

The Widening Gyre: Security, Sovereignty, and the Making of Modern Statehood in the British Empire, 1898-1931

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THE WIDENING GYRE: SECURITY, SOVEREIGNTY, AND THE MAKING OF MODERN STATEHOOD IN THE BRITISH EMPIRE, 1898-1931

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This project asks why changing norms of statehood in the early twentieth century produced extraordinary violence, and locates the answer in the way a variety of actors across the British Empire—colonial and Dominion governments, nationalist movements, and clients or partners of colonial regimes—leveraged the problem of imperial defense to serve their own political goals. It explores how this process increasingly bound ideas about sovereignty to the question of security and provoked militarizing tendencies across the British world in the early twentieth century, especially among liberal governments in Britain and the colonies, which were nominally opposed to militarism and costly military spending. Security provided a framework in which the matters of imperial defense and strategy could be translated into an expedient language of danger and safety, risk and reward, order and disorder. It legitimized colonial state-building projects and helped control populations; it propelled the renegotiation of relationships between those colonial states. Security suffused the British world's racial identities and hierarchies with yet more hopes and fears, and yoked these to the centralization and growth of states and institutions. The project employs sources and methodologies that link history to debates about sovereignty and state-building in political theory and international relations, about identity and anxiety in the production of literature, and about federalism and subsidiarity in constitutional law. Beginning with the outbreak of the South African War, the first chapters cover the haphazard coordination of imperial forces in that conflict, and how it shaped movements for constitutional federation in Australia and New Zealand. Next, the project explores how the Government of India under George Curzon attempted to manage its military clients in the Indian Princely States, and how Indian princes understood and performed their sovereignty by providing troops to serve in the Indian Army. It then compares these arguments about sovereignty in India to highly similar ones about military subsidies from British Dominions to the Royal Navy, and the irony of self-governing Dominions converging with Indian modes of rule. The third chapter discusses colonial reactions to the Anglo-German naval crisis in 1909 and how colonial governments leveraged the Empire's security crisis to argue that, through their contributions to imperial defense, they had transcended colonial status and become "Dominions." Next, the project discusses the breakdown of systematic schemes for defense and political cooperation in the British Empire in the years leading up to World War I, and how they reflected the tensions inherent in the empire's emerging norms of sovereignty. Central to this chapter is the struggles of Wilfrid Laurier's government in Canada and between nationalist and unionist factions in Ireland to manage the militarization unleashed by the securitizing logic that had taken hold in the British Empire and, increasingly, the British metropole. The final chapter explores the issue of conscription during World War I, and how it personalized the problems of security and

sovereignty for millions of British subjects by forcing them to apprehend the reality that states could take possession of their physical selves for service in war. This chapter draws extensively on personal recollections of the war years by Irish men and women who gave “witness statements” to the Republic of Ireland’s Bureau of Military History during the 1940s and 50s about their experience of the years 1912-1922, including World War I, conscription, the Anglo-Irish War, and the creation of the Irish Free State.

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INTRODUCTION

*Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.*

*Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi
Troubles my sight: a waste of desert sand;
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Wind shadows of the indignant desert birds.*

*The darkness drops again but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?*

-William Butler Yeats – *The Second Coming* (1919)

0.1 INTRODUCTION

Albert Venn Dicey published the first edition of his seminal *Introduction to the Study of the Law of the Constitution* in 1885.¹ It ran for eight editions during his lifetime, each prefaced by Dicey with a brief update of constitutional happenings since the last. In the preface to the 1915 final edition, Dicey reflected on all that had passed since he delivered his first lecture as Vinerian Professor of English Law at Oxford in 1882. “This introduction...is in the main a work of historical retrospection,” he wrote, “It is impossible, however...to prevent a writer's survey of the past from exhibiting or betraying his anticipations of the future.” Dicey could not have known the true magnitude of global death and ruin that awaited in 1914. Instead, he focused his professional analysis on two more specific portents of doom. First, he predicted, the recent revocation of the House of Lords’ historic right to veto legislation would fundamentally alter the nature of parliamentary sovereignty. Secondly, in his words, “the Imperial Parliament may, if not in theory yet in fact, have ceased as a rule to exercise supreme legislative power in certain countries subject to the authority of the King.”² Even worse, Dicey argued, Britain and its colonies could no longer afford to hold one another in benign neglect that might have assuaged the problem. “Imperialism,” he explained, had become received wisdom, because it offered a priceless gift to imperial subjects: it foreclosed on

¹ Dicey’s work has been so influential, including among other things popularizing the phrase “rule of law” and articulating the function of Parliamentary sovereignty, that his writings are considered part of the UK’s unwritten constitution. See a recent exploration of Dicey’s impact by Lord Bingham: Tom Bingham, *The Rule of Law*, Reprint edition (London: Penguin Global, 2011).

² A.V. Dicey, *Introduction to the Study of the Law of the Constitution*, (orig. 1915) 8 ed. (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1982), 21. Dicey refers in the first instance to the Parliament Act 1911, which replaced the Lords’ legislative veto powers with a limited delaying mechanism.

the possibility of war between them, in their millions, and (through their combined strength), ruled out war against foreign powers too.³ This boon obliged Britain and its colonies to consider one another's mutual interests going forward, and made crisis-management an Empire-wide imperative. "The war in South Africa," Dicey remembered more than a decade on from the conflict, "was in reality a war waged not only by England, but also by the Dominions to prevent secession."⁴ No longer peripheral inconveniences, wars like the one in South Africa had become existential struggles to preserve the unity of the Empire and the crucial security cordon it provided. Dicey thus described a grim dilemma: imperialism had simultaneously turned the British constitution into a bulwark holding back all assailants, and yet was weakening that bulwark from within. The British constitution had become like iron: strong but brittle.

Arthur Berriedale Keith was Dicey's Scottish contemporary and counterpart, a lecturer in Sanskrit and constitutional law at the University of Edinburgh. Keith, a prolific writer with broad expertise, wrote extensively on the constitutional confusions created by the expansion of British imperialism. Whereas the wizened Oxonian Dicey mostly confined himself to study of the white-settled Dominions, Keith took a keen interest also in India, and later in 1919 would be appointed to a special committee formed to consider the implementation of responsible government there.⁵ He also shared Dicey's sense of foreboding. Keith wrote in his 1909 *Responsible Government in the Dominions* that those who expected a linear progression across the Empire from dependency to

³ Ibid., 29.

⁴ Ibid., 30.

⁵ See: Papers Presented to Parliament at the Command of His Majesty (hereafter Cd.) 207, 1919, "Great Britain. India Office. Committee on Home Administration of Indian Affairs. East India (Home Administration)," UK Parliamentary Papers, Chadwyck Online.

democracy were simply mistaken.⁶ Where there were “large and increasing white population[s]” this might be the case, but in “small islands or tropical colonies where there is a relatively large native population,” it was unlikely.⁷ Keith’s offered two reasons for this discrepancy: some colonies, such as Bermuda, served as imperial fortresses, and their strategic value could not be risked to the whims of democracy, while in the others the Imperial Government had to act in trusteeship for the native population, in other words, to prevent migrant whites from running roughshod over indigenous peoples.⁸ India, for Keith and for most others, did not easily fit any of these categories. It was all of them and none – a fortress containing the world’s largest professional army, a repository of its own legal tradition of considerable antiquity,⁹ a composite of native aristocratic and foreign colonial regimes,¹⁰ and an uneasy if surprisingly durable balancing act between a small, white ruling bureaucracy and a large non-white population. While India did not experience the British Empire’s crisis of security and sovereignty in the same way as the self-governing colonies, its strategic importance gave it a central role in the same drama.

⁶ More specifically, from Crown Colony (rule by a local Governor responsible only to Crown and Colonial Office, e.g. in Fiji) to full responsible government (rule by a local, democratically-accountable legislature, e.g. in Canada).

⁷ Arthur Berriedale Keith, *Responsible Government in the Dominions* (London: Stephen and Sons, 1909), 3.

⁸ The prevalence of the “trustee” mentality within the Colonial Office points also to the critical fact that metropolitan colonial policy often had much to do with constraining British clients or settlers. This topic has been studied extensively in the literature; two of the most important works are Stephen Constantine, *The Making of British Colonial Development Policy 1914-1940*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 1984); Ronald Hyam, *Understanding the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), chap. 7, “Bureaucracy and Trusteeship in the Colonial Empire.”

⁹ Keith fell in with an established tradition of British orientalist like William Jones who sought to unlock the essence, as it were, of Indian legal and political heritage through the rigorous study of Indian, especially Sanskrit, texts. Their legacy has been critiqued by Edward Said and others.

¹⁰ For a recent investigation of the composite nature of British colonialism in India in the Company period, see Philip J. Stern, *The Company-State: Corporate Sovereignty and the Early Modern Foundations of the British Empire in India* (New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 2011).

The crises Dicey and Keith portended were the crises of the global twentieth century: imperial decline, self-determination, and the politics of identity; violence and global war. World order changed drastically in the first half of the twentieth century. This project tries to explain why it happened so rapidly, and why it appeared so strongly within the British Empire, for shifts in world order emerged strongly in colonial environments. In 1905, the colony of New Zealand had a local militia of a few thousand, no blue-water navy, no office of foreign affairs, and no distinct identity among international observers; its ships and soldiers existed abroad, officially, as British. Its government could not prevent its interests from being bargained away by British diplomats in deals with Germany, the United States, and Japan. Its courts could have their decisions overturned via appeals to the British Privy Council. A little over a decade later, the same New Zealand funded the construction of one of the world's most advanced warships, deployed troops under its own flag in four continents simultaneously, passed laws conscripting its young men for service in a foreign war, independently signed the most momentous international treaty in world history to date, and received authorization from the League of Nations to rule German Samoa as its own Protectorate. This story and others explored here shows how the rapid changes of the twentieth century were driven by unlikely actors. They were not Great Powers but insurgent ones. Their epicenter was not in Europe, but Asia and the greater Pacific. These reworkings and redistributions of sovereignty were not simply conceded by European powers as they collapsed, for the British Empire emerged from the war nominally stronger and larger than ever. Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa actively pursued these concessions, and similar

processes unfolded in Ireland and India. They did this by leveraging the problem of imperial defense to legitimize their goals.

A second puzzle about the militarization of the British Empire is that it mostly occurred under the auspices of liberalism and at the hands of liberal governments. Militarism demanded high public spending, to which British liberals were usually averse, threatened the civil liberties cherished by liberals for much of the preceding century, and distracted from the plans of contemporary liberals to build social welfare provisions into the repertoires of their states. This puzzle can be explained in two ways. First, unleashing the logic of security meant that some militarizing measures would have to be taken in spite of liberal impulses – H.H. Asquith’s British government would certainly have preferred to build fewer dreadnoughts, for example. Secondly, however, militarization and the conflation of security and sovereignty occurred under liberal oversight because it helped satisfy liberal impulses to create communities of equality and social contracts that could produce political order. Building military machinery and agreeing to use it to serve imperial goals served as a test for whether colonies were ready to become responsible members of the imperial community, and colonies’ joint trust in maintaining imperial security allowed them to construct themselves as partners, allies, and increasingly as equals to Britain. This satisfied liberal cravings to flatten social hierarchy, and yet constructed new hierarchies in its place – namely, ones that privileged conformity to the examples and norms shaped by European colonial powers which built powerful states and used them to create security and order at home, and then to project power abroad.

The picture of crisis Keith and Dicey painted had already taken shape before 1914, and would not reach its logical conclusion until 1931, when the Statute of

Westminster revoked Britain's right to legislate for colonial governments, and placed all of the Empire's responsible governments on legally equal footing under the Crown. While often read also as a consequence of the First World War, the Statute merely confirmed in law what had already become true in practice – the imperial center no longer held in matters of security. The colonies (and their military capabilities) evolved haltingly, as did their abilities to influence and react to imperial norms and policies. The first significant international conflict in which most British colonies were forced to confront their obligations (and functional abilities) to participate was not World War I, but the South African War fifteen years earlier. The strains on the British constitution itself also crescendoed well before the war; Dicey's beloved House of Lords had been handcuffed in 1910 mainly because of its recalcitrance in the matter of Irish sovereignty. The pre-World War I era's most interesting civil-military debate occurred not in Britain but India, between its Viceroy George Curzon and his proposed Commander-in-Chief, General Herbert Kitchener, and engulfed Indian nationalists and colonial bureaucrats alike.¹¹ The rapid evolution of colonial military capabilities and diplomatic autonomy is a puzzle unto itself: from 1898-1900, Britain fought wars in China and southern Africa that substantively used colonial resources and soldiers, in many cases informally because colonial governments lacked established systems for authorizing military force. By the 1922 Chanak Crisis, Canada, Australia, and other colonies, because of their strategic indispensability to imperial security goals, effectively vetoed British military intervention in the newly-created Republic of Turkey. This story will begin at the turn of the twentieth

¹¹ See Chapter 2. Curzon thought Kitchener's bid to collapse the functions of India's top military post and its top civilian defense office into a single post was a barbarous and militarist affront to the civil-military norms of the British constitutional tradition.

century, when events like the South African War, the federation of Australia, and the debate over Indian and Irish reform stimulated fresh interest in questions of security and sovereignty. It will end with the Statute and its immediate impact.

A.V. Dicey noted towards the end of his introduction, as Keith had, how the previous century's debates on the future of the Empire tended to assume two possible futures: a series of American-style separations or a wholesale imperial centralization into a single, federal state. In their place emerged a new synthesis; each colony would remain connected to the imperial community, but to the greatest extent possible be "Master of its own house." Dicey attributed the happy emergence of this new synthesis to "the political instinct of our race."¹² Indeed, Anglo-Saxon settlers were a key ingredient in his recipe for institutional success; even Ireland was not safe for concessions in his view. Any attempt to explain the development of colonial institutions and states in this period must contend with the fact that most of the Empire's inhabitants viewed the world through racialized phenomenologies.¹³ Some recent scholarship has explored the way this affected the making of modern states, as institutionalized racism.¹⁴ The political *rhetoric* of security – in which colonial states used the language of dangers, risks, safety, and opportunity to persuade their subjects to back militarizing schemes – readily co-opted racial imagery and helped these incipient states map out population groups as threats to,

¹² Dicey, *Introduction to the Study of the Law of the Constitution*, 29.

¹³ See D.A. Washbrook, "Oriental and Occident: Colonial Discourse Theory and the Historiography of the British Empire," in *Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume V: Historiography*, ed. Robin W Winks, vol. 5, 5 vols., The Oxford History of the British Empire (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 596–611.

¹⁴ Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); David Theo Goldberg, *The Racial State* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2002).

or defenders of, order. Securitizing logic used race to help define the borders of states – inside, it confronted the threat of uprisings and the need to build harmonious social order; outside, it faced the menace of foreign invasion or infiltration, and the imperative to project power and build order regionally, even globally. In this way, the security logic deployed by political elites to speak to their subjects encouraged the latter to embrace militarization, and to think racially about the way they mapped the boundaries of the state and the world. Exploring how race influenced ideas about security and sovereignty in this project will help place the extensive research on the role of race in colonialism in conversation with new work on race and the state.¹⁵

Scholars, especially those interested in military and strategic questions, have been tempted to explain the rapid changes in world order during this period as consequences of the First World War. This interpretation, while tidy and befitting of the war's impact, is too convenient. As Dicey and Keith observed before the war broke out, the Westminster Parliament had already lost its priest-like role as mediator and conduit of the sovereign power of the Crown to its subjects in all parts of the Empire. In place of that magisterium prevailed an eclectic and perhaps appropriately Anglican settlement – Westminster remained predominant, but colonial actors increasingly asserted their autonomy – the gyre, as Yeats would write in 1919, widened.¹⁶ In fact, one of the war's causes can be

¹⁵ Australia has proved a fruitful case for exploring this theme; see also Goldberg, *The Racial State*; Eric Richards, "Migrations: The Career of British White Australia," in *Australia's Empire*, ed. Stuart Ward and D.M. Schreuder, The Oxford History of the British Empire Companion Series (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Luke Trainor, *British Imperialism and Australian Nationalism: Manipulation, Conflict, and Compromise in the Late Nineteenth Century*, Studies in Australian History (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), chap. 13, "Federating in a White World."

¹⁶ Yeats' "gyre" – a spiral, growing ever wider, struggling to maintain its shape as the motion that made it larger slowly tore it apart – was sufficiently abstract (and occult) to be useful in this context. *The Second Coming* reflected on the ruin of both physical and metaphysical order in the aftermath of World War I. For Yeats it seemed to herald the dawn of a new age, and begged the question of what messianic figure would

read as the failure by other world empires to effectively manage similar crises of sovereignty to the one Britain faced. British colonies played an important role in reshaping international order in the early twentieth century, and offer a glimpse at the metamorphosis from subordinate colony to sovereign state. But this story of transition might also be told about the successor states of World War I's myriad crumbled empires, from Turkey to Czechoslovakia. The British world's peculiar influence lay in the fact that, as the world's fading hegemon, Britain's efforts to work through the dilemmas of sovereignty acted as an incubator for ideas about international- and even world-government. This was in no small part due to the fact that Britain had managed to survive the war relatively intact, and had done so by successfully leveraging its empire as a military asset.

0.2 BACKGROUND – CRISES OF SOVEREIGNTY

“Sovereignty” is an abstract concept. It refers to authority, and its exercise within the context of states. Describing its usage in the British world is rendered more difficult by the fact that Britain lacks a formal, written constitution that carefully describes the parameters of state power. Instead, it consists of an informal system of precedent and

arise, as Christ had in the previous, to dominate it. Unfortunately, the latter question falls outside the scope of this project.

practice, and relies on occasional figures like Dicey to make observations about it. In rare instances, like Dicey's and especially William Blackstone's, those observations attract sufficient consensus to become part of Britain's constitutional ecosystem itself. In short, sovereignty's precise meaning and usage in the British Empire has changed over time. Its most common usage has been reference to the person of the monarch. The King or Queen was, qua Thomas Hobbes' Leviathan – "The Sovereign" - the physical embodiment of rightful authority, and of the state. Though some have argued (notably, Hobbes in 1651) that sovereignty ought to be absolute; a binary condition of authority that either existed or did not, in practice sovereignty has always functioned as a mediation between coercion and consent. England's 1688 Glorious Revolution made this mediation a matter of formality: the Crown was no longer the absolute Sovereign; instead, the Crown-in-Parliament represented the source of sovereignty for the English state (which would further augment itself through the 1707 and 1800 Acts of Union with Scotland and Ireland, respectively). "Crown-in-Parliament" reflected the reality that the absolute sovereignty of the monarch was mediated by the consent of his subjects, the latter expressed via representation in Parliament.

The explosive expansion of Britain's empire created a host of new puzzles. Each new colonial venture produced a new context in which the sovereignty of the British monarchy - imperial power - would be mediated, negotiated, and contested. The integration of other legislative assemblies into the imperial system, such as Ireland's and those of the American colonies, introduced a new concept, "Parliamentary Sovereignty," which described the superiority of the Westminster Parliament to the others in the Empire, and gave it the legislative prerogative to supersede their acts. This authority, too,

was mediated, for as Edmund Burke argued in defense of rebellious Americans, authority was a matter not of theory but of things, and Parliament could not expect to govern in Massachusetts as absolutely as it did in Middlesex.¹⁷ The Empire also mediated sovereignty through non-democratic institutions. In India, after the end of Company rule, the Viceroy stood as the representative of the British Sovereign just as Governors did in self-governing colonies, but the Raj constructed itself as an aristocratic regime that ruled Indians with direct authority.¹⁸ It also recognized subsidiary rulers, the native aristocrats of the Princely States who enjoyed sovereignty within their own territories, which led to the restyling of Victoria as “Empress” rather than simply “Queen” in 1877. The main official distinction here involved the constitutional concept of responsibility – “responsible governments” in the British Empire were responsible to local assemblies (with the consent of their Governors as Crown representatives); other colonial governments were responsible to the Crown (or its Governors) alone, hence their designation as “Crown Colonies.”

