Beach, then chancellor of the exchequer, argued for caution as war clouds darkened at the end of August. Eluding cabinet responsibility for stoking the prospects of war, he hoped that "Milner and the Uitlanders [would] not be allowed to drag [Britain] into war."[77] Prime Minister Salisbury, concerned about Milner's purposeful intent to "turn the screw," feared that the Boers would go to war instead of capitulating and that such a war would be highly unpopular in Britain.[78] Although Arthur Balfour, the first lord of the Treasury and leader of the House of Commons, personally considered the Transvaal to be a sovereign foreign state, he consented to sending reinforcements to the Cape after becoming convinced that a mobilization of troops would not necessarily lead to war.[79] Similarly, Sir William Harcourt, the leader of the opposition, was convinced that "the real policy of the government [was] to bluff Kruger," and that the issue would ultimately not come to war.[80] Throughout the summer, Secretary of State for War Lansdowne, and Lt. General William Butler (Commander-in-Chief of British forces in South Africa) had stood opposed to Milner's and Wolseley's requests for reinforcements because of the massive costs associated with such a mobilization and because they feared that such action might provoke a war rather than prevent one.[81]

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[77] Hicks-Beach, *Life of Sir Michael Hicks-Beach*, 2:104-108.
[78] Andrew Roberts, *Salisbury: Victorian Titan* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1999), 721-36.
[79] Pakenham, *The Boer War*, 92-93.
[80] Gardner, *The Life of Sir William Harcourt*, 499.
[81] While serving in that capacity, Butler had also briefly officiated as Acting High Commissioner of South Africa in Alfred Milner's absence. Smith, *The Origins of the War in South Africa*, 340-43, 345.

Indeed Butler's experiences throughout the spring and summer of 1899 illuminate much about the links between South African business interests and those within the British government pressing for concessions from the Boers. Charged with the defense of the British colonies in South Africa, Butler criticized officials within the War Office who he believed desired to provoke a war at a time when imperial defenses in the region were completely unsatisfactory. Further, Butler worried openly that a war between the "white races" would prove disastrous to southern Africa's social fabric.[82] As late as May 1899, he insisted that the Boers might be cajoled into implementing reforms if they could be convinced that Britain had no intention of assaulting the independence of the Transvaal. To Butler, the "real danger lay in the occult influences at work, backed by enormous means and quite without conscience, to produce war in South Africa for selfish ends."[83] However, his superiors in the War Office and Milner at the Cape admonished him for transgressing into political matters that they believed did not concern him. Public opinion also strongly turned against Butler as the summer progressed. The result was that he lost whatever influence he might have had in deterring a war, and he was ultimately recalled from South Africa.[84]

The cabinet as a whole did recognize that any military mobilization had to be accompanied by an ultimatum, and that Britons generally would not support a move toward war on the basis of the franchise question alone, unless all diplomatic measures had presumably been exhausted.[85] Thus, Chamberlain and Salisbury began crafting an

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[82] William F. Butler, *William Francis Butler*, 413-414; Surridge, *Managing the War in South Africa*, 37-38.
[83] Butler, *William Francis Butler*, 425-26.
[84] By the end of August, Butler had been reassigned to a command in the Western Division. After the war, his pre-war positions were vindicated by the report of the War Commission. Surridge, *Managing the War in South Africa*, 38-39; Butler, *William Francis Butler*, 389-93; 450-54, 456-57.
[85] Smith, *The Origins of the Boer War*, 344-45.

ultimatum to the Transvaal government which, as Kruger's advisors feared, would have gone a long way toward destroying what sovereignty the Transvaal enjoyed under the terms of the London Conference of 1884.[86] However, the promulgation of this message was unintentionally preempted by Kruger, who issued his own ultimatum to Britain on 10 October, with a 48-hour deadline attached. In that ultimatum Kruger did not specifically address the contentious issues of the Uitlander franchise, or the larger question of Britain's suzerainty and its corollary (the right of interference), which had occupied the attentions of the two governments. Rather, it was a direct response to Britain's decision to mobilize. It demanded that Britain agree to:

1. arbitration on "all points of difference";
2. withdraw British troops from the border;
3. withdraw all British reinforcements that had arrived in South Africa after 1 June;
4. send no further troops, and those presently en route were not to be landed anywhere in South Africa.[87]

Foreshadowing the thinking of the kaiser and his generals in 1914, Kruger believed that the mobilization of the British army meant war. The mobilization of 10,000 British troops on 8 September had effectively nailed the door shut on diplomacy, if it had not previously been closed.[88] Coming to the conclusion that nothing short of war would stop

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[86] The British ultimatum called for the Boers to: 1) repeal all legislation enacted since 1881 which discriminated against Uitlanders, 2) grant full municipal rights to the mining districts, 3) guarantee the independence of the Courts of Justice, 4) remove all religious requirements for civil service, 5) accept a Tribunal of Arbitration to settle questions pertaining to the Convention, 6) grant most favored nation rights to Britain in all matters commercial or otherwise which affects British interests or the position of its subjects, white or black, 7) agree to a program "for the reduction of excessive armaments of the South African Republic." Ethel Drus, "Select Documents from the Chamberlain Papers concerning Anglo-Transvaal Relations, 1896-1899," *Bulletin of Historical Research* 27 (1954): 182-86.

[87] *Further Correspondence Relating to Political Affairs in the South African Republic* C. 9530 (1899), 67.

[88] In the case of Germany, the perception that "mobilization meant war" was linked to the fact that the mobilization of the German army, which would be ordered in reaction to a precautionary Russian mobilization, was necessarily coupled with an immediate invasion of Belgium and France. On that occasion there was no lag time for further diplomacy to take place. For a discussion on the pre-1914 understanding of "mobilization means war," see Luigi Albertini, *The Origins of the War of 1914*, vol. 3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, reprint New York: Enigma Books, 2005), 105-108.

Britain from imposing on their sovereignty, the Boers realized that to preserve their independence they had to seize the initiative.[89]

At the onset of the dispute the British public had remained generally disinclined to go to war with the Transvaal solely over the issue of franchise rights. Yet, as the diplomatic conversation turned to the broader issue of British suzerainty in early September, Chamberlain observed that public opinion had turned.[90] Writing to Milner on 2 September, Chamberlain expressed his confidence that if it came to war, although a sizeable minority of the public would be most unwilling, "we shall be sufficiently supported."[91] Toward that end, Chamberlain insisted that the diplomatic game had to be played "*selon les règles*" [according to the rules]. Before Britain could ask more from the Transvaal, it had "to first exhaust proposals on the franchise issue." At the same time, he believed that no ultimatum could be issued until at the very least a contingent force had been deployed to the Cape, which could hold the position until a full complement of troops could be delivered.[92]

For its part, throughout the spring and early summer the British public was, as Chamberlain had recognized, widely opposed to going to war with the Boers solely to ensure Uitlander franchise rights. While it is arguable that most were not well versed in the intricacies of the diplomatic positions staked out by the respective governments in the late spring and early summer of 1899, the provincial press still provided considerable coverage and commentary about the ongoing diplomacy. As the Conservative-minded

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[89] Smith, *The Origins of the South African War*, 378-80.
[90] Headlam, *Milner Papers*, 1:526.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid., 1:527.

Gloucester Standard observed when troops were being deployed in July 1899 to reinforce the British position at the Cape:

> Undoubtedly, outside the mining interests and the friends of the comparatively few families settled in the Transvaal, there is no disposition on the part of the public to wrestle with Kruger's puzzles, to analyse the points of difference between his concessions and Sir A. Milner's demands. Still less is there a war of feeling about. An armed expedition to the Transvaal would not, we fully believe, be popular just now.[93]

The paper asserted that it was dangerous to assume that the British public would be forever detached from the matter, and maintained that "a single turn in events, an insult to the British flag, a reverse of arms, might set the current the other way in a moment."[94] Clearly aware of the situation itself and the broader implications for British imperial prestige, the paper anticipated:

> One morning…they may perceive that which is quite clear to the government, that much more is at stake than the conversion of Kruger to the cause of the Outlanders. Are we to admit that the Rand shall be the paramount power in South Africa? If so, then we need not prolong the struggle. We may just as well haul down the British flag. And in that case, what would Queensland, which has offered troops for service in the Transvaal, in the event of hostilities, think, with the rest of the empire.[95]

Only two weeks later, the same paper reported that the negotiations in South Africa were followed with interest: "public opinion [was] in a rather optimistic mood in regard to the Transvaal of late, and perhaps that hopeful view was supported by the carefully-worded statement of the colonial secretary a few days since when he announced the receipt of a telegram showing that the Volksraad of the South African Republic had adopted a seven years' retrospective franchise for the Uitlanders."[96]

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[93] *Gloucester Standard*, 15 July 1899, 4.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Ibid.
[96] *Gloucester Standard*, 29 July 1899, 4.

That interest became even more apparent when the matter ceased being just about the specific rights of the Uitlanders and became focused on the standing and prestige of Britain and its empire as a whole. Commenting on Kruger's attempt to compromise on the franchise issue in July, the *Gloucester Standard* maintained:

> Either Britain is to govern in South Africa or the Boer. To do nothing and to admit defeat would be to court another Majuba Hill—a moral Majuba, as a special correspondent puts it.[97]

Likewise, the *West Briton and Cornwall Advertiser* insisted that the Boer promise of granting all whites in the Transvaal an equal share in political right and liberties, "should at length, if only in a qualified fashion, be fulfilled." The *Advertiser* continued:

> That is the conclusion at which Sir Alfred Milner and the bulk of the people in South Africa generally have arrived, and in which they are supported by the imperial government. The issue, let it be once more explained, is not only for the procuring of the franchise for a few thousand Englishmen in the Transvaal; but as to our future paramountcy in South Africa. Nothing can be more certain than that our yielding now would deal a damaging blow and possibly an irrevocable blow to our prestige.[98]

The Liberal-minded *Fife Free Press* editorialized a month later that while the Boer government had indeed already made some concessions concerning the Uitlander franchise, still more action was needed from Kruger before the matter could be considered closed. Firmly declaring its desire for peace, the *Free Press* enthusiastically reported that statements by Chamberlain and the queen, along with the deployment of the 10,000 reinforcements to Natal, were effectively cornering Kruger into a position from which he would be forced to comply with British demands. When faced with the prospect that "war [would] mean nothing less for [the Boers] than the removal of the republic from the map of South Africa," the *Free Press* was firmly convinced that the

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[97] *Gloucester Standard*, 15 July 1899, 4.
[98] *West Britain and Cornwall Advertiser*, 27 July 1899, 4.

Boers would come to see the reason of conceding to Britain's demands instead of losing their entire country.[99] Later still, in mid-September, the Independent *Evesham Journal* similarly emphasized:

> The British terms are just and equitable in themselves, and their being so, and the avoidance of any expressions calculated to exasperate the existing feeling, must strengthen the government by enlisting the moral support for a large mass of responsible and thoughtful men, whose reluctance to countenance war except as the last resource and under irresistible pressure earns for them the scorn of the raving jingoes who would light-heartedly enter upon a race war without serious thought of the awful and far-reaching consequences.[100]

While doubting whether the Boer reply would in itself relieve the tensions between the two countries, the journal nevertheless held out hope that an agreeable resolution would soon be forthcoming.[101]

London and provincial papers had, therefore, noted the deployment of troops that took place alongside the diplomatic effort, but they expressed little concern that such action might precipitate a conflict. One commentator wrote to the *Times*, that in the event that Kruger's proposals proved to be insufficient and unsatisfactory, "strong reinforcements of our troops in South Africa should be sent out as an indication that we are not resorting to a council of the South African states in order to shelve our responsibilities, but merely to make certain that our cause is just and approved by those of whose interest we are guardians."[102] Likewise speaking about the need to be ever prepared, the *Gloucester Standard* opined:

> The exodus of the British soldiers for special service in South Africa goes on apace, though we are officially assured that nothing more is being done in this direction than to make assurance that the military equipment at the Cape and the auxiliary stations shall be sufficient to meet any possible emergency. It is to be

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[99] *Fife Free Press* (Kirkaldy), 12 August 1899, 4.
[100] *Evesham Journal*¸ 16 September 1899, 8.
[101] Ibid.
[102] *Times* (London), 13 July 1899, 12

> hoped that there will be no necessity for active operations in the field; but the War Office motto would seem to be, in this direction at any rate, "Ready, aye ready."[103]

A month later, the *Times* asserted that the deployment of additional troops to South Africa had already had an effect on Pretoria.

> The threats of the Boers have been open and undisguised, as our correspondent tells us, but little more will be heard from them when it is known that the British forces in the colony are so strong that a raid would meet with an unpleasantly warm reception…Pretoria will, in the end, think twice and thrice before they risk their property, their liberty, and their political privileges in a hopeless struggle with the paramount power.[104]

Statements such as these strongly suggest that few had reservations about the use of coercive military force so long as it aided in eliciting the desired response from the Transvaal.

The tenor of commentary changed, however, when Kruger denied British suzerainty in early September. The *Morning Post* did not believe war to be imminent; rather, it argued that, due to Chamberlain's steadfastness, the Boer government would be compelled to retract his denial not merely with words but with action.[105] British newspapers from across the political spectrum expressed the belief that the Boer Government should and eventually would accede to British demands before it came to war. To that end, Conservative and Liberal papers alike, widely argued that should war come with the Transvaal, it would be due to the recalcitrance of Kruger and the eagerness of his administration for war.[106]

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[103] *Gloucester Standard*, 15 July 1899, 4.
[104] Ibid., 12 August 1899, 8.
[105] *Morning Post*, (London) 15 September 1899, 2.
[106] *Fife Free Press* (Kirkaldy), 9 September 1899, 4; *Daily News* (London), 16 September 1899, 4; 22 September 1899, 5; *Aberdeen Journal*, 22 September 1899, 5; *People's Journal* (Edinburgh), 23 September 1899, 6, 8; 30 September 1899, 6.

News of the Boer ultimatum elicited a range of responses from the British press including "derision, delight, dismay—and indifference." London papers used words such as "preposterous" and "extravagant farce" to describe the Boer ultimatum.[107] For instance, the *Times* expected that the public would receive the news that the "petty republic" had taken the "infatuated step of dispatching such a document" with profound regret.[108] More emphatically, the *Morning Post* noted, Kruger's open rejection of British suzerainty effectively galvanized public opinion:

> When Mr. Kruger made his empty boast about British suzerainty he probably did not see that he was at the same time bidding good-bye to his favourite theme of arbitration. By his own foolishness he has given away the situation. People who felt lukewarm on the Uitlander franchise and the dynamite monopoly are up in arms the moment it comes to an independent Transvaal. Even the bondsmen must now desert the Kruger cause if they wish this country to believe in their protestations, for both Mr. Hofmeyr and Mr. Schneider have declared in favour of British supremacy in South Africa.[109]

And, as Pakenham has pointed out, most editorials echoed the position of the *Daily Telegraph*:

> Of course there can be only one answer for this grotesque challenge…Mr Kruger has asked for war, and war he must have.[110]

When the Transvaal was first annexed some Britons defended the Boers' right to domestic sovereignty. The pro-Boer lobby would gain considerable momentum when, after the summer of 1900, the war deteriorated into a guerrilla struggle, and the British government used objectionable tactics, such as concentration camps, in an effort to curtail

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[107] Pakenham, *The Boer War*, 110.
[108] *Times* (London), 11 October 1899, 7.
[109] *Morning Post*, 15 September 1899, 2.
[110] *Daily Telegraph*, 11 October 1899, quoted in Pakenham, *The Boer War*, 110.

and hinder the Boer forces.[111] Even before that point, however, key members of Parliament and pacifist groups spoke out against the legitimacy of the war. For instance, in late-September Lord Rathmore wrote a lengthy review of Britain's imperial policy toward the Transvaal from 1877 to 1899 and concluded prophetically that a future war would devolve from a shooting war into a disastrous guerilla war. In thus questioning the legitimacy of the position which Britain had staked out, he wrote:

> I see many things against us; but, if in addition, the God of battles deems not our cause a righteous one, the war that we are entering upon with so light a heart may bring sorrow and loss untold to our fair Christian land.
>
> The Boers are not a lovable people; somewhat naturally they hate us; but still for all that, though their country is rich in mines, and a vineyard to be coveted, it is questionable whether our motives are perfectly pure, and our conduct righteous in making war upon them.[112]

In addition, peace societies, some members of the Liberal Party, elements of the labor movement and religious nonconformists, such as the Quakers, actively petitioned the British government between June and October 1899 both in letter and in public meetings. After the war started, anti-war agitation coalesced into a variety of anti-war organizations, which included the Transvaal Committee, the South African Conciliation Committee, and the Stop-the-War Committee.[113]

Within the relatively small bloc of pro-Boers, Irish nationalists had long been particularly sympathetic with the Boer cause, seeing in the Boers a people who had

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[111] Works that specifically delve into the Pro-Boer position prior to and during the Second Boer War include Stephen Koss, *The Pro-Boers: the Anatomy of an Anti-War Movement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973); Arthur Davey, *The British Pro-Boers, 1877-1902* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1978); Donal McCracken, *The Irish Pro-Boers, 1877-1902* (Johannesburg: Perskor, 1989); Hope H. Hewison, *Hedge of Wild Almonds: South Africa, the Pro-Boers, and the Quaker Conscience, 1890-1910* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1989).

[112] *Evesham Journal*, 23 September 1899, 3.

[113] Paul Laity, "The British Peace Movement and the War," in *The Impact of the South African War*, ed. David Omissi and Andrew Thompson (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 138-156. For more on the anti-war activities of nonconformists see, Greg Cuthbertson, "Pricking the 'nonconformist conscience': religion against the South African War, in *The South African War reappraised*, edited by Donal Lowry (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 169-187.

mutual frustrations with the overbearing power of Britain. Opposition to the Jameson raid afforded a rallying point for nationalist Irish MPs, who had been torn apart since the Parnell split in the Irish Parliamentary Party in 1890.[114] As Anglo-Boer relations descended into war, Michael Davitt, MP for South Mayo, along with other Irish nationalists such as Arthur Griffith, Maud Gonne, and W.B. Yeats, strenuously objected and on 1 October convened a sizeable public meeting to contest the war.[115] On 17 October John Dillon (MP for East Mayo), offered an amendment to the Commons's response to the queen's speech in which he moved that the government acknowledge that the war was caused by unlawful interference on the part of Britain into the internal affairs of the Transvaal, and that the dispute between the two countries be settled through arbitration.[116] Supporting Dillon's motion, Davitt emphasized the hypocrisy of the British government's defense of Roman Catholic rights in the Transvaal while denying Catholics the same rights in Ireland. Moreover, he declared:

> As I have the honour to represent a constituency which was the first in Ireland to condemn the war policy of the colonial secretary, I support the amendment of my hon. friend [sic]. Upon the war which that policy has provoked the whole world outside of jingo circles and stock-jobbing rings cries "shame," and I am proud of the fact that Ireland's voice is raised in that indignant chorus of condemnation. It is a war without one single redeeming feature, a war of a giant against a dwarf, a war which, no matter what its ending may be, will bring neither credit nor glory nor prestige to this great British Empire.[117]

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[114] The Parnell split occurred when Gladstone threatened to withdraw Home Rule legislation if Parnell did not step down as leader of the Irish Party when his scandalous affair with Katherine O'Shea became public knowledge. When Parnell refused to resign, 45 Anti-Parnellite Irish M.P.s walked out and ultimately reorganized themselves as the Irish National Federation. The 27 Irish MPs who remained loyal to Parnell then formed the Irish National League. Lyons, *Charles Stewart Parnell*, 479-530; idem., *The Irish Parliamentary Party, 1890-1910* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1975 ed); Frank Callanan, *The Parnell Split, 1890-91* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1992).

[115] Carla King, *Michael Davitt*, Historical Association of Ireland Life and Times New Series, ed. Ciaran Brady (Dublin: University of Dublin Press, 2009), 72-73. King's work states that 20,000 people attended to hear Davitt. King's assertion that the Dublin meeting drew 20,000 may well be a gross overestimation, as the *Times* sized the crowd at roughly 2500. *Times* (London), 2 October 1899, 8.

[116] *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 4th ser., vol., 77 (1899), cols. 93-100.

[117] *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 4th ser., vol., 77 (1899), cols. 121-22.

Supported mostly by members of the various Irish nationalist factions and a few Liberals, the motion was, nevertheless, overwhelmingly defeated by Unionists and Conservatives by a vote of 54 "Ayes" to 322 "Noes".[118] On 26 October, in a further act of protest against what he considered to be "the greatest infamy of the nineteenth century," Davitt resigned his seat in the Commons and subsequently worked to generate Continental support for the Boer cause.[119] In the spring of 1900 he proceeded to South Africa, where he followed the Boer armies as a correspondent for the *New York American Journal* and the Dublin *Freeman's Journal*. Later that year he returned to London where he wrote a history of the war from the Boer perspective.[120]

Tangible indications of the public's interest in the run-up to the war, either in favor of or against the conflict, can be found in the numerous public meetings that sprang up all around Britain. On 24 September a small pro-Boer rally in Trafalgar Square was reportedly overrun by a crowd of 30,000 "jingoes," who rallied in favor of Chamberlain and the government. Singing patriotic songs such as "Rule Britannia" and "The Soldiers of the Queen," and waving the Union Jack and royal standard, the crowd drowned out the keynote speaker, Dr. Gavin Brown Clark (Liberal MP for Caithness), with accusations of treason and challenges to his being able to call himself an "Englishman."[121] On 1

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[118] *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 4th ser., vol., 77 (1899), cols. 158.
[119] Michael Davitt, *The Boer Fight for Freedom*, 3rd ed. (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1902), v.
[120] King, *Michael Davitt*, 74-76.
[121] *Times* (London), 25 September 1899, 6; *People's Journal* (Edinburgh) 30 September 1899, 6. The conflation of England and Britain was a common occurrence in imperial discourses and will be addressed further in chapter 5. However, given that Clark was Scottish, some comment is warranted here regarding the questioning of Clark's Englishness. As Christopher Harvie notes, while "British" was certainly a more exact and correct label, the use of "English" was often a preferred and less complicated label, as it referred to both the predominant language and country of the Union. On the other hand, the use of "Britain" very often carried with it "provincial" associations and implications. Christopher Harvie, *A Floating Commonwealth: Politics, Culture, and Technology on Britain's Atlantic Coast, 1860-1930* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 38, 76-77. In this case, the accusations of the crowd should be seen as centering upon Clark holding a position that was regarded as being in opposition to the nation and the people as a whole.

October, there was the aforementioned rally in Dublin.[122] Another rally opposing the war occurred in Swindon on 8 October and was also disrupted by supporters of the government, who then proceeded to hold their own rally. The following day in Sheffield there was a "remarkable patriotic feeling" at a public meeting, at which "a resolution was carried heartily supporting the Government in their Transvaal policy."[123] At public meetings held on 1 November in Wick and Thurso, towns that lay within Clark's own Caithness constituency, the attendees unanimously passed resolutions to express their "great dissatisfaction and strong disapproval of the action of Dr. Clark, MP for the county, with reference to the present crisis in the Transvaal."[124] Two weeks later, Aberdeen's *Weekly Free Press* reported that even Clark's most enthusiastic supporters along the East Coast had turned against him and passed a similar resolution condemning his position:

> That no language can adequately express the feelings of contempt with which this meeting holds the recent unpatriotic attitude of Dr. Clark, MP, toward the government and the nation at a time when the enemies of the country are invading our territory, our countrymen ruined and fleeing for refuge from the hands of the oppressor, and that we take this opportunity of dissociating ourselves from such disloyal conduct.[125]

As often as British newspapers had expressed a desire for a peaceful resolution of the imbroglio, they widely held that neither Britain's honor nor its imperial holdings could be sacrificed at any price. Although the government had effectively forced the Boers into a political corner, its spokesmen portrayed—and the papers and public readily accepted—that the war was a defensive conflict because the Boer government was the first to issue an ultimatum. It was thus Britain's duty to prosecute the war to the fullest

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[122] *Times* (London), 2 October 1899, 8.
[123] *Times* (London), 10 October 1899, 5.
[124] *Weekly Free Press* (Aberdeen), 4 November 1899, 4.
[125] Ibid., 18 November 1899, 10.

extent. The question no longer was simply about the Uitlanders' franchise. The Second Anglo-Boer War would determine whether the Transvaal would establish itself as a fully independent state, or whether Britain would finally establish itself as the sole imperial power in South Africa. If the Transvaal succeeded, Britons widely believed this would lead to the decline of the empire – something which could not be allowed to happen. On the other hand, a British victory brought with it great economic and humanitarian promise. As Dr. James Stewart, a moderator of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland and a resident of Lovedale, South Africa, noted in a letter to the Earl of Moray:

> There is a great future for the African continent. Its mineral and other wealth has, as yet, only been guessed at. What is needed for the opening up of that continent is reliable information, just government, and a Christian civilization, or the application of the teachings of Jesus Christ. The present war, which has darkened so many homes, is, strange to say, a part of the process and a part of the heavy price which has to be paid for that great end. It is in this light that the present war should be regarded, and no one need have any compunction or any doubts as to its necessity and justice. Little or nothing of a permanent kind can be done to develop the continent on just lines so long as essentially unjust and obstructive forces of government block the way. It is the same process as began in Egypt nineteen years ago, was necessary at Omdurman and Khartoum two years ago, and has now travelled south to Ladysmith and elsewhere; and that just because none of these three forms of government would act otherwise than for the benefit of a few at the expense of the many.[126]

With the stakes thus set, the majority opinion of the public was that there was little room for those who held a position short of fully supporting the war effort and the intended aims of the government. Regardless of their abhorrence for another war with in South Africa, once the Transvaal issued its ultimatum, the ensuing war became one that the vast majority believed Britain must win to uphold its national honor.

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[126] *Weekly Free Press* (Aberdeen), 18 November 1899, 12.

Opening Shots, Black Week, and Mafeking Night

As they had in prior conflicts, war correspondents kept the reading public well informed about events in South Africa. Regimental departures appeared in the presses and maps (a staple of British war correspondence) accompanied the reports which emerged from the front. In October and November the news that poured into Britain was anything but encouraging, and it was not long before lengthy casualty lists filled the columns of the national and provincial papers. Despite Britons' belief in their own military superiority, the Boers took the initiative as they had in 1880 and had the upper hand in the early going of the conflict. Unlike in the previous war, the Transvaal was supported in its struggle by the Orange Free State, which saw that its future survival hung in the balance.

The war officially began on 12 October 1899 when the Boer ultimatum expired. Within forty-eight hours Britain began losing contact with its forces on the Transvaal border. On 14 October Boer forces laid siege to the border towns of Kimberley and Mafeking, with garrisons of 2,600 and 1,000 men respectively. The next week saw a furious invasion, as the aged Commandant-General Piet Joubert led 21,000 Transvaalers and Orange Free Staters south past the old 1881 battlefields of Laing's Nek, Ingogo, and Majuba Hill, and flooded into northern Natal. Despite temporarily repulsing the Boers at Dundee and Elandslaagt, the British fell back toward Ladysmith, where General George White's force of 12,000 likewise became besieged on 29 October.[127]

The British public quickly became intensely interested in the war. George Sturt recorded in his journal on 24 October:

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[127] Nasson, *The South African War, 1899-1902*, 81-91; Pakenham, *The Boer War*, 106.

> Behind the boy who brought his bundle of evening papers into Frank's shop, there followed thick, until the shop was crowded, men eager for war news. For so long they had been waiting about, with nothing to do, expectant of the stimulus, and desiring something truly stirring. They would like a bloody battle twice a day, so that breakfast and supper might have a relish, and ennui be chased away.[128]

Responding to the clamor for war news, the Conservative *Daily Mail*, which had been founded by Lord Northcliffe in 1896, quickly rose to being the best-selling daily newspaper. Joining the *Mail* in covering the war, other leading papers, such as the *Daily Telegraph*, and the *Morning Post*, as well as illustrated weeklies, such as the *Graphic* and the *Illustrated London News*, sent correspondents and artists to report on events. Even the *Manchester Guardian*, which was one of the few papers to continue to oppose the war openly, sent a correspondent to the scene of the war. War news, especially when it came from a paper's own correspondent, was good for business.[129]

The growth of the *Daily Mail* at this time was part of the burgeoning of adult, educational, and juvenile literature markets that had emerged since the late 1870s. Much of this fare was devoted to imperial messaging. Arguably motivated by both a keen interest to meet public demand for imperial news as well as to drive public opinion, the central themes of those media were British self-confidence and the safety of the empire.[130] As Jacqueline Beaumont, a historian of British journalism and the colonial wars, points out, the hundreds of war correspondents who found their way to South Africa demonstratively reflected the growth of the press and the level of public interest in

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[128] E. B. Mackerness, ed., *The Journals of George Sturt, 1890-1927*, volume 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 302.
[129] Denis Judd and Keith Surridge, *The Boer War* (London: John Murray, 2002), 251-52.
[130] Patrick Duane, "Boys' Literature and the Idea of Empire," *Victorian Studies*, 24 (Autumn, 1980), 106, 120-21; Louis James, "Tom Brown's Imperialist Sons," *Victorian Studies* 18 (September, 1973), 98-99; J.S. Bratton, "Of England, Home, and Duty: The Image of England in Victorian and Edwardian Juvenile Literature," in *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, ed. John Mackenzie, 78; J. A. Hobson, *Psychology of Jingoism* (London: G. Richards, 1901), 19; Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism*, 81-85. That broader field of literature and its attention to imperial messaging is explored more fully in chapter five of the present work.

imperial matters. Many of those correspondents, such as Lionel James, established their careers in covering the war.[131] To be sure, there was a very good reason why the Boer War captivated the public. More than merely being the latest in a long series of imperial crises, the set-backs in the early stages of the conflict warranted deep public concern as this war proved to be the greatest challenge to the empire arguably since the Crimean War.[132]

Indeed, by early November the public's initial haughtiness was already beginning to wane. Describing the scene in London to Milner, Miss Bertha Synge wrote on 3 November:

> Our days are spent reading our papers—ever clamouring for more, our nights in dreaming of all that is and is to be. In my lifetime, the state of tension is unique. The war affects all, rich and poor alike. All have friends and relations in it and it is no exaggeration to say we are all plunged in gloom…I shall never forget last Tuesday in London, when the news of the missing battalion arrived around midday. Picture the newsboys at the corners…shouting "Terrible Reverses of British Troops—Loss of 2,000." Imagine the rush for papers as we all stood about the streets—regardless of all appearances, reading the telegrams with breathless anxiety. Carriages stopped at the corners for papers to be bought—bus conductors rushed with handfuls of pennies as deputation for their passengers. There was a perfect sea of newspapers and anxious faces behind—intense gravity prevailed…People walked along speaking in whispers and muttering, while ever echoed round the shrill and awful cry of "Terrible Reverses of British Troops." …The War Officer is besieged—no one goes to the theatres—concert rooms are empty—new books fall flat—nothing is spoken save the war.[133]

With the British regaining some of their footing in the third week of the month, Lt. General Redvers Buller, the commander of British forces at the Cape, divided his 47,000 men into three groups and planned a massive three-pronged counter-offensive to break

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[131] Jacqueline Beaumont, "The Making of a War Correspondent: Lionel James and the *Times*," in *The Impact of the South African War*, ed. David Omissi and Andrew Thompson (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 124, 135n.
[132] A close second would arguably be the Indian Mutiny (1857-1858), which lasted more than two years and also involved the relief of several besieged garrisons.
[133] Headlam, *Milner Papers*, 2:43-44.

through the Boer defenses and to relieve the beleaguered British garrisons at Kimberley and Ladysmith.[134] He sent 20,000 men west under Lord Methuen to retake Kimberley. With a much smaller force, Major Generals William Gatacre and John French were to repulse the Boer incursion in the midlands of the Cape Colony. Retaining 20,000 under his personal command, Buller intended to relieve Ladysmith. [135] Initially the operation went well. In the west, Lord Methuen's 1st Division succeeded in driving the Boers back to the Modder River. On 28 November they then successfully maneuvered Commandant-General De la Rey and Piet Cronje's 3,000 commandos out of the defensive position they had taken up despite suffering significant losses in the process.[136] The strategic success at Modder River notwithstanding, the ratio of the comparative troop strengths and the casualty numbers would become characteristic of the early phase of the war. In the east, the arrival of British reinforcements, along with the presence of Buller's own column of approximately 21,000 men, had convinced Joubert to fall back to Colenso and focus on the siege of Ladysmith instead of pressing still further south toward Durban.[137]

Then, between 10 and 15 December, in what came to be known throughout Britain as "Black Week," the offensive turned catastrophic. In the midlands on 10 December, despite enjoying a two to one numerical superiority, Gatacre's 3rd Division was utterly routed at Stormberg.[138] The following day, Lord Methuen intended to follow up his earlier success at Modder River, and, with the aid of reinforcements from the 3rd

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[134] A member of Wolseley's Ring, Buller was regarded as an extremely capable officer.
[135] Nassion, *The South African War*, 116. Pakenham, *The Boer War*, 181-83.
[136] Davitt, *The Boer Fight For Freedom*, 188-208. Despite outnumbering the Boers at least three to one, the British sustained almost five hundred casualties compared to the Boers' 150.
[137] Walker, *A History of South Africa*, 489.
[138] Davitt, *The Boer Fight for Freedom*, 225-40. Gatacre's effective force at Stormberg numbered roughly 3,000 men and in the attack suffered 26 dead, 70 wounded, and a further 632 captured. The Boers, fielding a force of only 800 men, sustained 5 dead and 17 wounded.