Sovereignty, then, was a capacious concept that referred both to formal constitutional relationships between different parts of the British Empire, and more abstractly to the growth of the authority and powers of colonial states. British subjects talked about sovereignty fairly often, even when they did not mention it by name. They also invoked it directly in extraordinary moments, which will be highlighted in this project. Some colonial liberals invoked sovereignty in arguments *against* military

¹⁷ Burke, *Conciliation with America*, vol. III (ed. 1808), 56-57. in Dicey, *Introduction to the Study of the Law of the Constitution*, 24–25.

¹⁸ A useful exploration of the way the Raj constructed its sovereignty in India as a kind of *translatio imperii* from the East India Company and the Mughal Empire is Sudipta Sen, *Distant Sovereignty: National Imperialism and the Origins of British India* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

spending, asserting (speciously) that only sovereign states needed navies and armies, not their humble colonies – Henry Bournes Higgins of Australia and Wilfrid Laurier of Canada both deployed this argument.¹⁹ Maori invoked sovereignty (and its contested Maori translation, *mana*) in their debates over the Treaty of Waitangi, which regulated their relations with Pākehā New Zealanders, and also in the way they understood their loyalty and military service to the British Crown.²⁰ Politicians and the press in multiple British colonies invoked sovereignty in their rejection of naval and military subsidies to Britain, which they felt eroded the sovereignty of their incipient states.²¹ Finally, nationalists used sovereignty extensively to describe their opposition to British rule, especially in Ireland, and often linked these arguments to their opposition to military conscription during the First World War.²² The idea of sovereignty is useful here, even when it is not invoked directly, because it captures the exercise of state power in both democratic and undemocratic cases, unlike terms such as “self-government,” and can also describe *de facto* as well as *de jure* exercises of power. Focusing on how sovereignty changed over time thus allows this project to measure two things: the way colonial states changed relative to each other (such as in the creation of Dominion status, a new constitutional category for some colonies), and the way they changed absolutely (such as in the growth of their own powers to tax and coerce populations). Colonial subjects and colonial governments fixated on security in the early twentieth century because it allowed

¹⁹ Higgins’ remarks are discussed in Chapter 1, and Laurier’s in Chapter 3, below.

²⁰ *Mana*, sovereignty, and the Maori are discussed in Chapter 2 below.

²¹ The subsidy problem is discussed in Chapter 2 below.

²² Conscription and Irish nationalism are discussed in Chapter 5 below.

them to alter the balance between coercion and consent through which authority was produced.

If A.V. Dicey and A.B. Keith were firsthand observers of the British Empire's crisis of sovereignty at the turn of the twentieth century, the seeds of that crisis had been germinating for at least a century. Recent work on sovereignty has tended to revolve around the issue of territoriality, or the imposition of authority within given borders.²³ From its inception, the Empire faced related dilemmas over how to defend the nominal extent of its territory. Failure to settle this question of security begat crises of sovereignty. The first bitter fruits of this problem had been the American Revolution, itself a result of the unsettled Seven Years' War and the fiscal-military mess that conflict made of North America. George III and his government in Great Britain thought his governments in the American colonies should be funding the imperial security apparatus that protected them more robustly. The American colonists, discomfited by imperial troops in their communities and chagrined by the tax rates needed to sustain them, saw tyranny in the Crown's mismanagement of its security responsibilities.²⁴ In the aftermath of the revolution, the Empire was forced to consolidate in North America and rebalance around

²³ Some have argued that territoriality obscures more than it reveals. An excellent overview on competing theories of sovereignty and recent scholarship is available in Lauren A. Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400--1900* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 279–283; Cf. Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990-1990* (Cambridge, Mass., USA: B. Blackwell, 1990); Stephen D. Krasner, *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999).

²⁴ A book that usefully explores how British politics made sense of the American Revolution as a crisis of sovereignty is Eliga H Gould, *The Persistence of Empire: British Political Culture in the Age of the American Revolution*, Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Gould has more recently returned to this topic to explore how the American state repackaged some of the same themes and sought to enhance its sovereignty via diplomatic recognition in Eliga H. Gould, *Among the Powers of the Earth: The American Revolution and the Making of a New World Empire* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012).

its presently more profitable colonies in Asia.²⁵ The problem remained: where coercion and consent were out of balance, crises of sovereignty ensued, and self-government only exacerbated them. Carl Schmitt, the German jurist whose works on sovereignty influenced the rise of Nazism, argued that sovereignty proceeded from the “state of exception,” or the ability to impose emergency conditions regardless of their nominal legality.²⁶ In short, this refers to raw coercive power without mediation. Colonial governments used the language of security to legitimize these coercive demonstrations.²⁷ Financial extraction, another key measure of state power, has been intimately linked to security imperatives; it has been argued that the nexus between them propelled the emergence of centralized, modern states.²⁸ The quest for sovereignty, moreover, always involved internal and external negotiation – colonial claimants of sovereignty needed to convince both themselves and their interlocutors of their credentials.

Another crisis of sovereignty emerged in the mid-nineteenth century and fundamentally altered the constitutional and ideological realities of British rule in the world.²⁹ The 1857 Rebellion in India prompted a reconstruction of British rule in Asia,

²⁵ Some helpful recent works on this pivotal moment are Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles: The Loss of America and the Remaking of the British Empire* (London: Harper Press, 2011); P. J. Marshall, *The Making and Unmaking of Empires: Britain, India, and America, c.1750-1783* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

²⁶ Carl Schmitt, *Dictatorship* (Wiley, 2015).

²⁷ The legal scholar James Whitman has argued for the capacity to wage war as a key determinant of state sovereignty. See James Q. Whitman, *The Verdict of Battle: The Law of Victory and the Making of Modern War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).

²⁸ The growth of the “fiscal-military state” is usefully explored in an important book by John Brewer. John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money, and the English State, 1688-1783* (New York: Knopf, 1989).

²⁹ A recent book by Antony Anghie has argued for the “de-centering” of ideas of sovereignty that are essentially Western and imperialistic, arguing that these have mainly been tools of colonial rule. This project advances a parallel if not equivalent objective to uncover the ways actors outside imperial centers both appropriated and challenged the forms of sovereignty produced therein. A. Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law*, Cambridge Studies in International and Comparative Law (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

namely, the demise of the Company-state form of government and its replacement by the formal institutional structure of the British Raj. 1857 began with a sepoy mutiny in the Indian Army and ended with the final collapse of the Mughal dynasty that had continued to rule, at least in name, alongside the East India Company. In its aftermath, both the Army and the manifestation of royal power in India had to be reconstituted – a new balance between coercion and consent had to be struck. This was accomplished in ensuing decades by reform and selective-recruiting of “loyal” regions of India for the Army, and by creating a new royal honor system that incorporated India’s native aristocracies under the aegis of the British Crown, with Victoria as Empress.³⁰ This new settlement was highly symbolic and hinged on military power – the Army dominated the business of the Government of India in fiscal, infrastructural, and strategic terms, and sovereignty on the subcontinent was constituted through participation in its defense against foreign assailants.³¹ India serves as one example of how colonial governments tried to use militarism to mediate their sovereignty, and how security logic could

³⁰ A useful dialog about this system is Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition*, Past and Present Publications (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), chap. 5 Bernard Cohn, “Representing Authority in Victorian India”; David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

³¹ Literature on the Indian Army is extensive and especially concerns the way the Army harnessed India’s military labor market and depended on racial concepts of soldiering. See Stephen Cohen, *The Indian Army: Its Contribution to the Development of a Nation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971); T.A. Heathcote, *The Indian Army: The Garrison of British Imperial India, 1822-1922* (London: David & Charles, 1974); Philip Mason, *A Matter of Honour: An Account of the Indian Army, Its Officers and Men* (Jonathan Cape Ltd, 1974); Madan Paul Singh, *Indian Army Under the East India Company* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1976); Kenneth Ballhatchet, *Race, Sex, and Class Under the Raj: Imperial Attitudes and Policies and Their Critics, 1793-1905* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1980); S. L. Menezes, *Fidelity & Honour: The Indian Army from the Seventeenth to the Twenty-First Century* (New Delhi, India: Viking, Penguin Books India, 1993); David E. Omissi, *The Sepoy and the Raj: The Indian Army, 1860-1940* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994); Victor Kiernan, *Colonial Empires and Armies 1815-1960* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1998); Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857-1914* (Manchester University Press, 2004).

legitimize state-building projects.³² This refashioning of sovereignty in India through security will be further explored in Chapter 2.

The other major constitutional development of the late-nineteenth century, with its attendant dilemmas of sovereignty, was the confederation of Canada in 1867. Canadian confederation appears to hold little in common with India's 1857 rebellion settlement beyond chronological proximity, yet they did bear some key similarities – both shared the burden of mastering vast continental spaces and yoking hitherto separate systems of rule into a unitary whole. Keith wrote that Canada deserved credit for setting the form and precedent for responsible government in the Empire, dating back to Lord Dunham's 1838 report on the joining of Upper and Lower Canada.³³ A comparable security subtext also featured – confederation followed the planned withdrawal of British troops from forward positions across the Empire in the 1860s, a fraught and divisive process that raised tensions between colonies and London.³⁴ The Canadian government was forced to reconstitute its land defenses in order to secure its newly-unified territory, which was not presumed safe while the United States remained in a state of vast armament from its Civil War. The "Fenian raids" of the late 1860s, in which US-based Irish had attacked British interests across the Canadian border stoked these fears. The situation underscored the need for British troops among many Canadians, and the need to

³² A recent book that explores how this process unfolded in the late-nineteenth century is Jill Bender, *The 1857 Uprising and the British Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

³³ Keith said of Dunham's report that "no single point of his exposition of the fundamental character of responsible government requires alteration to-day after sixty-six years of actual experience of its working." Keith, *Responsible Government in the Dominions*, 6–7.

³⁴ These accompanied the Cardwell Reforms in Britain; see Donald C. Gordon, *The Dominion Partnership in Imperial Defense, 1870-1914* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1965), chap. 2. "The Withdrawal of the Legions"

minimize strategic liabilities in North America to many British decision-makers. Still, the newly-created Dominion of Canada was to serve as a model for self-governing colonies, in years to come, of the payoffs that accrued to colonies that amalgamated themselves into large, capacious states with greater resource pools and greater weight in the minds of imperial leaders. It also reflected the centralizing (and at the imperial level, centrifugal) impulses typical of modern statehood, impulses that were frequently connected to the issue of defensibility. From Australia to Canada to South Africa and India, arguments for the federal centralization of colonial states often drew attention to their vulnerability as smaller, fractured units, as will be explored below.³⁵

These dilemmas of sovereignty and security resurfaced in the twentieth century. In imperial borderlands such as the Middle East, British, French, and Ottomans jointly ruled territory; the United States, recovering from its Civil War, strained the limits of its republican constitution with its own imperial adventures and its more aggressive pursuit of the Monroe Doctrine under Teddy Roosevelt; a host of foreign powers occupied and exploited a declining imperial China; new global actors such as Japan and a unified Germany entered the field. The coercive processes by which these sovereignty claims were mediated exposed unprecedented numbers of people to the fundamental questions of legitimate state power. The meteoric rise of popular sovereignty as the organizing principle for world politics must be understood also as a mass reaction to the lengthening reach of war (and imperial state power) into all facets of society.³⁶ The First World War's

³⁵ I have explored this theme in greater depth in the article "The 'Durbar Settlement' and the Union of South Africa: Railways and Infrastructural Power in the British Empire, 1905-1914," Selected Proceedings of the 2012 Northeastern Graduate Student Conference, *The Middle Ground Journal* No. 8, Spring, 2014.

³⁶ Recent books investigating this apogee of popular sovereignty and some of its consequences, intended and otherwise, are Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins*

position as the fulcrum of the modern, destructive age can be read as the result of these new, insurgent, and often extra-European states wielding their coercive power in a collective bid to have their sovereignties recognized by the international community.³⁷ The runaway militarization of European powers that presaged the war distracts from this emerging trend – a more global story of the norms of state power converging around the ability to wage war.³⁸ “Imperial defence” – as a concept, a policy issue, and an ideological movement – acted as a system of legitimacy that enabled British colonies to access sovereignty, statehood, and various political concessions.³⁹ Interrogating the early twentieth century’s most important geopolitical narratives from the perspective of the British Empire reveals militarization and expansionism as global, rather than narrowly European, phenomena. Moreover, colonial actors drove those processes as much as they were instrumentalized by them. British colonies voluntarily funded the construction of Dreadnought battleships, the Empire’s largest and most costly pre-war defense platform. The Indian Army and its activities in South Asia, the early Union of South Africa and its dreams of manifest destiny on that continent, and the aspirations of Australia, New Zealand, and Canada in the greater Pacific are all examples that speak to this expanded

of *Anti-Colonial Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*.

³⁷ A new book investigating this dynamic is Adam Tooze, *The Deluge: The Great War and the Remaking of Global Order 1916-1931* (Allen Lane, 2014).

³⁸ Another book on the modern state’s violent capacity in the British case is David Edgerton, *Warfare State: Britain, 1920-1970* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

³⁹ Perspectives on the decline of the British Empire in the early twentieth century change when one takes a broader view of security as a collective good that could sustain political order. Some classic works on the issue of decline are Aaron L. Friedberg, *The Weary Titan: Britain and the Experience of Relative Decline, 1895-1905*, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); John Gallagher, *The Decline, Revival and Fall of the British Empire: The Ford Lectures and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

scope and some of the common tendencies that ensue when sovereignty converged around security, militarism, and violence.

The view from turn-of-the-century Britain suggested that containing a rising Germany and other world powers required both a mobilization of imperial security assets and serious economizing measures, as the costs of defense rose and successive British governments hoped to advance social entitlement programs at home. These concerns made leveraging the Empire as a reservoir of security resources especially important, and opened up space for negotiating with colonial states on shared security priorities. The same concerns also helped legitimize militarism among liberal governments across the Empire, as collective security gave them a kind of general will around which to build imperial unity, in contrast to the formal imperial federation schemes favored by conservatives in Britain and the colonies. Whereas other sectors of policy (trade, migration, and formal constitutional movements like the imperial federation idea, to name the most important) failed to make significant progress during this period, security proved more fruitful. Colonial security concerns operated on two levels: internally, where they often hinged on managing relationships between white settlers and indigenous peoples, and externally, where colonial governments and ruling elites volunteered for imperial collective security schemes, which acted as an opportunity for them to build diplomatic capital.⁴⁰ It was at this moment that a critical mass of metropolitan officials in

⁴⁰ Work on intra-imperial relations enjoyed a period of popularity in the late 1960s but has been scarce in recent decades. See Gordon, *The Dominion Partnership in Imperial Defense, 1870-1914*; John E. Kendle, *The Colonial and Imperial Conferences 1887-1911: A Study in Imperial Organization* (London: Longmans, 1967); Franklyn Arthur Johnson, *Defence By Committee: The British Committee of Imperial Defence, 1885-1959* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960); J.J. Eddy, D.M. Schreuder, and Oliver MacDonagh, eds., *The Rise of Colonial Nationalism: Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and South Africa First Assert Their Nationalities, 1880-1914* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1988).

London first entertained the proposition of consuming, rather than producing, security within the Empire.

That proposition produced paradoxical outcomes. Britain's success in securing colonial cooperation and resources for its own defense required slacking the colonies' rein to pursue their own regional objectives. Over the period 1898 to 1931, colonies' autonomy to act in the world reached unprecedented heights, and yet, never before had the Empire's resources and collective strategy been so closely intertwined, both during and before the First World War. Thus the First World War should be read as part of an ongoing trend in the role of security in politics rather than a rupture that fundamentally altered the political or strategic relationships between Britain and its colonies.⁴¹

Investigating this trend helps us understand the violent project of imperialism (and the persistence of its forms after decolonization) from the institutional level, and the way colonial actors were sometimes active participants in it rather than passive recipients of it. That Britain required their cooperation as independent actors in the defense of the Empire created diplomatic upward mobility not previously available to colonial actors. This dynamic also goes some way towards explaining how Britain was able to wage a successful global war from 1914 to 1918 with the help of imperial resources, and how the nexus between a state's sovereignty and its security capabilities came to be written into the formal machinery of international politics in the interwar period with the Treaty of Versailles, the League of Nations Covenant, and the Locarno Treaties, among others.⁴²

⁴¹ For an overview of the literature on Dominion status, and a representative argument about the war's importance, see John Darwin, "A Third British Empire? The Dominion Idea in Imperial Politics," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Twentieth Century*, vol. IV, V vols., The Oxford History of the British Empire (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 64–87.

⁴² The Dominions and India (Ireland was at war with Britain) were independent signatories to the Treaty of Versailles; the League Covenant began to design formal mechanisms for collective defense that required

0.3 LITERATURE, METHODS, AND THEORY

This project will address two historiographical problems. First, the historical literature on the British Empire tends to address important questions of state and imperial rise and decline, the nature of imperial power, and the empire's influence in shaping the modern world, but under-utilizes colonial sources, instead relying on metropolitan data to support its claims. Conversely, the scholarship produced in former British colonies naturally avoids this pitfall but tends toward preoccupation with the narrative arcs of colonial nationhood that prefigure the emergence of states or identities. Some also intentionally eschew metropolitan sources, forfeiting the opportunity to understand political mediation between imperial governments and institutions. This project addresses some of the major questions asked by imperial histories above, but does so substantively by using sources produced by colonial states, and thus is able to show how historical changes have occurred in multiple, simultaneous cases and locales. The second historiographical problem this project addresses is that histories of the British Empire written between 1945 and 1980 tended to focus strongly on institutional, diplomatic, and political questions, but were insufficiently attentive to the way these institutional questions masked other ways that power was produced. More recent waves of scholarship have revealed the many ways that race, gender, class and other structures have produced

signatories to underwrite each other's sovereignty, and the Locarno pacts also dealt with the issue of how status quo in Europe would be upheld by military guarantors.

power and hierarchy, especially in colonial contexts, but have tended to focus on non-institutional questions. This project returns to questions about how institutional change takes place, and about the way states and international order have evolved, but does so by showing how institutional power is produced by discursive power. The language of security, as stated above, mobilized both fears and hopes in colonial populations, and drew heavily on racial ideas to legitimize colonial state-building projects. In these ways, the project applies newer methodological approaches to older questions.

Efforts to gain sovereignty through militarization proved the most effective in the white settlement colonies (“Dominions” after 1907): Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and Newfoundland. However, similar trends played out notably in the Union of South Africa with its still greater racial and social complexities, in India with its vast and undemocratic sub-imperium, and in Ireland with its uneasy membership of the United Kingdom itself. These were no less influential to the Empire’s debates about race, security, and sovereignty than were the Dominions, if their efforts saw less (or harder-won) payoffs.⁴³ The Indian Army was the world’s largest professional military force and the Empire’s primary manpower reserve; the strategic landscape of the early twentieth century cannot be understood without it. Irish issues struck at the heart of the United Kingdom and dominated its constitutional debates; questions of internal security formerly relegated to the colonial sphere were brought home in 1916 by Irish insurgents, who made strange bedfellows in subsequent years with their countrymen who fought with Britain in World War I. South Africa, meanwhile, demonstrated the bankruptcy of

⁴³ A recent work that has investigated the political theories linking the self-governing colonies in an earlier period is Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860-1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

imperial military coordination at the turn of the century; its 1910 Union reignited debates about federation, and its white representatives incessantly disrupted imperial conferences with their concerns about race and security.

To confine analysis to the pre-war Dominions would subordinate interpretations of sovereignty to cases in which the coercion of imperial power was mediated through democratic institutions and ignore the myriad other ways in which authority was produced. Such an approach would foreclose on explaining how sovereignty was constructed through racial identity-formation, aristocracy, and authoritarianism. Both enfranchised and disenfranchised colonial subjects asserted their utility to imperial security goals, though this produced mixed results that often correlated with the racial identities of these subjects. One notable explanation of how sovereignty has been constructed through race and violence is through postcolonial theory, advanced conspicuously by Frantz Fanon and followed by a thriving body of scholarship. It posits imperialism as an inherently violent project, and the colonizer-colonized relationship as managed through and defined by violence.⁴⁴ This is a helpful framework for thinking about imperial power in the context of this project, but needs refashioning to capture instances in which violence served as a site of cooperation (or perhaps competition) between colonizer and colonized, whereby the latter's replication of colonial forms of power was used to remake hierarchies, instead of functioning in a purely adversarial sense.⁴⁵ If imperialism's definitive feature was the creation of hierarchy through violence, this feature has long outlived decolonization in the international system. Recent

⁴⁴ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, ed. Richard Philcox (Grove Press, 2007).

⁴⁵ See for example Fanon, "On Violence," 3.

scholarship has explained the institutional ramifications of that persistence.⁴⁶ The goals of colonial political actors transcended the issue of democratic self-government, and even nationalists of varying degrees of radicalism still had to react against the institutional norms used and created by colonial regimes.⁴⁷

Meanwhile, treating a wide array of colonial cases together captures one of imperial history's methodological advantages: thinking through problems with broad geographic and chronological scope, with resulting opportunities for comparison and contrast.⁴⁸ It also brings colonial cases to bear on theoretical questions of the way modern states have behaved, especially on whether these behaviors are perennial or historically contingent. The reality was somewhere in between; colonial states could indeed be classified as discrete, self-interested, and power-maximizing entities of the type Max Weber began to posit in the aftermath of World War I.⁴⁹ However, the forms and logics of state-building were also normative – designed to bring aspiring entrants to the international community into closer alignment with prevailing international concepts of

⁴⁶ Some excellent recent work on this topic is Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); This has also been argued in Bernard Cohn, "Representing Authority in Victorian India," in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, Past and Present Publications (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

⁴⁷ One excellent example of this methodological debate is to be found within the literature on Ireland; that between the revisionist R. F. Foster, "History and the Irish Question," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Fifth Series, 33 (1983): 169–92; and the advocacy of nationalist historiography and the legacy of Butterfield's "whig" history found in Brendan Bradshaw, "Nationalism and Historical Scholarship in Modern Ireland," *Irish Historical Studies* 26, no. 104 (November 1989): 329–51 I will return to this problem in Chapter 5, which deals most closely with Ireland and the issue of conscription.

⁴⁸ This advantage was elucidated in a chapter by Linda Colley, "What Is Imperial History Now?," in *What Is History Now?*, ed. David Cannadine (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

⁴⁹ This framework suggests that states have perennial or immutable interests, and that these interests should be the primary concern of those who study their behavior. The classic argument for realism, as such, is Kenneth N Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., 1979).

state sovereignty that privileged robust security capabilities.⁵⁰ These norms were fully contingent on ideas and discourses that worked in a mutually constitutive fashion on states within the international system. Thinking outside and across the boundaries of colonial states draws also attention to their regional strategic objectives, and the continuities between their cases and across time.⁵¹ Here I echo among others D.K. Fieldhouse, who argued in 1961 that strategy and not economics was the first-order issue of British imperialism, and thus that intra-imperial relations tended to hinge on strategic concerns.⁵² Subsequent chapters will explore this theme further.

The final literature implicated in this project is that on the way states evolve and grow, or the way they augment their power and capabilities in absolute terms. Theories abound on the key variable driving state expansion. Notorious examples include Karl Marx's, which posited the state as the "committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie," growing as its parasitic power grows.⁵³ A stable of liberal thinkers from John Stuart Mill to William Gladstone suggested the state could be made to serve as guarantor of the property and rights of greater swathes of the population were

⁵⁰ For a discussion of the formation of international norms and the way states respond to them, see Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (Spring 1992): 391–425.

⁵¹ For some useful recent work on the way late British imperialism made room for colonial strategic ambitions see Priya Satia, "Developing Iraq: Britain, India and the Redemption of Empire and Technology in the First World War," *Past & Present* 197, no. 1 (2007): 211–55; John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830-1970*, 1st ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

⁵² D. K. Fieldhouse, "'Imperialism': An Historiographical Revision," *The Economic History Review*, New Series, 14, no. 2 (January 1, 1961): 187–209, doi:10.2307/2593218.

⁵³ "...the bourgeoisie has at last, since the establishment of modern industry and of the world market, conquered for itself, in the modern representative state, exclusive political sway. The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie." K. Marx and F. Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (Friedrich Engels, 2015), chap. 1, https://books.google.com/books?id=TO_qCQAAQBAJ.

they given a stake in its business via the franchise. Still others have argued that the state arises primarily as an engine of war, and will grow as the exigencies of war grow.⁵⁴ This interpretation enjoys diverse endorsements, from the Athenian historian and general Thucydides, to Immanuel Kant, who theorized that the internal conditions of a *civitas* prevail at the whim of their external environs and that defense is thus their prerequisite, to Friedrich Nietzsche and the twentieth century fascists who admired him, seeing the state as the vehicle for the violent struggle that would bring spiritual transcendence to the nation.⁵⁵ The sociologist and political theorist Michael Mann has also argued that state-formation tends to occur as a dialectic between militaristic centralization and federal diffusion; the British Empire of the early twentieth century witnessed both.⁵⁶

The case of state development in Britain's large colonies supports this eclectic consensus on the centrality of war, violence, and militarism. Not in the manner suggested by nationalist-separatists like the figurehead of the Irish 1916 Easter Rising, Patrick Pearse, or the nationalist historians who followed them, like Australia's official historian-observer of World War I, C.E.W. Bean, who saw national liberation in a quasi-mystical, Christoid sacrifice of colonial blood that bought or earned parity with the imperial

⁵⁴ This argument has been notably articulated by Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990-1990*; International Relations scholars have also built this argument into their theories; see R. Harrison Wagner, "How Do You Build a State?," Stanford University Workshop on State-Building, 2003, <http://hw.webhost.utexas.edu/papers/sb.pdf>; and R. Harrison Wagner, *War and the State: The Theory of International Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007); historians of Britain and other states have illustrated the links between war and state provision of social services in the twentieth century as well. See James E. Cronin, *The Politics of State Expansion: War, State, and Society in Twentieth-Century Britain* (New York: Routledge, 1991).

⁵⁵ Benito Mussolini wrote in his Doctrine of Fascism that "The state leads men from primitive tribal life to that ultimate expression of human power which is Empire..." B. Mussolini, *The Doctrine of Fascism* (H. Fertig, 2006), 21.

⁵⁶ Michael Mann, "The Autonomous Power of the State: Its Origins, Mechanisms, and Results," *Archives Europeenes de Sociologie* 25 (1984): 129.

power.⁵⁷ Rather, colonial governments were engaged in an institutional project aimed at parity with British institutional capacities that was accelerated by, but substantively preceded, actual military combat. The British political philosopher Michael Oakeshott separated the function of states into two modes: nomocracy (that which prescribes the *manner* of politics), and telocracy (that which prescribes the *end* or *purpose* of politics). Modern states, in his esteem, have tended toward the latter, and the primary reason has been war. “War,” he wrote, “is the paradigm case of a situation in which the variety of ‘admitted goods’ in a society is reduced, or almost reduced, to one; a state at war is a paradigm case of telocracy. And it is not insignificant that the rhetoric of telocratic belief is always liberally sprinkled with military analogy.”⁵⁸ The early twentieth century, then, was a moment in which both Britain and its large colonies became more alike through the telocratic preparation for, and occasional experience of, war. And they emerged from that experience with yet greater parity in the international system. Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, and India independently signed both the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations Covenant. Ireland was still at war with Britain in 1919 but its 26-county rump joined the League as the Irish Free State at the end of hostilities in 1923. These acts of membership in the international community were taken as diplomatic recognition of a sovereignty derived partly and perhaps mostly from these states’ military capabilities.

⁵⁷ The Proclamation of the Republic, issued by those who initiated the Easter Rising in 1916, read: “In this supreme hour, the Irish nation must, by its valour and discipline and by the readiness of its children to sacrifice themselves...prove itself worthy of the august destiny to which it is called.” Bean wrote in *The Story of Anzac* that “Australian national consciousness was born on 25 April 1915” (the date of the landing at Gallipoli). The apparent disagreement over the proper date for Australia’s “founding” will be explored further in Chapter 1.

⁵⁸ M. Oakeshott, T. Nardin, and L. O’Sullivan, *Lectures in the History of Political Thought*, Michael Oakeshott Selected Writings (Imprint Academic, 2011), 496.

0.4 SOURCES

A.V. Dicey laid out four “rules” that generally governed the relations between Britain and the Dominions in 1914, and the fourth of these was the imperial conference system.⁵⁹ These conferences, “quite unthought-of thirty years ago,” met every few years from 1887 and occupied a constitutionally fluid space whereby political leaders and bureaucrats from various colonies gathered and deliberated on topics of concern for the Empire broadly.⁶⁰ The constitutional authority vested in these conferences was nebulous, their composition shifting, and their ability to reach workable settlements, never mind consensus, rare. But they reward close reading for the way elites across the Empire imagined themselves and their relation to one another at a critical moment when colonial military, diplomatic, and political institutions were undergoing rapid evolution. They were the Empire’s first official multilateral political forum, and defense issues frequently dominated their proceedings. The conferences also produced both public and confidential records that will be used extensively in this project, and provide a set of narrative moments at which to measure the state of discourse about sovereignty and security among colonial elites and military leaders.

⁵⁹ The other three were, respectively, that the Imperial Parliament remains nominally superior to legislate on matters of imperial interest, that colonial governments are prohibited from individual treaty-making with foreign powers or from holding themselves neutral in an imperial war, and that Dominions have the right to a free hand in legislating for matters that strictly concern their internal affairs.

⁶⁰ Dicey, *Introduction to the Study of the Law of the Constitution*, 26.

Furthermore, the diplomatic correspondence between imperial Governments, the personal papers of officials across the Empire, and the documents generated by both colonial parliamentary assemblies and their nascent military bureaucracies will be critical. This source base invites analysis of the way the Empire's aspiring sovereign states advanced their interests both with and against imperial authority rather than adopting a center-focused perspective as in much scholarship on imperialism. While the Empire's hierarchical structure exerted itself on the thoughts, words, and deeds of colonial subjects, they often acted laterally, managing relationships, communicating, and in some cases jostling, with counterparts in other colonies or Dominions. These lateral relations are just as important as the vertical axis of imperial power relations, because they demonstrate colonial states working through their status in the diplomatic sphere with peer actors, and the gradual subversion of colonial hierarchy at the diplomatic level.

Most of the evidence used in this project is that produced by the apparatus of colonial states. This is appropriate for measuring the changing forms of sovereignty in the British Empire, and for understanding the way colonial states created discourses of security that could be used to control populations and legitimize the growth of their own power. However, the chapters also use print media and popular literature at points to illustrate how issues of imperial defense resonated among British subjects, especially how it produced fears and anxieties among publics. Finally, while few non-elites produced historical sources on the matter of sovereignty or the constitutional future of the British Empire, a handful of collections do access these very matters, most notably the Irish Bureau of Military History's witness statement program, which asked around 1,800 people to recall their experiences of Ireland's revolutionary period from 1912-1922. The

fifth chapter analyzes these sources to access the way ordinary people responded to vexed questions like conscription that struck at the heart of state sovereignty.

Colonial ideas about sovereignty were also shaped by their relationships with peer actors in other colonies and Dominions, not simply through their hierarchical relationships with Britain. For, as is often noted by scholars of international relations, a state's ability to accrue legitimacy and possess sovereignty depends as much on its acceptance by external actors as it does on that state's internal qualities.⁶¹ Historians can benefit from this insight in their understanding of modernity's implications for the state, and for decolonization broadly. Colonial states and peoples hoping to shirk imperial control had not just to overcome or subvert hierarchies, but also to appeal to other, parallel sets of meaning and power from which they could draw legitimacy and recognition.⁶² That imperative (and their general self-interest in pursuing autonomy) is another point of continuity across the varied cases considered here. Historians working on early America have explored this phenomenon, as have others on non-European nation-states.⁶³

⁶¹ A helpful overview of the literature on this topic may be found at David A. Lake, "The New Sovereignty in International Relations," *International Studies Review* 5, no. 3 (September 1, 2003): 303–23.

⁶² See Gerrit W. Gong, *The Standard of Civilization in International Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984); and Robert H. Jackson, *Quasi-States: Sovereignty, International Relations and the Third World* (Cambridge England; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

⁶³ See David Armitage, *The Declaration of Independence: A Global History* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2007) who argues that the Declaration began a genre in which states formally attempted to engage the international community; and the previously-mentioned Gould, *Among the Powers of the Earth*.

0.5 PROJECT OUTLINE

The first chapter begins during the Boer War at the turn of the twentieth century, and examines the ad hoc coordination of imperial resources to fight that ill-fated counterinsurgency in South Africa from 1898-1901. It sets the stage for the project narrative by highlighting the moment of anxiety that followed this conflict as imperial elites realized that they had no effective means of coordinating and directing their aggregate resources in times of crisis, and the way concurrent state-building projects – the federation movements in the South Pacific, were structured by this environment of fear and anxiety. In Chapter 2, which spans the years 1902-1906, I trace the political and military reforms that grew around the British Empire in the aftermath of the South African War, and how these calls for reform sparked debates over militarization. Here the Government of India's attempts to reinforce its military client relationships on the subcontinent, and the civil-military debate between Curzon and Kitchener, will also feature. In the third chapter, I examine how these changes occurred at the institutional level at the Colonial Conference of 1907, which formally acknowledged "Dominion status" in a way that privileged security capabilities, and how this new arrangement was given its first test with the Anglo-German naval crisis in 1909. This chapter shows how security logic was used to create an exclusive community of constitutional status.

In Chapter 4 I show how this political settlement became increasingly strained in the years leading up to the outbreak of World War I, as colonial democracy and colonial interests ran counter to the Empire's ostensible collective priorities on defense and political order. This chapter will explore how the exigencies of security created political divergence as well. Through the First World War, my fifth chapter examines how the

relationship between security and sovereignty was demonstrated by the debates over military conscription that raged across the Empire as British forces faced serious drains on manpower and resources. Here sources on the conscription crisis in Ireland and the conscription referenda in Australia and Canada are especially critical. The responses of hundreds of Irish recollections of conscription and war show how the state's sovereignty over individual bodies brought the hitherto abstract questions home to ordinary people. The conclusion discusses how imperial security cooperation produced unintended consequences in Ireland's War of Independence and the repressive crackdowns across India as World War I drew to a close, and how colonial states achieved legitimacy and projected new norms of sovereignty into the international system as independent signatories to the agreements at Versailles, the League of Nations Covenant, and others.

In short, this project continues the work of explaining how political modernity was shaped by imperialism and war. The British Empire must be central to this explanation. It entered the twentieth century as a global hegemon, and even through imperial decline, played a large role in shaping the new forms of political order that followed decolonization. Many of the twentieth century's emergent states began as British colonies. The extraordinary, coordinated violence of the twentieth century and the forms of international order that sprung up in response or opposition to it remain a great historical puzzle which cannot be solved without looking to Britain, the power that predominated in its beginning – as the dread and envy of them all. Narratives of the turn of the twentieth century are often drawn into the orbit of World War I, but the war was predated by, and itself just one episode in, an longer story of how states came to organize and plan for each other's destruction. That story is taken up here at the outbreak of the

Boer War at the close of the nineteenth century and the sunset of the Victorian age.

George Curzon, then the Viceroy of India and one of the era's most influential characters, said this to his Legislative Council as he reflected on the conflict from Calcutta in 1900:

“A storm has taken place in the great ocean, the commotion caused by which will be felt thousands of miles away on every beach and shore. Here, as elsewhere, we shall require to set our own house in order, to overhaul our military machine, and to profit by the lessons learned.”⁶⁴

⁶⁴ *Speeches by Lord Curzon of Kedleston, Viceroy and Governor General of India*, vol. II, 1900–1902 (Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, India, 1902), 322.

1 CHAPTER 1 – ‘A TIDE IN THE AFFAIRS OF MEN’: FEAR, FEDERATION, AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN WAR IN AUSTRALASIA

1.1 INTRODUCTION

A cartoon published in the Sydney-based Australian news magazine *The Bulletin* and carried in the periodical *The Australian Federalist* on 7 May 1898 shows a small boy standing defiantly athwart a railroad track, his fists raised. His opponent, a locomotive, has just hurtled from the mouth of a tunnel, and seems sure to run him down. The young boxer's hatband displays the word "ANTIFED"; the locomotive is emblazoned "FEDERATION." In case readers harbored any confusion at what was to happen next, the lower right inset displays an exasperated engineer scraping the boy's mangled corpse off the wheels of the locomotive with a masonry knife. The caption reads "A FEDERATION POEM: The boy stood on the railroad track – he heard the whistle squeal – The engineer got slowly down, and scraped him off the wheel."⁶⁵

⁶⁵ "Australia's Glorious Fourth," *The Bulletin* (Sydney), May 7, 1898; Accessed via MS 1540, Papers of Alfred Deakin, National Library of Australia (NLA), Subseries 11.2 Item 11/348.