Highland Brigade, he struck with 13,000 men at De la Rey's new position at Magersfontein Hill, which was held by fewer than 5,000 commandos. The Boer forces easily repulsed Methuen's attack, inflicting almost nine hundred casualties while sustaining fewer than two hundred and fifty.[139] The most grievous blow came four days later in the east when Buller's own column, which had swelled to 23,000 men, attempted to break through General Louis Botha's force of 5,000 at Colenso.[140] Here, as at Stormberg and Magersfontein previously, though severely outnumbered, the Boers enjoyed a decisive advantage in position and made full use of it.[141] When the fighting subsided, the British had sustained as many as 1,500 casualties and lost ten pieces of artillery, while the Boers had at most thirty-three casualties.[142] Among the British who fell was Field-Marshal Lord Roberts's only son, Lieutenant Freddy Roberts, who was mortally wounded in an attempt to save several British guns from being captured.[143]

Being used to the relatively short wars which had generally produced favorable outcomes with comparatively few casualties, the British government and public were completely stunned by the news of this string of British defeats. In the first place, the casualties sustained in those fights were uncharacteristic for the British army. While they did not rise to the level seen during the Napoleonic or Crimean wars, they were a stark contrast to the greater pattern of battles fought against native opponents during Victoria's

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[139]Davitt, *The Boer Fight for Freedom*, 210-24; Pakenham, *The Boer War*, 197-214. Among the dead was Major General Andrew "Andy" Wauchope, whose 3rd Highlander Brigade, composed of the Black Watch, Seaforth, Argyll, and Sutherland Highlanders, sustained the bulk of the casualties.

[140] While Botha had 5,000 men at his disposal, Davitt approximated that the Boer force that actually repelled the British advance was closer to 3,000, as the position of nearly 2,000 Middleburg and Free State burghers on the Ladysmith Road never came under attack. Davitt, *The Boer Fight for Freedom*, 281.

[141] Ibid., 251-74

[142] Ibid., 275-77.

[143] Of the eight Victoria Crosses issued for gallantry at Colenso, seven involved the attempted rescue of Colonel Long's guns. Six went to the men, including Lt. Roberts and Capt. William Congrieve, who rushed forward under heavy fire to retrieve the guns; another was issued to Maj. William Babtie who, along with Congrieve, ran back to carry the mortally wounded Roberts to cover. *London Gazette*, 2 February 1900; 20 April 1900, 1; 4 June 1901, 1; 30 August 1901, 1. Snook, *Into the Jaws of Death*, 362-363, 365.

colonial wars. In those encounters the British were frequently outnumbered but almost routinely had suffered casualties of only a few dozen.[144]

Despite Britain's previous difficulty fighting the Boers, the public entered the war with utter contempt for their opponents' capabilities. H. Spenser Wilkinson recalled later that the public almost universally had believed that "a war with the Transvaal would be a small affair, resembling the autumn manoeuvres [sic] and lasting a few weeks."[145] To be sure, the British military had suffered other ignominious disasters at places such as Isandhlwana (Zulu War) and Maiwand (Second Afghan War). While tragic, those instances could be rationalized by the public on the grounds that their forces had been vastly outnumbered by the enemy. That the British enjoyed sizeable numerical superiorities at Stormberg, Magersfontein, and Colenso only made the defeats coming within days of each other all the more shocking and humiliating. Chamberlain, in speaking before a concerned student body at Dublin's Trinity College, referred to the events of Black Week as "the darkest hour."[146] Sir Arthur Conan Doyle called the week "the blackest one known during our generation and the most disastrous for British arms which has occurred during this century."[147] The effect of Black Week was such that J. L. Garvin maintained some thirty-five years later that "our national life and thought never fully recovered" from the shock of Black Week.[148]

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[144] A partial exception to this pattern was the Battle of Omdurman, where Kitchener sustained over 400 casualties out of a force of nearly 26,000. Of course, the relative losses indicate the technological superiority of the Anglo-Egyptian force at Omdurman, as Kitchener's men destroyed nearly half of the 50,000 dervishes who attacked his position. See Churchill, *The River War*, 249, 259-260, 310-11.
[145] Judd, *The Boer War*, 153. Wilkinson made a career as a critic and commentator of military matters. From 1882-1892 he worked for the *Manchester Guardian* and in that capacity covered Wolseley's expedition in 1884-85. At the time of the Second Boer War, he was working for the London *Morning Post*. In 1909 he was named the Chichele Professor of Military History at the University of Oxford.
[146] Garvin, *The Life of Joseph Chamberlain*, 3: 526.
[147] Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Great Boer War* (New York: McClure, 1902), 167.
[148] Garvin, *The Life of Joseph Chamberlain*, 3: 522.

Finding it difficult to fathom how they could have been so easily repulsed, British officers and war correspondents frequently over-approximated the size of the Boer forces and the number of casualties the British forces had inflicted. For instance, the *Hampshire Telegraph* reported that at Magersfontein the Boers likely had 12,000 men and that there were "heavy casualties on both sides."[149] According to a Press Association report of the same battle which was carried in the *Bristol Mercury*, "the entire Scandinavian contingent had been destroyed," and the Boers had lost more than 700 men. Wounded Boers told the reporter that "the destruction wrought by the naval gun was enormous…All confess they suffered the greatest loss they have yet had during the war."[150] A reporter for the *Times* insisted "the loss of the enemy in mounted infantry was heavy."[151] Calling Magersfontein the "most desperate" battle fought thus far, the editorial staff of the *Derby Mercury* drew some comfort from the knowledge that the British artillery, though not destroying the "fine nerve" of the Boers, had "inflicted havoc amongst the enemy" as it "killed and wounded hundreds of them."[152] A correspondent for the Central News, whose reports appeared in the *Mercury*, recorded that "all [were] agreed that the total number of Boer losses [at Magersfontein] were over two thousand killed and wounded," thus over-estimating by a factor of ten.[153] As news trickled in from Colenso, rumors abounded in Bristol that Buller had succeeded in capturing 10,000 Boers.[154] In issuing their official reports two months later, British commanders continued

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[149] *Hampshire Telegraph*, 15 December 1899, 5.
[150] *Bristol Mercury*, 16 December 1899, 5. The Scandinavian Corps was only one of a number of units that were composed of foreign volunteers who were sympathetic to the Boer cause. Other foreign corps were formed from volunteers from France, Ireland, Germany, and Russia. See Davitt, *The Boer Fight for Freedom*, 300-36.
[151] *Times*, 16 December, 1899, 7.
[152] *Derby Mercury*, 20 December 1899, 7.
[153] Ibid.
[154] *Bristol Mercury*, 15 December 1899, 8.

to assert that they had been confronted with much larger forces than they had anticipated. Indeed, the estimated size of the Boer forces had actually grown since the initial reports. Methuen's report on Magersfontein, published in the *London Gazette* and carried by many provincial papers, maintained that there "must have been at least 16,000 Boers in front of him."[155] Buller reported after Colenso, that he thought "the force opposed to us must altogether have equaled our own!"[156]

Amid reports of overall losses, British newspapers featured biographical sketches of prominent casualties. The *Daily News* called the loss of Wauchope "irreparable" and gave a lengthy biographical account of his military service in the Ashanti Wars in 1874 and his role in the expedition to save Gordon in 1885.[157] In Scotland news of his death was met with "deep regret." In Edinburgh, for instance, the news "caused a feeling of distress and almost consternation," to the point that the South Edinburgh Liberal Association adjourned after adopting a resolution of "deep and heartfelt sympathy with Mrs. Wauchope."[158]

Black Week also caused Britons to re-evaluate their impression of the Boers. Noting the public's tendency to exaggerate the relative magnitude of the British losses, the *Glasgow Herald* offered a Social Darwinist rationalization when it asserted that the public could not compare this enemy to other recent foes. The *Herald* maintained that the Boers were "not barbarians like the Ashantis or Zulus, nor half-civilised and half-armed tribes like the Pathans of our North-West Indian frontier, or the dervish[e]s of the

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[155] *London Gazette*, 26 January 1900, 508; *Times* (London), 27 January 1900, 12; *Glasgow Herald*, 27 January 1900, 7; *Liverpool Mercury*, 27 January 1900, 6.
[156] *London Gazette*, 16 March 1900, 1785; *Times* (London), 17 March 1900, 4; *Daily News* (London), 17 March 1900, 2. The exaggerations were well-known enough for the Boer Commandant-General Christian de Wet to make note of them in his "Diary of the War," published in Davitt, *The Boer Fight for Freedom*, 560.
[157] *Daily News* (London), 14 December 1899, 4.
[158] *Aberdeen Journal*, 16 December 1899, 6.

Sudan…They possess all the intelligence of Europeans, and, what is more important, they have the advice of skilled strategists to aid them, and a full supply of the newest and most perfect missile-weapon."[159] Insisting that it was more appropriate to compare the engagements to those fought with European opponents, the *Herald* thus assured its readers that there was no reason to be pessimistic. Likewise, dispensing with the notion that the Boers were anything but capable adversaries, the *Manchester Times* maintained that "truly they have nothing to learn from either German or French tutors."[160]

In his history of the war, Conan Doyle insisted that Black Week inflicted "an incalculable" blow to British prestige, and this conclusion is borne out through a review of the contemporary press.[161] For example, the *Daily News* claimed that Methuen's defeat at Magersfontein, coming as it did on the heels of Gatacre's repulse from Stormberg, had led to great anxiety about the British position in South Africa.[162] Similarly, the Press Association observed that "an air of gloom deeper than any since the opening of the war…pervaded the War Office," and the *Aberdeen Journal* maintained that the reverse of Methurn at Magersfontein, "following so closely after General Gatacre's reverse, at Stormberg, produced a more dispiriting effect than the casualty of any engagement."[163] After calling Gatacre's defeat at Stormberg "humiliating" in a 14 December editorial, the *Liverpool Mercury* subsequently noted that the "serious reverse" suffered by Buller at Colenso "differed only in coming upon the public as an absolute surprise." Whereas Methuen and Gatacre had only divisions at their disposal and "were operating against enemies who were probably as strong numerically as themselves," the

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[159] *Glasgow Herald*, 16 December 1899, 4.
[160] *Manchester Times*, 15 December 1899, 5.
[161] Conan Doyle, *The Great Boer War*, 167.
[162] *Daily News* (London), 14 December 1899, 4.
[163] *Aberdeen Journal*, 14 December 1899, 5.

paper insisted that everyone had expected that Buller, "at the head of the main army," would "produce decisive results."[164]

Even though the Christmas season of 1899 was understandably gloomy, the papers emphasized that the situation was not completely hopeless. Britons emerged from Black Week more unified and determined than ever in favor of the war. Conan Doyle observed that after Black Week the Boers were no longer the piteous underdogs upon whom Britain had forced a war, and that peace meetings risked incurring a public riot in opposition.[165] The *Glasgow Herald* was amazed that partisans would continue to refute the necessity of the war:

> Can any sane man regret that we have fallen upon a time so opportune in the politics of the world for a trial of strength with this great military power which we have discovered to be capable of disputing our hold of South Africa? Every Krupp or Creusot that has rolled out of the Pretoria armoury has dinned into our ears the lesson that we should be thankful for the failure of our diplomacy, and for the international situation which has permitted us to throw our full military strength against a foe who has proved to us that he must be annihilated as a military power if the British flag is to wave over any spot from Cape Town to the Zambesi.[166]

The *Daily News* anticipated that "this fresh check to the British arms will only increase the determination of the British people to see the thing through," and that with the "very existence of the British Empire at stake," the war had to be pressed "until the British flag flies from Johannesburg and Pretoria—places which will be reached via Bloemfontein."[167] Detailing the reverse of Methuen at Magersfontein, the *Liverpool Mercury* called upon the British public to persevere:

> All the fortitude on which the people of this country pride themselves will be required to enable us to face the situation with patience and with a fair allowance

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[164] *Liverpool Mercury*, 14 December 1899, 6; 18 December 1899, 5.
[165] Conan Doyle, *The Great Boer War*, 168-69.
[166] *Glasgow Herald*, 14 December 1899, 6.
[167] *Daily News* (London), 14 December 1899, 4.

> for the difficulties that have led to the present crisis in the campaign against the Transvaal…For the soldiers no praise can be too high. It is evident from their whole demeanor under trying and dispiriting circumstances that they remain undaunted and eager for the fight. They have had to suffer a repulse. The bravest troops are open to a temporary rebuff. But their morale is, obviously, unshaken.[168]

Public support had so shifted in favor of the war that Conan Doyle recorded that even "the only London daily which had opposed the war, though very ably edited, was overborne by the general sentiment and compelled to change its line."[169]

Notwithstanding support for the troops, newspaper editorial staffs had few qualms about attacking the government for its handling of the war effort.[170] Thus, the *Daily News* warned the government after Magersfontein that future setbacks would not be readily tolerated by the public:

> British ministries which faltered and paltered with great emergencies have often found the country behind them in a different sense—the sense which Tennyson intended when he wrote: "You, you, *if* you shall fail to understand What England is . . *if* you should only compass her disgrace. . . . the wild mob's million feet Will kick you from your place."[171]

Such criticism, however, did not initially extend to the performance of the military. For example, the *Liverpool Mercury* insisted that the reverse at Stormberg was not Gatacre's fault, but that "he was placed in a situation…in which he was merely a sheep for the slaughter."[172] Meanwhile, after Colenso, the *Glasgow Herald* called upon the public "to keep its head and trust the great soldier who commands Natal to repair his loss."[173] The public's confidence in the military and its expectation that the government would respond

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[168] *Liverpool Mercury*,14 December 1899, 6.
[169] Doyle, *The Great Boer War*, 168-9. Conan Doyle does not specifically name the paper, but it was almost certainly the *Daily Chronicle*. This decision may not have been due to a sudden ideological change, but was made to resurrect the paper's declining sales. Judd, *The Boer War*, 252.
[170] Judd, *The Boer War*, 253.
[171] *Daily News* (London), 14 December 1899, 4.
[172] *Liverpool Mercury*, 14 December 1899, 6.
[173] *Glasgow Herald*, 16 December 1899, 4.

appropriately to the turn of events was bolstered with the announcement that Buller was to be replaced as commander in chief by Lord Roberts, who was to have as his chief of staff the much younger Kitchener of Omdurman fame.[174] Observing that their appointments were greeted with "universal satisfaction," the *Liverpool Mercury* asserted that their past resourcefulness justified "the country in forming the highest expectations of the effect which their advent will produce upon the course of events in South Africa."[175]

Before Roberts arrived, however, Buller launched one further attempt at breaking through to Ladysmith in order to redeem his reputation. Much like Colley's ill-fated operation at Majuba Hill in 1881, the resulting battle atop Spion Kop (24-25 January 1899) was another ignoble British defeat.[176] After the arrival of Roberts in early February a series of British victories in quick succession turned the tide of war. In the west, French broke through and relieved Cecil Rhodes and the British garrison in Kimberley on 15 February. On 18 February French forced Cronje and his commandos to surrender at Paardeberg. Ten days later, Buller, whom Roberts had retained as a field commander, finally succeeded in relieving Ladysmith, and on 13 March Bloemfontein, the capital of the Orange Free State, fell. After taking time to secure the southeast part of the country, British forces renewed their northward march on 4 May. Two weeks later British forces breached the last line of Boer defenses and relieved the very much beleaguered forces under Colonel Robert Baden-Powell at Mafeking on 17 May.

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[174] Landsdowne's decision to send Roberts as a replacement was especially irksome to Wolseley. He had not only hoped to be sent himself, but he was personally jealous of Roberts and likely did not want his rival to receive a victory laurel. Buckle, *Letters of Queen Victoria*, 3rd ser., 3: 435-7; Kochanski, *Sir Garnet Wolseley*, 245-46; Pakenham, *The Boer War*, 254.
[175] *Liverpool Mercury*, 19 December 1899, 6.
[176] Snook, *Into the Jaws of Death*, 366-394.

Johannesburg then fell on 31 May, and Roberts captured Pretoria five days after that. Over the next several months the last vestiges of organized Boer resistance were systematically hunted down, and on 26 October, the Transvaal was formally annexed. Afterward, the war descended into nearly two years of tedious and costly guerrilla warfare.[177]

The conditions within Mafeking had become appalling over the course of the 197-day siege. Food was scarce and strictly rationed, with Baden-Powell ultimately diverting part of the rations from blacks to the white garrison.[178] The details of the conditions within Mafeking were unknown to the British public, but news of the relief of the city caused an outburst of celebrations all across Britain nonetheless. Writing to Milner, James Rendel reflected that when London heard the news, it was "mad with joy,…people were shouting, cheering, and singing in the streets in the High Street for half the night, and the scene at [the] Mansion House was quite extraordinary."[179] London's *Daily News* reported that the news quickly spread from the city to the West End and resulted in the "wildest enthusiasm."[180]

Noting that the "unparalleled demonstrations" did not cease until daybreak Saturday morning, the *Times* speculated that Sunday would only be an intermission and

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[177] For a concise narrative of these campaigns see, Nasson, *The South African War*, 146-234. For a longer and more detailed narrative, see Conan Doyle, *The Great Boer War*, 259-440; Davitt, *The Boer Fight for Freedom*, 356-504; Pakenham, *The Boer War*, 325-584. Leo Amery's *The Times' History of the War in South Africa, 1899-1902* (London: Hutchinson, 1900-1909), while biased in favor of the British, remains one of the best sources for details on the conflict. As a pro-Boer M.P. who resigned his seat in protest to the war, Davitt's narrative was written with that bias, and in covering the guerrilla phase of the war, he does so via an annotated rendition of Commandant-General Christiaan de Wet's diary. Conan Doyle wrote his narrative of the war in 1900 and thus he concludes his account with the fall of Pretoria.
[178] Pakenham, *The Boer War*, 422-23, 428-33.
[179] Mr. Rendel to Sir A. Milner, 19 May 1900, in Headlam, ed., *Milner Papers*, 2:75. James Rendel was an old friend and frequent correspondent of Milner's. Thompson, *Forgotten Patriot*, 113.
[180] *Daily News* (London), 19 May 1900, 4. As Greg Cuthbertson has noted, the enthusiasm of Mafeking Night was not entirely peaceful as exuberant patriots smashed the windows of at least two outspoken pro-Boers in the course of the celebrations. Cuthbertson, "Religion Against the South African War," 177.

not the end to the exuberance.[181] Of the celebration itself, the paper reported that on Saturday, "by common consent a public holiday had arranged itself, *nemine contradicente*." At 10 am on Saturday a crowd had begun to gather around the Mansion House and from noon to 3 pm throngs of people packed the area "singing, cheering, and throwing their hats in the air." At the same time, the celebrations did not emerge uniformly:

> Westward the scene was less noisy, but not less remarkable. The striking feature of the proceedings was not enthusiasm, not excitement, and certainly not passion. It was the sense that however extravagant this conduct might have been at any other time, it was perfectly proper now in harmony with the spirit of the hour. White-haired old ladies, betraying no sign of emotion, were to be seen inspecting the shop windows of Holborn carrying a large Union Jack in each hand, and young women had the colours pinned across from shoulder to shoulder.[182]

Poor children dressed in rags formed small regiments and marched in columns of fours up and down the street, and there was hardly anyone who did not display some form of the Union Jack either on their person or on their carriages. Such displays notwithstanding, the *Times* insisted that the "real celebrations of Mafeking Day did not occur in Mayfield." The real celebrations emerged in the City up to the Strand and Trafalgar Square, in the suburbs, and in Whitechapel, Bloomsbury, Cambden-town, and Southwark. "It was here," the *Times* wrote, "that scenes were witnessed which have never been seen before in the history of the country:

> Perhaps a Roman triumph was something like this; yet there has been no triumph of war, and there was no vaulting over a defeated enemy; only the universal

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[181] *Times* (London), 21 May 1900, 12. The phenomena of Mafeking Night has been the subject of considerable scholarly inquiry. See Porter, *Absent-Minded Imperialists*; Krebs, *Gender, Race, and the Writing of the Empire*; Thomas Pakenham, "Mafficking," in *The Seige of Mafeking*, ed. Iain R. Smith, volume 2 (Johannesburg: South Africa, Brenthurst Press, 1999), chapter 4; Richard Price, *An Imperial War and the British Working Class Attitudes and Reactions to the Boer War, 1899-1902* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972). Comprising a significant part of his examination of British society and the Boer War, Price's work pays considerable attention to the "Jingo crowd" of Mafeking Night and the khaki election of 1900.

[182] *Times* (London), 21 May 1900, 12.

> spontaneous rejoicing at the happy end of the long seige of a little town of no strategic significance. Women and boys were more demonstrative than many of the men. Well-dressed young women of usually proper demeanor traversed the roadways arm-in-arm, six abreast, carrying flags, and occasionally bursting into song. Ear-splitting sounds issued from every sort of raucous instrument, and noises which would have been offensive at any other time were quite agreeable to all concerned…Gutter children not satisfied with their performance on impromptu kettledrums, commandeered long broom-handles, to which they attached cloths and constructed a clever imitation of an ambulance corps, finishing the picture by laying the smallest of their number in the ready-made hammock and carrying him through the streets.[183]

Outside Hyde Park, the home of Mrs. Baden-Powell, mother of the hero of Mafeking, was another center of public attention. Crowds decorated it with Union Jacks and a picture of the colonel, which was framed by newspaper bills which read "Three Cheers for Baden-Powell" and a banner with the word "Mafeking." In the Thames, British ships docked from the Tower eastward were dressed. Amid this release of pent up emotion, the *Times* reported that such celebrations belonged entirely to the general public and were devoid of any official display of celebration, as "Whitehall displayed never a flag."[184]

In Oxford, where the "glad tidings" arrived around 10:15 pm on Friday night, a large crowd gathered in the city center within the hour and engaged in singing patriotic hymns, carrying soldiers about on their shoulders, and bonfires and fireworks were set alight outside Exeter College and at numerous other locations around the city.[185] In Bristol the celebration took on a more formal tone, as a "monster demonstration" numbering in the thousands turned out to support the lord mayor in doing honor to the "invincible Baden-Powell." In a tribute that the *Bristol Mercury* said could only be compared with a visit from the queen,

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[183] *Times* (London), 21 May 1900, 12.
[184] *Times* (London), 21 May 1900, 12.
[185] *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 21 May 1900, 8.

> The whole city gave itself up to rejoicing, and right heartily did it go through with it. There was necessarily very little time for arranging a programme, but what mattered that when everybody meant taking part, and was determined to do his or her share in fittingly celebrating the freedom of the heroes of Mafeking. Enthusiasm ran high on Friday night, but it was really only a rehearsal for the next day. The deep feelings of pride and patriotism aroused by such a rare event in British history could not be spent in a few hours. People woke up on Saturday morning—in many cases after a very short night's rest, and the bright sunshine enhanced the gladness which reigned everywhere. Flags were flying on all sides, and church bells rang merrily. Being Saturday most of the shops opened as usual, but as a rule business was at a standstill. Purchases were confined chiefly to flags and other decorative material.[186]

Scenes in Scotland were equally stirring. In Edinburgh, news of the relief of Mafeking was highlighted by a massive torchlight procession which marched from the Royal Mile across Waverly Bridge through the commercial district of Princes and George St. and concluded in the Castle Esplanade.[187] In Kirkaldy, the occasion was marked by the ringing of the town and church bells.

> There was an unprecedented demand for flags, and before nine o'clock all dealers were sold out, while coloured ribbons and other fabrics suitable for decorations were also quite unobtainable. By breakfast every shop on High Street was bedecked with flags and streamers.[188]

Throughout the day the streets were filled with dancing and pipe music, and the celebratory revelry continued well into the night, with the town council contributing to the festivities by spending £20 on fireworks. To a certain extent, in Scotland such displays took on a decidedly provincial bent. One banner was "displayed in the shape of an old tunic from the Cameron Highlanders," and another, being owned by the Gallstown Apron Society, was styled after a banner flown by Scottish soldiers at Flodden which bore the motto: "Fear God, honour the King with a long life and prosperous reign."[189]

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[186] *Bristol Mercury*, 21 May 1900, 5.
[187] *Edinburgh Evening Dispatch*, 23 May 1900, 5.
[188] *Fife Free Press* (Kirkaldy), 26 May 1900, 2.
[189] Ibid.

Not only did such celebratory expressions persist beyond the weekend of 18-21 May, but they were not limited to the major metropolitan districts. Donald Hodge, who was five years old in May 1900, recalled in a 1995 interview that in his village of East Peckham in Kent:

> We had a day's holiday from school, and the village celebrated it in due style. Some of the village men had old tire bells which they set alight, and poked them down the village street with poles.[190]

Moreover, the general public was well aware that their local celebrations were part of a much larger national and indeed imperial phenomenon, as London and provincial papers alike noted their breadth and scope. For instance, the *Hampshire Telegraph* reported that the jubilations were seen in "distant colonies, as well as in the smallest villages of the land."[191] More demonstrably, in an extra-large edition for 26 May, the *Graphic* highlighted the celebratory displays that had erupted across London, in Portsmouth, Glasgow, Liverpool, Hampstead, and Godalming.[192] As details of the sieges became more fully known, at least for some the war had a sobering effect. Rachel Cadbury, who was about six years old when the Boer war broke out and had been born into a wealthy Quaker family, recalled later her reaction to details of the siege of Ladysmith: "If war makes people eat rats, I am not for war."[193]

The exuberances surrounding Mafeking Night have traditionally been seen as spontaneous and a quintessential example of mass imperial support and pride in the empire. Paula Krebs, however, has challenged this interpretation by emphasizing the

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[190] Donald Hodge, interview April 1995, IWM, catalogue #11341. In 1901, East Peckham had 464 families and a population of 2,023. *Census of England and Wales, 1901. County of Kent. Area, Houses and Population*, Cd. 1171 (1902), 27.
[191] *Hampshire Telegraph*, 26 May 1900, 5.
[192] *Graphic*, 26 May 1900, 741, 744-45, 747-48, 751, 754-55, 757-59. See example at the end of the chapter.
[193] Rachel Cadbury, interviewed 28 October 1985, IWM, catalogue # 10038.

significant role played by the press in encouraging the public toward that reaction. Her overall assessment of the events of Mafeking Night was that they were as much a demonstration of the power and ability of the press to influence the public and drive it toward a desired goal, as they were an outpouring of public support for imperialism from within the general populace and across the social spectrum.[194] For instance, she points out that the relief of Mafeking rose to such an importance in the eyes of the *Daily Express* that it printed the first ever across-the-page headline by a London newspaper.[195] Moreover, as Jacqueline Beaumont's study on the press coverage of the sieges has demonstrated, any manipulation of the public by the British press was in part due to the material being fed to them by the correspondents on the ground in South Africa. In particular, in converging on Mafeking at the onset of the war, it was the correspondents who were responsible for focusing the attention of the press, and by extension the country, specifically onto Mafeking and its beleaguered commander at the expense of the other besieged towns.[196] When vetted information was not readily available due to censorship or other reasons, in reviewing surviving reporters notebooks, and news accounts, Beaumont and Krebs have persuasively argued that the public interest in the sieges around Mafeking, Kimberley, and Ladysmith, made it easy for the correspondents and their papers to sensationalize reports from the South Africa and to "invent" news by speculating and reporting rumors and half-truths. As, Beaumont has pointed out, on occasion this entailed the false reporting from the front of "brilliant victories involving

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[194] Paula Krebs, *Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire*, Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth Century Literature and Culture, volume 23 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 1-31, 36-37.
[195] Krebs, *Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire*, 13.
[196] Jacqueline Beaumont, "The British Press During the South African War: the Sieges of Mafeking, Kimberley, and Ladysmith," in *War and the Media: Reportage and Propaganda, 1900-1930*, ed. Mark Connolly and David Welch (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005), 2-6.

massive Boer losses, which later had to be retracted." Moreover, the dearth of hard information pertaining to the besieged towns only heightened public anxiety and interest in the sieges.[197]

A New Style of Warfare and Public Opinion, June 1900-1902

As the British offensive under Roberts slowly but surely forced the collapse of formal Boer resistance, the press and the public believed that the end of the war was in sight. Indeed, Conan Doyle concluded his narrative history of the *Great Boer War* with the fall of Pretoria. Even as the war with the Transvaal government came to a close over the summer of 1900, recalcitrant Boer commanders such as Christiaan de Wet were moving combat in a new direction via guerrilla campaigning. Consequently, although Kruger went into exile and Britain formally annexed the Transvaal in October, the war itself would not officially end until the final surrender terms were signed on 31 May 1902.