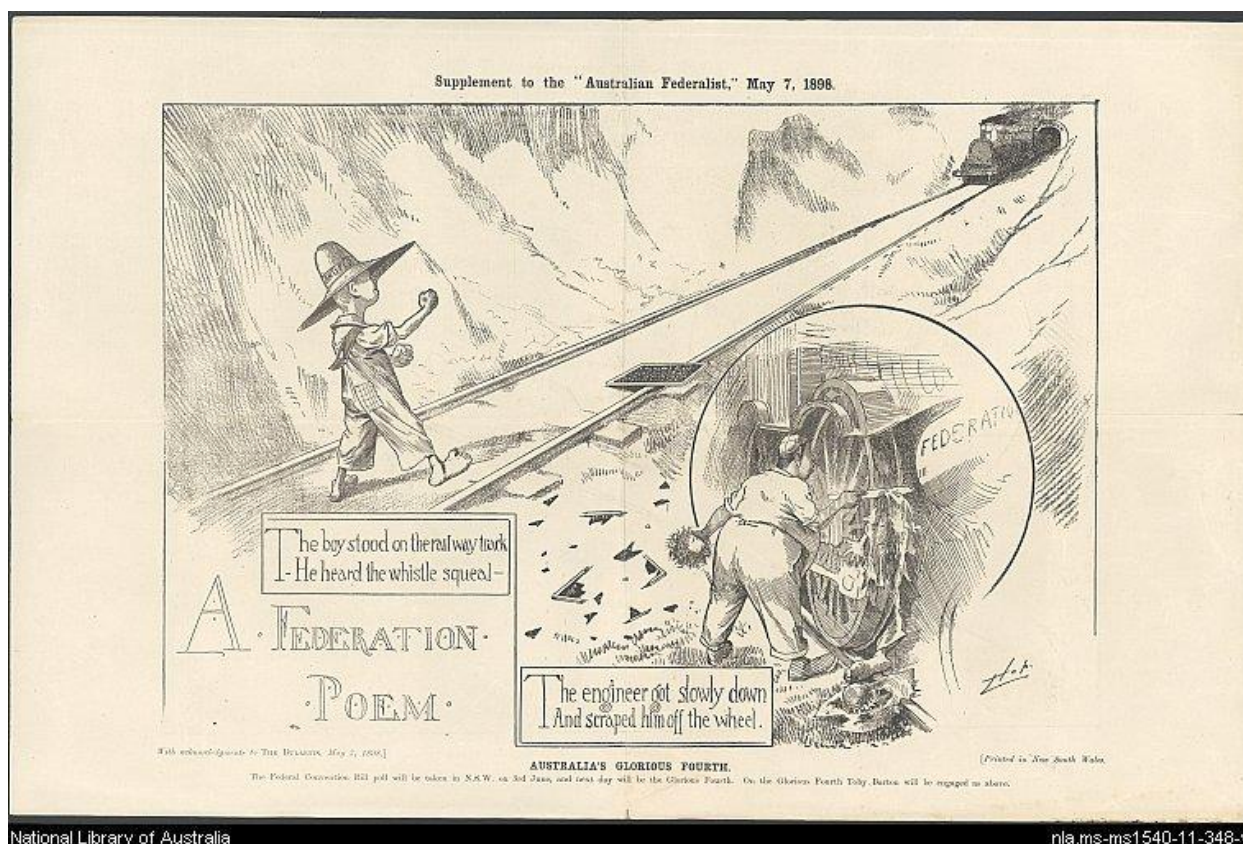


Figure 1 – "Australia's Glorious Fourth"

This grisly collision indeed came to pass, albeit a year behind the cartoonist's expectations – two rounds of referenda in each Australian colony were needed after the first returned overall majorities in favor of federation but failed to reach the agreed majority threshold in New South Wales.⁶⁶ The "Glorious Fourth" proved just a prelude to the eventual federation moment in June 1899. *The Bulletin*, whose masthead read "Australia for the White Man," was not a subtle publication. Its locomotive-on-juvenile-pugilist cartoon violence, though, may have been unintentionally perceptive. Federation –

⁶⁶ This eventuality confused contemporaries; one exasperated voter wrote to the Melbourne *Argus* on 31 May positing a variety of polling outcomes and asking which would result in federation, signing the letter "IGNORAMUS". "The Federal Vote: to the Editor of the Argus," *Argus* (Melbourne), May 31, 1898. Accessed via MS 1540, Papers of Alfred Deakin, NLA, Subseries 11.12, Item 11/359.

the joining of multiple, discrete state structures into larger constitutional unions that formally distribute sovereign functions – emerged at the turn of the twentieth century as a minor political craze in the British world, and its advocates possessed a frenetic, locomotive attitude. Violence, if not always as obvious as a railway collision, lurked beneath federation debates across the Empire and surfaced dramatically if sporadically. Federation activists cultivated an air of inevitability around their movements much like that of the hurtling train. But not all of them reached their destinations. In some cases, the forces of divergence proved too strong and federalist dreams were dashed by unexpectedly strong upstarts in their tracks.

This chapter investigates why federation proved a popular idea in the British Empire during the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries. Though some of these movements failed, others succeeded, including those of Australia, the Union of South Africa, and the Federated Malay States, to name some notables that followed in Canada's 1867 footsteps. This was a remarkable constitutional efflorescence that occurred over a short period (1901-1910) across three continents. It also coincided with a particularly busy slate of diplomatic treaty-making by the Imperial Government in London, and a few internationally notorious wars – namely, Britain's second major war in South Africa (the Boer War), the Boxer Rebellion in China, and the Russo-Japanese War. These events, wound together, propelled the realignment of British power in the world and within the Empire. In the space of a decade, Britain went from relative diplomatic isolation under Lord Salisbury, in fact and in spirit the last Victorian Prime Minister (and erstwhile Foreign Minister), into a crowded and complex new environment. Here, it was forced to manage formal strategic agreements with Japan, France, and Russia, an informal

relationship with a frenetically-rising United States, and a rearguard attempt to contain the ascent of the German Empire while managing the collapse of the Ottoman.⁶⁷ These very well-studied diplomatic shifts took place laterally, among peers – an inflection point in the long tale of the “rise and fall of great powers.”⁶⁸ But Britain’s global footprint consisted firstly of its Empire, and the hierarchical world order of this period must also be understood vertically, beyond its thin upper crust. Colonial governments began increasingly to contest Britain’s control over diplomatic and strategic affairs, which were hitherto formally reserved to London. Federation movements advanced that competition by enhancing the notoriety, scope, and resources of colonial states and opening questions about sovereignty and how to divide the functions of state. As such, international order in the early twentieth century was also reshaped from below, as colonial actors mounted institutional and constitutional challenges to their subordinate status. International hierarchy did not, of course, disappear, but the imperialism upon which it was based began to evolve. The pinnacle of international hierarchy also began to tilt away from Europe, towards the United States and Asia beyond.

Scholars often treat the late nineteenth century as a moment of federations and unifications, and the early twentieth century as a moment of international atomization and

⁶⁷ Down to 1904, when the Entente Cordiale was concluded, it was scarcely clear that Britain would choose to focus on containing Germany and not, as it had so often since Napoleon, on France. A classic study of the transition from isolation under Salisbury is Christopher H. D. Howard, *Splendid Isolation: A Study of Ideas Concerning Britain’s International Position and Foreign Policy during the Later Years of the Third Marquess of Salisbury* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1967); see also John Charmley, *Splendid Isolation?: Britain, the Balance of Power, and the Origins of the First World War* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1999); An extended meditation on Britain’s behavior during this period of relative decline can be found in Aaron L. Friedberg, *The Weary Titan: Britain and the Experience of Relative Decline, 1895-1905*, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

⁶⁸ Articulated by Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Random House, 1987) and others.

fracture along Wilsonian lines, with perhaps a slight reversion to consolidation in the postwar era.⁶⁹ This ebb and flow misses a frenetic moment of federal state-building just before World War I, a moment that arose out of the growing pains (and death throes) of empires in the world's contested zones – the Middle East, southeastern Europe, and the Pacific.⁷⁰ The peculiarities of interwar internationalist schemes for rebuilding global order, or the economic-currency blocs of the Depression era, or even the strategic blocs of the later Cold War, trace their origins to the British Empire's schemes for federation at the turn of the twentieth century and the way they tried to solve crises of sovereignty and institutional fracture. Richard Jebb, a journalist and activist for the cause of constitutional change in the British Empire, wrote and lobbied for federalism his whole career. Initially, he even advocated the yoking of the whole Empire into a single federal union, though he abandoned that position around 1902 and moved toward a looser model in which colonies (settled by Britons) would wax into large federations and then join voluntarily with Britain in a grand, "Britannic alliance." This small but close-knit family of imperial states

⁶⁹ Cases for unification and federalism include Canada, the postbellum United States, and the Italian and German unifications. The rise of self-determination and the nation-state followed World War I, and this norm extended into the mid-century with some notable exceptions. Susan Pedersen has recently explored the implications of League of Nations schemes for creating viable states and inter-state relationships in Susan Pedersen, "Getting Out of Iraq—in 1932: The League of Nations and the Road to Normative Statehood," *The American Historical Review* 115, no. 4 (October 1, 2010): 975–1000, doi:10.1086/ahr.115.4.975; For a theorization of the way drastic changes in political order can follow major wars, see G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order After Major Wars*, Princeton Studies in International History (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

⁷⁰ The turn of the century efflorescence of imperialism posed major problems for the sovereignty and constitutional structures of imperial states. Some of these problems have been recently explored in Lauren A. Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400--1900* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), Chap. 6, "Bare Sovereignty and Empire"; Two recent works that have explored the interwar Wilsonian heyday and complicated its salience for many states are Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anti-Colonial Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); and Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015); For a discussion of the many attempts at reforging a viable international order through collective security in the interwar period, see Patrick O Cohrs, *The Unfinished Peace After World War I: America, Britain and the Stabilisation of Europe, 1919-1932* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

could, in Jebb's mind, control the world. "The advance of the Britannic polity along that path [to alliance] has been wonderfully rapid in the past fifteen years," he wrote in 1913, "and especially since the creation in South Africa of the fourth new nation-state, which practically completed the original units."⁷¹ Jebb presciently imagined the ad hoc future of imperial ties, and to an extent the peculiar, centripetal direction of Britannic nationalism in the colonies. This was a holy paradox – through independence, Jebb predicted, they would grow closer together. These visions of the Empire's future, casting forward from the precipice of World War I, conjure a different image than that of an atomizing nationalist whirlwind, or what George Curzon later called "the unmixing of peoples."⁷² In fact, it suggested deliberate mixing of peoples: the building of federal states that could reshape an imperial order by balancing its hierarchies and creating political stability through strategic makeweights.⁷³ The British Empire's experiments with colonial federalism were thus the front line of a shift in world order, and the epicenter of a global conversation about the future of sovereignty. In Jebb's words, these experiments would be either "the last monument of an old order or the great exemplar of a new."⁷⁴

The British Empire's successful federal projects in this period are not usually understood as such; rather, they are situated within the long narratives of settler colonialism and democratic self-government. These narratives understand the formation

⁷¹ Richard Jebb, *The Britannic Question: A Survey of Alternatives* (London: Longmans, 1913), 252.

⁷² Curzon made this remark in his observations of the Balkan Wars; it later resurfaced as a key slogan of the 1924 Lausanne Conference, which sought to manage the collapse of the Ottoman Empire through, among other things, mass population transfers between newly-made nation-states.

⁷³ Imperial planners returned to this tactic as early as 1930; see Great Britain and Colonial Office, *Papers Relating to the Question of the Closer Union of Kenya, Uganda, and the Tanganyika Territory*. (London: H.M.S.O. [printed by Metchim & Son], 1931).

⁷⁴ Richard Jebb, *The Britannic Question: A Survey of Alternatives* (London: Longmans, 1913), 252.

of the self-governing Dominions as a process of replicating British models of society, commerce, and institutions.⁷⁵ But the United Kingdom offered no clear model for federation projects – its monarchy ruled four distinct kingdoms, but its legislature was a unitary body populated from all. Would-be federations in the colonies had to look to other exemplars, usually Canada and the United States.⁷⁶ Furthermore, creating optimal domestic conditions comprised only half the logic of large federal projects in the British world – the other half concerned the need to position new British states within, and secure them against, their foreign environments. Federal movements tapped into colonial imaginations of what lay outside the border, and off the shore. This was a space pregnant with fear, anxiety, and risk – but also ripe with opportunity. Southern Africa and the Southern Pacific were such places. Federal ideas there were not just the outgrowth of settler aspirations to replicate Britain and extend its power, they also hinged on perceived threats menacing nearby, frustration with imperial restrictions or negligence, and even fears that, in the end, Britain would forsake or betray its children to serve metropolitan goals. These anxieties meant that federal schemes unfolded with an eye to strategic defensibility. Colonial federalists dreamed also of what they could accomplish given greater diplomatic weight in London and a freer hand to act regionally. Thus the logic of

⁷⁵ Two often-cited recent synthetic histories of the Empire that have emphasized the colonies of settlement explain their development as a process of socializing into the norms and practices of a global British system with primarily economic characteristics. John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830-1970*, 1st ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Angloworld, 1783-1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009). See also Caroline Elkins and Susan Pedersen, eds., *Settler Colonialism in the Twentieth Century: Projects, Practices, Legacies* (New York: Routledge, 2005); again Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

⁷⁶ Here I echo the move made by Linda Colley in her study of the formation of British identity - a thing structured as much by external as internal factors. Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837*, 3rd Revised Edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

federal projects reflected the reality that sovereignty had to be constituted both domestically and internationally. Security imperatives served both of these objectives by providing a justification for territorial conquest and a common strategic ground for intra-imperial bargaining.⁷⁷

Federal moments in the Pacific coincided with the Empire's turn of the century crisis – the war in South Africa. The Boer War dominated the Empire's headlines while it ran from 1899-1902, and raised a great many questions. The first of these was why it took so long to bring to a satisfactory conclusion – it was assumed that bands of poorly-organized rustics like the Afrikaner farmers would not stand for long against the might of the British Empire. But when they did, bottling British forces into a handful of fortified towns and winning early victories with what Arthur Conan-Doyle called their “ancient theology and their inconveniently modern rifles,” uncomfortable realities emerged. The Empire, populous and well-resourced though it was, appeared quite inept at organizing for war – colonial participation proved highly conspicuous but poorly coordinated. This alarming realization underscored the necessity for diplomatic and domestic reforms that continued apace in the following years, down to the outbreak of the First World War.

This chapter will proceed with a short overview of the South African War to provide context. It will then consider how the fears and hopes raised by the war (and other strategic and security-oriented issues) featured in the South Pacific and the bids for political federation launched there at the turn of the twentieth century. The first and

⁷⁷ Max Weber theorized in 1919 that states must monopolize the legitimate use of force within a given space to consolidate internal sovereignty. See “Politics as a Vocation” in Max Weber, *The Vocation Lectures: Science As a Vocation, Politics As a Vocation*, ed. David S. Owen, Tracy B. Strong, and Rodney Livingstone (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub Co, 2004); A helpful overview of the two-level nature of sovereignty as theorized in international relations is David A. Lake, “The New Sovereignty in International Relations,” *International Studies Review* 5, no. 3 (September 1, 2003): 303–23.

greatest of these was the movement for Australian federation, the steaming locomotive mentioned above, a movement that had stewed for much of the 1880s and 90s and finally realized its Commonwealth dream on New Years' Day 1901. Voting commenced in Australia during the Boer War's dark early stages; federation's success was confirmed by the Westminster Parliament as imperial troops were working to relieve the siege of the international legations at Peking and to crush the Boxer Rebellion in China. Meanwhile, a concurrent debate raged just across the Tasman Sea in New Zealand as to whether that self-governing colony should join with the Australian federation. New Zealand elected to go its own way, but the logic of its decision will prove useful in this chapter and, moreover, led directly to the final case that will be considered here: the failed attempt by New Zealand premier Richard Seddon to annex Fiji into a federation of his own with the help of a vocal lobby of British settlers there. The South Pacific was the Empire's remotest corner, but for a time it was the very center of debate about the Empire's future political order.

1.2 THE SOUTH AFRICAN WAR AND ITS COLONIAL REVERBERATIONS

As the Empire's dominating political crisis of the turn of the century, the Boer War insinuated itself into far-flung affairs, and contemporaries seized on the war and its supposed lessons for their own political ends. Proponents of federal projects in Australia, New Zealand, and Fiji looked to events in South Africa as an example of what colonial

states could do given the will and organization, a warning of what might happen if colonial counterinsurgency efforts failed, and an opportunity to extract concessions from Britain for the help they supplied.⁷⁸ Somewhat unexpectedly, then, a shambles of a war and the reckoning that followed it created opportunities for colonial subjects hoping to challenge the prevailing order.⁷⁹ The Boer War had been a nasty business – its debacles created an international media storm, drove deeper wedges between mainstream British opinion and various “pro-Boer” factions across the Empire, especially in Ireland, and destabilized Britain’s electoral landscape itself, crippling the Liberal Party and sparking years of inquiries and reforms. But the story that emerges from the colonial diplomatic sphere was one of opportunity and possibility. Colonial actors responded to the war and the issues it raised, and used it as an opportunity to reshape the Empire’s political landscape. Reading the war from this perspective reveals how events on the edge of Empire, like the Boer War, not only rebounded upon and shaped policies in the imperial center, but also affected events in other colonies and shaped the course of their politics. Meanwhile, the war’s happy coincidence with the advent of the Conference system gave rise to a new era of diplomatic communication across the Empire. With a new forum in which to use them, colonies found their diplomatic voices in debates about South Africa, which proved critical to their pursuits of greater autonomy. The urgency of discussion surrounding the Empire’s strategic and security dilemmas enabled emerging colonial

⁷⁸ For an example of how a colonial event, and the fears it generated, could affect other colonial contexts, see Jill Bender, “Fears of 1857: The British Empire in the Wake of the Indian Rebellion” (Boston College, 2011); Jill Bender, *The 1857 Uprising and the British Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

⁷⁹ The most commonly cited cases here are those of Mohandas Gandhi, who observed the mistreatment of Indian laborers in South Africa while working there as a barrister, and Ireland, where pro-Boer sympathy ran high among republicans. But other British subjects drew different lessons from the South African War, especially in the Pacific.

states and aspiring federations to seek previously unavailable concessions, and so to chip away at the Empire's hierarchical edifice.

Leo Amery, tireless operative of imperial (and later international) politics, and himself a major proponent of imperial federation (more steadfast than his colleague Jebb), spent several years writing and editing *The Times History of the South African War*, which arrived in 1909 and was based on his reportage for that newspaper during the war.⁸⁰ Amery epigraphed the book with a couplet by Rudyard Kipling, which the Empire's consummate bard had composed in 1900 to memorialize the Boer General Piet Joubert as Britain's noble enemy. Joubert represented a moderating voice among the Boers in the lead-up to war, but lost his bid for leadership to the more hardline Paul Kruger, and on the outbreak of hostilities assumed command of Boer forces. This made him a tragic figure to some on the British side; a sort of Teutonic Robert E. Lee who fought with honor in a doomed resistance to Federal power. Joubert's horse, possessed of a sense of poetic tragedy, abruptly threw the general to his death in late 1899. Kipling's couplet, lines 5 and 6 of a 3-stanza poem, spoke of Joubert's legacy:

Later shall rise a people, sane and great, 5
Forged in strong fires, by equal war made one⁸¹

⁸⁰ By "imperial federation" I refer not to efforts to create federal states out of multiple colonies, but the effort to federate the whole Empire via new institutions designed to include colonial input in metropolitan policymaking. L. S. (Leopold Stennett) Amery, *The Times History of the War in South Africa, 1899-1902* (London: Sampson Low, Marston and Company, Ltd., 1909), <http://archive.org/details/timeshistoryofwa06ameria>.

⁸¹ Rudyard Kipling, *Rudyard Kipling's Verse, Inclusive Edition, 1885-1918* (Garden City: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1922), <http://www.bartleby.com/br/364.html>.

Kipling, and by extension Amery, meditated on these lines because they evoked the equalizing nature of war. Kipling and others referred to the war as a crucible, forging “a people” of the war’s key belligerents – the Boers on the one side, the British and imperial forces on the other. This imagined smelting had precious little room for South Africa’s majority black inhabitants, as will be discussed in subsequent chapters. Amery, though, had still greater metaphors in mind. He noted in the preface to his *Times History* that writing it had been “a wonderful lesson not only in the supremely interesting business of war, but in the whole Imperial problem of which the struggle in South Africa is but a single phase.”⁸² The subtext for Amery was the way the crucible of war could create unity not just between romanticized opponents but also between allies – the colonial participants who served alongside British forces.

Hostilities between the Boers of southern Africa and their neighboring British settlers stretched across centuries.⁸³ Largely Calvinist, Dutch-speaking colonists had been arriving in southern Africa since the Dutch East India Company set up there in the late seventeenth century. Many became farmers, or smallholders called “Boers,” who by the nineteenth century had begun to migrate inland in search of workable land and freedom from encroachment by competing colonial powers – a phenomenon known as The Great Trek. Southern Africa’s strategic position along the maritime route to India, and the vast gold and diamond reserves discovered in its interior in the mid-nineteenth century,

⁸² Amery, *The Times History of the War in South Africa, 1899-1902*, viii.

⁸³ A classic account of the war and its antecedents is Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War* (New York: Random House, 1979); The centenary of the conflict also sparked a number of new studies, such as Denis Judd and Keith Terrance Surridge, *The Boer War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); Donal Lowry, *The South African War Reappraised* (Manchester University Press, 2000); David E. Omissi and Andrew Thompson, eds., *The Impact of the South African War* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2002).

primed the ensuing era for unstable competition between indigenous peoples, settler colonists, and imperial powers. Organized opposition to colonial expansion and settlement from the region's indigenous people led to the Zulu War in 1879, after which Britain assumed control of Zulu lands, and the first Anglo-Boer war in 1880-1, which resulted in a Boer victory and British recognition of two Afrikaner republics, the Orange Free State and the Transvaal (or South African Republic).⁸⁴ This left an uneasy regional balance between the two British colonies, the Cape Colony and Natal, and the two Afrikaner republics bestriding most of the region's mineral reserves. By century's end, then, a legacy of conflict between the region's competing powers and their local interests had set up a major strategic tension: would the future lead to regional consolidation under British rule, or remain fractured? Federation of these colonies into a single, expansive state had been a goal of the Colonial Office since the days of the Zulu War and First Boer War – a goal that had been routinely frustrated by recalcitrant opposition to British hegemony by indigenous peoples and Boer settlers alike.⁸⁵

Afrikaners in the mineral-rich Rand, the upland region drained by the Vaal and Orange rivers, faced a possible British takeover not just through a military putsch or invasion, but via ordinary democratic – and demographic – change.⁸⁶ The Boer Republics' abundant resources and chronic labor shortage meant they had to maintain

⁸⁴ There were further conflicts as well, especially the Matabele Wars (1893-4 and 1896-7) in Rhodesia. For more see Richard Price, *Making Empire: Colonial Encounters and the Creation of Imperial Rule in Nineteenth-Century Africa* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

⁸⁵ Lord Carnarvon made the first attempt at a British federation in South Africa in the late 1870s; this led to the first Anglo-Boer War. Judd and Surridge, *The Boer War*, 28; Amery described the war as a rerun of the American Civil War, between “the forces making for union and the forces making for disintegration.” See Lowry, *The South African War Reappraised*, 26–7.

⁸⁶ Judd and Surridge, *The Boer War*, 32–33; 44–7.

significant inward migration to keep the mines productive and thus to service their abundant debt. Thousands of foreigners poured into the Rand, many of whom were laborers from other parts of Africa, India, and China that worked for a pittance and suffered high mortality rates in the mines. Over 100,000 British settlers, less happily for Boer governments, accompanied them, drawn by the promise of gold-strikes, land speculation, and chain-migration.⁸⁷ These “Uitlanders” (the Afrikaans word for foreigner), when naturalized, could swamp the incumbent Boers in a stroke of legal, democratic regime change – or so they feared. The imagined British federation in Southern Africa could arrive without a fired shot. To avoid this sort of euthanasia, the Transvaal government placed strict franchise controls on Uitlanders to stop their acquiring voting rights and thus threatening the Afrikaners’ *Herrenvolk* model of government.⁸⁸ With democratic paths apparently closed to them, those hoping for a British, federal South Africa resorted to coup and conspiracy. A cabal of Randlords – fabulously rich and politically ambitious British mining magnates like Cecil Rhodes and Leander Starr Jameson, who between them controlled De Beers, the British South Africa Company, and the government of the Cape Colony itself – colluded with officials in London and the Colonial Office to destabilize the regime of Paul Kruger, the intransigent Afrikaner Prime Minister of the Transvaal.⁸⁹ The “Jameson Raid,” the fruit of their labor,

⁸⁷ The populations of the Transvaal, Cape Colony, and Natal roughly doubled over the period 1890-1905. The city of Johannesburg grew to a population of over 100,000 in 1895 from virtual nonexistence in 1885. Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, chap. 6, “Boers, Britons, and the ‘Black English’” pp. 378–9.

⁸⁸ For the concept of Herrenvolk Democracy, in which a state is nominally democratic but reserves the franchise to racial in-groups, see Kenneth P. Vickery, “‘Herrenvolk’ Democracy and Egalitarianism in South Africa and the U.S. South,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 16, no. 3 (June 1, 1974): 309–28.

⁸⁹ One of the best overviews of the situation remains AJP Taylor’s 1952 essay in A. J. P. Taylor, *English History, 1914-1945*, The Oxford History of England 15 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), chap. 6, “The Jameson Raid.”

was a monument to failed coups. By the end of 1895 the plot, which involved a small army raised by the British South Africa Company under Jameson's direction but which depended on a mass Uitlander uprising that never came, had been routed by the Boers. Knowing British officialdom needed to distance itself from the affair and with no interest in prosecuting a high-profile international trial, Kruger simply packed the ringleaders back to London in shackles. Rhodes resigned his chairmanship of the British South Africa Company to avoid repeal of the Company's Charter; Jameson served a predictably short prison sentence, given his sustained popularity in Britain.

And so the nineteenth century drew to a close with the Transvaal and Orange Free State still firmly within Boer hands. A paranoid Paul Kruger even succeeded in attracting diplomatic sympathy from Germany, and in procuring shipments of cutting-edge German rifles with which to arm his forces. The dream of a British South Africa had been stymied, but pressures continued to mount. British officials, especially the Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain and the High Commissioner for Southern Africa, Alfred Milner, continued to advocate for voting rights to Uitlanders under Boer rule.⁹⁰ Kruger, with few incentives to cooperate and the hints of German backing from the notorious Kruger Telegram, stood firm.⁹¹ After a mutual exchange of ultimatums in late 1899 – Chamberlain demanded full rights for Uitlanders; Kruger demanded withdrawal of all British forces from the Transvaal border within forty-eight hours – the situation deteriorated into open war.

⁹⁰ High Commissioners acted as representatives of Crown sovereignty to British colonial governments. Constitutionally, they appointed Governments and assented legislation, etc., on the Crown's behalf.

⁹¹ In the aftermath of the Jameson Raid in 1896, Germany's Kaiser Wilhelm II telegraphed Kruger to congratulate him on repelling British aggression. Once leaked, the telegram sparked an Anglo-German diplomatic crisis which the Kaiser was forced to diffuse with a conciliatory letter to his grandmother, Queen Victoria.

The opening moves of the Boer War went horribly pear-shaped for British forces. With reinforcements thousands of miles away, well-armed and fast-moving Boer troops seized the initiative and cornered British positions. Soon they bottled up General George White in Ladysmith, Natal (the operation that took the life of Piet Joubert and bestirred Kipling); Cecil Rhodes in Kimberley, the Cape Colony; and Robert Baden-Powell in Mafeking, Bechuanaland. Thus Redvers Buller, the British general initially tasked with prosecuting the war, faced the impossible task of liberating three ongoing sieges with his single, already outnumbered force. Buller split his strength into thirds and tried to accomplish this in one three-pronged stroke. This failed miserably, and 1899 ended with “Black Week” – three successive defeats for British forces and nearly 3,000 casualties. Following intense public hand-wringing, the War Office sacked Buller and attempted to reconstitute British forces in southern Africa. 30,000 new volunteers from British South Africa and almost as many again from Australia, Canada, and New Zealand leant an air of imperial solidarity to the reconstituted force.⁹² The Indian Army arrived in time to prevent a total collapse of British positions in Natal, though it was a special detachment of British soldiers from the Indian Army; native Indians with guns risked upsetting the racist sensibilities of the white population in South Africa, whom Britain could not afford to alienate.⁹³

By this point, the calamity of the South African emergency had begun to affect politics in London, and in the seats of government across the Empire. Salisbury, then

⁹² See the figures provided in Keith Jeffery, “Kruger’s Farmers, Strathcona’s Horse, Sir George Clarke’s Camels and the Kaiser’s Battleships: The Impact of the South African War on Imperial Defence,” in *The South African War Reappraised*, ed. Donal Lowry (New York: Manchester University Press, 2000), 189.

⁹³ See Balasubramanyam Chandramohan, “‘Hamlet with the Prince of Denmark Left out’: The South African War, Empire and India,” in *The South African War Reappraised*, ed. Donal Lowry (New York: Manchester University Press, 2000), 158–9.

double-jobbing as both Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, was judged (rightly, it must be said) to have overstretched himself, and surrendered the latter portfolio to Lansdowne in late 1900.⁹⁴ Meanwhile, as the imperial war machine lumbered to life, the Pacific colonial contingents and 7,000 troops from India were supplemented by imperial detachments from across the Mediterranean and Middle East: Gibraltar, Malta, Cyprus, Egypt, Aden, and Mauritius. This vast regional muster proved haphazard and, in the war's aftermath, an easy target for criticism. Hugh Oakley Arnold-Forster, the Belfast firebrand and secretary of the Imperial Federation League, wrote a sensational polemic against the Government's management of deployment to South Africa from his post at the Admiralty in 1900: *The War Office, the Army, and the Empire: A Review of the Military Situation in 1900*.⁹⁵ Of the scrambling, fevered manner in which imperial outposts were denuded of troops for the war effort, he wrote: "it stands to reason that in any war except the particular one in which we happen to have been engaged such transfers could only be described as criminal folly."⁹⁶ In one exemplary case, the Government of New Zealand under Richard Seddon, having sent an initial detachment of troops to South Africa, faced calls for additional deployments and felt compelled to poll

⁹⁴ Wilson, *International Impact of the Boer War*, ch. 10 "The Boer War in the Context of Britain's Imperial Problems" This move involved pressure from Joseph Chamberlain, Colonial Secretary, to do a deal with Germany over South Africa and related strategic questions. Germany played here for a Triple Alliance (with Britain and Austria), but Salisbury feared the multiplicity of global land borders shared by British territory and that of France and Russia, who would be created his formal enemies by such a deal, and demurred this offer.

⁹⁵ H.O. Arnold-Forster, *The War Office, the Army, and the Empire: A Review of the Military Situation in 1900* (London: Cassell and Company, Ltd., 1900).

⁹⁶ Ibid., 30. The text will be discussed in greater depth in the next chapter.

the assent of Representatives on their willingness to dispatch more men from their constituencies.⁹⁷ By war's end in 1902 they had performed ten such consultations.⁹⁸

The imperial troop surge eventually worked, albeit at great cost. The cost in casualties on both sides joined the diplomatic and moral costs of a grisly, counter-insurgent war. Probing, on-site journalism cataloged the increasingly repressive tactics of British troops against unconventional Boer forces. An Irishman and committed imperialist named Roger Casement reported on the atrocities of the Boer War and the Congo colony from a consular post. The experience so reframed his perspective on British power in the world that it drove him into the welcoming arms of Irish republicanism.⁹⁹ Emily Hobhouse's exposé on the British practice of rounding up the families of Boer soldiers into "concentration camps," where they were malnourished and prone to disease and death, made her, and the *Manchester Guardian* for which she wrote, household names of liberal reformism.¹⁰⁰ The course of the war featured enough fortunate turns for British forces to keep the campaign from derailing, however. The relief of Mafeking in May 1900 provoked an Empire-wide night of bacchanalian revelry and catapulted future Scoutmaster Robert Baden-Powell to fame as the garrison's indomitable commander.

⁹⁷ See: "South African War Telegrams," 1902 ACHW 8634 SEDDON2/4/15 R19467553, NANZ.

⁹⁸ See Ian McGibbon and John Crawford, eds., *One Flag, One Queen, One Tongue: New Zealand, The British Empire, and the South African War* (Auckland (New Zealand): Auckland University Press, 2003), chap. 5, Thomas Pakenham, "The Contribution of the Colonial Forces."

⁹⁹ Casement's Road to Damascus moment culminated in his own death at the hands of British forces in 1916, after the German U-boat on which he had been conspiring farcically dumped him on the shores of his native land, delivering him, hypothermic and bewildered, into the hands of his erstwhile employers.

¹⁰⁰ See G. R. Searle, *A New England?: Peace and War 1886-1918* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 281; Searle has written elsewhere of how the debacle of the war provoked a national craze for "efficiency"; G. R. Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency: A Study in British Politics and Political Thought, 1899-1914* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971).

The war's fortunate turn for British forces affected many other careers besides. The early disasters at Colenso and Spion Kop were followed by successes at Paardeburg, and the relief of Rhodes at Kimberley. These victories redeemed the reputation of Redvers Buller, and burnished that of Gen. Lord Roberts, aging hero of many Victorian engagements, qualifying him to assume initial command of British forces in World War I, the conflict that claimed his life in late 1914. The man who would succeed him in Flanders, Herbert Kitchener, also cemented his reputation as a military fixer in South Africa. Having won fame for saving the British campaign in the Sudan some years before, Kitchener spearheaded the scorched-earth tactics he believed would win the war, in accordance with his Shermanesque reputation. The war's turn also gave Salisbury's Tory Government of 1895 a new lease on life, ushering him into a final term, despite his failing health, on the heels of the "Khaki Election" of October 1900, so named for the hue of imperial kit in South Africa. 1900 marked a resounding victory for the Tories, who rode a wave of imperial fervor (jingoism, according to their critics) to an increased majority and a renewed confidence to win the war.¹⁰¹

But the elation of final victory over Afrikaner forces, after much mopping-up, in May 1902 scarcely masked the revulsion at what it had cost, and the anxiety over the sheer inadequacy of imperial planning, institutions, and politics to address military crises of this type. Formal measures to reform these inadequacies in the war's aftermath will be

¹⁰¹ A helpful discussion of the implications of class in the 1900 election is Richard Price, *An Imperial War and the British Working Class: Working-Class Attitudes and Reactions to the Boer War, 1899-1902*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2007); See also a classic work on the realignment of British politics in the early 20th century by "New Liberalism" argued by Peter Clarke, *Liberals and Social Democrats* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); and a continuation of Clarke's theme by E.H.H. Green and Duncan Tanner, *The Strange Survival of Liberal England: Political Leaders, Moral Values and the Reception of Economic Debate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

discussed below. The remainder of this chapter will discuss how the war – as crisis, logistical challenge, romantic cause, shameful debacle – affected political debates in Britain’s Pacific colonies. British forces’ nominal *casus belli* in South Africa concerned electoral democracy – Kruger’s refusal of voting rights to Uitlander-British settlers. The ramifications of this global intervention to vindicate democracy provoked Empire-wide conversations about democracy and self-government as the racial birthrights and constitutional baselines necessary for British political society to function. Critically, the war also established a precedent that the British Government would militarily intervene to protect the political rights of its subjects; an ironic inversion of the blundered American Revolution. Finally, it also stimulated thinking about the viable paths to sovereignty available to British colonies. The Afrikaner republics served as warnings: they had democratic institutions and copious mineral wealth, but lacked the resources to defend the former and the labor and infrastructure to exploit the latter. Now, they were to be subsumed within a loosely-agreed roadmap to the trusty federation model, agreed at the Treaty of Vereeniging in 1902. Colonial participants in the war from farther afield took heart also – operating jointly with Britain implicitly posed them as its partners; the pretense of democratic assent to these interventions, however perfunctory, created procedural precedents for autonomous security policies among colonial governments. Likewise, those hoping to distance themselves from British influence found themselves galvanized by the cruelty and sloppiness of the imperial war effort. Especially in Ireland and India, the prospect of delegitimizing British power, or resisting it by force of arms, looked more feasible to hardline nationalists after 1902. Australians, properly understood as proto-Australians at the war’s outbreak, had to complete their own federation project

concurrently with the conflict in South Africa. As the Empire's headline story, they could not ignore it, yet by virtue of the Indian Ocean they could keep it at arm's length. And so opportunists on both sides of Pacific federation projects seized on South Africa for their own ends.

1.3 AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION, IMPERIAL STRATEGY, AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN WAR

While the war to which Australian colonies would ship over 16,000 troops raged in South Africa, the heads of those colonies deliberated over the terms of their federation. Australians' reaction to the plight of Uitlanders carried more emotion than that of metropolitan Britons; they empathized with the experience of migration and the hardscrabble life that followed it in faraway lands.¹⁰² The juxtaposition of some British migrants poised to complete a grand federation in the South Pacific and others being cheated of their destiny in southern Africa only enhanced the poignancy of Australia's involvement in the war. It also heightened the sense of urgency surrounding the new federal state's ability to defend itself. The alarum raised by Arnold-Forster over the reallocation of imperial troop garrisons resounded too in Australia – even farther from major concentrations of British forces in the event of a local military contingency. Kipling, never one to let an auspicious event in the Empire pass him by, penned an ode to

¹⁰² Pakenham, *The Boer War*, 260.

Australia's emergence as a nation from the crucible of the war; entitled "The Young Queen," it first ran in *The Times* in late 1900 and was published again as part of Kipling's anthology *The Five Nations* in 1903.¹⁰³ In it, the "Young Queen" symbolizing the new Australia comes before the Old, symbolizing Britain, in the aftermath of conquest: "Her hand was still on her sword-hilt / The spur was still on her heel". Asking to be crowned for her valor, the Old Queen refrains "How shall I crown thee further?" (than the war already has), and after several stanzas, sends her new sister forth with a warning about peace and security:

Shall I give thee delight in dominion – mere pride in thy
setting forth?

Nay, we be women together – we know what that lust is
worth.

Peace in thy utmost borders, and strength on a road
untrod?

These are dealt and diminished at the secret will of
God.¹⁰⁴

This stanza, fittingly, contains both the promise of federation (peace within the borders), and the solemn reminder that peace and prosperity are fragile, contingent on divine ordination. Australia's nationhood, its security, was inscribed in the heavens, and made

¹⁰³ A full account of the poem's publication history is available at http://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/rg_youngqueen1.htm

¹⁰⁴ Kipling, *The Five Nations*, 1903, 102-3

manifest in a heavenly sign – the Southern Cross – “the Five-Starred Cross above them, for sign of the Nations Five.”¹⁰⁵

At the opposite pole from Kipling’s celestial ramblings lay the grim episode of Harry “Breaker” Morant – an Australian who served in South Africa in the Bushveldt Carabineers. Morant and another officer were alleged to have shot Boer prisoners during the war, and found themselves court-martialed and executed in 1902. Morant’s case proved highly controversial – supporters professed his innocence – as an effort by Britain to find a convenient colonial scapegoat for the myriad abuses of the South African campaign.¹⁰⁶ Among other things, the Breaker case highlighted the diplomatic disadvantages facing the “Young Queen” – namely, that she was not capable of protecting the rights of her citizens against judicial proceedings initiated from the imperial center – the very constitutional puzzle that aroused the cogitations of A.V. Dicey and A.B. Keith. Here were the paradoxes of constitutional reality in the Edwardian autumn of the British Empire. Some colonies were carving new forms of sovereignty out of the stultifying hierarchy of a colonized international system, and metropolitan officialdom even recognized the utility of this for strategic ends. But changing circumstances begat precarious, liminal conditions for colonies like Australia positioning themselves as new, rising states. Supporters of Australian federation meant to pry open these constitutional lockboxes and take possession of their contents. Strategic expediency

¹⁰⁵ The constellation Crux, or “Southern Cross,” rather confusingly features five bright stars, though the four that form its cruciform shape are the most well-known. Thus Kipling’s metaphor for the five self-governing nations of the Empire: Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the Cape Colony, is technically coherent – the Cape Colony’s status here being roughly as tenuous as Epsilon Crucis’ in Crux.