The later portion of the war stands beyond the chronological scope of the present study, and has been the subject of several outstanding investigations. Nonethless, a brief overview of a few of their conclusions is warranted. In studying the war correspondents in the Boer War, Raymond Sibbald has observed that the press's and the public's attachment to the war noticeably declined as the war descended into a guerilla conflict. In the first place, papers such as the *Times* had seemingly grown bored with the war, as the outbreak and drama of the Boxer Rebellion and the siege of the foreign legations

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[197] Beaumont, "The British Press During the South African War," 11-13; Krebs, *Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire*, 10-11. See also, Jacqueline Beaumont, "Reporting the Siege," in *The Siege of Mafeking*, ed. Iain R. Smith, volume 2 (Johannesburg, South Africa: Brenthurst Press, 2001), chapter 3.

supplanted and pushed the Boer War "from the forefront of the public consciousness."[198] Maintaining positive public interest in the Boer War was made all the more difficult as the British government sanctioned measures, such as the construction of concentration camps and the internment of Boer civilian women and children, in order to reign in the defiant commandos. Many, however, considered these measures to be morally questionable and to conflict with Britain's time-honored traditions of "peace, good government, and the indivisible world rights of Englishmen."[199] The public's access to information about such practices was also impeded by Kitchener's decision to impose greater censorship on the press in order to demoralize the Boers.[200] But even when information was available, many papers seemingly preferred to ignore the objectionable measures as much as possible. For instance, while humanitarians such as Emily Hobhouse and Millicent Garrett Fawcett attempted to raise public awareness of the harsh realities of life within the concentration camps, the *Times* was largely disinclined to address the camps and did so only begrudgingly.[201]

> It is with some reluctance that we revert once more to the controversy of concentration camps for Boer refugees, which has been revived in the last few

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[198] Raymond Sibbald, *The War Correspondents: The Boer War* (London: Alan Sutton, 1993), 177.
[199] Bill Nassion, *The South African War*, 239.
[200] Judd, *The Boer War*, 254. .
[201] In addition to the Parliamentary Papers which were produced on the subject, and were not necessarily objective, see Jennifer Hobhouse Balme, *To Love One's Enemies: The Work and Life of Emily Hobhouse Compiled from Letters and Writings, Newspaper Cuttings and Official Documents* (Cobblehill, British Columbia: Hobhouse Trust, 1994); John Fisher, *That Miss Hobhouse* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1971); E. Neethling, *Should We Forget?* (Cape Town: Dusseau, 1902); Annette Terblanche, *Emily Hobhouse* (Johannesburg: Afrikaanse persboekhandel, 1948); S. J. Thomson, *The Transvaal Burgher Camps, South Africa* (Allahabad, India: Pioneer, 1904). Even after the war, the camps remained a controversial issue. Harold Begbie's study *Kitchener: Organizer of Victory* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1915) notably avoided mentioning Kitchener's use of the camps and other harsh methods used to curtail the Boer's guerrilla war. This omission was quite likely influenced by a desire to avoid staining the reputation of the officer who was at the time of publication leading Britain's war effort in the First World War. A. C. Martin's work *The Concentration Camps 1900-1902: Facts, Figures, and Fables* (Cape Town: Timmins, 1957), acknowledged mortality in the camps, but concluded that the British were not exceedingly brutal in these facilities. See Fred R. van Hartesveldt, *The Boer War: Historiography and Annotated Bibliography* in Bibliographies of Battles and Leaders, no. 24, ed., Myron J. Smith, Jr. (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 2000), 54, 147.

> days by the letters which have been sent from South Africa since the arrival in that country of Miss Hobhouse's "Report." But in view of the misunderstanding as to the whole situation in South Africa which seem to possess the minds of Boer sympathizers in this country and elsewhere it is necessary to set forth once again the true aspect of the case, which have been too much obscured by mistaken sentimentalism and by an astonishing incapacity or unwillingness to recognize the necessities imposed by the peculiar character of the war in its recent stage.[202]

In this instance, the *Times* insisted naively that the camps had largely been necessitated in order to provide effectively for the humanitarian needs of the Boer civilians who had been abandoned by the Boer commandoes.[203] In fact, the *Times* only grudgingly addressed these controversial tools of war. For instance, on 31 October the paper acknowledged that it would not be publishing a leading article about the justifiability of the camps. It would instead present letters representing both sides on the question and thus allow its readers to make up their own minds as to which position was more convincing.[204] But while the volume of war coverage declined in the summer of 1900, this should not be seen as a sign that the press or the general public were necessarily losing interest in imperial matters as a whole. Instead, as Sibbald points out, in the summer of 1900 the public merely turned from the war in South Africa with a new international crisis—the Boxer Rebellion and the siege of the foreign legations in Peking.[205]

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[202] *Times* (London), 31 August 1901, 7.
[203] Ibid.
[204] Ibid., 30 August 1901, 7; 31 October 1901, 7.
[205] Sibbald, *The War Correspondents*, 177. After holding out for fifty-five days, the foreign legations were successfully relieved by an international relief force comprised of British, American, Austrian, French, German, Italian, Japanese, and Russian soldiers and naval personnel on 14 August. Operations in China, however, would continue until the Boxer Protocol was signed on 7 September 1901. Considering that imperial tensions between the great powers were already beginning to percolate, especially between Britain and Germany, the international cooperation was a bright spot in an otherwise increasingly tenuous environment. The expedition would effectively be the last time that the entire "Western" community came together for a common cause until the establishment of the League of Nations in 1919. See Chester C. Tan, *The Boxer Catastrophe* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955); History of Modern China Series, volume 4, *The Yi ho Tuan Movement of 1900* (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1976); David D. Buck, ed., *Recent studies of the Boxer movement: Chinese Studies in history*, xx: nos. 3-4 (Spring/Summer 1987);

CONCLUSION

The coverage of imperial politics by London and provincial papers between 1877 and 1900 strongly suggests that the British public was not only well-versed in the issues pertaining to the country's presence in the Cape to Cairo corridor, but that it was well aware of the debates concerning imperial policies during that period. Moreover, the public formed its own opinions about such matters and voiced them accordingly. While that voice may have been less pronounced at times when the empire was not imperiled, such relative quiet does not mean that the people had no opinion. As we have seen, the newspapers did register their indulgence to the annexation of the Transvaal in 1877 and their opposition to those who would stand in the way of the imperial civilizing process. But as the proclamation did not immediately result in a war or other serious calamity, the public's engagement in the matter can be easily overlooked.

Quite naturally, it was in times of crisis that public opinion became the most vocal. As divergent (and closely held) ideological positions were brought to bear, the public digested the situations. With conflicts of various sizes continuously popping up throughout the 1870s, '80s, and '90s throughout the empire, there were plenty of opportunities for the public to demonstrate its engagement in imperial matters. To that end, public opinion was often fractured as political parties and the provincial press debated the merits of supporting or resisting imperial interventionism. Although imperialism proved to be a highly divisive issue, both within Parliament and among the

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Jane E. Elliott, *Some Did It for Civilization, Some Did it for Their Country: a Revised View of the Boxer War* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2002); and Lanxin Xiang, *The Origins of the Boxer War: a Multinational Study* (London and New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003).

general public, those experiences also served to bind the nation together through the collective experience of demonstration and debate.

In examining the public expressions concerning the imperial conflicts which emerged between 1870 and 1900 in the Cape to Cairo corridor, it becomes clear that the degree to which the British press voiced its approval of a given military action depended largely upon how well the arguments for such intervention could be justified. Moreover, we see that such justifications had less to do with economic opportunism, and more to do with the advancement of civilization, the preservation of British honor, the projected cost of the enterprise (both in blood and capital), and the pursuit of imperial security, both at the regional and the global levels.

In the case of the annexation of the Transvaal, Carnarvon justified his actions on the grounds that such an action would lead to greater security for the Cape Colony and improve the civilization of the natives. Given that the Boers proved incapable of mounting an effective defense, the British public largely acquiesced to the action with little opposition whatsoever, despite the questionable legality of Shepstone's action. It was only with the outbreak of the Zulu and the First Anglo-Boer wars that the public began to reconsider seriously the action orchestrated by Carnarvon and Shepstone.

In turning the focus northward to the British presence in Egypt and Sudan, we have seen that similar issues again drove the public discussion. Wavering on whether its presence in Egypt was worth the financial and military investment, public sentiment became galvanized, but only to the point of relieving Gordon as a matter of national pride and honor. It was only after thirteen years of observing Mahdist rule in the Sudan that the British public—as differentiated from military commanders—became convinced that

for reasons of imperial and international security British rule in the Sudan was preferable. Likewise, although the public was divided over the issue of whether or not to intervene in the domestic affairs of the Transvaal in the late 1890s, after the British government was able to redirect the focus from Jameson's illegal interference to the defense of British honor in the face of Kruger's intransigence, the majority of Britons—with the notable exception of a vocal pro-Boer lobby—united in favor of the war. That unity would break down in the war's latter stages.

In the present review, the most explicit instances of public engagement occurred when popular sentiment factored in Gladstone's decision to take action to save Gordon, and during the celebratory reactions to the relief of Mafeking. In regards to the latter, there is much to be said for Krebs's analysis and interpretation of that event. And while the public jubilation may not have been "spontaneous" in the sense that the press had drawn the public into the sieges in such a way as to foster an enthusiastic response to their relief the newspapers did not send the people into the streets. Although informed by the press, the public celebrations themselves were not manufactured by the press. Additionally and in looking beyond Mafeking Night, the press was not wholly responsible for manufacturing interest in the war, as the public took some ownership of its fascination in the war. For instance, although the demonstrations following the relief of Mafeking focused largely on Baden-Powell, the predominant hero of the working class remained, as George Sturt noted in his journal, Sir Redvers Buller, despite his failures to turn the war during Black Week and afterward at Spion Kop:

> At 11 o'clock my men left off work, and could scarce wait to take their wages, in their eagerness to be off to Aldershot in time for the public reception of General Buller.

> Of all the men in the Transaal War, not even excepting Baden-Powell, General Buller is the favourite among our working men. Their regard for him is almost passionate, in its jealousy for his honour. They are determined that from them he shall have justice, whoever else may belittle him…the working class see a resemblance between Buller's fate and their own. At any rate he is their hero: not Roberts. And so Farnham town is half empty today: even the fair looks a sort of desert. The men have tramped off devotedly, to pay their tribute of admiration where they think it due. It is but one more of many instances that the War has afforded, that our working people are hungry, starving, for a stimulus to their imaginations, to their emotion.[206]

In following the war as a child, Donald Hodge, the son of a wheelwright, was also an enthusiast for Buller but for a more personal reason:

> One of the generals, who was operating in South Africa at that time, was General Sir Redvers Buller and his birthday coincided with mine. So he was, if not my hero, a center of my interest in the Boer War.[207]

Such hero worship was not entirely self-motivated. Nor was it the sole province of the music halls, for as we shall see more fully in chapter five, the celebration of the British military as a symbol of the empire was deliberately encouraged by grammar schools and the press in an effort to instill imperialism and nationalism into the public's consciousness.

At the same time, the public displays on Mafeking Night did not suddenly emerge in the vacuum of the Second Anglo-Boer War. Rather, in taking a longer-term view of the press's attention to imperial matters in southern and northern Africa, one sees that frequent attention to imperial affairs had cultivated a public interest for at least thirty years. Moreover, that interest was interwoven into a greater framework of public concern for and interest in the British military, both as an extension of British imperial politics and as the quintessential symbol of the British empire. Just as Krebs and Beaumont note how the half-pennies and mainstream presses did much to foster an intimate connection

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[206] Mackerness, ed., *The Journals of George Sturt*, 1: 327-328.
[207] Donald Hodge, interview, IWM, catalogue # 11341.

between the British home front and the besieged garrison at Mafeking, we have seen over the course of the last three chapters that further attempts were made at engendering the connection between soldiers and citizens. To varying degrees, this was done by the mainstream presses, but certainly by illustrated presses, such as the *Graphic* and *Penny Illustrated Paper*. Among the most prominent of these, as Robert MacDonald has shown, was arguably that which surrounded General Charles Gordon for his stand at Khartoum.[208] But as we have seen, it could also easily include Wolseley, who was affectionately referred to by the country as "Our General," and, to a much lesser degree, afforded to the slain at Isandhlwana and the survivors at Rourke's Drift.

In taking into account the broad spectrum of press coverage and the public's awareness of imperial affairs in the Cape to Cairo corridor, Mafeking Night should thus be seen as a culmination of public interest in imperial matters, especially those involving the military. As we shall see in the next two chapters, the public's engagement in the politics of imperial interventionism transcended political questions about events on the imperial periphery and involved a concern for the place of the military establishment in British society. Since at least the 1850s, the public was well aware of the impact of imperial interventionism on the military and the consequential need to reform its institutions. As we will see, the content of the press and popular culture also suggests that imperial and military issues were becoming distinctly engrained, both on the national and the provincial level.

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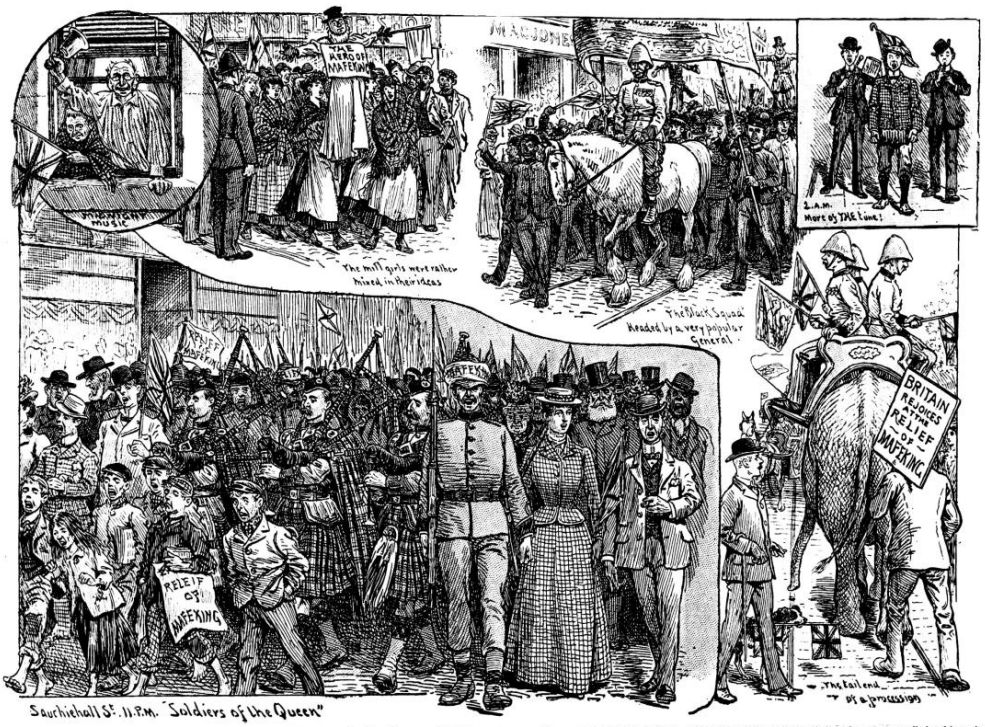
[208] Robert H. MacDonald, *The Language of Empire: Myths and Metaphors of Popular Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 81-108. As MacDonald notes, Victorian culture remembered its past heroes, such as Admiral Nelson and Field-Marshall Wellington, whose monuments and memorials were erected in the early part of the Victorian Era. And the construction of a list of British heroes weaved together the idea of patriotism, Christian service, and sacrifice. Ibid., 82-83. See also, Dave Russell, "'We Carved Our Way to Glory': the British Soldier in the Music Hall Song and Sketch, c. 1880-1914," in *Popular Imperialism and the Military, 1850-1950*, ed. John Mackenzie (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 58-59.



There was great enthusiasm at Glasgow on Saturday, and business was largely suspended. The shipbuilding yards were idle, and flags were hoisted on the public buildings and railway stations. Crowds paraded the streets, cheering and singing, and large numbers of persons arrived from the country districts to participate in the rejoicings. Sauchiehall Street, about 11 p.m. on Friday night, presented a most extraordinary sight. When at last the news was believed, everyone yelled and hurrahed. Several Volunteers happened to be about, and a curiously mixed crowd fell in with them, and paraded the town to the tune of "Soldiers of the Queen"

"MAFEKING IS RELIEVED": ENTHUSIASTIC REJOICINGS AT GLASGOW

DRAWN BY W. RALSTON

Hampstead was indeed "Happy Hampstead" on Saturday. The arrangements for the Mafeking relief demonstration were practically completed many months ago, and the weary waiting to put the plans into operation had only tended to increase the ardour of all concerned. The revellers, a motley crew of youths more or less fantastically clothed, gathered at the Public Library in Finchley Road, and, escorted by a brass band and a number of torch-bearers, set out to parade the principal streets of the neighbourhood in search of coins for the Golder's Hill Convalescent Home

HAMPSTEAD REJOICING OVER THE RELIEF OF MAFEKING

DRAWN BY GEORGE SOPER

Figure 3-1: "Mafeking is Relieved," *Graphic*, 26 May 1900, 759.

PART II
MILITARY-CIVIL RELATIONS AND POPULAR CULTURE

CHAPTER 4:
IMPERIAL AWARENESS AND MILITARY REFORM: 1856-1900

Public discussions about military institutions, which were critical components of interventionist ambitions, offer yet another window into conceptions of Britain as an imperial power. Scholars have frequently emphasized the detachment of the British public from its armed forces. Noting the paradoxical nature of that detachment, Gwyn Harries-Jenkins has contended that, while the public collectively celebrated the military's victories and mourned its defeats, that interest did not translate into concern for the military's well-being. This apparent detachment was also noted by Cecil Norton in the Commons on 5 February 1904 when he stated:

> Over and over again when attempting to improve Army conditions they had had to speak to a practically empty House, empty press gallery, and unsympathetic public, and his sympathies had been altogether with the gentleman who had had the misfortune to be in charge of the War Office.[1]

The public's apparent disengagement from military issues also factored into Bernard Porter's assertion that the repercussions of the empire did not "necessarily [affect] Britons' ways of thinking."[2] Pointing to the Second Boer War as an example, he insisted that imperial circumstances, beyond offering a warning of future dangers, factored little into the calls for military reform.[3] The supposed separation of the British public from the military has also been used to advance the argument that Britain, in contrast to Germany, was a non-militaristic society.[4] But an examination of the national and provincial newspapers, as well as of more general interest magazines, demonstrates that discussions

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[1] Gwyn Harries-Jenkins, *The Army in Victorian Society* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 5-6; *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 4th ser., vol. 134 (1904), col. 522.
[2] Porter, *Absent-Minded Imperialists*, 284.
[3] Ibid., 287.
[4] Harries-Jenkins, *The Army in Victorian Society*, 4-8.

about military matters and reform efforts received extensive coverage, calling into question assertions that the public remained oblivious to those issues.

In pursing this inquiry, I have made the deliberate decision to focus specifically on matters pertaining to the British army. This is not to minimize the place of the Royal Navy in matters pertaining to imperial and national defense. The primacy of the navy in imperial and domestic defense was made abundantly clear in an 1867 *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* article entitled "Our Naval Defences: Where Are We Now?".[5] However, as suggested by a piece in the *London Society* just six years later, the public was equally aware of the pressures on the army and the need to implement consequential reforms in that branch of service:

> In these days of Woolwich Infants, Bismarcks, and Affghan [sic] Boundary Questions, we are compelled to take more than a passing interest in the efficiency of the British Army.[6]

Moreover, given that it was the army that bore the brunt of the fighting in the theatres discussed in the previous chapters, it is logical to focus on that branch of the service to tease out links between the military and imperial affairs.

In fact, in the four decades after the Crimean War, army reforms received widespread coverage in the national and provincial presses. The British Library has digitized more than fifty newspapers in print during those years, and a cursory review of that collection demonstrates that they carried almost four thousand articles containing the narrow phrase "army reform." Broken down by decade, the majority, some 2034 articles,

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[5] "Our Naval Defences: Where Are We?" *Blackwood's Magazine* 101 (1867): 1-16.
[6] "Talk of the Town," *London Society: an Illustrated Magazine of Light Amusing Literature for Hours of Relaxation* 23 (1873), 384. The name "Woolwich Infants" was a household label given to a family of large caliber guns that was forged by the Woolwich Arsenal beginning in 1871, which revolutionized land and sea warfare. See: "Great Guns and Armour-Plating" *Chambers Journal* 53 (1876): 297-298, reprinted in *Eclectic Magazine of Foreign Literature, Science, and Art* 23 (1876): 117-118.

appeared between 1871 and 1880, years during which Secretary of State for War Edward Cardwell worked to reorganize the army.[7] In the *Times*, which has been digitized separately, hundreds of articles, letters to the editor, and editorials on army conditions and army reform likewise appeared in print between 1856 and 1899. Such articles addressed, among other things, the readiness of the army, army organization, military spending, and marksmanship. Not limiting their attention to reform issues, the national and provincial press also consistently covered more mundane military matters such as promotions, military reviews, and technological advances with military importance, and the results of inter-regimental shooting competitions, including those held annually on the outskirts of London in conjunction with the National Rifle Association.[8] This coverage was provided not only by syndicated columns from the *London Gazette*, the official journal of the government, but by locally driven pieces as well. The latter quite naturally paid particularly close attention to developments of significance in the papers' distribution areas, but they also included matters that transcended a narrow geographical focus.[9]

Another examination of the articles catalogued through the *Periodicals Archive Online* produced similar results, as hundreds of articles concerning contemporary army matters appeared in magazines and journals between 1856 and 1899. The overwhelming

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[7] For instance, see "Army Reform," *Hampshire Telegraph*, 13 January 1854, 4; "Army Reform," *Yorkshire Herald*, 17 February 1855, 7; "Military Spending," *London Times*, 5 September 1881, 9; "Inefficient Marksmanship," *Bristol Mercury*, 3 April 1882, 6; "Condition of the Army," *Aberdeen Journal*, 9 April 1887, 8; "Organizing the Army," *Aberdeen Journal*, 27 August 1895, 4.

[8] From 1860 to 1888, those competitions were held at Wimbledon; afterwards they were held at Bisley Commons.

[9] For instance, see "From the *London Gazette*," (London) *Times*, 19 September 1855, 6; "The Army," *Scotsman*, 22 September 1855, 4;"Royal Review," *Aberdeen Journal*, 26 August 1886, 5; "Camerons," *Aberdeen Journal*, 4 May 1898, 5; "Military News," *Hampshire Telegraph*, 17 August 1895, 7; "Latest News," *Liverpool Mercury*, 8 August 1895, 9; "Military March Through Yorkshire," *Yorkshire Herald*, 26 August 1899, 10; "Army and Navy News," *Glasgow Herald*, 7 October 1899, 7; "Gordons in the Highlands," *Newcastle Courant*, 23 September 1899, 4.

majority of these articles appeared in the *Spectator*. Not surprisingly, other publications of note included those with an editorial focus on military issues such as the *Journal of the Royal United Services Institution*, but more general interest publications, such as the *Society of Arts Magazine*, *Macmillan's Magazine*, and *Contemporary Review*, also carried relevant material. Beyond the purview of that select index of periodicals, other periodicals of general and popular interest—including *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country*, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, and *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*—devoted space to a wide range of military and defense matters.[10] If, therefore, the public was indeed disinterested in the military, it was not due to a lack of coverage in the leading newspapers and magazines of the day. Of course, press attention to military matters and the empire, does not necessarily signify that the public was actively invested in those discussions. But the volume of coverage indicates that the British public either chose deliberately to ignore the material and refrained from engaging it on an individual level, or that the public was not as ignorant about the goings on in the military as Porter, and others have maintained. Indeed it is quite probable that the press was devoting substantial coverage to such matters in response to popular demand.

Given the expansive nature of civil-military relations in the late nineteenth century, the present chapter focuses on a specific question: the extent to which imperial concerns entered into the public discussion on the need to reform the regimental system of the British Army. The next chapter will explore how the military, as a symbol of the

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[10] Some examples include: "Two Reviews," *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* 27 (1860): 438-48; "English Militia," *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country* 56 (July, 1857): 118-26; "Relative Cost of the French and British Armies," *Cornhill* 7 (1863): 310-25; "Military Policy of E. Cardwell," *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country* 2 (November, 1870): 537-53; W. R. Greg, "Popular versus Professional Army," *Contemporary Review* 16 (1871), 351-73; Major R. R. Noel, "National Defence," *Contemporary Review* 16 (1871): 212-24; Two Officers of Her Majesty's Army, "Recruiting and the Militia," *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country* 91 (April, 1875): 450-66.

British Empire more generally, became manifest in Anglo-Scottish popular culture. Aside from merely assessing the presence of imperial issues within British society, attention to the relative success of the Cardwell-Childers reforms serves as a window on distinct inflections of Britishness, as English and Scottish subjects expressed overlapping—if differing—conceptions of their roles as members of the wider empire.

In the early twentieth century, historians such as John Morley, J.W. Fortescue, E. L. Woodward, R. C. K. Ensor, G. M. Trevelyan, and David Thomson, argued that Britons became aware of the need to reform their military after studying Continental wars, including the crushing defeat of France by Prussia in 1871.[11] More recently, Thomas F. Gallagher, Brian Bond, and David French have placed greater emphasis on two other factors that drove home the need for army reform, i.e., Britain's first-hand imperial experiences and the emerging inadequacies and limitations of the regimental system that became evident in the 1850s and 1860s.[12] While the present author is sympathetic to that latter view, the specific prompts leading government officials to enact reform is a secondary concern here. Instead, I seek to use an examination of the popular magazines and news presses from 1870-1899 to demonstrate that the British public was cognizant of both the full range of imperial, continental, and political concerns that called into question the effectiveness and efficiency of the country's imperial defenses and of the consequent need to enact corrective reforms.

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[11] Brian Bond, "Prelude to the Cardwell Reforms, 1856-68" *Royal United Service Institution Journal* 106 (1961): 229; Thomas F. Gallagher, "British Military Thinking and the Coming of the Franco-Prussian War," *Military Affairs* 39 (1975), 19.

[12] Bond, "Prelude to the Cardwell Reforms," 229-36; David French, *Military Identities: The Regimental System, the British Army, and the British People, c. 1870-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 11-12; Gallagher, "British Military Thinking," 19-22.

THE BRITISH PUBLIC AND ARMY REFORM, 1856-1871

Prior to Cardwell's reorganization of the military in 1871, the Crown forces consisted of four major bodies: the Regular Army, the Militia, the Yeomanry, and the Volunteer Forces, all of which were filled with volunteers. To be sure, press gangs at various times resorted to compulsory practices and contrivances to "encourage" individuals to take the king's shilling; those instances notwithstanding, as a matter of tradition—and after 1852 as codified law—the British military was firmly grounded on the principle that military service should be voluntary.[13] In 1866-67 the Regular Army stood at roughly185,000 men divided into 31 regiments of Guards and Line Cavalry, 113 regiments of Foot Guards and Line Infantry, and 2 Corps regiments of Royal Artillery and Royal Engineers. Within their respective branches, Guards and Line regiments were then arranged according to a hierarchical order of prestige based on longevity of service and subdivided into battalions. For the infantry, the King's Rifle Corps and Rifle Brigade contained four battalions. The Foot Guards Regiments and the first twenty-five Line Regiments were comprised of two battalions, and the remaining Regiments embodied only one. Enlistment in the Regular Army obligated a man to 10 years of service, but enlistees had the option of serving a further eleven years and receiving a pension. Regular Army regiments could be posted overseas at any time. In keeping with the longstanding practice, a soldier could not be transferred to a different regiment without his consent. Consequently, there was very little cross-over of non-commissioned and commissioned officers between regiments, and when it came to handing out promotions,

[13] Early attempts to introduce universal conscription in 1707 and 1709 only modified the older practices of targeting those "who were able-bodied without legal calling, employment or visible means of support" and "who were least able to argue about it." Corelli Barnett, *Britain and Her Army* (New York: William Morrow, 1970), 141, 294-95; Laws, Statutes, etc., *The Enlistment Act, 1852*, 15 & 16 Vict., c. 50.

non-commissioned and commissioned officers were almost always promoted up through the ranks of the regiment to which they were originally assigned. Taking into account that a great many commissions were purchased and not earned meritoriously, the quality of the officers from one regiment to the next could be uneven. Thus, in addition to the challenge of filling out the ranks of the army with willing volunteers, the regimental system itself was rife with weaknesses.[14]

The regiments of the Militia, Yeomanry, and Volunteer Forces supplemented the Regular Army. The Militia served primarily as a home defense unit, and as such it could not be compelled to serve overseas. Between 1752 and the mid-1800s, it experienced a number of transformations in terms of recruitment and length of service, such that in 1866-67, the Militia had a strength of some 115,000, organized into 125 infantry battalions and 31 artillery units, the latter of which were relegated to coastal defense.[15] Recruitment was handled strictly on a county basis through the use of paid bounties, although the government reserved the right to use compulsion in the event of a national emergency. Serving enlistments of five years, Militia members underwent several months of initial training, after which their regiments were required to report annually for a few weeks of refresher training. Organizationally distinct from the Militia, but

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[14] David French, *Military Identities*, 10. Prior to 1783, army regiments were created through contracts between the monarch and the commanding colonel. The colonel received pay and allowances for the entire regiment from the regimental agent, and then took sole responsibility for recruiting and filling the ranks of the regiment, allocating pay and provisions to the enlistments under his command. Lt.-Gen. W. H. Goodenough and Lt.-Col. J. C. Dalton, *The Army Book of the British Empire: a Record of the Development and Present Condition of the Military Forces and their Duties in Peace and War* (London: HMSO, 1893), 15-16, 125-26; Charles M. Clode, *The Military Forces of Great Britain; their Administration and Organization*, volume 1 (London: John Albemarle, 1869), 579.

[15] Goodenough and Dalton, *The Army Book of the British Empire*, 17-19.

operating under essentially the same principles, the Yeomanry in 1866-67 provided a reserve cavalry force of 49 corps, numbering about 14,000 men.[16]

Last in terms of prestige came the Volunteer Forces, which had fallen into abeyance after the conclusion of the Peninsular War in 1814. The government resurrected the Volunteers in 1859 amid mounting military and public fears of an impending invasion by Napoleon III's Second Empire.[17] Providing a secondary level of home defense, the Volunteers in 1866-67 numbered roughly 140,000 riflemen, 32,000 gunners, 4,800 engineers, and 1,200 light cavalry and mounted rifles. Like the Militia, the Volunteers were recruited on a county or local basis, a feature that had organizational implications: the recruits drawn from the country's more populated urban centers formed 86 fully manned "consolidated" battalions, while Volunteer leaders placed those from the more thinly populated rural areas into 134 "administrative" battalions. Targeting married individuals who could not afford to leave their places of employment for even the relatively short time required by the Militia, the Volunteer force required evening training sessions and a couple of weeks of training each year.[18] By the 1870s, the Volunteers numbered some 200,000, which included a sizeable working-class component. This feature, Cunningham rightfully insisted, could not be ignored and required the older preconceptions about Victorian society and the patriotism of the working-class to be revisited. The existence of the Volunteer Force, in such substantial numbers, did not go

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[16] Clode, *Military Forces of Great Britain*, 1: 583.
[17] Capt. Cecil Sebag-Montefiore, *A History of the Volunteer Forces from the Earliest Times to 1860* (London: Archibald Constable, 1908), 355-70; Hugh Cunningham, *The Volunteer Force: a Social and Political History, 1859-1908* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1975), 5-15.
[18] French, *Military Identities*, 11; Clode, *Military Forces of Great Britain*, 1: 583. Cunningham, *The Volunteer Force*, 2-3, 18-50.

unnoticed by newspapers such as the *Illustrated London News*, which insisted that its growth was a testament to the public's awareness and dedication to national defense.[19]

This then was the organizational structure of the British Army at the onset of a renewed age of imperialist ambition during the mid- to late-nineteenth century. The well-recognized and touted strength of the system was that the long terms of service of the Regular Army combined with the solidarity and insularity of the regiments to create a highly experienced military with a deep-rooted sense of *esprit de corps*. Military commanders regarded these elements as crucial components of any effective military force.[20]

Throughout the 1850s and 1860s, however, a number of weaknesses and inadequacies of the regimental system became apparent and raised concerns in relation to the actions of Continental powers. The military's poor performance in the Crimean War and slow response to the Sepoy Rebellion, and the country's inability to engage the issue of German unification exacerbated existing concerns about Britain's readiness to respond overseas, including especially the need for an effective reserve system that could supplement the Regular Army when it went abroad.[21] The disastrous charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava dramatically demonstrated that the practice of purchasing commissions rather than promotion on the basis of merit could have fateful consequences on the battlefield.[22]

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[19] Susan Walton, *Imagining Soldiers and Fathers in the Mid-Victorian Era: Charlotte Yonge's Model of Manliness* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2010), 47.
[20] French, *Military Identities*, 1-2, 10.
[21] Sir Llewellyn Woodward, *The Age of Reform: 1815-1870*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1938), 291-92; Olive Anderson, *The Liberal State of War: English Politics and During the Crimean War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1967), 51-58, 67-68, 115; French, *Military Identities*, 12.
[22] Gallagher, "British Military Thinking," 19.

While the discussion regarding national defense and the need for military reform had begun as early as 1852 and had occurred primarily within military circles, numerous articles and reviews in popular publications enabled interested general readers to remain abreast of those discussions.[23] In 1857 the *Literary Gazette* reviewed General Henry Wyndham's recently published pamphlet "The Army and the Militia: a Letter" that maintained there was a need to abolish purchase and award commissions based on merit.[24] That same year in July, *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country* thought it prudent to provide its readers with a "brief historical sketch of the problems plaguing the militia system."[25] As a "nursery for army," the Militia had been woefully ill prepared to lend its support to the forces fighting in the Crimea when called upon. While the Continent's reliance on conscription had no place in Britain, the author believed that the Swiss model of drilling the Militia in the towns and villages, instead of in regional

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[23] A sampling of the pre-Crimean War military reform literature includes: James Fergusson, *The Peril of Portsmouth* (London: J. Murray, 1852); Sir Charles Napier, *A Letter on the Defence of England by Corps of Volunteers and Militia* (London: Edward Moxon, 1852); Capt. John Kinloch, *Proposal for the Defence of the Country by Means of a Volunteer Force in Place of a Regular or Local Militia* (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1852); Baron Paul Maurice, *On National Defence of England* (London: Parker, Furnivall, and Parker, 1852); Gore Montague, *National Defences* (London: Parker, 1852); Col. R. E. Jebb, *Flying Shot at Fergusson and His "Peril of Portsmouth"* (London: Wm. Clowes, 1853); Col. W. R. Mansfield, *On the Militia Force* (London: James Ridgeway, 1854; Capt. William Haggard, *The Militia Its Importance as a Constitutional Force* (London: Longman, 1857); Maj. Gen. Sir Charles "Redan" Windham, *The Army and the Militia: a letter* (London: J. Murray, 1857); Anonymous, *Defects of the Militia Service, and a Remedy* (Aberdeen: D. Chalmers, 1859); Anonymous, *The Militia: the Proper Field Force for the Defence of the Kingdom against Invasion* (London: Boone, 1859); Anonymous, *On the Necessity of General Arming in England* (London: Boone, 1859); Capt. E. Finch-Hatton, *The Militia and the Recruiting Service* (London: Bosworth, 1859); Capt. Chetham Strode, *Plan for Improving the Organization of the Militia* (London: 1859); Lt. Col. G. G. Alexander, *The Command of the Channel and the Safety of Our Shores* (London: Bradbury, 1860); R. Dudley Baxter, *The Volunteer Movement: its Progress and Wants* (Cambridge: Macmillan, 1860); Sir Duncan MacDougall, *Remarks on National Defence and on Volunteer Corps* (London: Wm. Clowes, 1860); David Urquhart, *The Invasion of England* (London: Free Press Office, 1860); Capt. Cowper Coles, *Our National Defences* (London: Mitchell's Military Library, 1861);W. A. Brooks, *The Defence of Portsmouth* (London: 1863).

[24] "Miscellaneous Pamphlets," *Literary Gazette and Weekly Journal of Literature, Society, and Fine Arts*, 31 January 1857, 10.

[25] "The Militia," *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country* 56 (July 1857): 119-22, 125-26.

depots, would likewise engender greater military spirit among the British populace, and "secure a sufficient force to defend our shores."[26]

That Britain's performance in the Crimean War illuminated the need to reform was also not lost upon the conscientious press and general public. During the war, the connection had been made in two February 1855 editorials in the Conservative *Aberdeen Journal*, which boasted of the advancements already being undertaken by Lord Panmure, and opined that "no man living had done more to reform the British army than [Lord Panmure] the present war minister."[27] Proof of this claim included the improvements to the transport services and commissariat services, the appointment of a chief of the staff to oversee the efficiency of the service, the call for an official inquiry into the state of the army in the Crimea, and of the recent discussion in parliament about shortening the terms of service. That same month, however, "A Retired Officer" wrote to the *Daily News* maintaining that, while the organization of the British Army was superior to that of the French, the forces were undermined by the practice of purchase. It "saps the very vitals of the service, stagnates its blood, paralyzes its limbs, degenerates and degrades its mind, and fills it with corruption."[28] Less than a month later, "A Foreign Observer," also writing to the *Daily News*, strongly disputed the soundness of the organization of the British Army:

> I can of course only smile when it is imagined that great improvements in this branch can be made by Palmerston, Panmure, and others. All these do not see where the fault lies. It is in the constitution, in the infatuation of your own perfection, in the slavery to fashion, in the want of nerve and intelligence in the

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[26] Ibid.,

[27] *Aberdeen Journal*, 21 February 1855, 8; 23 February 1855, 8. Fox Maule-Ramsay, the second Baron Panmure and eleventh earl of Dalhousie, served as Secretary of State for War Minister from 1846-52, and then again from 1855-58. *DNB*, 13:85.

[28] *Daily News* (London), 23 February 1855, 2.

> aristocracy, and in the general disorganization of the higher authorities, in all that relates to the army, and in the army itself.[29]

Moreover the writer firmly doubted that any significant military reform could be enacted while the government was in the hands of Palmerston and Panmure. The "Observer" blamed the Duke of Wellington for neglecting to reform the system and keeping the army as an "aristocratic institution for younger sons of nobility," which he then did not properly train. The aristocracy, he argued, had proven "itself inadequate in the army, imbecile in parliament, infatuated in ordinary life, and it will now show itself incapable to save the country from loss of dishonor."[30]

Having been aroused by events in the Crimean War, the press continued to wade into the issue of military reform. Writing to the *Daily News*, on 12 March 1857, one T. M. W. commended the government's taking up the matter of low pay for enlisted men, but he deplored its inattentiveness to the "niggardly" pay for officers that had remained unchanged since the Restoration. This oversight, he maintained, compounded the worrisome state of the officer corps, which did not know whether they would have a pension or advancement. If remedied, however, the reforms would "increase the popularity of the military with the working classes."[31] Marveling that the "random manner in which the British army has hitherto been officered," had "not become a reproach instead of one of the glories of the country," the editors of the *Scotsman* argued that there was some value in striking a balance between those who saw reform as offensive and those who welcomed it. To that end, they agreed with the position advanced by Lord Stanley that the practice of purchase should remain, but that some

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[29] *Daily News* (London), 5 March 1855, 6. This "Foreign Observer" was an officer who had recently been involved implementing military reforms in his own country.
[30] Ibid.
[31] *Daily News* (London), 12 March 1857, 3.

commissions should be available for merit. In this fashion the officer corps would be protected from being wholly overwhelmed by bookworms, and those who lacked the vigor for military service.[32] Musing on the decision by the Duke of Cambridge, the commander in chief, to turn the senior department at Woolwich into a staff college in the winter of 1858, and anticipating future advantageous reforms, the editors of the *Bristol Mercury* specifically noted that the grumbling and debate over army reform likely would have continued for decades had the Crimean War not occurred. That war had made it clear that going forward the military was to be much more than merely a force to silence the annual threats to domestic tranquility, but would be "the right arm of national security."[33]

In the decade following the Crimean War, these collective concerns led to a number of uncoordinated and ultimately ineffective attempts at reforming the army. In 1857, a parliamentary investigation recommended abolishing purchase and instituting meritorious promotions, but Parliament took no deliberate action at the time.[34] Incentive for military reform was reignited after Prussia's shockingly efficient victory over Austria in 1866. Weighing in on issues surrounding military recruitment that November, the *Pall Mall Gazette* saw the debate over conscription as an example of the "political impotence" which had plagued Britain. It argued the country risked showing signs of "conscious weakness and cowardice" by preferring to make minute policy changes rather than tackling the broader questions.[35] While not fully endorsing conscription, the *Gazette* maintained that it would do much to raise the "moral tone not only of the army but of the

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[32] *Scotsman* (Edinburgh), 5 August 1857, 2.
[33] *Bristol Mercury*, 2 January 1858, 2;
[34] House of Commons, "Report of Select Committee on Purchase," *Sessional Papers*, 1857, XVIII, 1-316; Thomas Gallagher, "British Military Thinking and the Coming of the Franco-Prussian War," 19.
[35] "English Patriotism," *Pall Mall Gazette*, 21 November 1866, 2.

nation at large."[36] In light of the Continental developments, numerous military officers, such as Lt. Colonel T. St. Leger Alcock, argued that there was a need for the British Militia and Regular Army to account for the power of this new Continental force and to reform the nation's national defenses accordingly.[37] *Fraser's Magazine* likewise revisited the problems plaguing the British military in a five-part series that ran between December 1866 and August 1867.[38] In so doing, the anonymous author honed in on the short supply of recruits, which in his opinion was due to "the scandalous system of recruiting and the falling behind of the soldiers' condition in comparison with that of his fellows of the same rank of life outside the army." Recruitment would continue to be a problem, he insisted "till we make the soldier's position so valuable that without cheating or cajoling, men of the right stamp will voluntarily apply to be enlisted faster than vacancies occur." The solution was to raise the soldier's status, improve their physical condition, and give them "more mental and moral freedom, and greater opportunities for distinction."[39]

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[36] Ibid, 1. As the century progressed, and recruitment concerns persisted, conscription would increasingly become a point of interest and controversy.

[37] Lt. Col. T. St. Leger Alcock, *The Militia, the Nucleous of our Defensive Force* (London: W. Mitchell, 1867), 3, 25. See also Maj. Millar Bannatyne, *Our Military Forces and Reserves* (London: W. Mitchell, 1867); Gen. C. J. B. Riddell, *Army and Militia Organizations* (London: Saunders, 1867); and Capt. Chetham Strode, *The Line and the Militia* (London: Ridgeway, 1869).

[38] "Military Reform, I," *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country* 74 (December 1866): 681-97; "Military Reform, II," *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country* 75 (March 1867): 285-300; "Military Reform, III," *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country* 75 (April 1867): 423-34; "Military Reform, IV," *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country* 75 (June 1867): 743-55; "Military Reform, V," *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country* 76 (August 1867): 204-15.

[39] "Military Reform, V," *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country* 76 (1867): 204. Other such discussions appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine*, the *London Review*, the *London Society*, *Macmillan's Magazine*, and the *Saturday Review of Politics*. For example, see: "The Indian Army," *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country* 56 (1857): 164-74; *London Review and Weekly Journal of Politics, Literature, and Art* 1 (1860): 5, 54, 115, 126-27; "The Army, I" *Blackwood's Magazine* 101 (1867), 133-47; "The Army, II," *Blackwood's Magazine* 101 (1867, 261-79; "The Army, III" *Blackwood's Magazine* 101 (1867), 440-60; "Army Reserves," *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art* 23 (1867), 163-64; Capt. Noake, "Best Mode of Recruiting for the Army" *Royal United Service Institute Journal*, 11 (April, 1867): 27-39; "On the Limitation of Enlistment and Army Reserves," *Blackwood's Magazine*106 (1869): 279-289; "Our National Insurance" *Macmillan's Magazine* 20(1869), 170-76.

In that environment Parliament passed the Army Reserve Act of 1867, which established a two-tiered reserve system that was meant to establish a total force of 80,000.[40] The initiative, however, utterly failed to produce the forecasted number of enlistments, largely because the meager enlistment bounties simply could not compete with civilian wage rates and were thus insufficient to offset the unpopularity of foreign deployment.[41] This failure did not go unnoticed by the public. Bemoaning the fractious and unprofessional nature of the British Army in comparison to the cohesion of the Royal Navy, "Centurion" reasoned in a letter to the *Scotsman* in November 1869 that because the various branches of the service were not trained together, they lacked uniformity. There were also "too many club-room generals who are a dead loss," and the "true-hearted duty officer" did not receive the encouragement or pay due to him. At the same time, the author insisted that despite being awash in a mass of confusion, as it had been during the Crimean War, the country lacked "a military chaos, out of which a Carnot or Stein would speedily evolve an efficient system of national defence."[42]

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[40] A First Class of Reserves, numbering 50,000, was to be drawn from new recruits and veterans filling out the last part of their first term of service in the Regular Army. Receiving a bounty of £12 over five years, Class I reservists were liable for overseas service in the event of war. The Second Class of Reserves, numbering 30,000, drawn from army pensioners and those veterans who were willing to commute the last years of their second term of service, would be strictly relegated to home service. *Militia Reserve Act, 1867*, 30 & 31 Vict., c. 111; Bond, "Prelude to Cardwell Reforms," 235-36.

[41] Gallagher, "British Military Thinking," 19. In 1869 the total Reserve Force stood at 17,948 men, and the year after, it was 20,467. Instead of drawing in new recruits, the vast majority of the reservists, 87% in 1869 and 72% in 1870, were army pensioners who had joined the Class II Reserves. In 1869 only 1,006 recruits had joined the Class I Reserves; a year later its strength stood at 1,939. If one excludes the pensioner enlistments and the holdover enlistments that had been raised under the Reserve Act of 1859, the returns for the Class II Reserves fared even worse. In 1869 the force had raised 1,027; a year later less than 130 had been added. *General Annual Return of the British Army for the year 1873, with Abstracts for the Years 1861 to 1873 inclusive*. C. 1104 (1874), 76.

[42] "Army Navy Compared," *Scotsman*, 11 November 1869, 5.

IMPERIAL WARS AND MILITARY REFORM

Thus, despite their efforts, by the end of the 1860s advocates of reform, who—for more than a decade—had raised alarms about its performance in the Crimean War and who feared the potential threats of imperial France and, increasingly, the emerging Prussian-dominated German state, remained concerned about the condition of the British Army. Numerous factors continued to inhibit the army from tapping into support from middle-class Britons. Among the most salient were the lengthy terms of service required and the real prospect of overseas deployments, but a further issue discussed widely was a weakening connection between the civilian population and the military. The result was that, as C. E. Trevelyan colorfully claimed in 1871, the Regular Army was drawn from "the froth and the dregs" of British society. The "froth" consisted of the aristocratic officer corps, while the "dregs" from the lowest rungs of society filled out the rank and file.[43] The deplorable performance of volunteer forces at the onset of the American Civil War compared to that of the Prussian conscripts in the initial phases of the German Wars of Unification caused still more questioning of the volunteer-based British regimental system. Administratively, the nation's finances also were severely strained by the costs associated with sustaining a pension program for retired noncommissioned and commissioned officers who had served for 21 years. Next to the national debt, the Army and Ordnance expenditures were the largest part of the budget between 1864 and 1869,

[43]*Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 3rd ser., vol. 192 (1868), cols. 531-32. Sir Edward Robert Sullivan subsequently used this illustrative phrase as the title for his work on the abolition of the purchase system and recruiting practices in the German and British armies. See Sir Edward Robert Sullivan, *The Froth and the Dregs* (London: Edward Channing, 1871).

exceeding Royal Navy expenditures by £4 million. The bulk of these expenditures went to service the pension program.[44]

Assuming control of the War Office in 1868, Edward Cardwell threw himself into addressing these concerns by pushing through a series of acts and Royal Warrants toward that end.[45] The Army Enlistment Act of 1870 reduced terms of service from twenty years to twelve, six years in the Regular Army and six years in a newly organized reserve.[46] In addition to creating a much needed veteran reserve, Cardwell also believed that the measure would prove an incentive to a "new class of recruit…entirely different from that which was now entering the army largely with a view to an eventual pension."[47] Consequently, the act sought to decrease the financial strain on the annual budget incurred by the pension payments. Further, with the passage of the Regulation of the Forces Act of 1871, Cardwell sought to improve the image of the army by allowing soldiers of bad character to be discharged.[48] That same year, after much controversy, Cardwell eliminated the coveted privilege of purchase with a Royal Warrant.[49]

The culmination of Cardwell's efforts, however, was inspired by organizational elements from the Prussian Army. The broad reorganization further facilitated short

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[44] French, *Military Identities*, 12-13.
[45] Cardwell was aided in this task by a team of progressive officers, whose names would become inseparable from Victoria's Little Wars of the nineteenth century. These officers included Colonel (later Field Marshal Viscount) Garnet Wolseley, Captain (later Earl Cromer) Evelyn Baring, Captain (later Sir Edward Bulwer, Captain (later General Sir) Henry Brackenbury, Captain (later Major General Sir) George Colley, Captain (later Major General Sir) John Frederick Maurice. Some of these had served together with Wolseley as a part of the Red River Expedition in 1870. Reunited by Wolseley in 1873, the group saw action in West Africa against the Ashanti. Remaining associated thereafter, these officers comprised the core of the so called "Ashanti" or "Wolseley Ring" of officers. Owen Wheeler, *The War Office Past and Present* (London: Methuen, 1914), 220-21; Field Marshall Viscount Garnet Wolseley, *The Story of a Soldier's Life*, vol. 2 (Westminster: Archibald Constable, 1903), 255-56.
[46] *Army Enlistment Act, 1870*, 33 & 34 Vict., c. 67.
[47] Wheeler, *The War Office*, 215-16.
[48] *Regulation of the Forces Act, 1871*, 34 & 35 Vict., c. 86.
[49] Arvel B. Erickson, "Abolition of Purchase in the British Army," *Military Affairs* 23 (Summer, 1959), 65-76.

service recruitments and brought the Regular Army, Reserve, Militia and Volunteer Forces under the Crown.[50] The result was the Military Forces Localization Act of 1872, which was augmented by General Order 32 of the War Office the following year.[51] According to the scheme, there were to be 66 recruiting districts, largely drawn along county lines. Within each district, a pair of Regular Army battalions was to be linked together with two Militia battalions and the Volunteer Forces therein as an administrative brigade and serviced by a "Brigade depot."[52] The Brigade depot was to then serve as the recruiting center for the district and also function as a barracks for the Regular Army battalions and the Militia when the latter reported for training. One intention for linking battalions was to encourage inter-battalion camaraderie; as such, the plan also allowed officers and men of linked battalions to be interchanged with no cost to the individual. At the same time, however, battalions were to retain their individual number and identity.[53]

The Cardwell Reforms proved to be only the first in a series of ongoing reform efforts. The imperial experiences of the 1870s in western and southern Africa, as well as in Afghanistan, highlighted the continuing problem of lack of preparedness in Army

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[50] Brian Bond, "Edward Cardwell's Army Reforms, 1868-74" *Army Quarterly and Defence Journal* 84 (1962), 114-15. Formerly, the Militia and Volunteer Forces were set apart from the Regular Army and controlled by county Lords Lieutenant.

[51] *Military Forces Localization Act, 1872*, 35 & 36 Vict., c. 68; *Reports and Other Documents Relating to Army Organizations*, C. 2792 (1881), 63-76.

[52] The Guard Regiments, the 60th (King's Rifle Corps) Regiment, and the Rifle Brigade were largely left untouched by the reorganization. The Guards would retain their own depot, while the 60th and the Rifle Brigade were to share a consolidated depot at Winchester. *Reports and Other Documents Relating to Army Organizations*, C. 2792 (1881), 63.

[53] Ibid., 63-64; The idea of linking regiments and battalions to specific locales was not a new concept, as it can be traced back to 1782, when the vast majority of regiments were designated with county names as a means of prompting enlistments during the American Revolutionary War. However, those linkages were superficial and had only a nominal meaning. The regiment was not assigned to a permanent barracks in the county for which they were named, and no attempt was made to localize the battalion's recruiting efforts. Eric Lummis, "English County Regiments," *Journal for the Society of Army Historical Research* 74 (1995): 222-26.

battalions, which were losing their battle-hardened veterans due to the expiration of their terms of service and becoming increasingly comprised of young and unseasoned short-service recruits.[54] Coordinating the ties between Regular Army and Militia regiments also proved problematic, as evidenced in 1879 when, during the Zulu War, the vacancies that were created in British barracks by the departure of Regular troops were not filled by Militia regiments as Cardwell had envisioned.

The practical problems associated with incompletely fusing the paired battalions together lingered until Secretary of State for War Hugh Childers completed the integration process in 1881.[55] As a disciple of Cardwell, Childers, however, first had to reject the conclusions of a parliamentary commission that had recommended undoing the scheme entirely.[56] Instead, he proposed reforms which he thought would improve recruitment, professionalism and coordination. He called for the age of enlistment to be raised from 18 to 19, with the expectation that it would subsequently be raised to 20. Although he kept the terms of service at twelve years, he addressed the question of professionalism by increasing the time spent in the Regulars from six to seven years, and reducing the Reserve commitment to five years. All men liable for service in India would be required to serve eight years, after which they would serve four years in the Reserves. Childers formalized the connections between the Regular Army, Militia, and Volunteer

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[54] The specific conflicts in these areas were the Ashanti War (1874), the Zulu War (1879), the Second Afghan War (1879-)

[55] Bond, "Edward Cardwell's Army Reforms," 116; *London Gazette*, 1 July 1881, 3300-3301.

[56] The parliamentary commission was created in June 1879 under the leadership of Lord Richard Airey, who had recently served as adjutant-general of the forces (1870-1876). Returning with its findings on 8 March 1880, the commission chose to view the army's performances narrowly as a confirmation of the scheme's inherent weakness. Thus, instead of developing solutions to improve the Cardwellian system, the commission recommended that the scheme be undone entirely. Specifically, it recommended extending enlistments to eight years, and abolishing the linked battalions, and amalgamated brigade depots. See W. S. Hamer, *The British Army Civil Military Relations, 1885-1905* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 78-80. See *Report of a Committee on Army Re-organization*, C. 2791 (1880), 7-45.

regiments by transforming those bodies into regiments comprised of four battalions, with two "line" battalions and two "militia" battalions. The numerical system of organizing regiments was to be abolished and thereafter the regiments were referred to either by the county affiliation or other regimental moniker of the senior battalion. The primary exemption was that four line battalions of the King's Rifle Corps would remain intact.[57] For example, under the Cardwell reforms the 29th (Worchester) Regiment of Foot had been linked to the 38th (Herefordshire) Regiment of Foot. Under the Childers reforms, which were finalized on 1 July 1881 with the issuance of General Order 70, the regiments were reconstituted as the 1 and 2 Battalions of the North Staffordshire Regiment. At the same time, regimental ornamentations were redesigned to reflect the union of the two regiments and their respective traditions. In this regard, special considerations were extended to some of the Scottish regiments; namely, the number of kilted regiments was increased from five to nine.[58]

Still later, Wolseley, as adjutant-general of the forces (1885-1890), was especially outspoken on the need to modernize equipment and arms, and in 1890, the Hartington Commission recommended that the position of commander-in-chief of the forces be replaced with a general staff which would be tasked with planning military operations and preparing the army for war.[59] These efforts were effectively blocked by the the Duke of Cambridge, whose outlook toward the military had a staunchly pre-industrial bias.[60]

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[57] *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 3rd ser., vol. 259, (1881), cols., 199-202, 204.
[58]Hugh Edmund E. Everard, *History of Thos. Farrington's Regiment Subsequently Known as the 29th Regiment of Foot* (Worchester: Worchester Press, 1891), 514, 525-26; "Infantry Regiments of the Line," *London Gazette*, 1 July 1881, 3300-3301; *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 3rd ser., vol. 259, (1881), cols., 204-5.
[59]Barnett, *Britain and Her Army*, 334-36.
[60] Because of the Duke's familial relationship to Queen Victoria, it proved practically impossible to replace him with a more reform minded officer or to work around his ideological outlook toward the military. Although he was generally a forward-thinking officer, Wolseley likewise opposed the conclusions of the

With Britain's experiences in the Second Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) still fresh, two secretaries of state for war, St. John Brodrick and H.O. Arnold-Forster, tried unsuccessfully to overhaul the command and organizational structure. Ultimately, Lord Haldane succeeded in carrying forward a reform program in 1909, just five years before the Great War broke out, placing military matters at the forefront of governmental attention.[61]

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT IN MILITARY REFORM, 1871-1881

Although the fear of a French invasion all but disappeared with the demise of the Second French Empire, continental and imperial developments kept the question of army reorganization and imperial defense in the public eye. Indeed, as the *Aberdeen Journal* noted in 1881, the public had been engaged in the issue of army reorganization for over fifty years.[62] Ten years earlier, reacting to Cardwell's plans in the politically charged environment of the Franco-Prussian War, the *Bradford Observer*, asserted that:

> The existing army organization is hedged in and fortified by innumerable privileges, and abuses strong with the strength of antiquity. *But the events of the war have so aroused public opinion that the government had no alternative save*

Hartington Commission, because he desired the position and responsibilities of C-in-C of the Forces for himself, and thus did not move to enact them when he took over as C-in-C of the Forces in 1890.

[61] Ibid., 356-59, 362-67. A select bibliography on these efforts and issues includes, Lowell Sarte, "The Unionists and Army Reform, 1900-1903: the Abortive Proposals of St. John Brodrick," (Master's Thesis, University of South Carolina, 1966); Winston Churchill, *Mr. Brodrick's Army* (London: Arthur J. Humphries, 1903); John Gooch, "Adversarial Attitudes: Servicemen, Politicians, and Strategic Policy, 1899-1914," in *Government and the Armed Forces in Britain*, ed. Paul Smith (London: Humbledon Press, 1996), 53-74; Bryce Poe II, "British Army Reforms, 1902-1914," *Military Affairs* 31 (1967):131-38; Albert V. Tucker, "The Issue of Army Reform in the Unionist Government, 1903-05," *The Historical Journal* 9 (1966): 90-100; Tim Travers, "Hidden Structural Problems in the British Officer Corps, 1900-1918," *Journal of Contemporary History* 17 (1982): 522-44; T. H. E. Travers, "The Offensive and the Problem of Innovation in British Military Thought, 1870-1950," *Journal of Contemporary History* 13 (1975): 533-52; Denis Hayes, *Conscription Conflict: The Conflict of Ideas In the Struggle For and Against Military Conscription in Britain Between 1901 and 1939* (London: Garland, 1973); R. J. Q. Adams and Philip Poirier, *The Conscription Controversy in Great Britain, 1900-18* (Columbus: Ohio University Press, 1987); Timothy R. Lay, "Arming an Empire: Conscription and Militarism in Britain," (Master's Thesis: Middle Tennessee State University, 2004).

[62] *Aberdeen Journal*, 16 March 1881, 4.