¹⁰⁶ Donal Lowry discusses the importance of the Morant case to Australian national consciousness, especially later during the Vietnam War with the release of the film *Breaker Morant*, in Lowry, *The South African War Reappraised*, 226–7.

to imperial goals was to be their key. Australia's federation was not just about the way the Australian colonies chose to associate with one another, it was about the way they chose collectively to associate with the outside world. It was an international project, not merely a national one.

The prelude to Australian federation reflected this two-level sovereignty.¹⁰⁷ A series of Australian inter-colonial conferences through the 1880s and 90s provided a forum for the individual colonies to discuss common concerns, yet these meetings were driven substantively by the colonies' outward expansionism. The governments of individual colonies, especially northerly Queensland, grew anxious at foreign colonial

¹⁰⁷ Scholarly explanations for the logic underlying the Australian federal movement have not ignored its strategic context. In 1976, Neville Meaney's *The Search for Security in the Pacific, 1901-1914* marked a shift in the historiography, which to that point had mostly focused on the First World War and Gallipoli as moments when Australians' investment in foreign affairs was born. Neville K. Meaney, *The Search for Security in the Pacific, 1901-14* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1976); For earlier consensus works on Australia that de-emphasize prewar foreign and security factors, see Gordon Greenwood, *Australia: A Social and Political History* (London: Angus & Robertson, 1955); C.E.W. Bean, *The Story of Anzac: From the Outbreak of War to the End of the First Phase of the Gallipoli Campaign, May 4, 1915*, *The Official History of Australia in the Wars of 1914-1918* (Hertfordshire, England: Prentice-Hall International, 1981); After Meaney, a number of historians have emphasized late-colonial and early-Commonwealth preoccupation with security, and with Australia's place in the greater Pacific and imperial strategic landscapes Jeffrey Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, 3 edition (Port Melbourne, VIC: Cambridge University Press, 2008); and Eric Andrews, *The Department of Defence, The Australian Centenary History of Defence*, V (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2001) which emphasized the unification of Germany as a pretext for Australian federalism, and Luke Trainor, *British Imperialism and Australian Nationalism: Manipulation, Conflict, and Compromise in the Late Nineteenth Century*, *Studies in Australian History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994) which emphasized Japan's regional aggression against China and Russia as the motivating factor. The expected wave of scholarship published to coincide with the centenary of the Commonwealth in 2001 appeared to swing back towards other points of emphasis. While Stuart McIntyre's 1999 historiographical essay in the *Oxford History of the British Empire* noted that attention was beginning to grow around the imperial dimension of Australia's history, some of the notable centenary works tend to emphasize more centripetal forces, and the fractious, contingent nature of the federation story. Robin W Winks, *Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume V: Historiography*, vol. 5, 5 vols., *The Oxford History of the British Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Overall this has been a useful exercise for moving away from nationalist historiographies, discussed in the intro above, that treat the formation of nation-states in the colonies with an air of path-dependency. The trade-off to this turn is that it makes a contextual understanding of the forces responsible for federation more difficult. See Helen Irving, ed., *The Centenary Companion to Australian Federation*, 1 edition (Cambridge University Press, 2010); and W. G. McMinn, *Nationalism and Federalism in Australia* (Melbourne ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) Understanding the coalescence of the Australian Commonwealth is made easier by framing it in the wider lenses of the British Empire and in Australia's near-abroad, the Pacific Ocean.

incursion by France and Germany, and to a lesser extent, Japan and the United States. They lobbied the British Government to annex the island chains ringing Australia's coasts before another power could. London, particularly the Foreign Office, loathed nothing so much as the prospect of colonials complicating their careful diplomatic machinations with other European powers. So the Australians resorted to subterfuge – Queenslanders seized New Guinea in 1883 and had to be walked back by a hand-wringing Colonial Office. Britain eventually assumed official control of part of southeastern New Guinea five years later and placed it under joint administration with the government of Queensland, partly vindicating the colonists' tactics.¹⁰⁸ The issue of New Guinea, and of the French threat to annex the New Hebrides, provided the impetus for the first Inter-Colonial Convention between Queensland, Victoria, and New South Wales at Sydney later in 1883. After this meeting, advocates of federation attempted to seize the initiative for future cooperation, and lobby organizations like the Australian Natives Association (as one important white political group so preciously dubbed itself) spearheaded the effort. The British Government took the first step toward encouraging the colonies' federation when it passed the *Australasian Federal Council Act 1885*. In its original conception, this consultative body included the Australian colonies plus New Zealand and representatives from the Crown Colony of Fiji, annexed in 1874.

Even after the creation of the Federal Council, serious obstacles to unification remained. The Australian colonies at the end of the nineteenth century were a diverse lot, and their interests often clashed. New South Wales, with its bustling port of Sydney,

¹⁰⁸ The National Archives of Australia's own finding guide on the Federation period narrates this series of annexations as part of its official chronology. It says of the climbdown over New Guinea, "...demonstrating how powerless Australian colonies were to act on their own." See: <http://www.naa.gov.au/naaresources/publications/research_guides/fedguide/chronology/chron4.htm>

greatly valued commercial maritime trade. Its Premier Richard Parkes, a late-warmer to federation keen to preserve New South Wales' interests, feared the Council was a platitudinous half-measure and ensured his government never joined it. Queensland, the northern colony governed from Brisbane, looked to the tropical zone off its shores and its attendant commodities – migration and labor proved critical issues there. Victoria in the southeast had been the recent beneficiary of a gold boom that made Melbourne one of the wealthiest cities in the British Empire.¹⁰⁹ Van Diemen's Land, or Tasmania, possessed a temperate climate and conditions presumed ideal for European settlement, as well as a thriving capital at Hobart. Southern and Western Australia remained preoccupied with settlerism – enticing new (British) migrants to sign up for the life of hardscrabble farming offered by its vast *terra nullis* where dispossessed Aboriginal peoples once dominated.¹¹⁰ These differences made it difficult for the colonies to reach consensus on many of the day's important policy issues, most conspicuously trade policy, for which commercial Sydney had much to gain from the London-endorsed orthodoxy of free trade, and the agricultural and commodity-producing colonies elsewhere on the island-continent, much to lose. But the Federal Council served an immediate need for regulating matters of business between the colonies, who had no constitutional powers to legislate beyond their own borders on matters such as extradition and shipping.

While the fears stoked by Queenslanders and other Australians against French or German incursion took on a competitive tone – annexation of Pacific islands proved a race of sorts, in which the Continentals sprinted ahead with the German claim of western

¹⁰⁹ See Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*, chap. 11, "Melbourne's Empire."

¹¹⁰ The Northern Territory, with all its imagined defensive liabilities, was at the time administered remotely from Adelaide in South Australia.

New Guinea in 1885 and the French claim of the New Hebrides in 1886 – the fears stoked against Japan proved more ominous and adversarial. Japan’s increasingly muscular Meiji regime grabbed the world’s attention in 1894 by launching an amphibious assault on the Korean Peninsula and Manchuria that efficiently deployed over 200,000 land forces, held control over the Yellow Sea, and wrested Korea from Qing China in a short, eight-month war. Colonel (later Commander-in-Chief of Australian forces) Edward T.H. Hutton, the commandant of New South Wales’ military forces, wrote to the NSW Colonial Secretary in Sydney in Spring 1895,

The sudden rise of Japan to the position of a naval and military power of the first magnitude has placed the importance of the defence of the Australian continent by mutual agreement between the several colonies in the light of necessity...The final result of their successive and momentous victories by land and sea cannot be foreseen...The necessity for preparation for such a possibility becomes a question of the utmost importance to Australia, not only in relation to British trade but national future.¹¹¹

Japan’s military show in the Sino-Japanese War only confirmed the worst fears of Australasian staff officers – that an organized invader could surely rout the inadequate and hopelessly fractured defenses of the individual colonies. Legally, there was not even a clear basis for volunteers from New South Wales to come to the aid of a hypothetically-

¹¹¹ Minute by Maj. Gen. Edward Hutton to the NSW Colonial secretary, 12 March 1895, CAB 11/23; quoted in Meaney, *The Search for Security*, 29.

besieged Queensland, since the colonies' militias could only operate within their own borders, or up to three miles offshore.¹¹² Lt. Gen. J. Bevan Edwards, the officer commanding the Royal Navy's China Station at Hong Kong, had embarked on a military inspection of Australasian colonies' forces in 1889 and wrote to his counterpart in the Horse Guards, London, "The assurances which I have received from the Premiers and Ministers of the different Colonies lead me to believe that steps will now be taken to bring about federation of the local forces of the different Colonies, so that they may combine for defence."¹¹³

Edwards was correct. His report helped convince Henry Parkes that New South Wales should cooperate with the movement for federation – in his famous Tenterfield Speech, often seen as the turning point in the story of Australian unification, Parkes noted that nothing short of a unified, federal Australia could ensure the colonies' security.¹¹⁴ With all governments finally on board, negotiations over the path forward accelerated. A preliminary constitutional convention met in Spring 1891 and approved a draft constitution and a name, "The Commonwealth of Australia." Colonial legislatures failed to pass this document, however, as they were in the grip of a severe economic depression and their governments were rent by resignations and gridlock. In subsequent years, the colonies finally agreed a framework for electing delegates to a Constitutional

¹¹² This was the doctrine of "Colonial Extra-territorial Incompetence." See S.B. Kaye, "The Offshore Jurisdiction of the Australian States," *Australian Journal of Maritime and Ocean Affairs* 1, no. 2 (2009): 37.

¹¹³ Cd. 6188 1890, Australasia – Correspondence Relating to the Inspection of the Military Forces of the Australasian Colonies by Major-General J. Bevan Edwards, C.B. *Parliamentary Papers*, 6.

¹¹⁴ "SIR HENRY PARKES AT TENTERFIELD. BANQUET TO THE PREMIER. A BRILLIANT RECEPTION. [BY TELEGRAPH.] (FROM OUR SPECIAL REPORTER.) TENTERFIELD, THURSDAY.," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, October 25, 1889, 8.

Convention, the output of which would then be ratified by referenda in each colony. Delegates were elected in early 1897 and met first later that year. The aging Parkes suffered the Mosaic misfortune of dying in 1896, but his ambitious young Attorney General, Edmund Barton, took center stage at the Convention. The task facing the delegates, of authoring Australia's founding document and making it acceptable to the colonial governments, was in its technical sense a task of drafting a bill for the Imperial Parliament in London – if they succeeded in having the constitution ratified, it would need Westminster's approval and Royal Assent to become law. The delegates completed their work in 1898 and threw themselves to the winds of colonial referenda. In June of that year, all the voting colonies approved the draft constitution. But New South Wales was not finished complicating matters – its majority in favor came up 8,000 votes short of the agreed 80,000-vote threshold, and a new vote had to be scheduled for the following year, along with that of Western Australia, which drug its feet for concessions on railways throughout the federation negotiations. Having finally cleared the hurdles of Australian ratification, the draft constitution would meet its final reckoning in London.

Nascent Australians faced an eighteen-month gestation, while their founding documents circulated through their colonial plebiscites and then through the corridors of London, before their legal birth on the first day of 1901. But international events did not wait for constitutional formalities to be settled – the summer of 1898 proved hot and dizzying for Britain in seemingly every colonial theater, and especially nervy for Australians. Gen. Edwards had warned of this eventuality in his report, stating hopefully that federation “would also prevent the unseemly scares which take place whenever the relations of the mother country with a foreign power are somewhat strained. The mere

fracture of the cable between Darwin and Batavia which recently took place was sufficient to cause uneasiness throughout all the Colonies, and in Victoria preparations were actually made to resist an attack.”¹¹⁵ In July 1898, the British Government negotiated a settlement to lease the Chinese port of Weihaiwei after foreign powers began snapping up naval stations in the Yellow Sea following the Sino-Japanese War. American forces, having landed in the Philippines in May, captured Manila on 13 August, ejecting the Spanish colonial government and establishing a major foothold in the western Pacific. Britain and France nearly went to war over the Sudan; British forces under Kitchener swept through the defunct Ottoman province after their victory at Khartoum until they encountered a French force stationed at the Nile port of Fashoda. A tense stalemate ensued, and a British flotilla arrived in early September 1898 to tilt the balance in favor of the British, but the standoff was not resolved until Théophile Delcassé ordered his out-gunned French forces to stand down in November. The ongoing standoff with Paul Kruger’s government in the Transvaal did not resolve so fortunately, of course, and by late 1899, the war in South Africa was underway.

Though South Africa was thousands of miles away from the Commonwealth-in-waiting, the war with the Afrikaner republics marked the most significant imperial conflict since the 1857 rebellion in India, and the first serious inter-state conflict Britain had fought since the Crimean War in 1853-6. The commandants of the Australian colonies faced an operational headache: Australian subjects kept volunteering for military forces that were not fully realized, to fight in conflicts to which they were not formally

¹¹⁵ Cd. 6188 1890, Australasia – Correspondence Relating to the Inspection of the Military Forces of the Australasian Colonies by Major-General J. Bevan Edwards, C.B. *Parliamentary Papers*, 22.

deployed.¹¹⁶ The Colonial Office had rebuffed repeated offers of troops to serve in the Sudan campaigns, though one contingent of New South Welshmen managed to reach that conflict in time to play a role.¹¹⁷ As Edwards and Parkes had warned, federation was the only path to defensibility for the Australian colonies, but their disunity also posed a challenge for *offensives* and military adventurism – the colonies found themselves coordinating the robust voluntary response to the South African War on an ad hoc basis. Queensland sent a formal offer of troops to the British Government first, in fact well before the expiry of the diplomatic ultimatum to Kruger, on 11 July 1899. It offered Joseph Chamberlain 250 mounted troops and machine guns, and roughly that number arrived with the first wave of British offensives under Gen. Lord Methuen in December. Loath to be out-shone by the Queenslanders, the other Australian governments quickly followed suit.¹¹⁸ The Australian commandants, gathered in Melbourne, hoped to win approval for a unified Australian force of a few thousand to deploy in South Africa under its own officers. The British War Office quashed the idea. Chamberlain informed the Governors of Victoria, NSW, and South Australia on 3 October 1899 that their offered troops were to be “an integral portion of Imperial forces” and that they should be

¹¹⁶ In fact, offers of troops by colonial governments were carefully planned for public consumption, as work by C.N. Connolly has shown. John Leonard Mordike, *An Army for a Nation: A History of Australian Military Developments, 1880-1914*, Directorate of Army Studies, Dept. of Defence (North Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1992), chap. “Manufacturing Spontaneity”; See also Trainor, *British Imperialism and Australian Nationalism*, 150; Stephen Clarke has challenged this thesis in a recent book chapter, arguing that activist officers in Australasian posts expedited the deployment of colonial contingents, see McGibbon and Crawford, *One Flag, One Queen, One Tongue: New Zealand, The British Empire, and the South African War*, chap. 2, “Desperately Seeking Service: The Australasian Commandants and the War.”

¹¹⁷ A good overview is Barbara R. Penny, “Australia’s Reactions to the Boer War—a Study in Colonial Imperialism,” *Journal of British Studies* 7, no. 01 (November 1967): 97–130, doi:10.1086/385546.

¹¹⁸ For an overview see the official account published following the war, John Stirling, *The Colonials in South Africa, 1899-1902: Being the Services of the Various Irregular Corps Raised in South Africa and the Contingents from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, India, and Ceylon Together with the Details of Those Mentioned in Despatches with Related Honours and Awards*, 2nd ed. (Polstead, Suffolk: J.B. Hayward & Son, 1990), 435.

commanded at unit-level by officers not higher-ranked than Captain or Major.¹¹⁹ An additional spot of bother arose over costs – the Imperial Government expected the Australians to cover the costs of equipping and transporting their troops, as well as paying their wages (and pensions) at standard imperial rates. Their only reciprocal offer was for arms.¹²⁰ These issues – of costs and of unified force structure – represented a greater tension between the public enthusiasm for the war effort, and private irritations over Australia’s security and military capabilities.

The Australian colonies nonetheless cooperated with Britain in organizing the deployment of the “contingents,” as they came to be known in shorthand. Contemporary accounts of these deployments made clear that they marked the first act of a new state. A 27 January 1900 issue of the *South Australian Register* featured a number of conspicuous articles marking the departure of that colony’s troops.¹²¹ Following a correspondent’s report from the Veldt about the hazards of life on deployment with the contingents in South Africa, a letter signed “LOYAL GERMAN” exhorted the German residents of Australia to remain faithful to their domiciled country in the face of the insidious German press, which had turned steadily anti-British since the start of the Boer War (and anti-American since the war with Spain). Next came an account of an Australian Natives Association meeting on the occasion of Foundation Day, which marked the arrival of the

¹¹⁹ Cd. 18 1900, “Correspondence relating to the Despatch of Colonial Military Contingents to South Africa,” *Parliamentary Papers*, 6.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹²¹ This issue shows up in several places throughout the literature; see Henry L. Hall, *Australia and England, a Study in Imperial Relations*, and Meaney, *The Search for Security in the Pacific, 1901-14*, 4; For more on the case of South Australia in the South African conflict, see A. P. Haydon, “South Australia’s First War,” *Historical Studies: Australia and New Zealand* 11, no. 42 (April 1, 1964): 222–33, doi:10.1080/10314616408595278.

First Fleet of British ships in Australia, on 26 January 1788. The irony of the Australian Natives Association again blazes brightly. Vaiben Solomon, former Mayor of Adelaide and serving MP for South Australia, remarked at the meeting that “The spirit of patriotism [evident in the deployment of Australian troops to South Africa] had drawn the colonies themselves closer together than twenty-five years of commercial peace had done, and it had been a striking lesson to the world.”¹²² Solomon’s words invoke both the extent to which federationists regarded security matters as more salient to their nationalism and state-building projects than all-too-divisive economic matters, and also the way that Australia’s participation in the South African War served as an important signaling mechanism to both Britain and the wider international community. As diplomatic cables and daily newspapers indicated, Australia seemed to swim in a sea of crisis, and its rebirth as a continental federation was as much an outward-facing measure as it was an internal consolidation.

Mafeking’s liberation on 17 May 1900 spawned the barbarous neologism *to maffick* – to celebrate exuberantly, uncritically, wildly.¹²³ Within two months, Queen Victoria’s subjects had more occasions for mafficking. They mafficked on 17 July, when Indian troops bore the imperial flag into Peking and freed the besieged international legations trapped in its diplomatic quarter, turning the tide of the Boxer Rebellion in favor of the international coalition. They mafficked also in Australia the previous week, when the Federation Bill passed through the Mother of Parliaments in Westminster and

¹²² “FOUNDATION DAY – A.N.A. BANQUET,” *The South Australian Register*, January 27, 1900, 5.