> *to grapple with this difficult question.* And not even the most ardent enemy of bloated armaments will regret this, when he has mastered the leading features of the bold and comprehensive scheme of military reorganization which Mr. Cardwell unfolded to the House of Commons last night.[63]

The paper optimistically reported that forthcoming reforms would be more expansive than had been previously anticipated.[64] For the *Birmingham Daily Post* the key issue of the reform effort was not whether or how the Militia should be expanded. In its opinion, those issues were being duly addressed. Instead, a lingering and much overlooked concern was that the Militia needed to be effectively armed, supported, and officered:

> If the 120,000 men were called out to take the field, not a single battery would be ready to accompany them; nor could they reckon upon supply services of any kind, except in so far as assistance could be spared from the establishments provided for the Regular Forces…Consequently, to render our Militia effective, we should require at the least forty more batteries of field artillery, with other supports in proportion.
>
> The truth is that in the Militia we have literally not taken a single step beyond enrolling the men in regiments and putting rifles in their hands. We say nothing about the difficulty respecting officers, because we hope that may be found to disappear in proportion as the Militia becomes a real army.[65]

Four years later, however, the lack of progress remained troubling. The London correspondent for the *Bradford Observer* expressed its regret that the patronizing comments made by the Duke of Cambridge at a public dinner on behalf of army reform would lead to nothing upon his return to the Horse Guards:

> That this is so is the unanimous verdict of every one, civilian or military man, who has attempted to obtain the duke's help to lift the army question out of the rut into which it has fallen. The truth is that His Royal Highness, the commander in chief of the forces, loves red tape, pipe-clay and routine as only a German, who has never been scared by Moltke or Blumenthal can love them. He hates any change which will in the least disturb the peaceful system of seniority by which to govern and promote requires but the diligence of an ordinary clerk.[66]

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[63] *Bradford Observer*, 17 February 1871, 2. Emphasis added.
[64] Ibid., 6 February 1871, 3.
[65] *Birmingham Daily Post*, 27 January 1871, 6.
[66] *Bradford Observer*, 11 December 1875, 5.

That the army was in desperate need of reform and could ill afford to permit any disorganization was also not lost upon the *Bristol Mercury*:

> The state of Europe is at present full of dangers to the maintenance of peace, and it is impossible to deny that events may arise which may force us to consider the condition of our armaments. Next year, moreover, the first batch of soldiers enlisted for short service will be entitled to the discharge…and nearly 30,000 fresh recruits—or about double the number previously needed—will henceforth be required annually to maintain the forces at their present strength. If the War office has hitherto found it almost impossible to get more than 17,000 men yearly, it is obvious that the task of obtaining 30,000 is likely to prove insuperable.[67]

While the *Mercury* observed that the War Office had not neglected the needs of Her Majesty's forces, it insisted that more needed to be done to address "the economical [sic] and social advance of the forces that has taken place of late years in the condition of the working classes generally."[68] Speaking at a public gathering about the present standing of the army in Manchester on 10 January 1876, John Holms, a Liberal MP for Hackney and a leading advocate for reform, expounded on the "muddle and mess" concerning the realization of the process:

> As regards mere numbers, this scheme will involve an increase of one-fifth of our regular army and it will more than double our militia. Now, what prospect have we of obtaining this large additional number of men?...But let us grant that the men can be got. I will show that this scheme of mobilization is no more than a delusion and a sham. Three-fourths of these army corps are to be composed of militia, which are thrown about in the most grotesque manner, as if to make annual trainings in the army impossible, and to ensure the wildest confusion in case of invasion…Are we to understand that the War Department seriously intend that all these regiments of militia from the extreme corners of Scotland and Ireland are to travel to Dorking and back, 1000 miles each every year, for their annual training? If so, what a scandalous waste of time and money this must involve…Could you image a schoolboy concocting a scheme of mobilization more silly or more absurd?[69]

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[67] *Bristol Mercury*, 4 December 1875, 5.
[68] Ibid.
[69] *Bristol Mercury*, 15 January 1876, 3; *Manchester Times*, 15 January 1876,

Three years later, in February 1879, when the Duke of Cambridge reviewed the six regiments being deployed to fight in the Zulu War the occasion offered a poignant illustration of the army's continued ill-preparedness. According to the *Times*, men who had been moved from one regiment to another in order to fill out that regiment's ranks remained in their old uniforms. The effect was that many of the 91st Highlanders had not yet been issued their customary trews. Aware that the lack of uniformity did more than just create a less-than-smart appearance, the *Times* vocalized what many throughout the country likely thought about Britain's military readiness. It granted that a redistribution of troops to handle the Ashanti War in 1874 was perhaps to be expected and tolerable, coming as it did on the heels of the so-called "Short-Service Act" of 1870. Now, almost nine years after that legislation, it asserted that "we have a right to expect that a certain proportion of our troops should be maintained effective for active service, so when a sudden call is made we shall not be compelled to adopt the shifty expedient of begging draughts from every regiment in the United Kingdom in order to dispatch a half-dozen infantry regiments out of the country."[70]

MILITARY REFORM AND PUBLIC REACTION TO MAJUBA HILL AND THE ANGLO-BOER WAR (1880-1881)

We have already seen in chapter one that the Anglo-Boer War of 1880-81 affected the public's outlook toward Britain's colonial presence in the African sub-continent. In addition to raising questions about Britain's imperial policies, the war also amplified awareness of several lingering weaknesses in the army. The first of these was rash overconfidence. Following the defeats at Laing's Nek and Ingogo respectively, the *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post* editorialized that Colley had made a mistake similar to the

[70] *Times* (London), 19 February 1879, 10.

one the army had made against the Zulus. He was guilty of fatally "despising a foe who can keep him chained to one spot, and kill or disable half of his troops whenever he commences action."[71] The *Western Mail* arrived at a similar conclusion after surveying Colley's recent campaigns in the wake of Majuba Hill. In an editorial entitled, "What Our Military Disasters Teach," the writer mused that overconfidence alone did not account for recent failings. Britain's forces had been outnumbered and suffered from poor generalship, but the army was no stranger to such circumstances and had usually prevailed despite them. The deeper truth, the *Mail* insisted, was based on years of fighting against outgunned foes, and it made the argument in racialized terms: Colley's poor tactical decisions had been induced by "long years of easy victories over savages and Orientals." These had consequently led to a general "deprecation of the enemy" and an overconfidence in the army's ability to "undertake operations with insufficient numbers."[72] That being said, given the fact that the army was engaged with the "best marksmen in the world," the *Mail* expressed confidence in the British soldier, insisting:

> The conduct of our troops appears to have been all that could be desired, and provided they are only properly handled, we have little to fear for the future. But we cannot afford any more mistakes.[73]

Other newspapers were not so optimistic about the overall performance and management of the army. Even before Majuba Hill, where the accuracy of Boer marksmanship was put on full display, the author of the "What the World Says" column for the *Hull Packet* noted the sharp distinction between the British and Boer abilities and

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[71] *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post*, 16 February 1881, 4.
[72] *Western Mail* (Cardiff), 9 March 1881, 2.
[73] Ibid.

wondered why the army did not draw together its best sharpshooters to meet the Boers.[74] Continuing in his observations, he fully recognized that "an old military power was being taught a lesson by a despised and presumably inferior foe." Quoting from the testimonies of soldiers in the field in South Africa, he wondered that the British soldier had not deserted because of their inferior equipment:

> The muzzle-loaders are simply a disgrace to the government; it is sheer murder to send men into the field with such… a newspaper would keep out more wet than the [tents, waterproofs, and uniforms]…the top-boots are already done for; and the men receive no pay since they were called out.[75]

In the aftermath of Majuba Hill, such criticisms spread throughout the national and provincial press. In an editorial entitled "Lessons the Boers Taught Us," *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper* asserted that the blame did not reside with the individual soldier. Rather, it condemned the Duke of Cambridge and "those terrible barrack-square warriors with whom he is surrounded" for being "utterly destitute of the elementary requirements of warfare and even of the commonest of common sense."[76] Contrasting inept British training practices to those of the Boers and Germans, *Reynolds's* insisted that it was imperative that all British soldiers be effectively taught how to shoot, but held out little hope that any soldier's skill would improve so long as "royal dukes and brainless aristocrats [were] permitted to chalk out his course for him."[77]

The deplorable performance of the British solider in the field quite naturally drew the attention of military personnel. "A. N. S. M.," a self-described "old volunteer,"

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[74] At Majuba Hill, British soldiers fired thousands of rounds of ammunition, but Boer casualties amounted to one killed, five wounded, and two horses shot. Comparatively, the British casualties numbered over 280. Commander Romilly, Colley's second in command, was mortally wounded by a single shot at a range of more than 900 yards. All but a few of the men posted atop Gordon's Knoll were killed by a sudden single sharp volley, and the vital position of MacDonald's Kopie was effectively neutralized by the long-range sniping fire of the Boers. Ransford, *The Battle of Majuba Hill*, 94-95, 97, 101,108-9.
[75] *Hull Packet*, 18 February 1881, 2.
[76] *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper*, 1 March 1881, 5.
[77] *Ibid.*

concluded that if soldiers spent as much time in learning how to shoot as they did on goose-stepping and "other absurdities," the performance of the army would be very different.

> How is it possible for mere lads,—callants—who have hardly ever used a rifle to meet in skirmishing such death-shots as the Boers, who have been trained to firearms from their very childhood? They cannot do it—no, nor never will![78]

A. N. S. M.'s letter to the *Glasgow Herald* elicited a response from another "Volunteer" who likewise asserted that the British army should not become engaged on the Boers' terms.

> The only thing is to take advantage of our superior resources, and provide each man in the skirmish line with, say, a hand grenade…I see no use of opening up the 'goose-step and other absurdities' at present.[79]

Responding to a similar column in the *Times*, which insisted that Britain could make no graver mistake than to suppose that its troops required less training in shooting than those of continental powers, a military respondent expressed his hope that "our authorities have been awakened to the defects in this, now the most important position of the soldier's drill."[80]

As we have seen, the reform of British marksmanship was not readily forthcoming. The public had to wait for "Our Only General" (Wolseley) to be named adjutant-general in April 1882 for specific training reforms. His appointment to that position came as no surprise to anyone. Indeed, anticipating this action, the *Pall Mall Gazette* editorialized in November 1881 that his appointment would be a necessary

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[78] A.N.S.M's harsh criticism toward the soldiers of the Regular Army was apparently not applicable to the Volunteers, for he insisted that if two regiments of Glasgow Volunteers had been present, the outcome might well have been very different. *Glasgow Herald*, 7 March 1881, 10.
[79] *Glasgow Herald*, 10 Mar 1881, 3.
[80] *Times* (London), 21 April 1881, 6; 26 April 1881, 4.

consequence of "the current state of the army."[81] At a celebratory dinner for naval and military officers of the Egyptian campaign, Wolseley admitted that his attention to military reforms had been delayed by his presence in Egypt. He noted that there was much one could learn from that recent campaign, as it was the first in a quarter of a century that Britain had fought against an "army who was armed and disciplined according to modern ideas." While he could assure the public that the military had performed admirably and that the reforms already enacted had "made it the finest in the world," preliminary steps were already under way to increase the efficiency of the services.[82] The news that Wolseley had issued a syllabus for musketry training, which would be required of all ranks and officers, and which would include oral as well as practical examinations, was reported by provincial papers such as the *Aberdeen Journal*.[83]

The list of grievances pertaining to the performance of the army, however, was not limited to poor marksmanship. Reporting on the *Army and Navy Gazette's* recent assessment of the performance at Majuba Hill, the *Bristol Mercury* seemingly concurred with the conclusion of its contemporary that British troops had ceased to be hardened soldiers and instead were performing as "boy-regiments." Accusing the authorities of "deliberately slaying *esprit d' corps*, so that there is no moral influence to unite in a solid whole the stray and individually inferior atoms [of] which it is composed," the author saw this as proof of the "evil results of Cardwellianism."[84] The defenders at Majuba were not entirely undeserving of criticism. But the criticism was especially biting,

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[81] *Pall Mall Gazette*, 15 November 1881, 1.
[82] *Daily News* (London), 5 December 1882, 3.
[83] *Aberdeen Journal*, 30 December 1882.
[84] *Bristol Mercury*, 6 June 1881, 2.

considering that among those at Majuba Hill were three companies of Gordon Highlanders, a unit that was regarded as being among the country's best troops having been hardened by the wars in Afghanistan, the criticism was especially biting.[85]

PUBLIC REACTIONS TO THE CHILDERS REFORMS

Nevertheless, the announcement of Childers's reform program in March 1881 elicited a hostile response from the military community, which made its objections widely known. The *Army and Navy Gazette* charged that they would lead to the "demolishing of the British Army."[86] Localization had failed in the past, and the *Gazette* was confident that it would prove to be an equal failure in the future. Moreover, in the paper's opinion, the character of the scheme was "a pale copy of the organization of the German army."[87] Writing to the *Morning Post*, in what was probably an attempt to curry public sympathy for himself and to rally opposition against Childers, "A Major-General" sorrowfully claimed that his ability to achieve further promotion was being blocked and that his sizeable annum of over £1100 was to be reduced to £700.[88]

Yet such lamentations apparently made little impact on politicians. As the Liberal *Pall Mall Gazette* noted:

> Ministers and committees of all parties have agreed to the principle of short service with the colours and the formation of a reserve; and the slight change by Mr. Childers, for the sake of economy in relieving India, affirms the principle.[89]

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[85] In his analysis of the battle, Oliver Ransford insisted that once Colley's poor decisions had committed the British to a position with inherent weaknesses, the British defenders had fared no worse than any other unit in the army. Ransford, *The Battle of Majuba* Hill, 118-119.
[86] *Army and Navy Gazette*, June 1881, quoted in *Pall Mall Gazette*, 25 June 1881, 3.
[87] *Army and Navy Gazette*, January 1881, quoted in *Pall Mall Gazette*, 28 January 1881, 3.
[88] *Morning Post* (London), 17 March 1881, 6. Such accounts found little sympathy in the press. Well aware that such consequences were due to occur, the *Daily Telegraph* nevertheless held that "something of the kind is imperatively demanded under the altered conditions of service since 1870." *Daily Telegraph* (London), 4 March 1881, 9.
[89] *Pall Mall Gazette*, 4 March 1881, 10.

The Conservative *Aberdeen Weekly Journal* concurred and wrote that "among rational and well-disposed members of the legislature there will be little demur to their acceptance," and that "there should be slight difficulty in overcoming all opposition to the proposals." [90] Recognizing the scheme's popularity in Parliament, the *Army and Navy Gazette* admitted that for those who opposed the measure, their only hope lay in the continued uncertainty of the Gladstone administration and that upon being replaced by a Conservative, the next administration would then restore the "impaired efficiency and tarnished reputation of the British Army."[91]

The press, both Liberal and Conservative, also generally approved of the scheme in principle if not in its details. The *Pall Mall Gazette* agreed with Childers that "the old system of long service in the army was dying out for want of recruits, while more than enough than are required can be got by short recruitment," and decried the Airey commission's conclusions as being completely warrantless because Cardwell's scheme had never been given an adequate chance to succeed.[92] The *Bristol Mercury* congratulated Childers for having "the mind of a true reformer" and for "steering a middle course between long-service and short-service:

> Upon the whole, Mr. Childers's proposals must, we think, commend themselves to the common-sense of the nation. The civilian mind is, of course, not able to comprehend the length and breadth of the right hon. gentlemen's scheme; but there is a wise moderation about it which everyone can understand. The army is not an institution upon which to try rash experiments; and Mr. Childers has entered upon his task with no revolutionary spirit…The proposed changes could not have come a moment too soon, and could not have been prudently delayed.[93]

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[90] *Aberdeen Journal*, 16 March 1881, 4.
[91] *Army and Navy Gazette*, June 1881, quoted in *Pall Mall Gazette*, 25 June 1881, 3.
[92] Ibid., 10-11.
[93] *Bristol Mercury*, 11 March 1881, 5.

The *Aberdeen Journal* insisted that the reforms were "important and well-judged changes," which would immediately "enhance the comfort and efficiency of the men who fight our battles, and afford an additional guarantee for the loyalty and affection of our time-expired soldiers—a most valuable element in every civic community."[94]
The *Daily Telegraph* analyzed the proposal and dismissed the accusations of long-service advocates that short-service had proven its inadequacies on the battlefields of Isandhlwana, Maiwand, and Laing's Nek. Instead, the paper emphasized that Wolseley had the utmost confidence in the men who had served under him, and "found young troops equal to the work he has required of them, and that he is ready to go anywhere and do anything with them."[95]

Despite seeing the reforms as "a move in the right direction," some papers, from both ends of the political spectrum, remained skeptical that they would achieve their stated goals. Taking a decidedly Liberal view, the *Birmingham Daily Post* questioned Childers's insistence that reform was necessary, since the apparent problems of previous years stemmed from imperial conflicts that should have been avoided in the first place. "The strong case against the Conservative ministry," the paper argued,

> was that the wars and expeditions in which they had involved the country were without exception avoidable and unnecessary. That the contests in which we are now engaged are unavoidable is true in a limited sense only, so far as they are compulsory and unwelcome inheritance of previous bad policy; but Mr. Childers or any other minister would seek in vain for popular sympathy or encouragement in any justification of the origin of the wars of late years, or any plea of their necessity.[96]

The *Times*, meanwhile, approved of Childers's proposals but insisted that the real matter at hand was in their implementation:

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[94] *Aberdeen Journal*, 16 March 1881, 4.
[95] *Daily Telegraph* (London), 4 March 1881, 9.
[96] *Birmingham Daily Post*, 5 March 1881, 4.

> In design the changes may be pronounced worthy of approval; but to a certain extent, it is upon the loyal and thorough spirit in which they are to be carried out by the military authorities that the satisfactory realization of last night's programme must depend.[97]

The *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper*, which approved especially of the decision to abolish flogging, was concerned that the measures did not go far enough to provide sufficient financial incentives to encourage enlistment.[98] Drawing upon a report published by the independent-minded *Statist*, an article in the Conservative *Belfast News-Letter* similarly argued that they were "entirely inadequate, and barely [touched] the surface of the defects of the existing system."[99] In its opinion, Childers made no attempt to "add materially to [the army's] strength," and thus it remained "absurdly small for the duties it is called to perform."[100] For proof of this, the *News-Letter* insisted the public needed to look no further than Childers's decision to increase the eligible age of service to nineteen, and the lack of sufficient inducements to ensure that the requisite number of recruits enlisted. At the same time, the *News-Letter* believed that the Regular Army needed to be expanded by a corps, and that further reforms should be implemented in order to improve the battle efficiency of the army, such as marksmanship. Moreover, in response to Childers's "decision that the country would bear the expense of such expansion," the paper declared that it "did not believe one word of it."[101] Notwithstanding the possibility that Conservatives may have been inclined to oppose

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[97] *Times* (London), 4 March 1881, 11. These concerns were well warranted. Eight months after their initial presentation, the *Pall Mall Gazette* was convinced that, so long as the Duke of Cambridge remained Commander-in-Chief, little would be done to effectively improve the efficiency of the military. It further insisted that Wolseley alone, as "one of the most prominent military designers," had the practical experience required to prove Childers's assertion that the linked battalion system would work so long as it was given a fair trial. *Pall Mall Gazette*, 15 November 1881, 1-2.
[98] *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper*, 6 March 1881, 4.
[99] *Belfast News-Letter*, 8 March 1881, 6.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Ibid. While the *Belfast News-Letter* refrained from mentioning Majuba Hill directly, given the timing of the article, it is likely that their concern about British marksmanship was strongly influenced by that event.

Childers's scheme for political reasons and to win political points, that both Conservative and Liberal papers voiced similar reservations about Childers's scheme and argued that the reforms did not go far enough, suggests that partisan politics may not have been the primary motivation for the press's skepticism and criticism.

The reorganization of the army created some tensions within the military, as junior battalions became fully amalgamated with senior ones. One private of the 73rd (Highland Light Infantry) Regiment lamented that as a Londoner he did not wish to have his regiment joined with the 42nd (Black Watch) Highlanders, simply because he objected to being forced to wear a kilt, and a sergeant in the 69th Regiment declared that "we hate the 41st already because we are joined to them."[102]

The loss of military tradition was a particular concern in Scotland, where the issue was not only important within the military community, but also among the general public. Prior to the presentation of Childers's scheme, rumors abounded that the Highland regiments—in addition to losing their regimental number and moniker—would be forced to exchange their traditional tartans for a newly designed and issued "government" tartan. Taking the lead in opposing this measure, the Gaelic Society wrote to the queen on 9 February 1881. Claiming to speak on behalf of the army *and* of the country, the Society petitioned:

> We the undersigned believing that we represent the national feeling of Scotland humbly petition that the tartan dress hitherto worn by the various Highland regiments as distinctive of the districts in which they were raised and in which dress they have fought with honour and glory in every part of the globe be not changed believing that such distinctive tartans add to the *esprit de corps* and that

[102] Hugh Strachan, *The Politics of the British Army* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 203. In identifying himself as a Londoner, the position of this private from the 73rd Regiment is perhaps understandable. And it speaks to the heterogeneity of Scottish regiments. Nevertheless, there is a touch of irony in his statement given that the 73rd Regiment had originally been a kilted regiment.

> such changes as are contemplated are contrary to the instincts of every true Highlander.[103]

Two weeks later Mr. Frasier-Macintosh, one of the Society's leading members, inquired of Childers whether a change of regimental tartans was being considered. Childers's response was that while any such change would only occur after full consideration, pragmatism and cost-effectiveness necessitated changes.[104] When pressed further as to whether such changes would be brought before the House for debate, Childers replied that he hoped the explanations for the combining of two regiments would be sufficient and "would not render a lengthened debate on Tartans necessary."[105] Believing such a response to be completely unsatisfactory, the Society continued its efforts to impede the changes. They were joined in this endeavor by civilian Highlanders who compiled a petition containing over 16,000 signatures in just five days, which included "his Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh, 66 other Scottish noblemen, a large number of members of parliament, the provosts and chief magistrates of 124 cities and towns in Scotland and upwards of 50 associations and societies of Highlanders in Scotland and England."[106]

Such a development also did not escape the scrutiny of the Scottish press. On 15 February 1881, the *Glasgow Herald* maintained that "the strength of an army lies in such traditions as much as in its rifles and bayonets":

> Take away the bagpipes and the tartan and you unnerve the right arm of the Highland regiment. These things are to the Scotch soldier—be his native place

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[103] Anonymous, "The Highland Regiments and Their Tartan," *Transactions of the Gaelic Society Inverness* 10 (1884): 21-22.
[104] Ibid. Under the Cardwell Scheme men and officers were effectively a part of two regiments, each of which had their own uniform. Childers asserted that such a system was "unnecessarily costly." He was of the opinion that "the time has come when this anomaly should be put to an end, and the two regiments have the same uniform." *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 3rd ser., vol. 258 (1881), col. 485.
[105] *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 3rd ser., vol. 258 (1881), col. 485.
[106] "The Highland Regiments and Their Tartan," 25.

> north or south of Tay—the emblems of all the gallant past, whose honour is in his keeping.[107]

On 22 February the Conservative *Aberdeen Journal* charged that the elimination of the traditional military tartans in favor of a single government tartan would be a direct assault on military morale.[108] Condemning the war minister for regarding the kilt "simply as a dress of cloth having curiously coloured squares," and for not having any appreciation for the sentiments of the Highland soldier, the *Journal* went a step further by using the issue to illuminate the "despotism" of the Liberal Party:

> It is strange indeed to notice how despotic Liberalism invariably is when strong, compared to the reviled Conservatism, which is tenacious of old customs and old sentiments and of the rights even of the humblest. The tyranny of the party comes out in unexpected ways, just as it has done in the tartan question at present…In short a Liberal with a majority at his back thinks he can do anything. What is tartan that the Treasury should be bothered with varieties of it? or that clerks and storekeepers should have the "sweet simplicity" of wholesale entries in their books interfered with? It was acting on theories of this sort which led the nation to be disgusted with the previous Liberal administration, and it is not to be wondered at that already in Scotland the attempt to "simplify" our army uniforms by abolishing all tartans but one has arrayed men of all parties against the proposal.[109]

The *Glasgow Herald* also expressed concerns about the apparent lack of attention to the regimental histories. In particular, it worried that the Childers reforms would unite the 26th Cameronians and 79th Cameron Highlanders for the sole reason that they both had Clan Cameron roots. Although it admitted that to the uninformed observer such a union would be only natural, the *Herald* insisted that "a more ludicrous travesty could not be found." It asserted that every Scottish school boy knew that the Cameron Highlanders traced their lineage back to Jacobite Camerons, who had sustained 800 casualties at Killicrankie in following their chief Lochiel, the "Bonnie" Dundee, and the Stuart cause.

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[107] *Glasgow Herald*, 15 February 1881, 4.
[108] *Aberdeen Journal*, 22 February 1881, 4.
[109] Ibid.

The lowlander Cameronians, on the other hand, had proven their loyalty to King William III at Dunkeld in 1689, a battle, which, as the paper reminded its readers, was equally as devastating to Highlanders as was the Battle of Culloden in 1746. Despondent that the War Office was apparently not taking such issues into consideration, the *Herald* was nevertheless optimistic that the queen would not adopt any measure that would "do violence to the feelings of her Scottish soldiers."[110]

Much to the satisfaction of the Gaelic Society and the Scottish public, when the formal plan was presented in early March as a part of the Army Estimates, their earlier apprehensions proved to be wholly unfounded. The amalgamated Highland regiments were formed from units which had agreed to become joined and to share a tartan that drew upon a shared heritage. In the case of the Argyll and Sutherlanders, which had been formed from the 91st (Argyllshire) and 93rd (Sutherlandshire) regiments, the tartan chosen was closely associated with the region from which those battalions recruited and more accurately reflected the regiment's Campbell heritage than had the former tartan worn by the 91st.[111]

At the same time, Scotland's military heritage was further enlivened in another way. In 1809, believing that the kilt was distasteful among Lowlanders and detrimental to recruiting, six out of the eleven "Highlander" regiments were de-kilted and ordered to adopt the breaches worn by the rest of the British army.[112] This essentially stripped them

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[110] *Glasgow Herald*, 15 February 1881, 4.

[111] The 72nd (Duke of Albany's Own Highlanders) Regiment had been raised initially by a Mackenzie and was eager to adopt the Mackenzie tartan worn by the 78th (Ross-shire Buffs) Regiment when they formed the Seaforth Highlanders. See "The Highland Regiments and Their Tartan," 30, 32.

[112] The six units that were de-kilted in 1809 were the 71st, 72nd, 73rd, 74th, 75th, and the 92nd Regiments. Of these, in 1881 only the 71st and 74th, which were reconstituted as the 1 and 2/Highland Light Infantry, retained the trews. Philip J. Haythornthwaite, *British Infantry of the Napoleonic Wars* (London: Arms and Armour, 1987), 7.

of their Highland identity.[113] Since then, these regiments sought to regain their Highland identity, but only did so in a piecemeal and partially successful fashion.[114] It was only in 1881 with the Childers's Reforms that these regiments more fully regained their lost identity, as the number of kilted battalions was expanded from five to nine. In turn, the financial cost associated with this change of uniform was mitigated by replacing the costly Highlander headdress, which "had no national origin," with the "true national head-dress—the bonnet."[115]

The Scottish public was likewise pleased that the rumors that a Jacobite Highlander regiment was to be joined with a Lowlander and Covenanter regiment were also false. Recognizing that under the Cardwell Reforms, the lowlander and Covenanter 26th (Cameronian) Regiment had been linked to the Highlander 74th Regiment, the War Office committee subsequently joined the Cameronians with the 90th (Perthshire Volunteers) Regiment to form the 1 and 2/Scotch Rifles. Meanwhile, the Cameron Highlanders, refusing to adorn the tartan of the 42nd Black Watch Regiment, were returned to their original 1750 status as an unlinked single battalion regiment.[116]

The specific handling of the Highland regiments in regards to organization and dress is not insignificant, as it speaks to a number of key questions regarding the relationships between the military, government, and the public. In the first place, it

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[113] James Browne, *A History of Scotland and the Highland Clans*, vol. 4 (Glasgow: A. Fullarton, 1838), 306-7.

[114] In 1820 the 91st assumed the title of "Argyllshire." In 1823 the 72nd and 75th Regiments were allowed to wear trews in assuming the titles of the "Duke of Albany's Own Highlanders" and "Seaforth Highlanders" respectively. In 1845 the 74th had its Highland title restored. The title of the 91st Regiment was expanded to the "Argyllshire Highlanders" and adopted trews in 1864. Browne, *A History of Scotland and the Highland Clans*, 4: 306-7; Edward Spiers, *The Scottish Soldier and the Empire* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 3-4.

[115] "The Highland Regiments and Their Tartan," 29-31.

[116] Ibid., 27, 30; *Aberdeen Journal*, 16 March 1881, 4; The Cameron Highlanders remained a single battalion regiment until 1897 when the funds became available for a second battalion. Sir John Ewart, *Historical Records of the 79th Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders*, vol. 1 (London: William Blackwood, 1909), 234-35, 296.

illustrates the close ties that existed between the military and civilian communities. It exemplifies that the Scottish public was concerned that the central administration would effect changes that would diminish local symbols of those connections. It further shows that the central administration recognized such ties, took such concerns seriously, and worked to enhance those ties while still reforming the army.

IMPERIAL AWARENESS AND THE "NATION AT ARMS"

Alongside these sometimes heated discussions about how to realign the army, intellectuals and politicians also raised questions intermittently about whether Britain should implement some form of conscription and universal military training. The belief that the public should receive some military training if not be compelled into armed service had been advocated as early as the 1850s. Indeed by the end of the 1850s, individual headmasters began adopting military drill exercises in public schools, and a new organization, the National Rifle Association, formed for the "encouragement of the Volunteers rifle corps and the promotion of rifle shooting throughout Great Britain."[117] Such developments caused William Ewart, a Liberal from Dumfries, to inquire in February 1860 whether Palmerston's government had the power to implement such measures universally throughout the country's schools. The government responded that it had no such power, and that decisions relating to curriculum choices resided in the "local committees."[118]

Subsequently, some members of Parliament, intellectuals, and military officials endorsed the benefits of military drill and insisted that it should be more widely

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[117] The mission statement for the National Rifle Association was reprinted in the *Times* (London), 22 February 1860, 4. For the spread of military drill into public schools see Alan Penn, *Targeting Schools: Drill, Militarism, and Imperialism* (London: Woburn Press, 1999), 28.
[118] *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 3rd ser., vol. 156, (1860), cols.,1132.

incorporated into the country's schools. Addressing the National Association for the Promotion of the Social Sciences in 1870, Lyon Playfair, a former chemistry professor at the University of Edinburgh and at that time a Liberal MP for the Universities of Edinburgh and St. Andrews, maintained:

> School drill in military and naval exercises, besides their educational value in discipline and united action, sow the seed of the national strength in an economical way.[119]

In 1875, in the wake of Cardwell's reforms, the earls of Lauderdale and Richmond joined the Marquess of Landsdowne in a discussion in the House of Lords about military capabilities. They expressed specific concerns about the physical fitness and military preparedness of young Britons and advocated drill as the "best form of gymnastics." Lauderdale maintained, for instance, that it would most certainly prepare the nation's young men for military service by instilling the "ideas of order, regularity, and discipline without which it was difficult to obtain fully-qualified soldiers and sailors."[120] He continued:

> If boys were to undergo a simple system of military training, the country would have a better class of men. There was nothing boys liked best than playing at soldiers and sailors, and the effect of military drill in schools was to promote order, regularity, and cleanliness among boys.[121]

More than a decade later, Wolseley addressed a Birmingham audience about the threats facing the Empire and the condition of its defenses. And he declared his full support for universal military training:

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[119] Lyon Playfair, "National Education," in *Subjects of Social Welfare* (London: Cassel, 1889), 296. This quote comes from an address that was delivered at a meeting of the Social Science Association in September 1870.