¹²³ The OED lists a conspicuous attestation in the *Pall Mall Gazette* the week after, apparently coining the phrase, and another in the *Western Evening Herald* for 26 May, noting “about two thousand maffickers, mafficking as hard as they could maffick.” “Maffick, v. : Oxford English Dictionary,” accessed April 13, 2015, <http://www.oed.com.proxy.bc.edu/view/Entry/112119?redirectedFrom=mafficking#eid38534015>.

received Royal Assent on 9 July. The anti-federationist boy had at last been run down in the tracks, brave but misguided. The Commonwealth of Australia realized what one St. Kildan had described as “the consolidat[ion] of the power of the British Empire in the southern seas.”¹²⁴ It remained to implement the provisions of the new constitution. The Australian colonies legally became “states” of the Australian Commonwealth. The constitution entrusted to the new, bicameral Australian Parliament “[the] naval and military defence of the Commonwealth and of the several States,” but importantly clarified in the following chapter that “The command in chief of the naval and military forces of the Commonwealth is vested in the Governor-General as the Queen’s representative.”¹²⁵ The ability to make war, then, remained a centralized privilege of the British monarchy, itself indivisible from the British Parliament. This detail proved critical in subsequent years. So too did Section 87 of the constitution, which stipulated that for a period of ten years following the establishment of the Commonwealth, the federal government would return 75% of its customs and excise revenue to the governments of the States for their use as needed. Thus for the first ten years of its life, the Commonwealth of Australia would operate, fiscally, at quarter capacity. Australian military and naval ambitions would have to plan accordingly. The usual headquarters for Australian commandants and naval officers, Melbourne, stood in as the Commonwealth’s capital until such time as land could be set aside for the creation of a new one in interior

¹²⁴ “MEETING AT ST. KILDA,” (probably) *The Critic*, June 4, 1898, 5. Accessed MS 1540, The Papers of Alfred Deakin, Series 11, Item 11/356.

¹²⁵ 63 & 64 VICT. THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA CONSTITUTION ACT, Ch. II Sect. 68, “Command of naval and military forces.”

New South Wales, “not less than one hundred miles from Sydney.”¹²⁶ Finally, the new constitution contained a few sections that directly addressed the way the Commonwealth would count its population, a critical procedure for determining the apportionment of seats in the new population-based lower house, the House of Representatives. In a move that directly echoed the American sectional crisis fifty years earlier, the constitution stated explicitly that “aboriginal natives shall not be counted,” (Section 127) and that “persons of any race [who] are disqualified from voting at elections for the more numerous House of the Parliament of the States” would not be counted in either a State’s or the Commonwealth’s population figures (Section 25). The census method reflected and reinforced thinking about citizenship in the new Commonwealth. With security as the Commonwealth’s first principle and Anglo-Saxonism its racial self-image, Aborigines fell outside the imagined national borders.¹²⁷

The news of the Commonwealth Bill’s performance in London came off Australian presses sandwiched between columns on the South African War and columns on the plight of the besieged legations in Peking; Australians fought in both those conflicts, under the aegis of an imagined nation not yet possessed of a state. The Tasmanian *Daily Telegraph* noted as it reported the Bill’s passage, “The work of making the constitution was done when the public mind was free from the distractions of great wars,” but that “the dangerous state of affairs in Eastern Asia is a matter of deep concern

¹²⁶ 63 & 64 VICT. THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA CONSTITUTION ACT, Ch. VII Sect. 125, “Seat of Government.” The passage of subsequent Defence Bills will be discussed in Chapter 2.

¹²⁷ Lake and Reynolds have argued forcefully that racial demarcation was the Australian state’s key function after federation. This argument, and the fullness of racial thought in the period, I argue, must take greater account of security, and white settlers’ preoccupation with (racialized) strategic danger. See Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*, chap. 6, “White Australia points the way.”

for Australia,” and that henceforth it would be Australia’s “destiny” to play a role there. For, it concluded, “Australia will speak and act more weightily when she speaks and acts as a nation.”¹²⁸ Here again the imagined moment of Australia’s nativity is confused – contemporaries seemed unable to decide whether the *de jure* provisions of the Commonwealth Bill, or the *de facto* acts of Australian forces in the international sphere, constituted the true measure of nationhood. These conflations and interminglings underscore the two-dimensional nature of sovereignty in the case of Australia and in the British Empire more broadly – building a new state from colonial materials required an internal consolidation; a constitutional process, a legal procedure designed to confer the sovereignty of the Crown upon a new unified Governorship and convened legislature. But it also required a message to the world. Australians situated themselves, and their nascent identity, within an international context of conflict, uncertainty, and fear, for which they constructed themselves as interested actors ready to contribute. The nature of this contribution was interventionist, and even colonialist in its own right. In that sense, Australians took on the mode of their imperial forebears, but Britain and the great European imperial powers were not the only forces shaping these norms of sovereignty; Australians contributed their own ingredients, many of which Britain and specifically the Colonial Office actively worked to restrain or suppress. Manifest destiny had driven Australians across the island-continent to establish the sovereignty of colonial states, in which the Aboriginal inhabitants would now lack voting rights; it drove them also into

¹²⁸ No title. *Daily Telegraph* (Launceston, Tasmania), Monday July 9, 1900, 2.

the Greater Pacific – to China, and to their near-abroad, in their quest to become “master of the Southern Seas,” as it was put at St. Kilda.¹²⁹ But there were rivals for that title.

On the same day Australian newspapers reported on the success of the Commonwealth Bill, they also reported on the landing of between 25,000 and 100,000 Japanese troops on mainland China (reports varied), deployed to stop the massacre of foreigners in Peking.¹³⁰ The Allied invasion of China took another month to liberate the surviving foreigners in the capital, ultimately with far fewer troops than the papers speculated. By the following summer Australia was attempting to pass its first Defence Bill through the Commonwealth parliament. Richard Armstrong Crouch, the Member for Corio near Melbourne, soliloquized during the Bill’s second reading: “It is not from the European nations that I think we Australians have to expect any great national difficulties, but from those great nations of the East, China and Japan, which we have unfortunately stirred up, and which we are unfortunately teaching European methods of utilizing their military resources. We have already seen,” he continued, “with the recent Chinese campaign how very complete—far too complete—the Japanese arrangements already are in connexion with their military organization.”¹³¹ Crouch’s warnings supported two recommendations – to fortify Darwin, that northernmost extremity of

¹²⁹ At the time of federation there was still not a formal State or Colony government controlling the over 500,000 square miles of the Northern Territory, which was then under South Australian supervision and would not be fully admitted as a State until 1911.

¹³⁰ Cf. “The Epitome of News,” *The Mercury* (Hobart, Tasmania), Tuesday July 10, 1900, 2 (85,000); “MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS,” *The Sydney Wool and Stock Journal* (NSW), Tuesday July 10, 1900, 1 (15,000 marines and 30,000 infantry); No title, *The Brisbane Courier* (QLD), Monday July 9, 1900, 4 (100,000).

¹³¹ RA Crouch, Member for Corio, “Defence Bill, Second Reading,” (24 July 1901), *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates (Hansard)*, Commonwealth of Australia: House of Representatives, p. 2959

Australia and the first point of arrival for a supposed “Oriental” invader, and the restriction of migrants to that region for the same reason.

Forceful arguments for Australian interests arose also in the wind-up of the South African War. Joseph Chamberlain, hoping to leverage colonial enthusiasm for the war to advance his own federal scheme for the whole Empire, cabled a secret offer to the heads of colonial governments who had sent contingents to South Africa, offering to loop them into the peace negotiations.¹³² The Australians rebuffed the offer. This move seems strange for a newly-made federal state hoping to leverage its diplomatic position in the Empire and the world, but for two factors: Chamberlain’s was a pro-forma offer and the colonies sensed this, and even if the offer had carried serious weight, it would have pulled Australian interests too far out of the new federal government’s preferred area of emphasis – the southern Pacific. This strategic tension typified relations between the early Commonwealth and metropolitan officials. Australians’ enthusiasm for serving in South Africa and their relative lack of interest in influencing the future of political order in South Africa seems at first a paradox, but it need not be.¹³³ Colonial statesmen imagined the political capital their troops earned in South Africa as fungible and not limited to South African affairs. As discussed above, they saw the Boer War as an opportunity to demonstrate their competence in joint military operations and to redirect the Empire’s strategic orientation to their own ends. As an exercise in building good faith and political capital, it was presumed useful for its own end. Both Barton in the early

¹³² See Meaney, *The Search for Security in the Pacific, 1901-14*, 36–39.

¹³³ Neville Meaney’s overall argument on the primacy of Pacific security fears stands out among the literature, but he misses this point, writing “They had rallied to the empire not because Australian vital interests were at stake but simply out of patriotic fervour.” (p. 37). Australian interests *were* at stake in South Africa, but more abstractly.

Commonwealth and his neighbors in New Zealand deployed this basic strategy, seeking little beyond trade opportunities with postwar South Africa.

Some voices in the early Commonwealth held opposing views about the appropriate military *modus operandi* for the fledgling state. At the Defence Bill's reading in late 1901, the Commonwealth's combined military assets were paltry and not centrally organized – about 5,000 remained in South Africa; there were roughly 28,000 on combined State registers and about 2,000 seamen, but of all these a mere 1,750 were active duty.¹³⁴ A significant faction in the Australian Parliament preferred things remain that way. Henry Bournes Higgins, the MP for North Melbourne and a prominent liberal, railed against “militarism” and the Defence Bill, preferring that Australia remain isolated, trusting in the protection of the Royal Navy, and eschew any robust system of national defense, to say nothing of foreign deployments like the one in South Africa. Higgins protested, “it is inadvisable and impracticable for us to have any military system *like that of a sovereign European State*. So long as we are not a sovereign State, in the sense of being able to dictate peace or war, we shall not be consulted as to peace or war” (emphasis mine).¹³⁵ Higgins was both misguided (apparently he was not aware of Chamberlain's offer, nominal though it was, of a seat at the table in South Africa) and prophetic: he perceived that the first principles of sovereignty's norms, as shaped by European empires, concerned security. Moreover, he shared the view of many British

¹³⁴ Figures from Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, 64.

¹³⁵ H.B. Higgins, Member for North Melbourne, “Defence Bill, Second Reading,” (24 July 1901), *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates (Hansard)*, Commonwealth of Australia: House of Representatives, 2990; Meaney wrote an extended comparison of Higgins and Billy Hughes as countervailing Whig/Gladstonian idealist and Hobbesian/realist thinkers, respectively, on the direction of early Australian foreign policy. (*The Search for Security in the Pacific*, pp. 43-49) He quotes Higgins' remarks after this sentence, in which he warns against creating a “grotesque imitation” of European military power.

subjects in the Pacific that “the storm centre of the world has shifted to the east of Asia” and thus his arguments, anti-military though they were, complimented the visions of Australasians hoping to shift the Empire’s strategic center of gravity eastwards.¹³⁶

Unlike the military issue and the idea of foreign deployment, few in Australia seriously questioned the importance of naval protection for the island-continent and its fledgling Commonwealth government. Here too, the issue of Australian interests and the Commonwealth’s incipient sovereignty loomed large in the early years of the twentieth century. Its first Governor, Lord Hopetoun, having simply graduated from his post as Governor of Victoria, wrote to William Creswell, naval officer and staunch advocate for an Australian naval force fresh off a deployment to China, that “In profound peace the risk to Australia appears remote, but it must be remembered that when War breaks out there is no time to acquire what is then admitted it would have been prudent to possess.” Creswell replied that a “Force [of ships serving in Australian waters] has been kept together in the firm belief that with Federation, a Federation mainly for defence, there would be established an Australian Naval Defence in which they would be accorded their due place.” He noted that the slow progress on this matter was having a “detrimental effect.”¹³⁷ In the coming years, the young Australian state’s naval aspirations proved to be one of the British Empire’s most pressing strategic issues; one that drove a broad conversation about the meaning of sovereignty within the Empire and the way its changing constitutional landscape would reflect that meaning.

¹³⁶ Higgins, *Ibid.*, 2991

¹³⁷ “Hopetoun to Creswell, 22 July 1901,” Northern Division, Enclosure no. 24 – Miscellaneous letters of proceedings, various ships, Commander-in-Chief Australia Station correspondence, journals, registers, and assoc. records. RNASW422 41/44 R20562311, National Archives of New Zealand (NANZ), 3, 54.

1.4 NEW ZEALAND AND THE FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIA: MISTRESS(ES) OF THE SOUTHERN SEAS?

New Zealand watched the process of Australian federation closely. In fact, it acted as a formal participant in the preliminary conferencing and federal discussions, and enjoyed an invitation to join the Commonwealth. While New Zealand did not undergo a major institutional evolution at the turn of the century like Australia, then, its supporting role in Australian federation and its parallel role in the South African War stimulated similar conversations about sovereignty, its meaning, and its future.¹³⁸ But the colony, like its Australian neighbor, looked increasingly outward, and in this period its level of engagement with imperial counterparts and the international community evolved – by 1907 its Prime Minister Joseph Ward would tell his colleagues in London that the term “colony” no longer described his country.¹³⁹ Successive New Zealand governments pursued outward-looking and self-consciously expansionistic strategies. London officials’

¹³⁸ New Zealand’s historiography does not usually emphasize this moment; where it does, the focus tends to be inward, on the social changes taking place in the early twentieth century, or on nationalist self-conception. Contrast the latest iterations of the Oxford History of New Zealand, which cover the topic of war lightly and the latter of which suggests that “War has generally touched lightly on New Zealand,” (245) with the works of Ian McGibbon and James Belich. Geoffrey W. Rice, ed., *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, 2nd ed. (Auckland, New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Giselle Byrnes, ed., *The New Oxford History of New Zealand* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); I. C. 1947-(Ian C.) McGibbon, *Blue-Water Rationale: The Naval Defence of New Zealand 1914-1942* (Wellington, N.Z.: Govt. Printer, 1981); McGibbon and Crawford, *One Flag, One Queen, One Tongue: New Zealand, The British Empire, and the South African War*; James Belich, *The New Zealand Wars* (Auckland, N.Z. ; New York: Penguin, 1998); James Belich, *Paradise Reforged: A History of the New Zealanders from the 1880’s to the Year 2000* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004).

¹³⁹ See Chapter 3 below.

dyspepsia over the diplomatic and military crises playing out across the Empire was, for New Zealanders, opportunity. This sort of opportunism was not straightforwardly nationalistic or anti-colonial, however; New Zealanders, like their Australian neighbors, offered to mutualize the strategic burdens of the Empire in the South Pacific, which enhanced their autonomy and prestige but allowed them to connect their local interests to the common interests of the metropole and the Empire.¹⁴⁰ As above, New Zealand's own debate about whether to join the nascent Australian Commonwealth, and subsequently whether to carve out a Pacific federation of its own, featured much discussion of the South African War. New Zealanders drew similar conclusions to their neighbors about the diplomatic payoffs of their participation in the war – that Britain would be forced to pay closer attention to their interests – but the strategic lessons they took home from the Veldt diverged in interesting ways. Australians feared invasion. Theirs was a large country, sparsely populated, with thousands of miles of coastline and close proximity to competing colonial powers. Their fears aligned with those of South Africa's British inhabitants that began the war bottled up in besieged towns. New Zealand, curiously, seemed to strategically identify instead with the Boers. The Afrikaners' dogged defense of their rugged territory and success in making the war costly to invaders heartened New Zealanders and gave them the confidence to defer inclusion in an Australian federation – federations coalesced for security purposes and, after all, the New Zealanders felt secure enough.

¹⁴⁰ See Eddy and Schreuder - "The phenomenon of colonial nationalism can be seen acting as the ideological force in state-making within these new societies." J.J. Eddy, D.M. Schreuder, and Oliver MacDonagh, eds., *The Rise of Colonial Nationalism: Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and South Africa First Assert Their Nationalities, 1880-1914* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1988), 2.

Richard Seddon's Government made early offers to supply troops from New Zealand for the British war effort in South Africa. By the war's end, New Zealand's legislature authorized ten contingents totaling over 6,000 men.¹⁴¹ This robust contribution produced a number of domestic effects – many felt national pride, a smaller number, often those with Irish backgrounds, decried imperial tyranny against the Boers, and as in Australia, many took the war as occasion for anti-German rhetoric.¹⁴² Anti-Germanism played a dual role here – as a function of British patriotism it intuitively demonized the Boer enemy and its German patron, yet as a function of New Zealander patriotism it also linked the distant war in South Africa to matters closer to New Zealand's interests, namely, competition with German colonialism in the southern Pacific. There was also a sense of competition with the other British colonies to assist the imperial war effort – one New Zealand legislator cabled his assent for an eighth contingent of troops in 1902 with the note "We must not be behind Canada in assisting to terminate the war."¹⁴³ An early 1902 government memo contains records of resolutions passed by city councils across New Zealand condemning the German press, for all the good it did, for printing "vilifying" invective against the British war effort and New Zealand's participation therein.¹⁴⁴ One article in the *New Zealand Herald* alleged that Germany's denunciation of

¹⁴¹ Cf. 6,513 in Stirling, *The Colonials in South Africa, 1899-1902: Being the Services of the Various Irregular Corps Raised in South Africa and the Contingents from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, India, and Ceylon Together with the Details of Those Mentioned in Despatches with Related Honours and Awards*, x; and 6,416 in Jeffery, "Kruger's Farmers, Strathcona's Horse, Sir George Clarke's Camels and the Kaiser's Battleships: The Impact of the South African War on Imperial Defence," 189.

¹⁴² See McGibbon and Crawford, *One Flag, One Queen, One Tongue: New Zealand, The British Empire, and the South African War*, chap. 3, Malcolm McKinnon, "Opposition to the War in New Zealand."

¹⁴³ MHR C. Louisson, "South African War Telegrams," 1902 ACHW 8634 SEDDON2/4/15 R19467553, NANZ.

¹⁴⁴ Memo, Cromwell, etc. "South African War: Cuttings on German Press," 1902 ACHW 8634 SEDDON2/5/16 R19467554, NANZ, 21

British war crimes in South Africa stemmed effectively from jealousy – from Germany’s second-rate empire, especially in the realization that it would make no gains in South Africa, with “North America and Australasia now closed to her.”¹⁴⁵

The specters of Germany and South Africa loomed over New Zealand’s decision over whether to join the Australian Commonwealth as well. Ahead of this decision, the Government of New Zealand called a special commission in early 1901 to hear testimony on the desirability of union with Australia, drawn from a variety of notable personalities from the realms of trade, finance, politics, and the military.¹⁴⁶ These extensive testimonies contain a wealth of information on the logics of state-building as conceived by New Zealanders at the time – the committee questioned their guests thoroughly and pressed them to elaborate on key points. A vast majority advised against joining Australia. Less predictably, South Africa entered these testimonies with remarkable frequency. Most of the respondents mentioned trade in some way, for potential competition with Australian products and the issue of trade policy were key concerns for any possible federation, but even here South Africa proved a point of reference. Many opined that with the coming South African federation as a trade partner, New Zealand would not be as dependent on her large Australian neighbor as a market, or conduit for, food commodities. In this argument, New Zealand’s contingents in South Africa served as the vanguard of an enduring bilateral influence that would last through peacetime.