[120] *Parliamentary Debates*, Lords, 3rd ser., vol. 223 (1875), cols., 1202-4. Although these observations did not relate to any specific piece of legislation, the statement and those of his colleagues were made within the broader context of national interest in military capabilities in the wake of the Cardwell reforms.

[121] Ibid., col. 1202.

> We are too easy to believe that as in past centuries so we should in the future have ample time provided for us to enable us to create an army and navy when danger comes upon us…I earnestly pray that you will take home this one great fact—that you have looming over you at this moment a heavy war-cloud which threatens Europe as a nation…It is not that we wish for the professional enjoyment of seeing large armies and navies that we ask the military forces increased. It is because we know how terrible and dreadful are its consequences, that we ask you to make this increase…I wish you to understand I am not advocating universal military service on military grounds, I am advocating universal military discipline and training on physical grounds, and therefore on essentially national grounds.[122]

Wolesley was, in fact, a recent convert to the idea of conscription, but in addition to the purely military benefits of such a system, he spoke to the broader social and physical benefits that would accrue from its adoption:

> Those who would otherwise have grown up in unwholesome homes to be weaklings, poor, miserable creatures, with narrow chests and undeveloped muscles, leave their barracks, as I have said, healthy, well-developed men, sound in body, and fit to stand the physical strain of modern existence under its most trying conditions, and above all things, calculated to be useful members of society for the rest of their lives…The young man passes his two years in acquiring habits of attention, of order, and above all things, in acquiring that respect for law and order, which is the outcome of obedience to superiors, and of that practical training of the temper which obedience necessarily brings with it. (Cheers.)[123]

During the 1880s and 1890s, such issues continued to be raised as the British military was engaged in various spheres throughout the empire. As we have seen, from 1882-1885 Britain was involved in Egypt and the Sudan. Thereafter, in the context of its imperial rivalry with France in South East Asia, Britain was at war in Burma from 1885-

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[122] *Times* (London), 26 January 1889, 12.

[123] Ibid. When Wolseley gave this address he was a rather recent convert to the idea of conscription. As late as 1882, he had maintained that conscription would not be necessary so long as the English Channel was "neither bridged over nor tunneled under by a band of speculators." *Times* (London), 24 May 1882, 10. Such perceived benefits of military drill were not new. Since at least the 1840s, tutors had advertised their services on the grounds that their instruction in military drill improved one's physicality. See *Times* (London), 26 December 1846, 1; Idem, 26 January 1853, 3. Numerous notices advertising the services of "Captain K" appeared in the *Times* periodically from 5 August 1848 to 2 February 1854. At the same time, many industrialists had argued that the introduction of military drill into the factories led to a greater work ethic and production from the working class. See *Times*, 8 November 1862, 6; *Graphic*, 18 September 1875, 274.

1887.[124] In 1893 a brief war broke out between Cecil Rhodes's British South African Company and the Matabele in South Africa. Britain fought a third war against the Ashanti in West Africa from 1893-1894 to establish its dominance in the area and to guard against German encroachment from Togo. In 1898 concerns for the beleaguered position of the Italian colony of Eritrea at the hands of the Mahdiya spurred Britain to once again enter the Sudan. And only weeks after the Mahdists were crushed at Omdurman, Britain found itself nearly at war with France over the strategically important fort at the headwaters of the Nile at Fashoda. Throughout those years there were numerous other expeditions as well.

Still, with the prominent exception of the Second Anglo-Boer War, these events did not directly lead to another push to overhaul the British military because the army handled these challenges without any major mishap. True, Wolseley's relief force arrived too late to save Gordon at Khartoum. Its tardiness notwithstanding, the rescue force nevertheless performed admirably. Although seriously tested and delayed, the camel corps had pressed on to Khartoum. Moreover, despite Gladstone's attempts to blame Wolseley for the failure to rescue Gordon, others blamed Gladstone for a vacillating policy and for delaying the army's departure.

But if the public was somewhat lulled by the commonplace nature of Britain's "little" imperial wars in these years, as Farwell has maintained—the broader geo-political developments focused attention frequently on matters pertaining to imperial defense. That environment became ever more dangerous. Britain's longstanding imperial dominance in Africa was incrementally threatened, directly and indirectly, as the major

[124] This conflict was actually the third time Britain had fought the kingdom of Burma. The other wars were fought in 1824-26 and 1852-53.

powers of Europe scrambled to carve up resource-rich tracts for themselves, and the empty spaces between imperial boundaries disappeared. In addition, whereas France and Russia had been Britain's chief imperial rivals throughout much of nineteenth century, in the latter quarter of the nineteenth century an industrially and commercially powerful imperial Germany was rapidly presenting itself as a serious threat to Britain. Under Kaiser Wilhelm II, who sought international recognition of Germany as a world power, the seriousness of the German threat increased all the more with the commencement of Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz's plan to create a so-called "Risk Navy" in 1897.

Despite the performance of the British military in the "small" wars of the 1880s and 1890s, therefore, alarmists saw the rise of Germany and the changing geo-political environment as having monumental ramifications. Throughout the nineteenth century imperial rivalries, such as that which existed between Britain and Russia, had mostly provoked conflicts between European states and indigenous communities as the powers jockeyed for spheres of influence. The key exception to this was, of course, the Crimean War. But with the imperial holdings of the Great Powers coming into much closer proximity, the likelihood that a major war would directly involve the major powers and their colonies was believed to be increasingly likely.[125]

In this environment a number of paramilitary youth organizations arose as products of disparate public interests—empire, national defense, and the humanitarian reformation of British society, the last of which was particularly an interest of the middle class. The first such organization was the Boys' Brigade. Established in 1883 by William Alexander Smith, the Boys' Brigade was intended to rectify the declining

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[125] Joachim Remak, *The Origins of World War I, 1871-1914*, 2nd ed. (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace, 1995), 66-70.

attendance in church-related activities and to counter the perceived rampant hooliganism of working-class youths. In order to attract interest and maintain order, Smith deliberately utilized military themes, such as company organizations, military drill instruction, military-style uniforms, parades, and marching bands, in addition to Sunday Bible classes. Aside from being influenced by popular interests in the military, Smith's choice to incorporate military motifs in his organization was almost certainly due to his own involvement in a Glasgow Volunteer Regiment, the 1st Lanarkshire Regiment.[126] Other religious-based organizations soon followed: Gordon's Boys Brigade (1885), formed in honor of the General Charles Gordon who died defending Khartoum earlier that same year; the Church Lads Brigade (CLB) and the London Diocese Church Lads Brigade (1891); the Jewish Lads Brigade (1895); the Catholic Boy's Brigade (1896); and the Church Nursing and Ambulance Brigade (1901).[127]

The first wholly secular youth organization appeared in 1899 when Lord Meath established the Lad's Drill Association for the expressed purpose of arousing "the British nation to the serious nature of the problem of imperial defence."[128] By 1911 the military component and function of the Boys' Brigade and Church Lads Brigade were recognized by Lord Haldane in the War Office, who extended to both organizations offers to become incorporated into Britain's Territorial Cadet Force. While the Boys' Brigade declined the

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[126] John Springhall, *Youth, Empire, and Society* (London: Croom Helm, 1977), 23-24.

[127] The same year the Church Lads Brigade was founded it merged with the Gordon's Boys Brigade to form one organization. Hugh Cunningham, perhaps surprisingly, did not address the connection between the Volunteers and organizations such as the Boys' Brigade in his seminal work on the Volunteer Force. However, Kenneth Brown contends that not only did such interplay exist, but that the development of British cultural militarism was further advanced by the proliferation of toy soldiers in turn of the century Britain. Kenneth Brown, "Modeling for War? Toy Soldiers in Late Victorian and Edwardian Britain," *Journal of Social History*, 24 (Winter, 1990), 244.

[128] John Mangan, "'The Grit of Our Forefathers': Invented Traditions, Propaganda and Imperialism," in *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, ed. John MacKenzie (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), 128. The founding of this organization proved to be only the beginning of Lord Meath's involvement in fostering imperialist and militarist rhetoric. In 1903 he established Empire Day and a decade later he initiated the Duty and Discipline Movement in 1912.

offer, due in part to Smith's influence in maintaining the organization's character as a predominantly religious organization, the CLB readily accepted. It subsequently became specifically linked to the King's Royal Rifle Corps and a strong supporter of compulsory military service legislation.[129]

In the competitive international environment at the turn of the twentieth century, imperial alarmists such as Sir Charles Dilke and Spenser Wilkinson encouraged the formation of the Navy League in 1894. And shortly after, George Shee and the fourth Duke of Wellington established the National Service League (NSL) in 1902.[130] To be sure, as Porter has noted, active participation in such organizations was very much a middle class activity, given the prohibitive costs and time involved.[131] Nevertheless, the pageantry of these groups, such as the celebration of Trafalgar Day with the full participation of the Navy League after 1894, was conducted in full sight of the public and was duly reported by the press.[132] To that end, membership and active participation in organizations of that type were only one, albeit a very visible, sign of the public's interest in matters pertaining to imperial defense.

At the same time, as organizations like the NSL pressed for the introduction of universal military service and encouraged the nation to become a "Nation at Arms," they raised serious questions that transcended issues of military preparedness and challenged

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[129]Springhall, *Youth, Empire, and Society*, 29-31; Michael Francis Snape, *God and the British Soldier* (London: Routledge, 2005), 160-61.
[130] Bernard Semmel, *Liberalism and Naval Strategy: Ideology, Interest, and Sea Power during the Pax Britannica* (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1986), 95; Barnett, *Britain and Her Army*, 366-67. The National Service League was initially led by fourth Duke of Wellington, and received greater visibility under the presidency of Field-Marshal Sir Frederick "Bobs" Roberts.
[131] Porter, *Absent-Minded Imperialists*, 172-75.
[132] *Times* (London), 27 January 1893, 4; 22 October 1895, 4; 27 January 1897, 5.

Britain's time-honored tradition of maintaining a volunteer-based army.[133] They thus called for a complete rethinking of the relationship between the public and the state, which continued into the years of the Great War. As parliament debated whether to pass conscription legislation in January 1916, Sir John Simon asked his colleagues if they were "prepared to begin an immense change in our society?"[134] He was joined in this regard by Sir William Byles who likewise queried, "If we surrender our liberties, if we Germanise our institutions, will the war be worth winning?"[135]

It is beyond the scope of this study to delve into the culture of Britain in the early twentieth century, but with such vital transformational questions at stake, it seems unlikely that Britons would be largely disengaged from such issues in the years leading up to 1914 as Porter contends. An examination of the public discourse in regards to conscription throughout the mid- to late-nineteenth century strongly suggests that the public was not disengaged from the propagandizing efforts of alarmists to sway opinion in the years preceding the First World War. As E. S. Beesly remarked before the 1892 annual meeting of the Positivist Society, the general public both recognized imperial dangers *and* remained opposed to conscription:

> A war with one of the Great Powers to-day would throw us into the most terrible disasters. Our vast empire not only did not give us strength, but was the cause for our weakness. Our army was in India; for the purpose of defending this island we might just as well have no army at all, and keep the money in our pockets. We had three choices before us; we must either have twice as large of an army, or we must forgo our empire, or we must be content to run a constant risk of ruin which might come upon us at any time in two or three weeks. The *masses would not have conscription*; the *classes would not have the restriction of the empire*; therefore we must have the constant risk of disaster.[136]

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[133] In its final form the Recruiting Bill of 1707 merely extended the ability to impress the unemployed and stiffened the penalties to obstructing those efforts. Barnett, *Britain and Her Army*, 141.
[134] *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 77 (1916), col., 963.
[135] Ibid., col. 988.
[136] *Times* (London), 2 January 1892. Emphases are my own.

That the imperial alarmists were not speaking to a pliant audience, but one that had a mind of its own and thoughtfully rejected such measures, becomes apparent in surveying the reception that conscription and compulsory military training received in the provincial presses over the course of the mid- to late-nineteenth century.

Responding to the attempt to create a ballot system in accordance with the Militia Act of 1852, Liberals such as Sir Frederick Peel, William Cardwell, Henry Rich, and William Williams viewed that provision to be akin to "conscription." As such, they maintained that it "should not be endured by the people of the country."[137] Insisting that he was more attuned to the sentiments of the industrious class than anyone else, Samuel Morton Peto, a Radical, assured his fellow members that they "regarded the ballot with great jealousy and dislike."[138] In addition to members of Parliament speaking on their behalf, members of the general public clearly engaged in the debate. Not only were the parliamentary debates routinely covered by the provincial presses, but the public participated in numerous meetings devoted to the subject. These included gatherings at Bristol on 24 February and 13 April 1852, in Manchester on 11 March, in Marylebone on 13 April, and in Liverpool on 21 April. And the press covered all of these events in detail.[139] For instance, at the Marylebone meeting, which featured Richard Cobden as a keynote speaker, the attendees resoundingly passed a petition in favor of two resolutions which denounced the bill as "oppressive to all classes of the community and injurious to

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[137] *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 3rd ser., vol. 122 (1852), cols., 158, 184.
[138] Idem., vol. 121 (1852), cols., 598-99; Idem. vol. 122 (1852), cols., 158, 184.
[139] *Times* (London), 15 April 1852, 6; *Bristol Mercury*, 28 February 1852, 2; *Liverpool Mercury*, 28 April 1852, 3; *Manchester Times*, 13 March 1852, 6; *Northern Star and National Trades Journal* (Leeds), 28 February 1852, 6.

morals of the people," and which deemed it as an unnecessary and "serious evil."[140] At Manchester, meanwhile, the public's disapproval of the ballot measure resulted in a petition that was submitted to Parliament containing 30,000 signatures.[141]

Fears that the government might implement conscription were heightened as advocates began emphasizing that the general public should receive some elementary military training in order to remedy the nation's unpreparedness. Such alarms were raised in 1875 amid rumors that Disraeli's government intended to introduce legislation in the forthcoming session that would render all able-bodied men between the ages of 18 and 40 into military service in order to resolve the ongoing recruiting problems. While acknowledging that conscription would certainly correct the errors of Britain's reliance on volunteers, the *Ipswich Journal* maintained that such a system was wrought with shortcomings of its own. It would assault the nation's productivity and would not, in and of itself, sustain military efficiency. Finally, it constituted "a grave menace to the prestige of England."[142] On 1 June 1875 the Council for the Working Man's Peace Association issued a warning in the *Glasgow Herald* which reminded all working men of the United Kingdom of what the "infamous institution" of conscription meant. It entailed the "immorality of barrack life, the liability of foreign service in deadly climates, the slavish subordination of the soldiers to his officer, [and] the possibility of being called on to fight in quarrels in which you have no interest whatsoever." Conscription was, the Association concluded, "the deadly foe of industry, morality, peace, and liberty."[143] The *Northern Echo* likewise expressed its hope that "Englishmen still detest[ed] the principle

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[140] *Times* (London), 15 April 1852, 6.
[141] *Daily News* (London), 8 May 1852, 2.
[142] *Ipswich Journal*, 30 March 1875, 2.
[143] *Glasgow Herald*, 1 June 1875, 7.

of compulsory military service; and that conscription is now, as of yore, a word at which every English heart revolts."[144]

Although some, such as Wolseley, insisted that universal military training was not conscription, the general public remained unconvinced. In December 1872, *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* responded to the calls by Lord Elcho and the National Rifle Association for universal military training to resolve the nation's military unpreparedness by warning that such measures were nothing more than a deliberate step towards conscription.[145] The link between military drill in schools and conscription was also addressed in a *Penny Illustrated Press* illustration which depicted Wolseley speaking at the Birmingham town hall while ranks of school boys carrying rifles and exercising on gymnastic apparatuses appeared in the background. It was captioned:

> Lord Wolseley 'hopes the day is not far distant when every school in the country will have a gymnasium attached'…Lord Wolseley Favoring Conscription in Birmingham.[146]

The intended meaning of the *Penny Illustrated Paper* could not be clearer. While Wolseley talked of gymnasiums, the implication and inference was that such activities were necessarily meant to prepare the country at large for military service and, ultimately, conscription.

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[144] *Northern Echo* (Darlington), 15 December 1875, 2.
[145] *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* 1 December, 1872, 6.
[146] *Penny Illustrated Paper*, 2 February 1889, 73. See Image 4-1 at the end of chapter. While issued immediately after Wolseley's appearance in Birmingham, the quote offered by the *P.I.P.* came from a previous address he gave in 1887 in Liverpool in response to a presentation by the National Physical Recreation. Condensed in the *Times*, Wolseley's thoughts about military training in schools were more fully reiterated in an address to the Military Society of Ireland on 11 November 1891. See *Times* (London), 19 December 1884, 8; Major General H. F. Davies, "Military Training," in *Papers and Discussions—Military Society of Ireland* (Dublin: William Carson, 1891), 26-28. Whether due to public response to his Birmingham address, Wolseley's position continued to evolve, such that in 1897 the *Pall Mall Gazette* could confidently write that Wolseley had confirmed that "the future of the army was not conscription." *Pall Mall Gazette*, 18 November 1897, 8.

Despite the assertions by advocates of compulsory military training or service, the public remained vocally opposed to it. The *Leeds Mercury* argued in an 1886 editorial that it was premature to consider requiring military training because "the manhood of Great Britain" had never shrunk from military service when "the conditions of a political crisis proved that the use of the armed hand might be necessary to protect those things the man and the patriot holds most dear."[147] Although the *Ipswich Journal* contended in 1888 that Britain ought not "allow our defenses to become less efficient than those of other nations," it insisted that "Englishmen would certainly object to see this country take an ostentatious part in the now too favourite international game of brag." "Any great addition to our already costly armaments," the paper concluded, "would certainly create an outcry against extravagant expenditure."[148] Responding to Wolseley's call for universal military training in Birmingham less than a month before, and to an even more recent statement by Lord Goschen that "the patriotism of the country…would not refuse any necessary demand" for military expenditures to put "the defenses in a proper condition," many of Birmingham's citizens convened on 18 February 1889 to protest "a proposal for an enormous increase in military and naval expenditure and the imposition of forced military service."[149] The chairman of the meeting, Alderman W. H. Hart, insisted that military expenditures had only led to the great loss of life over the past fifty years, and to treaties that could have been signed without such costs. He maintained that the greater danger to the country was "from the social conditions of many thousands of

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[147] *Leeds Mercury*, 1 May 1886, 1.
[148] *Ipswich Journal*, 7 March 1888, 4.
[149] *Birmingham Daily Post*, 18 February 1889, 5. Lord (George Joachim) Goschen was at the time serving as the chancellor of the exchequer. His statements concerning military expenditures were delivered in the course of an address before the St. George's Conservative Club on 12 February 1889, 5. See *Times* (London), 13 February 1889, 5.

the people in the large towns."[150] Less than a week later a similarly well-attended meeting in Leeds passed a resolution expressing its

> disapproval of compulsion in military service, believing it has seriously burdened the nations of the European continent, and is opposed to the liberties and the feelings of the British people.[151]

In passing a second resolution against the "raising of war scares," the attendees deemed that the current level of military expenditure was sufficient and condemned the proposed increases as being unnecessary.[152]

Nevertheless, as two letters to the *Morning Post* published on the same day in 1890 suggest, the debate about conscription remained part of the public discourse. In the first, the pseudonymous writer "Non Sibi Sed Patriae" asked why, since the country already had compulsory education, it should not then require the men of the country to serve universally in a National Home Defense Corps.[153] In the second, Lt. Colonel Aubrey Maude insisted that the military had to recruit men of better character who would then stay in the colors instead of leaving the service at the first possibility.[154] Seven years later, a correspondent named Woolmer White wrote to the same paper, contending that "most satisfactory solution" to the question of conscription "would be for every man, say between the ages of 18 and 25, to be compelled to drill for two hours weekly, allowing him the choice of four days, which he would not be allowed to alter without proper notice."[155]

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[150] *Birmingham Daily Post*, 18 February 1889, 5.
[151] *Leeds Mercury*, 26 February 1889, 3.
[152] Ibid.
[153] *Morning Post* (London), 21 January 1890, 3.
[154] *Morning Post*, 21 January 1890, 3.
[155] Ibid., 25 June 1897, 7.

Consequently, the public generally saw conscription as unwarranted, though there were those who recognized that some measure of military reform was warranted. In this latter group was General J. H. Gascoigne, who wrote in the *Morning Post* in 1893 that conscription was entirely out of the question "except in the case of a threatened invasion." It would be much more effective, he maintained, to expand the Militia by means of a ballot to 500,000 men for the purpose of home defense.[156] With an editorial entitled "An Alternative to Conscription" in 1898, the *Pall Mall Gazette* announced its support for Secretary of War Arnold-Forster's proposal to increase the pay of enlisted personnel and to allow reservists to serve, at their request, in the line battalions of the regiment.[157] Later that same year, the *Aberdeen Journal* acknowledged that voluntary enlistments were not meeting expectations, but it concluded that circumstances still had not yet reached the point at which a drastic measure like conscription was needed. This was not a denial of the dangers threatening the empire; of those, the paper insisted it was well aware. Rather, volunteerism had not been utilized to its fullest potential. In the first place, more could be done to exploit the "martial spirit" of Scotland which had contributed so much to the empire, but had recently not fully contributed its share to the army. In addition, it argued that the attention lavished on recruiting in London had overshadowed recruiting opportunities in the smaller towns and villages throughout England.[158]

For still others, the matter of conscription was seen as an extension of the pursuit of ill-conceived imperial policies. In September 1895, shortly after Lord Salisbury

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[156] *Morning Post* (London), 24 January 1893, 3. Lt. General J. H. Gascoigne was well-positioned to speak on such matters as he had authored a brief pamphlet on the subject on army reform, *A System of National Defence* (London: John Camden Hotten, 1871).
[157] *Pall Mall Gazette*, 26 February 1898, 2.
[158] *Aberdeen Journal*, 31 August 1898, 2.

formed his third administration, the leading article in the *Leeds Mercury* responded to Joseph Chamberlain's indication that conscription might be considered with the warning that:

> Nothing is easier or more childish than to treat such possibilities with levity. The military party in this country is tremendously powerful and after the recent Tory victory at the polls it may lose its head completely.[159]

The leader writer went on to remark sarcastically that, "Certainly the sort of foreign policy illustrated by the retention of Chitral will ultimately need the conscription and will double the national debt. Imperial lying and stealing is a very costly business, as all history proves."[160] *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper* echoed these sentiments when, in March 1898, a leading article lamented the imperial policies of the "Big Englanders" of the 1880s and 1890s. By expanding the empire and Britain's military responsibilities in Africa, Asia, and the Mediterranean and pursuing an "insane policy" toward Ireland, their actions had increased international threats, frightfully elevated war expenditures, made the poor still poorer with taxation, and drifted the country toward conscription.[161]

The public's standoffishness on the issues of conscription and compulsory military training can be extrapolated from the number of schools that adopted drill by the turn of the century. Penn has calculated that in 1899 only about one-third of the nearly 31,200 elementary departments had introduced some form of drill into the curriculum. Of these, only 2,659 (just over 8.5 percent) had chosen to implement military drill. The rest resorted to various programs of physical education.[162] Although individual members of Parliament and others continued to press for compulsion until and even after the

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[159] *Leeds Mercury*, 7 September 1895, 12.
[160] *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper*, 13 March 1898, 1.
[161] "Let Us Have Conscription?" *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper*, 6 March 1898, 1.
[162] Penn, *Targeting Schools*, 89. The total number of departments adopting drill was about 11,800.

outbreak of war in 1914, the National Board of Education effectively closed the door on the debate in 1914 when it determined that "ordinary" drill, consisting of calisthenics, was the preferred method to be taught in school.[163]

Given the public's long-standing attention to military reform efforts, it is almost certain that the public remained engaged in the reforms that emerged in the wake of the Second Anglo-Boer War, which culminated with the issuance of Haldane's reorganization of the army and War Office in 1909. Moreover, a cursory review of the British government's and the public's reaction to the outbreak of war in 1914 is further suggestive of public awareness. In the first place, in 1914 even the British government was stunned by Kitchener's prediction that the European war would last far longer than the presumed couple of months, and that it would necessitate the introduction of measures, radical or otherwise, to raise hundreds of thousands of men for military service.[164] Despite his shock at Kitchener's assessment, Prime Minister H. H. Asquith had been deeply concerned about imperial matters and the maintenance and efficiency of the armed forces.[165] Even if one could maintain that the public's "absent-mindedness" about the empire had caused them to ignore the alarmists, then it was certainly remarkable that so many heeded Kitchener's call to arms in August 1914. Calling for volunteers, Kitchener hoped that 200,000 volunteers could be raised by the end of August; in fact, nearly 300,000 had responded. In the week between 30 August and 5 September, nearly 175,000 signed up.[166] In the month of September more the 460,000 more recruits had been raised, before sharply dropping off to the low- to mid-100,000s

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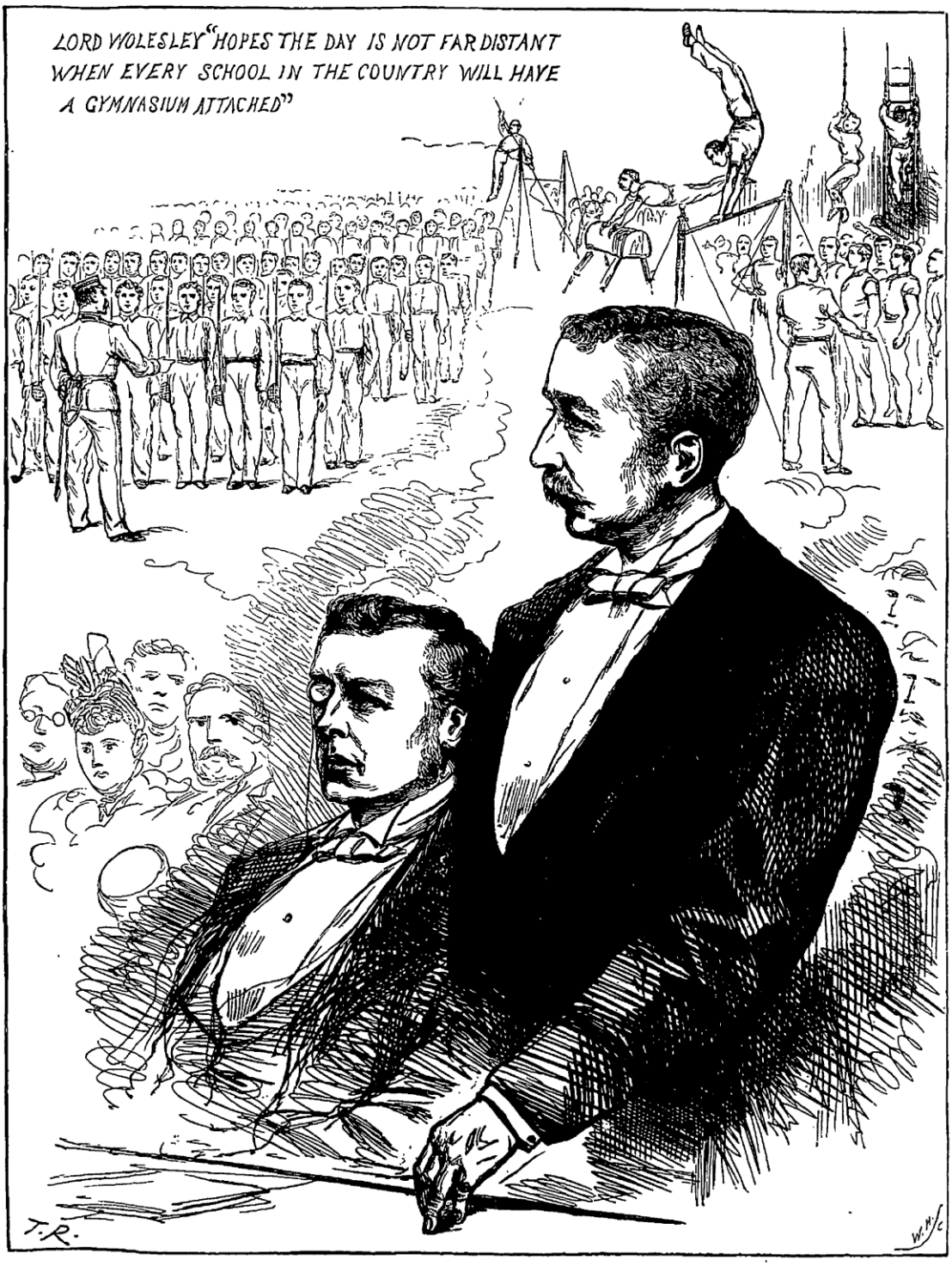
[163] Ibid., 156.
[164] Barbara Tuchman, *The Guns of August* (New York: Macmillan, 1962), 196.
[165] J. A. Spender and Cyril Asquith, *Life of Herbert Henry Asquith, Lord Oxford and Asquith*, vol. 1 (London: Hutchinson, 1932), 348.
[166] Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 198.

over the next nine months.[167] To be sure, as Niall Ferguson has pointed out, the rush to the colors was not fully representative of the nation as a whole, as some classes and regions of the country joined more readily than others.[168] Nevertheless, taking the sheer number of recruits as a whole, the response definitely warrants a much closer look at the public discussions concerning the empire and imperial defense in the years and months preceding the First World War.

[167] Great Britain, War Office, *Statistics of the War Effort* (London: H.M.S.O., 1922), 364.
[168] Ferguson, *The Pity of War*, 199.



LORD WOLSELEY FAVOURING CONSCRIPTION AT BIRMINGHAM.

Figure 4-1: *Penny Illustrated Paper*, 2 February 1889, 73.

CHAPTER 5
NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL CONNECTIONS WITH THE BRITISH MILITARY AND EMPIRE

Up until now, most of the present work has been concerned with the press and parliamentary discourse concerning imperial and military politics. In assessing that discourse, the continuity of political opinions from one side of the Anglo-Scottish border to the other suggests that the variances in perspectives regarding the politics of imperial intervention and war had more to do with the political and ideological alignment of the press and general public than with specific geographical or cultural considerations. As the *Glasgow Weekly Mail* insisted after the declaration of war against the Boers in the October 1899:

> We have now to stand shoulder to shoulder, one solid nation, vindicating the imperial title to supremacy in South Africa.[1]

Such rhetoric surrounding the imperial engagements in the Cape to Cairo corridor from the 1870s to the 1890s demonstrate that both English and Scottish commentators were concerned about maintaining national and imperial prestige, as well as with the ramifications of engaging in armed conflict. Even as divisions emerged, they largely fell along party lines and were relatively unaffected by geographical considerations. It is arguable, therefore, that variances in the reactions should effectively be considered as part of a broader "British" dialogue.

On the other hand, the public discourse regarding military reform from the 1870s onward suggests that there were indeed some nuances in the way people in the different kingdoms approached the issue, and that the public's engagement was not entirely uniform. To be sure, there was a great deal of common ground as the respective

[1] *Glasgow Weekly Mail*, 14 October 1899, 5.

communities debated the necessity for reform, the type of reform, and the costs associated with reforming the military. However, distinctions between the English and Scottish papers—and presumably their readers—became much more apparent as the ramifications of military reform impinged on areas deemed culturally significant. The prime example of this noted in chapter four was the significant concern raised regarding the merger of battalions and the re-kilting of Highlander regiments as a part of Childers's reform initiatives. While questions about consolidation were raised by constituencies on both sides of the border, the cultural and historical implications were more loudly vocalized by the Scottish public. In contrast, the concerns and protests which emerged from England over the matter generally came from those within the military establishment.

The works of John MacKenzie and other contributors to his "Studies in Imperialism" series have done much to demonstrate that Victorian culture was replete with messages pertaining to the empire and to the military as a manifestation of national power and prestige. In surveying that scholarship MacKenzie concluded:

> By the 1890s, it is clear, British society was saturated with nationalist and militarist ideas. The queen and the army were moved to the centre of the imperial stage, a cult of heroes and a heroic national history was celebrated in popular literature and had infiltrated school textbooks, and the music-halls exploited the patriotic sentiment in songs and tableaux.[2]

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[2] John MacKenzie, "Introduction," in *The Language of Empire*, ed. John MacDonald (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 2. The proliferation of military motifs in the Victorian and Edwardian eras has led some modern scholars, such as Anne Summers, Hugh Cunningham, Michael Howard, as well as MacKenzie, to associate those sentiments with militarism. Anne Summers, "Militarism in Britain Before the Great War," *History Workshop* 2 (1976), 104; Hugh Cunningham, "Jingoism and the Working Class," 6-9; Idem, *Militarism and Anti-Militarism in Britain* (Rome: Fondazione Lelio e Lisle Baso, 1983); Michael Howard, *Lessons of History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 74-79; John MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, 2, 5-6. To the extent in which militarism could be said to comprise a part of Victorian society, it certainly existed in more of a cultural and latent form; and thus should be distinguished from the institutional and more virulent form evidenced in continental nations such as imperial Germany. Militarism, broadly defined, involves the elevation of the military over civilian matters. A much more expansive understanding of the concept is offered by the 1888 *Oxford English Dictionary*: "The spirit and tendencies characteristic of professional soldiers; the prevalence of military sentiment or ideals among a

As the above quotation implies, however, these works have tended to present British culture as monolithic rather than seeing it as a product of distinct regions that may well have viewed the empire through different lenses. The result has been that, although the British public as a whole engaged with the same subject matter, the manner in which different audiences consumed, interpreted and considered those imperial messages to have meaning has been overlooked. To be sure, that trend has begun to shift as recent scholarship has become focused on exploring and deconstructing the concept of identity in the British Isles.[3] In turn, those studies have led to inquiries about how the British public connected to the empire at the provincial level.[4]

For instance, Heather Streets has recently addressed the nineteenth-century concept that certain races were "biologically or culturally predisposed to the arts of war."[5] Specifically, she focused on questions of why Highlander, Sikh, and Gurka regiments attained a reputation for being among the empire's fiercest warriors, and how that collective perception translated into a general ideology in Britain. Examining

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people, the political condition characterized by the predomination of the military class in the government or administration; the tendency to regard military efficiency as the paramount interest of the state." *Oxford English Dictionary* (1888), sv. "Militarism." In regards to the British experience, when Summers, Cunningham, Howard, and MacKenzie speak of a British militarism, it is to the second part of the above definition to which they largely refer. However, a wealth of scholarship, such as that of Niall Ferguson, has downplayed that element and maintained that Britain was distinctly not militarist by European standards. Ferguson, *The Pity of War*, 15-16.

[3] Key works that have addressed the issue of British and provincial identity: Dauvit Broun, R. J. Finlay, and Michael Lynch, ed., *Image and Identity: The Making and Re-making of Scotland Through the Ages* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1998); Steve Murdoch and A. Mackillop, ed., *Fighting for Identity: Scottish Military Experience, c. 1500-1900* (Boston: Brill, 2002); Paul Ward *Britishness Since 1870* (London: Routledge, 2004); Christopher Harvie, *Scotland and Nationalism: Scottish Society and Politics 1707 to the Present*, 4th ed. (London: Routledge, 2004); Simon Featherstone, *Englishness: Twentieth Century Popular Culture and the Forming of English Identity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009).

[4] Notable works that have concerned themselves specifically with Scottishness and the empire include John M. MacKenzie and T. M. Devine, *Scotland and the British Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Edward M. Spiers, *The Scottish Soldier and Empire* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006); and Esther Breitenbach's *Empire and Scottish Society: The Impact of Foreign Missions at Home, c. 1790-c. 1914* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009).

[5] Heather Streets, *Martial Races*, 1.

Roberts's use of the popular press to advance the army's initiatives, Streets has concluded that the military and the concept of martial races formed an integral part of late-Victorian culture.[6] Building off of this insight, it stands to reason that differences would exist in the manner in which civilian communities related to the military. As such, in addition to surveying the broad spectrum of popular culture and the integration of martially suggestive imperial motifs, this chapter will pay particular attention to the following questions: How did the popularization and consumption of the imperial and military motifs manifest themselves on both sides of the Anglo-Scottish border to the other? Were there in fact, significant cultural distinctions at play regarding the integration of the military into the public sphere, as the discourse on military policy suggests?

NATIONAL POPULARIZATION OF THE MILITARY

Beyond the political discourses of the daily and weekly newspapers, as Jeffrey Richards has persuasively contended, British imperial juvenile literature legitimized, glamorized, and romanticized the wider societal interest in empire. Designed to entertain and instruct its readers, juvenile fiction arguably had a deeper impact upon the reading public than any other direct forms of communication, such as speeches, sermons, or school lessons.[7] As both Richards and Kathryn Castle have pointed out, the genre of adventure stories was particularly concerned with exemplifying evangelical and racial messages, and over the course of the nineteenth century, those messages became increasingly militaristic.[8]

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[6] Ibid., 116-17.
[7] Jeffrey Richards, "Introduction," in *Imperialism in Juvenile Literature*, ed. Jeffrey Richards, Studies in Imperialism, ed. John M. MacKenzie (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), 1-3.
[8] Richards, "Introduction," 3-10; Kathryn Castle, *Britainnia's Children: Reading Colonialism Through Children's Books and Magazines*, Studies in Imperialism, ed. John M. MacKenzie (Manchester:

Beyond juvenile literature, works aimed at an adult or general audience—including those of poets, novelists, and journalists—were influential in highlighting the military's exploits on behalf of the empire, even in instances of death and defeat. Tennyson's epic poem "The Charge of the Light Brigade," along with some of his lesser known works, including "The Charge of the Heavy Brigade" and "Epitaph on General Gordon," stand out for their telling of British military actions in the Crimean War and Sudan operations.

> When can their glory fade?
> O the wild charge they made!
> All the world wonder'd.
> Honor the charge they made!
> Honor the Light Brigade,
> Noble six hundred![9]

> Glory to each and to all, and the charge that they made!
> Glory to all the three hundred, and to all the Brigade![10]

> Warrior of God, man's friend, and tyrant's foe
> Now somewhere dead far in the waste of Sudan,
> Thou livest in all hearts, for all men know
> This earth has never borne a nobler man.[11]

Likewise, Thomas Campbell, Lord Macaulay, and Feclia Heman all wrote stirringly of past and present wars, while Rudyard Kipling's barrack-room ballads such as "Hymn Before Action" and "Ford O' Kabul River" did much to promote sympathy for the common soldier and the military profession in their efforts to defend Britain and the empire.[12] In particular, such poetry found its way into literature that purposefully

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Manchester University Press, 1996..

[9] Alfred, Lord Tennyson, "The Charge of the Light Brigade," *Examiner*, 8 December 1854, 780.

[10] Alfred, Lord Tennyson, "The Charge of the Heavy Brigade," *Macmillan Magazine* (March 1882), 337-39.

[11] Alfred, Lord Tennyson, "Epitaph on General Gordon, *Times*, 7 May 1885, 6.

[12] Simon Dentith, *Epic and Empire in Nineteenth Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 131-33, 165-69; "War Poetry," *Edinburgh Review* 196 (1902): 51-52. Kipling's "Ford O' Kabul River" recounted General Roberts's assault on Kabul during the Second Afghan War (1878-1880).

targeted young boys, such as Frederick Langbridge's *Ballads of the Brave* (1890), William Henley's *Lyra Heroica: a book of verse for Boys* (1891), Arthur Stanley's *Patriotic Songs: a book of English Verse* (1901), William Knight's *Pro Patria Regina* (1901), William Caton's *Songs of England* (1902), and James Fawside's *The Flag of England, Ballads of the Brave and Poems of Patriotism* (1914). While their titles conveyed their purpose succinctly, Henley stated explicitly that his ambition was "to set forth, as only art can,

> the beauty and joy of living, the beauty and blessedness of death, the glory of battle and adventure, the nobility of devotion—to a cause, an ideal, a passion even—the dignity of resistance, the sacred quality of patriotism.[13]

And William Knight characterized his "small contribution to a patriotic purpose" as one that revealed "what is 'true, and beautiful, and good'" about the Anglo-Saxon race.[14]

The notions of duty, honor, sacrifice, and national pride that these refined writings articulated were supplemented by a plethora of music-hall songs such as "By Jingo," and numerous paintings, such as Richard Caton Woodville's "The Charge of the Light Brigade," Lady Butler's "Scotland Forever," and Robert Gibb's "Thin Red Line."[15] The combined effect of these expressions was the creation of what some referred to as a "fount of patriotism" and others as "mob passion" that permeated popular discourse and

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[13] William Henley, *Lyra Heroica: a book of verse for boys* (London: 1891), ix. See also William Canton, *Songs of England's Glory* (New York: Putnam, 1902), preface.

[14] William Knight, *Pro Patria Regina: being poems from nineteenth-century writers in Great Britain and America* (Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1901), ix. While the work entails content from both sides of the Atlantic, the bulk of the content was drawn from British authors. The idea of a wider British world that encompassed the United States, was raised by Sir Charles Dilke in his work *Greater Britain: a Record of Travel in English Speaking Countries During 1866 and 1867* (London: Macmillan, 1868). For a recent examination of the transatlantic nature of Anglo-Saxon racialism at the turn of the century, see Thomas M. Sobotke, "The Imperial Enterprise: Anglo-American Reaction to the Spanish-American and Boer Wars, 1898-1902" (Ph.D. diss. Marquette University, 2008).

[15] The use of artwork to convey patriotic sentiments was a relatively new development. While the Greeks and Romans depicted the heroic death, these representations were restricted to mythology. It was not until the mid-eighteenth century that it became acceptable to portray the dying human hero. See Alan Borg, *War Memorials: From Antiquity to the Present* (London: Leo Cooper, 1991), 46-50.

transcended class divisions. These forms of media effectively celebrated British imperialism and justified the United Kingdom's colonial wars, all the while conveying the notion that it was not the British way to seek out war purposefully but to fight when the empire was challenged.[16] As Krzysztof Cieszkowski has contended, Lady Butler's piece "Floreat Etona!" visually exemplified Henry Newbolt's call for Britons to "Play Up! play up! and play the game!"[17] However, Carolyn Wynne has cautioned that Butler's works—which the public received enthusiastically as celebrations of the empire, the army, and the common soldier—did not directly advance the "crude jingoism" of the day. In fact, by her frequent focus on the suffering and tragic results of war, Butler's works were "not always in harmony with the imperial Zeitgeist of the late nineteenth century."[18] An example of such a work would be "The Remnants of the Army, Jellalabad, January 13th, 1842" (1879), which depicted the disastrous retreat taken by General Elphinstone during the First Afghan War.[19] The disconnect between Butler's more complex engagement with military realities and public sentiment can perhaps be crudely measured. As her biographers have noted, after making her initial splash with her breakout masterpiece "Roll Call" (1874), Butler's reputation declined in the 1880s, as the more complex imperial themes of her works apparently affected public perceptions of

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[16] Penny Summerfield, "Patriotism and Empire: Music-Hall Entertainment," in *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, ed. J. M. Mackenzie (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1896), 17-41; John O. Springhall, "Up Guards and At Them!: British Imperialism and Popular Art, 1880-1914," in *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, ed. John M. Mackenzie (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), 49-50.
[17] Krzysztof Z. Cieszkowski, "The Pallas of Pall Mall: The Life and Paintings of Lady Butler," *History Today* 32 (February, 1982): 35. Lady Butler had made her reputation as Elizabeth Thompson, and in 1877 she married then-Major (later Lieutenant-General) William Francis Butler.
[18] Catherine Wynne "Elizabeth Butler's Literary and Artistic Landscapes," *Prose Studies* 31 (August, 2009): 127; J. W. M. Hichberger, *Images of the Army: the Military in British Art*, 1815-1914 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 79.
[19] Kryzystof Z. Cieszkowski, "The Pallas of Pall Mall," 32, 34.

her.[20] Her story is an important reminder that scholars must be cautious about how we utilize art and literature as source material when drawing conclusions about issues as complex as imperial sentiment.

Figure 5-1: Engraving of Lady Butler's "Floreat Etona!"[21]

[20] When "Roll Call" as it was popularly known, was first exhibited in 1874, policemen were required to hold back the enthusiastic crowds. Wynne, "Elizabeth Butler's Literary and Artistic Landscapes," 126-7; Paul Usherwood and Jenny Spencer-Smith, *Lady Butler: Battle Artist, 1846-1933* (Gloucester: UK, Alan Sutton; London: National Army Museum, 1987), 31.
[21] Wilfred Weymell, *The Life and Work of Lady Butler (Miss Elizabeth Thompson)* (London: Art Journal Office, 1898), frontpiece.

Figure 5-2: Engraving of Lady Butler's
"The Remnant of an Army"[22]

Imperial messaging of a martial nature was thus aimed at all ages and delivered in multiple media, including music halls, paintings, newspapers, and elite and popular literature. Likewise, picture books brought such themes home to British youths even before they entered primary schools. For instance, Frank Green's *Pictures for Little Englanders: a Companion to ABC's for Baby Patriots*, included rhymes such as:

The Union Jack
Wave John Bull Junior,
Wave our British Flag!
The Terror of the Foreigner,
Despite his noisy brag.

The Girl He Left Behind Him
Little Boy Blue, go blow your horn,
To cheer up this Maiden all forlorn;
For her soldier laddie will soon return,
But first his foes have a lesson to learn.

The Army
When I was young and a grenadier,
The sound of the drum was ever dear,
But the only tunes that I could play
Were "Forward! Boys," and "Lead the Way!"

The Navy
Here are some British ironclads—
You must not mind a bit,
That taxes should grow heavier
If but our Navy's fit.[23]

Similar lines also appeared in Mary Frances Ames's *ABC's for Baby Patriots*.

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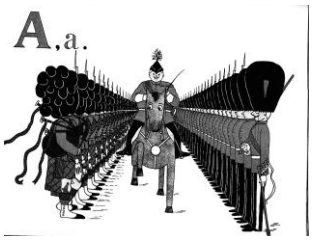
[22] John Oldcastle, "Lady Butler," in *Some Modern Artists and Their Work*, ed. Wilfred Meynell (London: Cassell, 1883), 72

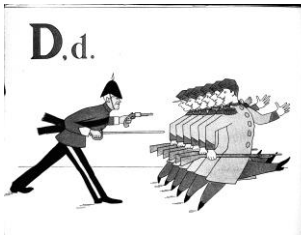
[23] Frank C. Green and A. S. Forrest, *Pictures for Little Englanders: a Companion to ABC's for Baby Patriots* (London: Dean and Son, 1900).

A is for the Army
That dies for the Queen;
It's the very best Army
That was seen.



B stands for Battles
By which England's name
Has for ever been covered
With glory and fame.

D is the Daring
We show on the field
Which makes every enemy
Vanish or yield.



N is the Navy
We keep at Spithead;
It's a sight that makes foreigners
Wish they were dead.

Figure 5-3: *ABC's for Baby Patriots*[24]

Once in school, youths were exposed to texts, such as Cyril Ransome's *Elementary History for Schools* and Charlotte Yonge's *Westminster Reading Books*. As Chancellor has shown, such works preached the idea that all citizens of the British Empire had a spiritual obligation and duty to defend its principles:

> Whoever does his or her duty to God, man and to the country is helping to keep our beloved old England in honour and safety.[25]

[24] Mary Francis Ames, *ABC's for Baby Patriots* (London: Dean and Son, 1899).
[25] Charlotte M. Yonge, *Westminster Historical Reading Books,* Book 6 (1890), 75; quoted in Valerie Chancellor, *History for their Masters: Opinion in the English History Textbook* (New York: A. M. Kelley, 1970), 130. See pages 73-75 in Chancellor's work for the treatment of Generals Gordon and Havelock in history texts.

Taking the issue of patriotism one step further, C. R. L. Fletcher and Rudyard Kipling published a history textbook in 1911 aimed at young Britons that waded into the issue of universal military service, which we have already seen had not won general approval from their parents. According to Fletcher and Kipling, one's duty to God and country required all citizens to undergo military training and service in the nation's armed forces:

> But I don't think that there can be any doubt that the only safe thing for all of us who love our country is to learn soldiering at once and be prepared to fight at any moment.[26]

Most texts refrained from going as far as this, but they still spoke of duty and service to the nation in general terms, and as Chancellor has documented, history textbooks were highly jingoistic and ultra-patriotic in their language and subject matter.[27]

That such messaging was indeed consumed by Britain's youth is indicated by the recollections of Donald Hodge, a World War I veteran who grew up in the years after the Boer War:

> War had been a part of our background, in every sense of the word really. When we learned history, it was a succession of kings, queens, and battles. When we learned geography, the maps we saw were covered by crossed swords, which indicated a battle. … The Battle of Hastings, Napoleonic Wars, up to the Boer War. ... And when it came to learning poetry, school was all by rote. We had to learn a psalm every week and periodically a piece of poetry. And the poetry was actually scattered with battles ... We started with 'How Horatio Captained the Bridge.' We went on to the 'Battle of Hastings,' and then to the Napoleonic Wars, and then the Crimean War, and then at that time the Boer War."[28]

As indicated by Hodge's testimonial, elementary and secondary primers and history textbooks indeed proved quite effective in spreading martial sentiments to British youth.

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[26] C. R. L. Fletcher and Rudyard Kipling, *A School History of England* (1911), 244; quoted in Chancellor, *History for Their Masters, 130*.

[27] Chancellor, *History for Their Masters*, 130. Such displays of heightened and romanticized martial patriotism in school texts were hardly unique to Britain, as such trends flourished on both sides of the English Channel throughout the nineteenth century.

[28] Donald A. Hodge, interview, Imperial War Museum, catalogue #11341.

By the turn of the century, history readers, textbooks, and juvenile literature consistently glamorized the exploits of military figures, such as Admiral Horatio Nelson and the Duke of Wellington, while elevating generals such as Henry Havelock and Charles Gordon to martyr status. The consequent message was that such individuals were to be revered and emulated.[29] In addition, Wolseley came to be regarded by the country as "Our Only General," and the phrase "All Sir Garnet" became equated with success.[30]

British society's draw toward military pomp is also evidenced by promotional materials for a variety of commodities. Such themes frequently adorned advertisements for items such as Pattison's Scotch Whisky. That Pattisons' whisky advertisements invariably depicted a kilted-Highlander regiment is a graphic illustration of Streets's contention that the British public considered the military through a racial lens.[31] Aside from advertisements for commodities, military imagery was also the subject of articles in popular magazines if not the primary focus of the magazines themselves. One example of such a publication was the monthly magazine *The British Realm*, whose cover consistently put provocative military images on full display. The cover for the January 1899 edition was representative of these images; it depicted a myriad of soldiers and sailors wearing uniforms from across the empire, effectively and vividly placing the

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[29] John M. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, 181; John M. MacKenzie, "Heroic Myths of Empire," in *Popular Imperialism and the Military, 1850-1950* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 114-116; J. S. Bratton, "Of England, Home and Duty: the image of England in Victorian and Edwardian Juvenile Fiction," in *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, ed. John M. MacKenzie (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), 73-78. Focusing on the statements concerning the public's reaction to the death of Havelock, Dawson cautions that contemporary claims about "national unity and universality" should be qualified. That caution notwithstanding, he nevertheless acknowledges that there could be no doubt that the public Havelock's role in suppressing the Indian Mutiny launched him to "legendary status." For a detailed examination of the popular exaltation of Havelock see Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities* (London: Routledge, 1994), 79.

[30] Joseph H. Lehmann, *All Sir Garnet: A Life of Field-Marshal Lord Wolseley* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1964), 283; *Times* (London), 5 June 1933, 11.

[31] Street, *Martial Races*, 1-13.

concept of a "British Realm" in a martial and imperial context.[32] The magazine also addressed a variety of other popular cultural topics during its run from 1897 through 1904. While the attention to military matters in the immediate context of the empire might be fully expected, the public's fascination with military pageantry was further suggested by the *British Realm's* nonchalant inclusion of a photograph of nine-year-old Hugh Trevor Dawson striking a martial pose in its piece on the activities and membership of the Prince's Skating Club.[33]

Figure 5-4: Pattisons' Whisky Advertisement[34]

[32] For example, *British Realm* 2 (January 1899), cover. Appearing alongside one another and against a backdrop of a militant image of Britannia and a naval vessel were a kilted Highlander, British soldiers wearing sun-helmets, and native soldiers from the Egyptian and Indian armies. See Figure 5-4 on page 291.

[33] *British Realm* 5 (February 1902), 48. See Figure 5-5 on page 291.

[34] *Graphic*, 10 July 1897, 87. The caption reads, "'Victorious All Along the Line'— The booming of the cannon is nothing to the booming of Pattisons' Whisky. Steady unfaltering attention to the object aimed at hits the mark and wins the battle. Pattisons' have aimed at hitting the public taste for a pure, sound, fully matured, delicately flavored whisky, and they have succeeded. Pattison's Whisky is the Scotch spirit in its perfection – wholesome, stimulating and cream-like. Pattison's Whisky has fought its way to the front and will remain there."

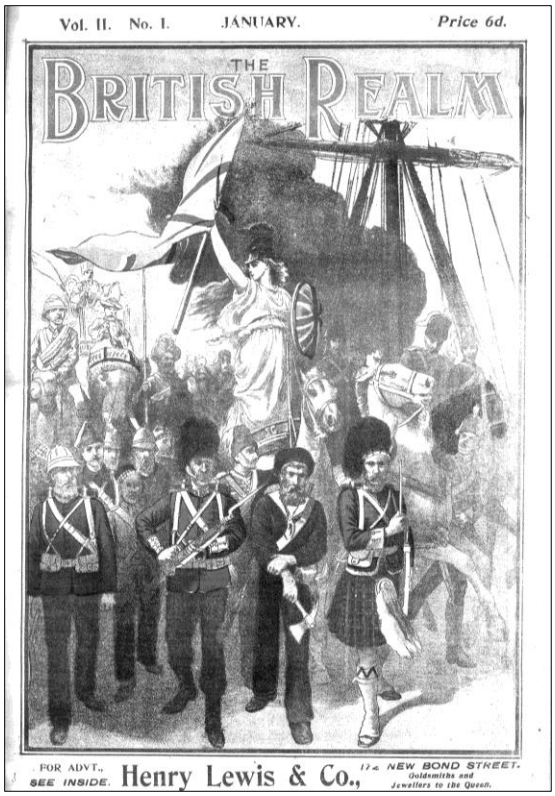

Figure 5-5: *British Realm*, 3 (January, 1898), cover.

Figure 5-6: "Master Hugh Trevor Dawson as the 'Handy Man.'" *British Realm 5* (February, 1902), 48.

The proliferation of such martial attitudes and sentiments in British society led the social historian J. A. Mangan to conclude that, by the turn of the twentieth century, war was widely viewed as a "sacred path to moral purity, ascendancy and domination."[35] Indeed, according to such materials, war was seen as a natural part of human interaction, not as something to be shunned, but rather as something to be accepted as a legitimate part of international politics. Despite those in society who frowned upon the cultural manifestations of militarism—including the pro-Boer factions discussed in Chapter Three—Howard has maintained that many in Victorian and Edwardian Britain had, by

[35] J. A. Mangan, "Duty Unto Death: English Masculinity and Militarism in the Age of New Imperialism" in *Tribal Identities: Nationalism, Europe, Sport* , ed. J. A. Mangan (London: Frank Cass, 1995), 13.

the outbreak of the Great War, become largely desensitized to the horrific side of war and instead had embraced warfare as a determinant of the fittest nation and its right to rule.[36] Truly, so long as military institutions or outbursts of bellicism did not infringe upon the cherished notions of personal liberty and the British sense of fair play, military motifs had become incorporated into British culture.

Provincial Relations with the Military and the Empire, and the Return of the Iconic Highlander

While there was much continuity in the way that the Empire and the British military were popularized and consumed, there were also some distinct regional manifestations of martial sentiment. On the broadest level this was revealed in the language used by the press and public to discuss the nation in imperial contexts. As innumerable instances in the past four chapters have shown, this involved the frequent conflation of "England" and "English" with "Britain" and "British" in English newspapers. As Catherine Hall and Sonya Rose have contended, this conflation was one that was deliberately advanced as early as the late 1840s with Thomas Macaulay's immensely popular *History of England*, a work that emphasized the rise and dominance of a distinct and heralded *English* nation. Marked by a constitutionally limited government, free press, free speech, and the Protestant religion, Macaulay's imagined English people and nation arose as homogenous entities. Through its dominance of Ireland and a Union with Scotland, new groups were grafted onto England and became assimilated as English, with the periphery then being the contemporarily established Empire in the New World, the Caribbean, and India.[37] With that understanding in hand,

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[36] Howard, *The Causes of War*, 271-272.
[37] Catherine Hall, "At Home with History: Macaulay and the *History of England*," in *At Home with the*

subsequent investments in the Cape, the Transvaal, Egypt and the Sudan were to be seen and widely described and understood as *English* enterprises. While this was to be expected from English newspapers, such conflations were also made by non-English writers as well, such as Sir William F. Butler, the Irish-born army officer who wrote extensively on his own military experiences in South Africa, Egypt, and Canada on behalf of "queen and country." Butler consistently conflated "England" with "Britain," and more often than not, showed a preference for the former over the latter.[38] For instance, in addressing his role in the Second Ashanti War (1873-1874), Butler stated:

> A general and some thirty or forty officers of various abilities had landed on the most pestilential shore in the world for the avowed object of driving back a horde of forty thousand splendidly disciplined African savages, who had invaded *British* territory. All the hopes founded upon the idea that the native races who lived under our protection in the forest lying between the sea and the River Prah—Fanits, Assims, Abras, and others—would rally under *English* leadership to do battle against their hereditary enemies, the Ashantis, had proved entirely fallacious.[39]

Writing about what the government's reaction should be to the threat posed by the Mahdi to the stability of the Sudan in 1883, he contended:

> The *English* government were now alarmed. One of two things must happen—either the Sudan must be fought for with *English* troops and paid for with *English* gold, or it must be abandoned.[40]

Later, in writing his history of Wolseley's Nile expedition in late-1884, he referred to the mission as a "purely English matter," despite the fact that Wolseley's force included a number of prominent non-English battalions, specifically the1st Royal Highlanders, the "Black Watch," and the Gordon Highlanders. Also present were battalions from the

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Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World, ed. Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 32-34, 40-41.

[38] In the course of my research I could not find any explanation as to why Butler personally preferred "English" over "British." It is possible that his publishers marketed their books primarily to an English audience, but the question warrants further inquiry.

[39] Butler, *William Francis Butler*, 148. Emphasis is my own.

[40] William F. Butler, *Charles George Gordon* (London: Macmillan, 1892), 194. Emphasis is my own.

Royal Irish and West Kent Regiment.[41] At the same time, Butler also showed a pronounced preference for "England" over "Britain." In recalling the enormous weight and responsibility on his shoulders, Butler wrote:

> My wrong, if it was to be my wrong, meant the death of hundreds of men, the loss of millions of money, the utter failure in the eyes of the world of the most remarkable effort made by *England* in our generation.[42]

In fact, in his account, *The Campaign of the Cataracts*, Butler referred to "England" twenty-eight times, but used "Britain" only twice.[43] In Butler's other works, such as his biography of Gordon, "Britain" appeared just as infrequently and almost never apart from the joined term "Great Britain."[44]

In stark contrast, as Esther Breitenbach explained in her recent work on Scottish missionaries, Scots consistently used the designate of "British" or "Britain" in conjunction with the activity of Christians and imperial administration.[45] For example, she notes that the *Free Church of Scotland Quarterly* characterized Havelock's efforts to suppress the Indian Mutiny as being "the noblest deed that ever God put into the power of a *British* soldier to do."[46] At the same time, the "English" descriptor in Scottish

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[41] Butler, *The Campaign of the Cataracts*, 292. In characterizing the operation as being "English" in this instance, Butler was clearly distinguishing the operation from having any connection with the Egyptian Army.

[42] Butler, *The Campaign of the Cataracts*, 41. Emphasis is my own.

[43] The first of these appeared as a part of a colorful description of his crossing of the English Channel on his way to Egypt: "One route still remained open—that *viá* Trieste—and accordingly when the Victoria Express had done its quiet, quick work, and the Dover-Calais boat had done all that was possible to prevent the inherent vices of the Continental world from invading *England*, and to preserve the well-known virtues of *Britain* from getting abroad into Europe, I found myself a passenger in a wagonlit of surpassing discomfort *en route* for Trieste." The second appeared in musing over the fact that a myriad of churches existed in Ethiopia at a time "when Druids were sacrificing in the oak glades of Britain." Butler, *The Campaign of the Cataracts*, 52, 62. Emphasis on "England" and "Britain" is my own.

[44] The only time "Britain" appeared in isolation in Butler's biography on Gordon was when the author quoted from a 1750 letter from "Mack-Donell" to the Cardinal York, which used the word "Britain" in the course of addressing the religious affiliation of the Gordon family. Butler, *Charles George Gordon*, 9.

[45] Breitenbach, *The Empire and Scottish Society*, 141-42.

[46] *Free Church of Scotland Quarterly Missionary Paper*, No. XVIII (June, 1862), 188, quoted in Breitenbach, *The Empire and Scottish Society*, 142. Emphasis is my own.

discourses was distinctly different and only used when specifically referencing the language, though it might also be used in connection with the broader culture of the United Kingdom. Breitenbach concluded that references to "English" society and culture included Scots and, where differences did exist, they highlighted those distinctions.[47] Indeed as Christopher Harvie has contended, the use of "Britain" and "British," while politically correct was "too cumbersome a formulation for diplomats, merchants, and publicists to deal with." As a result, the use of "English" and "England," which referenced the language and the predominant state became a "default position" that "Scots had to live with."[48] Moreover, he contends that the labels of "Britain" and "British" carried significant provincial connotations that were utilized by local chapters of country-wide organizations and clubs to designate their affiliation.[49]

Consequently, although "England" and "English" may have been the predominant label for the nation and its people, when it came to imperial affairs, the empire was very much a British enterprise. As Paul Ward has argued, such language allowed Scots to emphasize their contribution to the nation and empire, of which many were fiercely proud and defensive.[50] Thus, Breitenbach detected relatively little tension over the use of labels such as English, British, or Scottish while Scots served abroad, but she noted that sensitivity did manifest over their use within the United Kingdome itself.[51] As we will see shortly, many Scots expressed that sensitivity in the pages of the Scots provincial presses. There, when labels pertained to Scotland's place in the empire, Scottish papers preferred to use the word "British" rather than "English."

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[47] Breitenbach, *The Empire and Scottish Society*, 143-44, 151n.
[48] Harvie, *A Floating Commonwealth*, 38
[49] Ibid., 76-77.
[50] Ward, *Britishness*, 23-24
[51] Breitenbach, *The Empire and Scottish Society*, 144.

Moreover, when looking at coverage of the military and its relationship to the general public, one can detect several patterns in the press. Perhaps not surprisingly, aside from giving attention to active military campaigns, my survey of the leading presses digitized by the British Library Newspapers, found that Conservative, Unionist, and independent papers in England were much more likely to offer coverage of the promotions, deployments, shooting competitions, and other happenings of district or local units and the Volunteers than were Liberal papers. When they did, however, it was generally information gleaned from the *London Gazette*, the official government organ, and not resulting from locally generated reportage. To that end, when they did cover the peacetime actions of the military, papers such as the *Evesham Journal*, *Gloucester Standard*, and *Dereham and Fakenham Times*, often focused on matters of national attention such as the grand scale maneuvers conducted on the Salisbury Plain in September of 1898 and 1899.[52] When they mentioned noteworthy general officers or regiments, such as the reception of new regimental colors by the Scots Guards, the coverage of the English provincial papers generally reflected the national interest.[53] Even so, some English papers, such as the *Cheshire Observer*, the *Derby Mercury*, the *Hampshire Telegraph*, and the *Isle of Wight Observer*, did consistently cover developments in the local Volunteer units, which frequently involved reports on shooting matches. While such reports were certainly geared to informing the neighborhood about an event of local interest, the reports themselves were not necessarily written to engender

[52] *Evesham Journal*, 10 September 1898, 2; *Gloucester Standard*, 1,15, 29 July 1899; *Dereham and Fakenham Times*, 7 July 1900, 6.
[53] *Saltburn Times*, 22 July 1899, 2.

public affection toward the military. More often than not they were merely statements of fact.[54]

Such barebones coverage does not in itself mean that the English public was uninterested in military activities; indeed, scattered comments in local stories indicate that men and women were interested in military spectacles if nothing else. The *Pall Mall Gazette's* report on the recruiting march of the 2nd Battalion Devonshires in August 1895 mentioned that such developments were "being watched with great interest in the country."[55] The brief notice on the Devonshires' activity was subsequently carried verbatim by provincial papers such as the Yorkshire-based *Huddersfield Chronicle*, which served a readership well outside the unit's recruitment area.[56] Particular attention was paid to the Volunteers, because of the defensive character of the organization. Cunningham and, more recently, Walton have shown that men and women from all parts of the country and from all political backgrounds came out to watch Volunteers drill and train, and at times bestowed gifts upon the units.[57] The personal and beneficial attention paid to military units by individuals notwithstanding, as Ian Beckett's recent work on the Volunteers has concluded, public interest in the Force largely depended on international events. As a result, in times of peace, the public was frequently indifferent to the Volunteer Force and derided those who were a part of it.[58] At the same time, the tone and general substance of the press coverage suggests that the English public engaged

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[54] Appearing under different titles, these papers all carried columns devoted to the "Military and Naval Intelligence," which at times included the issuance of local commissions. With the full name of the *Hampshire Telegraph* being the *Hampshire Telegraph and Post and Naval Chronicle* and with the paper being based in the naval port of Southampton, it is not surprising that the *Telegraph* would have a regular column devoted to "Naval and Military News."
[55] *Pall Mall Gazette*, 8 August 1895, 6;
[56] *Huddersfield Chronicle* , 10 August 1895,
[57] Walton, *Imagining Soldiers and Fathers*, 49; Cunningham, *The Volunteer Force*, 72-73.
[58] Ian F. W. Beckett, *Riflemen Form: A Study of the Rifle Volunteer Movement, 1859*-1*908* (Barnsley, UK: Pen and Sword, 2007), 118.

individual military units more as part of the national institution and less so for their distinctive provincial and/or local identity.

In contrast, Scottish papers of both Conservative and Liberal persuasions frequently covered such military activities, seemingly fostering warm connections between the military and the civilian communities. That attention may indicate that the bonds between the military and the community were particularly strong and particularly important in Scotland. For instance, when the 2nd Battalion of the 78th Seaforth Highlanders, known as the "the Ross-shire Rifles," marched into Dingall (Ross-shire) in August 1899 as a part of their annual recruiting tour, the *Northern Weekly* devoted nearly three full columns to the festivities surrounding the battalion's arrival. The battalion marched into town with their brass band playing "Rothesay Bay," and the paper reported that they were welcomed by civilians who sang songs of "older days" that lauded the grandness of the regiment. Moreover, according to the report, many people were disappointed that they had missed the regiment when it took an unexpected route to the camping grounds on the far side of town. In addition to covering the details of the event, the *Northern Weekly* reminded its readers of the lengthy and proud heritage of the regiment that traced back to 1777, listing the times and places since 1835 where they had been engaged.[59] Similarly, the Liberal *Fife Free Press* announced the activities which were to accompany the Fife Artillery Regiment's annual two-week training session, while the Unionist *Edinburgh Evening Dispatch* printed a full itinerary of the 1st Battalion of the Gordon Highlanders when it left on a wide-ranging publicity tour.[60] In the case of the former, the *Fife Free Press* berated the "unpatriotic" actions of certain members of the

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[59] *Northern Weekly and General Advertiser* (Dingwall), 10 August 1899, 4; 17 August 1899, 2-3; 24 August 1899, 2 and 9.
[60] *Fife Free Press* (Kirkcaldy), 22 July 1899, 2; *Edinburgh Evening Dispatch*, 6 September 1899, 2.

Kirkcaldy Town Council, who had refrained from coming out in support of the regiment as it passed through. The paper insisted that without the auxiliary forces, the country would be forced to bear the "yoke of conscription" and "bear the enforced militarism that was now part of the national life of the Continental states," implying that to slight the Volunteers was a tremendous disservice to the country's ideals, including the ideal of volunteerism itself which they ought to defend.[61]

It is possible that such receptions and such coverage were mere testaments that Cardwell's localization and linked-battalion reforms of 1853 had been more successful in tying the civilian population to the militia and regular army communities in Scotland than in England. Indeed, the provincial press in Scotland was not oblivious to the connection between fostering that relationship and yielding new recruits. Still, according to the *Weekly Free Press* of Aberdeen, translating that rapport to recruitment remained dubious at best nearly fifty years after those reforms were enacted:

> Everywhere the gallant regiment has been received with enthusiasm, and hospitably entertained. It now remains to be seen whether the real purpose of the march, the acquisition of recruits, will be attained. There can be no doubt that an intelligent, well-behaved young fellow, on entering the army, may rely on securing speedy promotion, and may confidently hope to raise himself … to a very fair position. Unfortunately … there still lingers throughout Scotland the feeling that a man who becomes a soldier is drifting downwards, and the great improvement that has taken place during the past twenty years in the treatment of the rank and file is not fully realised. By-and-by prejudices will be dissipated … if only some assurance of steady employment could be held out to soldiers of good character on their discharge. Certainly it is that Highland lads who think of enlisting could not possibly do better than join the Seaforths—a regiment that has long been as highly distinguished for excellent conduct at home as for valour on the field.[62]

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[61] *Fife Free Press* (Kirkcaldy), 29 July 1899, 4. Given that we have seen that public support for military institutions suggests an inclination toward militarism, to the outside observer it seems contradictory that the paper would argue that the lack of support might lead to militarism (i.e. conscription). However, what this statement suggests is that Britain more easily equated militarism with conscription and did not readily consider militarism as having social or cultural manifestations.

[62] *Weekly Free Press* (Aberdeen), 26 August 1899, 6.

What is equally likely is that while personal aversions to taking the king's shilling remained, the bonds linking the civilian and military communities in Scotland exceeded those in the sister country to the south.[63]

A measure of this connection was the voluminous coverage of peacetime military happenings that transcended occasions where local life literally intersected with the military. Papers such as the Unionist *Aberdeen Weekly Journal*, Aberdeen's Liberal *Weekly Free Press*, and the Liberal *People's Journal*, which circulated in various editions all around Scotland, all had serial columns dedicated to Scottish regiments for the purpose of keeping "the Scottish soldiers in touch with the people of Scotland, and to keep up that interest and connection which will tend largely in favour of recruiting."[64] In the case of the *Aberdeen Weekly Journal's* coverage of the Highland Brigade, that coverage was not limited to the Gordon Highlanders, who were principally stationed in Aberdeen, but also included the Cameronians, Seaforths, Black Watch and other Scottish regiments who were barracked across Scotland. And while these columns most certainly touted military exploits, they were also concerned with "sports and recreations, their barrack-room relaxations, and their shooting and marching exercises," promotions, and other regimental items of interests.[65]

Serials, such as James McKnight's "Highland Battles and Highland Arms" in the *Weekly Inverness*, brought to the forefront incidents of Scotland's more distant but still

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[63] Steve Murdoch and A. Mackillop, ed. *Fighting for Identity: Scottish Military Experience, c. 1500-1900* (Boston: Brill, 2002); Richard J. Finlay, *A Partnership for Good? Scottish Politics and the Union since 1800* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1997); J. M. Mackenzie, "Essay and Reflection: On Scotland and the Empire," *International History Review* 15 (1993): 714-739; J. M. Mackenzie, "Empire and National Identities: The Case of Scotland," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 8 (1998): 215-231; Edward M. Spiers, *The Scottish Soldier and Empire, 1854-1902* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006).
[64] *Aberdeen Weekly Journal*, 15 March 1899, 10.
[65] *Aberdeen Weekly Journal*, 15 March 1899, 10; *Weekly Free Press* (Aberdeen), 15 July 1899, 5.

treasured military past.[66] Other serials brought attention to less well-known persons who may not have had ties to the local community. These included individuals like Lt. A. M. Price of the 2nd Lancers, who grew up in Aberdeen and received a Distinguished Service Order in 1898 for gallantry at Omdurman, or Mike, "an Irish private in Squadron M," who recounted his exploits at the Battle of Omdurman.[67] The *People's Journal* likewise formed a serial around soldiers like Captain Henry MacDonald and Lt. Colonel Abraham Boulger, who had successfully risen through the ranks and were awarded with commissions.[68] Such accounts not only served to personalize the military achievements of Scots and Scottish regiments, but since Boulger was Irish and had served in English units, it is arguable that such accounts helped to personalize the entire institution of the British army.[69]

More significantly, after reading through some thirty Scottish newspapers, another genre that emphasized military themes became evident—the serial novel. Appearing in papers such as the *People's Journal*, the backdrop for these romantic history and adventure tales was often events such as the campaigns in the Sudan, the Crimean War, or Waterloo, and their titles smacked of adventurism: "Fields of Fire," "The Captain's Bride," "Into the Jaws of Death," and "Field and Fight." [70] However, much older themes, such as the Jacobite Uprising were also used for stories such as "Battle of Sheriffmuir," "Kilmarnock's Hussars, and "The White Rose – A Romance of 'Bonnie Prince Charlie'."[71] These themes were particularly prevalent in the *Celtic*

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[66] *Weekly Inverness*, 3 June 1897, 3.
[67] *Weekly Free Press* (Aberdeen), 5 August 1899, 4.
[68] *People's Journal* (Edinburgh), 22 July 1899, 3; 29 July 1899, 3. Price and Boulger were additionally acclaimed for being recipients of Victoria Crosses for gallantry in the Crimean War and Indian Mutiny.
[69] Boulger served in the 84th Regiment of Foot and 2nd Battalion, York and Lancasters.
[70] *People's Journal* (Edinburgh), 1898; *Bridge of Allan Gazette*, August 1899.
[71] *Weekly Inverness*, June 1897; *Weekly Free Press* (Aberdeen), July 1899; *People's Journal* (Edinburgh)

Monthly, a magazine which ran from 1892-1917 and was devoted to the "History, Folk-lore, Archaeology, Poetry, Biography, Antiquities, Art, etc. of the Highlands."[72]

These works were hardly unique creations of the late-nineteenth century. On the contrary, they were reminiscent of one of Scotland's greatest men of letters, Sir Walter Scott, who had similarly romanticized Scotland's martial past in works like *Waverly*, *The Black Dwarf*, and *Rob Roy* in an effort to engender appreciation for the Highlands among his fellow Lowlanders. As noted by Linda Colley and Hugh Trevor-Roper, Scott's efforts fell short in the near term. Lowlanders of the early nineteenth century generally sought recognition as gentlemen by adopting the ways, fashions, and customs of London society, and they were taken aback by the "tartanized" Highland clans who welcomed the visit of George IV to Edinburgh in 1822.[73] Indeed, as Graeme Morton has argued, in stark contrast to the rest of Europe, nineteenth-century Scotland suffered a noticeable lack of nationalism.[74] By the end of the nineteenth century, however, the frequent appearance of Highland themes, not only in Highland publications, where one might expect to find it, but in Lowland ones as well, pointed to a realignment in the self-identification of the Lowlanders that coincided with the emergence of Scottish nationalist

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July 1899.

[72] *Celtic Monthly: a Magazine for Highlanders*, 1 (1892), 8. In celebrating culture of the Scottish Highlands and the Highlander diaspora, the magazine was keen to emphasize a Gaelic cultural revival. However, the issue of Home Rule was seemingly not a driving interest of the publication. Few if any articles were devoted specifically to the issue. While the magazine mentioned the the issue of Scottish Home Rule in passing while commenting upon the broader contributions of Theodore Napier a prestigious member of the highland community, another article by one William MacKay, in an article that discussed teaching Gaelic in schools, specifically refuted charges by the *Times* that the *Celtic Monthly* was intent upon advancing Scottish Home Rule. Mackay's reasoning was that given Scotland's small size, such a move was simply untenable and impractical. "Theodore Napier," *Celtic Monthly 4* (April, 1896): 121; William Mackay, "Teaching Gaelic in Schools," *Celtic Monthly*, 14 (September, 1906): 238.

[73] Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 15; Hugh Trevor-Roper, "The Highland Traditions of Scotland," in *The Invention of Tradition* , ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 29-31.

[74] Graeme Morton, "What if? The Significance of Scotland's Missing Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century," in *Image and Identity: The Making and Re-making of Scotland Through the Ages*, ed. Dauvit Broun, R. J. Finlay, and Michael Lynch (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1998), 157-76.

organizations, such as the Scottish Home Rule Association (1886).[75] Whereas Highlanders had once been shunned by Lowlanders for their martial ways, by the 1890s many Lowlanders gladly attached themselves to that identity and proudly claimed it for their own.[76] In fostering this identity, the *People's Journal* was arguably one of the more influential newspapers, as regional editions were published throughout the country from Aberdeen, Cupar, Dundee, Edinburgh, Forfar, Glasgow, Inverness, Perth, and Stirling, and its pages consistently celebrated and melded Scotland's martial past and present contributions to the British imperial experience.

Even while a romanticized heritage of the Highlands had begun to permeate the self-consciousness of Lowlanders via provincial publications at the turn of the century, the presses unique to the Highlands lauded Scottish regiments more avidly. This distinction should not be surprising. Ever since the union of 1707, the Highlands had been more closely identified with exuding a military culture than the Lowlands, an association that contributed to the concept of martial races.[77] In the aftermath of the Union, Lowlanders largely relied on the model of England in their attempts to modernize the country, and their dedication to the Covenanting movement displaced soldiering as a central pillar of Lowlander identity. The demise of any Lowlander militarism can also be accounted for by the Royal Navy's drain on Lowland manpower and the fact that Highland regiments were much more homogenously filled with Scots, than were non-

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[75] Graeme Morton, "The First Home Rule Movement in Scotland, 1886-1918," in *The Challenge to Westminster: Sovereignty, Devolution, and Independence*, ed. H. T. Dickinson and Michael Lynch (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2000), 113-22; Finlay, *A Partnership for Good*, 12-69 passim.
[76] Ewan A. Cameron, "Embracing the Past: The Highlands in Nineteenth Century Scotland," in *Image and Identity: The Making and Re-making of Scotland Through the Ages*, ed. Dauvit Broun, R. J. Finlay, and Michael Lynch (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1998), 194-196. The cultural division between Highland and Lowland Scotland can be traced as far back as the 15th century. T. M. Divine, *The Scottish Nation, 1700-2000* (New York: Viking, 1999) 232.
[77] Streets, *Martial Races*, 1-10.

Highland Scottish regiments.[78] Indeed, in a March 1898 article, the *Weekly Inverness* lamented the extra-Scots makeup of many "Scottish" regiments.[79]

On this point, many Scots were fiercely proud of their martial contributions to the empire and were concerned that those actions should not be undermined by those who insisted that Britain was in reality Greater England. Highland presses—more so than their Lowland counterparts—reacted stridently to English attempts to subvert, appropriate or otherwise minimize Scotland's contributions to the empire and its place as a coequal partner of Great Britain. Much to the consternation of thousands of Scots, including Scottish Secretary Alexander Bruce, 6th Lord Balfour of Burleigh, Lord Salisbury was frequently and deliberately interchanged the term "England" for the broader term "Britain." His blatantly prejudicial response to the 1897 Scottish Petition on this issue was particularly astounding:[80]

> The advantage of the use of the words 'England, English, and Englishmen' is that it has not any strict geographical interpretation, but is generally used for any inhabitants. Its use is traditional and based on a long course of history. It has followed the development of our literature … [and] it carries a clear idea to anybody's mind, and it rests upon no interpretation of a statute, but upon a long established custom, it raises no jealous question of honour or pre-eminence among the various populations of the two islands. While agreeing that the formal phrase 'United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland' should be employed in all documents of strictly formal character,
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> I do not think any advantage would be gained by attempting to modify the laxer practice which is instinctively followed by writers and speakers upon public questions.[81]

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[78] Murdoch, *Fighting for Identity*, xxxiii-xxxvii.
[79] *Weekly Inverness*, 3 March 1898, 3.
[80] Finlay, *A Partnership for Good?*, 32-33.
[81] Salisbury to Balfour of Burleigh, (1898) BL manuscripts 49688/24, quoted in Roberts, *Salisbury*, 272. This petition, which called upon the government to use the word "British" when referring to England, Ireland, and Scotland, ultimately received 104,647 signatures and measured three-quarters of a mile long. See also *Celtic Monthly: a Magazine for Highlander* 6 (1898), 89; Lady Frances Balfour, *A Memoir of Lord Balfour of Burleigh, K.T.* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1924), 89-100.

For patriotic Scots like Bruce, such slights and deliberate expressions of English hegemony could not be ignored. On 17 February 1898, the *Weekly Inverness* raised objections to "English" being used interchangeably with "British," which prompted the question of whether Scotland was losing its identity. Coincidentally, but fittingly in the present discussion, the paper protested accounts where massacres of the 78th and 93rd Highlanders in the Sepoy Rebellion and at Lucknow had been referred to as "English" massacres.[82]

Likewise, in the Edinburgh edition of the *People's Journal* from 23 July to 1 October 1899, a series of letters appeared that debated the "Britain over England" issue. Driven by the ardent nationalism of John S. Rae and Malcolm MacGregor Campbell, much of the discussion emphasized Scotland's contributions to and sacrifices on behalf of Britain, which were minimized by treating the nation as Greater England.[83] Reflecting upon the celebrations surrounding the American day of independence, Campbell lamented the absence of such a day in Scotland. With a subtle reference to Scotland's victory at Bannockburn, he called for Scots to demand the right to observe a national holiday on its "day of deliverance from the English yoke."[84] While the points of Rae and MacGregor were welcomed and appreciated by many, others—such as "Rob Roy," a Scot from Perth, and A. E. Parker, an Englishman from Aberdeen—insisted that such "bluster" served very little purpose whatsoever. The issue of a distinct Scottish identity was best set aside for the sake of national fraternity and unity. Indeed, "Rob Roy," an ardent

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[82] *Weekly Inverness*, 17 Feb 1898, 4.
[83] *People's Journal* (Edinburgh), 1 October, 1898, 3. Incidentally born on Robert Burns's 100th birthday, John S. Rae was a Scottish poet of minor renown, whose works "celebrated with fire, spirit, and originality, the fame of [Scotland's] ancient warriors, knights, nobles, and ladies." John S. Rae, *Poems and Songs*, with introduction by Dr. D. H. Edwards (Edinburgh: John Menzies, 1884), xii-xiv. Malcolm MacGregor Campbell became a secretary for the Scottish Home Rule Association in 1898 and also served as Secretary for the Scottish Anniversary and Historical Society. *Glasgow Herald*, 8 August 1898,4; .
[84] *People's Journal* (Edinburgh), 16 July 1898, 8.

supporter of Scottish Home Rule, argued that that cause would be better served by dismissing the subject instead of fanning the flames of animosity toward the "hated English."[85]

That Malcolm MacGregor Campbell was a secretary for the Scottish Home Rule Association may suggest that this discussion and the broader effusion of military themed articles were fundamentally linked to the efforts of the Home Rule movement which arose between 1880 and 1914. To this end, the press coverage of the Scottish regiments and their soldiers transcended the mere purpose of covering current events and providing public interest stories, as such topics also engendered a greater appreciation for Scotland's participation in the empire and the British nation. The product was the marketing of a self-conscious Scottish identity deeply grounded in Scotland's military past and present, to a degree that in England was either minimized or completely non-existent.

Thus, in delving into the links between the public and the military, the provincial dynamics of British cultural militarism, and its manifestation in the provincial press, we find that those sentiments and connections may well have been much more deeply rooted in Scotland than in England. As we have seen, both English and Scottish presses certainly reported on military happenings. However, the attention devoted to recruitment marches and social occasions in Scotland was both quantitatively greater and qualitatively warmer, suggesting a different bond between the civilian and military sectors than existed in England. Moreover, to the extent that martial attitudes and sympathies emerged particularly strongly in Scotland, they were notably molded and characterized by a strongly romanticized strain of Highlanderism, ironically using the

[85] *People's Journal* (Edinburgh), 9 July 1898, 2; 16 July 1898, 8.

trope of a "martial race" in service to the Crown to undercut the very connection that such a race was meant to preserve.[86] Thus, while the connection between the British public and the military received heightened attention in the cultural expressions of the later nineteenth century, those links were expressed distinctively in Scotland in order to serve, simultaneously and paradoxically, both regional and national purposes.

[86] Murdoch, *Fighting for Identity*, xxxvii-xxxix.

CONCLUSION

In surveying the public discourse concerning imperial events in the Cape to Cairo corridor and imperial military reform, we have seen that the issues of empire and national defense were interwoven and certainly not confined to the polished offices of Whitehall, the smoking rooms of the elite's social clubs, or even the parlors of the middle class. They loomed large in the eyes of the public, evidenced by discussions in the provincial press and the manner in which Britain's imperial army became fused into the fabric of Victorian society. While Porter acknowledges that such messages became more prevalent after 1870, his central question remains whether those messages were enough to pull an "absent-minded" public out of its slumber and infuse it with a "general imperial consciousness."[1]

The present survey of national and provincial papers—a resource that Porter did not consult in his work—demonstrates that newspapers and popular journals, and by extension the reading public, were consistently attentive to imperial matters. Specifically, in matters concerning the Cape to Cairo corridor, there was robust commentary about Britain's actions in South Africa, Egypt, and the Sudan across the political spectrum. Furthermore, tangible evidence of the public's engagement in imperial questions included the significant results of the 1880 parliamentary elections, an election rooted in Gladstone's anti-imperial Midlothian platform, as well as the numerous public demonstrations that were held in response to imperial events such as the siege of Gordon in Khartoum, the outbreak of the Second Anglo-Boer War, and most notably the relief of Mafeking.

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[1] Porter, *Absent-Minded Imperialists*, 164.

Throughout these events, Conservative, Liberal, and Radical voices spoke of the need to defend the nation's prestige and not to lose face in the eyes of its Continental rivals. British prestige involved a myriad of principles associated with classical liberalism, security, and economic and diplomatic supremacy. For the imperialists, the perpetuation of these elements often necessitated a vigorous foreign and imperial policy. It was on these grounds that Carnarvon and Shepstone coordinated the annexation of the Transvaal in 1877, a move generally supported by the press and politicians across the political spectrum. In the 1880s, the need to uphold British prestige was at the heart of intervention in the Sudan, the public's perception surrounding Gordon's mission to Khartoum and the public's demands for his relief. In the 1890s, British prestige was again invoked by Milner and his allies to support the Uitlanders in the Transvaal and to legitimize the Second Anglo-Boer War. Equally concerned about the nation's standing, Liberal leaders and their press allies frequently opposed imperial interventionism on the grounds that it was detrimental to British prestige, as it proved to be an unnecessary distraction to the government, diverted resources, and pulled Britain away from its principled abhorrence of war, conflict, conquest, and subjugation.

Looking at the spectrum of efforts at reforming the military and the engagement of the public, we find a great deal of continuity in the public's engagement in such matters as far back as the mid-1850s. To be sure, as international circumstances and the geopolitical landscape evolved, the potential consequences of military inefficiency and ill-preparedness became all the more serious. The British government was forced to shift its attention from having to contend mostly with pre-industrial armies on the imperial periphery to the highly industrialized powers of continental Europe. The result was that

the consequences of military inefficiency and ill-preparedness became all the more apparent and led some to advocate more radical solutions, such as conscription. To that end, Porter saw the propagandizing of Britain's imperial perils by the imperialists in the early 1900s as an effort to awaken the British public out of a slumber. He concluded that the sheer weight of their effort was indicative of the new imperial threat and the unsatisfactory state of the public's attention to it. As to the question of whether the public was convinced by it, Porter offered two possible and admittedly contradictory deductions. While he allowed that it was possible that the public did become convinced of the threat given the pervasiveness of the imperial message, he contends that it was far more likely that the public largely remained unconvinced of the threat because imperialist propaganda continued unabated for a lengthy period of time and because it did not apparently effectively penetrate the working class.[2]

However, if we examine the 1890s from the perspective that the public had for decades been keenly engaged in questions concerning military efficiency and military preparedness, along with their imperial implications and connotations, the imperialist propaganda of the 1890s which was geared toward heightening the awareness of national defense takes on quite a different meaning. In the first place, it is hardly surprising that as the perils to the British Empire increased, the calls for a national response did as well. In addition, so far as the imperialist propaganda was directed towards encouraging attention to national defense in the late 1890s, this messaging was very much in keeping with the previous efforts to encourage patriotism and increase voluntary enlistment in the services. The "paramilitary" organizations of the 1890s and early 1900s were certainly outgrowths of these efforts. By the mid-1890s, some imperialists believed that more

[2] Porter, *Absent-Minded Imperialists*,164-65, 192-93, 222-26

drastic solutions might be necessary: compulsory military service and conscription. For that solution to be implemented, however, Britons would have to reassess their personal and national identity, and redefine themselves and their nation socially, politically, and above all militarily. For a nation and people whose military traditions had been so deeply rooted for centuries, this was a momentous challenge. That the imperialists and militarists did not fully succeed to their satisfaction in bringing the country to that level of awareness prior to the First World War should thus be hardly surprising. The failure of groups such as the National Service League to harness the public to their cause was not necessarily an indication that the country remained oblivious to imperial needs. In the light of the robust attention paid to imperial affairs at least since the annexation of the Transvaal, the public's reluctance to respond to the NSL suggests just the opposite: the nation remained attached to its longstanding commitment to voluntarism as a fundamental British institution. Even amid the stark reality of an imperiled empire during the First World War, Britons were reluctant to part ways with such national principles. At the same time, the volunteerism of the British public in the first weeks of the war argues that they were already aware of the imperial implications of that conflict and were well-prepared to answer Kitchener's call to arms. Indeed to a certain extent, the public was more cognizant of those needs than some of the nation's leaders.[3]

In examining the public discourse on a provincial level, we find that by the end of the nineteenth century the martial aspects of the empire were being propagated by nationalist-minded Scots who sought to emphasize the *Britishness* of the British Empire by highlighting Scotland's unique contribution to it. Despite frequent conflation of

[3] For an examination of the public's response to Kitchener's call to arms and the potential need for conscription during the first half of the First World War, see Lay, "Arming an Empire," chapters 2-3.

"England" and "English" with "Britain" and "British" by the national and English provincial presses in addressing imperial politics, these Scots could thus assert that the empire was not English, but was most certainly a British construction and enterprise. At the same time, the discussions concerning military reform for the benefit of the nation and the empire became incorporated into broader narratives concerning Scotland's martial and Highlander identity—elements that were deeply felt by the general Scottish public.

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