Many of those giving testimony also mentioned the issue of defense. On this issue there were two key parameters – the respondents seemed to have internalized that the

¹⁴⁵ *New Zealand Herald* article, Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ 114 were interviewed in total. See “Witness Statements on Australian Federation,” 1901 ACGO 8424 IA106 8/9 R19731670, NANZ.

federation of Australia had occurred for military and geostrategic ends, and felt obliged to speculate on whether the inclusion of New Zealand served those ends; secondly, they usually followed with an appraisal of New Zealand's defensibility on its own terms. A Rev. William Curzon-Siggers, vicar of a Dunedin Anglican church, testified that New Zealand needed to preserve its aloofness as an "island race," akin to Britain, from that of "continental" Australia. He also told the committee that New Zealand would neither need, nor could it expect, military aid from Australia in the event of an invasion, since the latter would have astronomically greater territorial liabilities.¹⁴⁷ Three respondents – a grain merchant, the Mayor of Christchurch, and a timber and sawmill magnate, directly stated that the experience of the South African War had proved that highly motivated and dogged defenders of rugged territory could hold out for extended periods of time against superior forces operating with long, seaborne supply lines.¹⁴⁸ In this fanciful invasion scenario, New Zealanders imagined themselves as Boers. The strategic lessons of the South African War contained multitudes, from clergy to politicians to commercial traders. Their collective focus on the danger and ramifications of invasion show how some in other colonial theaters were applying the military lessons of South Africa to the task of securing and building states, and shaping the eventual consensus that New Zealand could go it alone as a sovereign state in the South Pacific.

Within a year, the evolving colony would re-open another federation debate, but instead of identifying with the Boer opponent, advocates would invoke the Uitlander British faction instead. One common strand that ran through New Zealand's debates

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 109.

¹⁴⁸ See George Gattonby Stead, William Reece, and William Booth respectively, Ibid., 146, 151, 308.

about federation, with Australia or in some other configuration, was the geostrategic dimension of prevailing opinions. The government commission testimonies abound with speculation on the balance of power in the Pacific and how New Zealand could best serve British, and its own, interests in the matter going forward.¹⁴⁹ As the country moved into its next debate on the possibility of carving out a new federation from South Pacific islands, these geostrategic arguments resonated ever louder. The *New Zealand Times* and other newspapers reported large public meetings held in the country's major cities in January 1902 to express outrage at German press commentary on the South African War. Sir George White, the commander of the besieged British occupants of Ladysmith at the outbreak of the war, was on hand at the Wellington rally. He boasted to the crowd, "Let our enemies take a forecast of the last two years. They must be conscious that in Canada, in South Africa, and in Australasia there was in each case an infant Hercules, and that the voice of these young giants must soon be heard in the councils of the nations." The *Otago Daily Times* reported the remarks of Dunedin's mayor, James Alexander Park, channeling Tennyson's surreal and clairvoyant 1835 masterwork "Locksley Hall":

When the war is over we shall go on our way like the river that has been
choked by an avalanche. Our Empire is building a group of federations. It
has succeeded in Canada and Australia, and now that Boer obstinacy will
be removed, it will succeed in Africa. On these great pillars will be laid a
roof to shelter the world. As time passes we hope to make one mighty

¹⁴⁹ Several respondents opined that Australia and New Zealand were poorly suited to defend each other in the event of a regional crisis for logistical reasons (See "Witness Statements on Australian Federation, 1901" ACGO 8424 IA106 8/9 R19731670, NANZ, 109, 149, 297-8. One soldier, recently returned from South Africa, indicated that he was a staunch navalist, and that naval policy (which was much more centralized in the British Admiralty than military operations) would remain constant, federation or no, and that joining Australia only risked ceding military decisions to an Australian commander. Ibid, 298.

peace-loving English-speaking Power, preliminary to the parliament of man, the federation of the world.¹⁵⁰

1.5 THE NEW ZEALAND-FIJI FEDERATION MOVEMENT

As quickly as the debate on whether to join Australia had died out, a new one took its place – whether and how New Zealand should create its own federation by joining with Fiji, the Cook Islands, and a number of other small archipelagos. This question had surfaced a number of times before, but gained unprecedented momentum after 1900. What made the situation different here was its diplomatic and strategic context. The federation of Australia, the progress of the Boer War, and the British Government's foreign treaty-making in the Pacific each leant the Fijian question urgency and attention. The logic of the proposed federation included many factors, and trade and labor were among the most important of these, but diplomatic and security concerns alone pushed the issue to its resolution, albeit unsuccessful, in three colonies and in

¹⁵⁰ "A Great Patriotic Demonstration," *Otago Daily Times* (New Zealand), January 18, 1902, filed in "South African War: Cuttings on German Press," 1902 ACHW 8634 SEDDON2 5/16 R19467554, NANZ, 41; "Patriotic Wellington: Great Meeting at the Theatre Royal, Enemies of the Empire Denounced, Stirring Speeches and Frantic Enthusiasm," *New Zealand Times*, January 18, 1902, filed in *Ibid.*, 51.

London itself.¹⁵¹ This small South Pacific colony, through both diplomatic and social scandals and a burst of political agitation, briefly served as the front line of an ongoing battle over how to define sovereignty and how best to organize states in the British Empire. Fiji's federation saga reveals some of this period's most burning issues: murky constitutional puzzles, fraught racial politics, and a fixation on federation as a political path that could deliver colonial dreams of sovereignty and defensibility.

New Zealand Premier Julius Vogel had twice attempted to annex Fiji, in 1874 and 1885, and had been rebuffed by the Colonial Office, which still reserved the right to regulate the external affairs of colonies, self-governing or otherwise.¹⁵² Thus by the turn of the century Fiji had been a frequent if not entirely positive feature of New Zealand's near-abroad. Settlers in Fiji had also attempted to have the islands annexed by both Victoria and New South Wales before Australia's federation, but these efforts failed too, primarily due to the problem of trade competition between like commodities.

Constitutionally, Fiji remained a Crown Colony, which meant that the Crown (and in real terms, the Colonial Secretary) bore exclusive responsibility for its affairs, which were managed by an appointed local Governor who ruled through small Executive and Legislative Councils comprised of appointed officials. The islands themselves held just over 110,000 inhabitants; of these about 4,000 were white settlers who owned the large agricultural companies and worked in towns, about 15,000 were migrant laborers from

¹⁵¹ The best overview of this topic is David Fieldhouse's. Fieldhouse argues as elsewhere that strategic concerns were the first-order issue of colonial affairs. D.K. Fieldhouse, "New Zealand, Fiji and the Colonial Office, 1900–1902," *Historical Studies: Australia and New Zealand* 8, no. 30 (May 1958): 113–30, doi:10.1080/10314615808595108; One recent but difficult to find book has been published on the topic: Ahmed Ali, *The Federation Movement in Fiji, 1880-1902* (Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, 2008).

¹⁵² See "PETITION: To the Hon. Speaker and Members of the New Zealand House of Representatives in Parliament Assembled" 1885 ACHW 8634 SEDDON2/3/9 38 R19467544, NANZ, Fiji Annexation Petition.

India, and the remaining 90,000 native Fijians.¹⁵³ The movement for federation with New Zealand emerged almost exclusively among the islands' white settlers. Its leaders included Humphry Berkeley, a lawyer with aspirations in the Fijian court system, and F.E. Riemenschneider, the son of an Australian timber magnate and Warden (a mayoral post) of Suva, Fiji's second city. Berkeley and Riemenschneider were articulate advocates of federation for a variety of reasons, but among the most important was their personal dislike of Fiji's Colonial Governor, George O'Brien, and their desire to rid the islands of O'Brien, and his very office, altogether.¹⁵⁴ O'Brien reciprocated their sentiment and considered it his duty to protect the colony in his trust from rapacious cowboys like the federationists, and he told the Colonial Office as much in repeated memos.

What brought Fiji and New Zealand close to federation in 1900 was the Tripartite Convention concluded between Britain, Germany, and the United States in November 1899. The Convention's object was a carve-up of the Samoan Islands, which lay a few hundred miles east of Fiji. In the resulting settlement, Britain renounced all claims in Samoa in exchange for concessions in Africa and elsewhere, while the Germans and Americans divided the Samoan islands between them. British Australasians regarded this agreement as nothing short of an abject betrayal of themselves and their interests. The Americans may have been a meddlesome presence in the region but the hated Germans, now with a working colony and attendant naval and telegraph stations, were a rival

¹⁵³ "Pacific Islands – Papers, federation of Fiji with New Zealand, 1900," ACHW 8634 SEDDON 2/3 Item Reference 9, 1900, NANZ, Item 2 "Resolution by the Fiji Federal League," 1.

¹⁵⁴ Fieldhouse is concerned to narrate the rivalry between O'Brien and the federationists. See especially Fieldhouse, "New Zealand, Fiji and the Colonial Office, 1900–1902," 116–117.

imperial power and a menace to British hegemony in the South Pacific. The British Empire's undersea telegraph cable, the sole means of rapid communication between Australia, New Zealand, and London, ran through Suva. Australians and New Zealanders took the Convention as evidence that Britain was willing to mortgage their regional aspirations, and their very security, for metropolitan payoffs and what they viewed as petty claims in Africa and elsewhere.

Enter Richard Seddon, who noted after the Tripartite Convention, This surrender of Samoa will, in future, be a source of anxiety, and entail expense on Great Britain and the Colonies in preparing for and providing against eventualities. However, now that it has been done, it is necessary that immediately it is opportune, steps be taken to put the islands admitted to be British on a satisfactory footing. I therefore venture to suggest for consideration that the boundaries of New Zealand should be extended so as to include the Cook Group, the Fiji, the Friendly, and the Society Islands, or such of them as might be included within the extended boundaries with advantage and without causing complications.¹⁵⁵

Seddon's idea of "satisfactory footing," apparently, meant a manifest destiny for New Zealand in the South Pacific, and a recognition that New Zealand, not Britain, would act as guarantor of British interests in the region. "Eventualities," likewise, was typical understatement. Germany's meteoric naval ascent now had an anchor point in the Fijian

¹⁵⁵ Memorandum enclosed in Ranfurly to Chamberlain, 25 Apr. 1900, CO 209/260, TNA. Quoted in Fieldhouse, "New Zealand, Fiji and the Colonial Office, 1900–1902," 114

and New Zealander back-yards, and with Britain's attention elsewhere it would now fall to local actors to "prepare," such as they could, for the consequences of the German presence.

Accordingly, Seddon drafted a memo to the Colonial Office in which he advocated federation with the South Pacific islands and argued that this measure was necessary for their mutual security and the safeguard of British interests. He also hoped that these measures would offset New Zealand's presumed relative decline in prestige, after opting out of the Australian Commonwealth, in the eyes of Britain and the Colonial Office.¹⁵⁶ But the Colonial Office politely rebuffed his petitions, and here the story changed directions. Rather than dropping the matter, Seddon doubled down on his interest in Fiji and embarked on a tour of the South Pacific islands in May 1900, ostensibly as a rest from his political labor at home. From this point the emphasis of his machinations for Fiji would focus on the issue of representative government there and not on New Zealand's ambitions, which clearly did not play as well in London as he had hoped. Self-government in Fiji would create an opportunity for settlers there to self-authorize its union with New Zealand, short-circuiting the Governor and by extension the meddlesome Colonial Office. This tactical shift fit well with the hopes of Fiji's British settlers, who received Seddon warmly on his visit.

¹⁵⁶ Once again, Fieldhouse: "The inauguration of the Australian Commonwealth was certain to reduce the weight of New Zealand and her premier in the imperial concert. The equal of most of the individual colonies in Australia, New Zealand would necessarily become a pigmy by the side of the federal government. But if New Zealand were to create her own federation of Pacific islands, the balance would to a large extent be redeemed, and she would be able to take her place beside Canada and Australia — and perhaps a federated South Africa after the war — as an equal at Colonial Conferences." Fieldhouse, "New Zealand, Fiji and the Colonial Office, 1900–1902," 115.

By the time of Seddon's arrival in Fiji, the federationists there had created an organization called the Fiji Federation League to organize meetings and distribute propaganda for their cause. The latter pursuit was greatly helped by the fact that federation activist Humphry Berkeley controlled the islands' only circulating newspaper, the *Fiji Times*.¹⁵⁷ The League organized a number of town-hall meetings in the wake of Seddon's visit in effort to sustain local enthusiasm for federation. The arguments made by attendees to these meetings, which were recorded and reprinted in the *Fiji Times*, are of interest not just for understanding the singular animosity that existed between agents of the Crown and Fiji's federationists, as Fieldhouse is primarily concerned to explain. They are also remarkable for the number of times they invoke the Boer War. Southern Africa lay some thousands of miles removed from Fiji; the war had not much affected, much less threatened, the islands. But the records of Fiji's attempted federation with New Zealand, as in the cases seen above, do not reflect that detachment.

Seddon arrived in Fiji just weeks after Mafeking Night. Fijians hoping to join New Zealand in federation referenced the Boer War both in terms of the reciprocity they felt Britain owed its colonies for their aid there, but chiefly in their arguments about their right to self-government itself. South Africa gave the federationists an opportunity to argue that service in war showed colonial commitment to British values such as the franchise, which Britain had fought to vindicate against the hated Kruger government, and that their martial efficacy was itself proof of their fitness to govern their own affairs. Fijian settlers also argued that the diplomatic capital accrued by the colonial contingents in South Africa should be fungible for Australian issues. Like the Boer War itself, these

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 119.

arguments also had strong racial connotations, both in the extent to which racial outsiders were seen as security risks and in the British settlers' presumed fitness to be their own masters, and perhaps the masters of the greater South Pacific. These arguments emerged forcefully at a Fiji Federation League meeting in Levuka on 14 June 1900. The themes of democracy, diplomatic capital, and race will now be considered in turn.

After the Chairman called the Levuka meeting to order, a short opening oration by one W.I. Thomas concluded with a formal motion in favor of Fijian federation with New Zealand. Thomas' motion was seconded by John M. Hedstrom, the son of a local retail department store magnate. Hedstrom gave a lengthy speech connecting the aspirations of those gathered with the struggles of the Uitlanders in South Africa, those British miners and settlers to whom Paul Kruger had denied the franchise and for whom the war there had begun. "Gentlemen, Napoleon has called us a nation of shopkeepers. But we feel sometimes like the defenders of Mafeking – we are widening the outposts of the Queen," he began. "Why are our armies fighting in South Africa? ...it is for the franchise. We, the supporters of freedom, are pouring out blood and money to vindicate our proud boast in South Africa, and yet, gentlemen, we of the Colony of Fiji are, after all, only Uitlanders."¹⁵⁸ Hedstrom here laid meaning atop meaning. He and his fellow settlers were quite literally "outlanders" in Fiji, to translate the Afrikaans, but they also, in Hedstrom's esteem, shared the Uitlander dilemma of being deprived of their ostensible rights by a ruling regime of questionable legitimacy. In this case, though, the tyrannical power denying British citizens their rights was not the bearded Boer, "Uncle Paul," but the

¹⁵⁸ "Pacific Islands – Papers, federation of Fiji with New Zealand, 1900," ACHW 8634 SEDDON 2/3 Item Reference 9, 1900, NANZ, Item 1, Extract from the *Fiji Times*, 21 July 1900, 2

British Government, the Colonial Office, and the Governor, who stood in the way of their self-determination and their federal dream.

The South African War also gave the Fijian settlers a critical opportunity to capitalize on metropolitan attention and gratitude, specifically by joining themselves in federation with a larger colony that had participated vigorously in the imperial war effort. Hedstrom emphasized this point as well: “Another important factor is that the Premier of New Zealand, as head of the [proposed federal] Government, is at this moment *persona grata* with the colonial authorities at Home, in consequence of assistance of colonial troops sent to the front.” He continued, “This is a most propitious time for bringing this matter forward... We may go twenty or fifty years before such a chance occurs again.”¹⁵⁹ Hedstrom’s statement here underscores the mixed legacy and “lessons” of the Boer War in the British Empire – what was for Britain a calamitous expenditure of blood and treasure was for some colonial subjects an unmissable fifty-year opportunity to extract concessions.

The previously-mentioned Warden and logging heir, Mr. Riemenschneider, rose in agreement with Hedstrom. “There is no time like the present,” he averred, “when all the colonies have done so well in the Transvaal crisis. Their claims cannot be shelved. The Imperial Government must recognise their strength and power. Any request made at the present time by federated Australia or New Zealand must be received with great consideration by the Imperial Government.”¹⁶⁰ These arguments made clear the importance of intra-imperial diplomacy for achieving local aims. They also suggested

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 2-3

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 3

that, in addition to the need to capture the Mafeking moment, imperial geopolitics had entered a new era – one in which the highest levels of negotiation (represented most clearly by the recently-convened Colonial Conferences) was only available to colonial states sufficiently large and organized to command seats at the table – credentials they demonstrated by participating in imperial military interventions.

Finally, the federationists' invocations of South Africa revealed the extent to which racial ideas infused their concepts of security and political order, and informed their perceived need for a federation with New Zealand. To begin, Fiji's status as a Crown Colony meant that the Colonial Office considered itself the trustee of the native population and was required to safeguard its interests vis-à-vis the white settlers. It also meant that the Colonial Office could decide whether to allow intra-imperial labor migration to Fiji, namely that of Indian "coolie" laborers for local sugar plantations and other natural resource industries, which it did in agreement with the Government of India.¹⁶¹ The federationists had yet to convince Fiji's wealthy plantation owners that a New Zealand government would not jeopardize their access to Indian labor by closing down this link in the interests of more local labor sources. Neither was it clear what would become of the existing system of bribing Fijian tribal chiefs to supply native laborers for miscellaneous jobs under rule from Wellington, which had its own policies on labor and the Maori to consider. Hedstrom argued that New Zealand was uniquely proficient at managing native populations and would improve conditions in Fiji, having "conclusively demonstrated that in their dealings with the native races they have used

¹⁶¹ Plantation interests on the islands consisted mainly of the behemoth Colonial Sugar Refining Company (CSR).

justice and temperance.”¹⁶² This was a tenuous claim, but the federationists cited the precipitous decline of the native Fijian population (from about 115,000 in 1885 down to 90,000 in 1900) as strong evidence that Crown Colony status was harming the native population.¹⁶³ For this reason, several Fijian chiefs from the Serua and Namosi regions supported the federation idea, and formally endorsed it in a memo signed by Chief Ratu Radomodomo in 1901.¹⁶⁴ The plantation owners and the Colonial Office, unsurprisingly, were not amused by this suggestion. Still, arguments for Fijian federation with New Zealand depended partly on optimizing white colonists’ paternalistic care for native populations, and on localizing control of the islands’ non-white migration and labor policies.

Moreover, the federationists’ quest for self-determination, and their broader goals in the South Pacific, were tinged with racialized concepts of their identities as Britons, which entailed dominion over and pacification of broad spaces. This is evident in Seddon’s original cables to the Colonial Office arguing that New Zealand should hold the South Pacific in trust, to be the mistress of the Southern Hemisphere as Britain was of the Northern.¹⁶⁵ A Mr. Garner-Jones addressed the Levuka meeting, saying “Federation to us of Fiji means – in a nutshell – progression. We, like our forefathers, are naturally

¹⁶² “Pacific Islands – Papers, federation of Fiji with New Zealand, 1900,” ACHW 8634 SEDDON 2/3 Item Reference 9, 1900, NANZ, Item 1, Extract from the *Fiji Times*, 21 July 1900, 2

¹⁶³ They cited a sympathetic report by a Methodist clergyman into the condition of the Fijians to support this claim. See “Pacific Islands – Papers, federation of Fiji with New Zealand, 1900,” ACHW 8634 SEDDON 2/3 Item Reference 9, 1900, NANZ, Item 4, “Report by Rev. W. Blake (Wesleyan) – FEDERATION AND THE NATIVES”

¹⁶⁴ See Brij V. Lal, *Broken Waves: A History of the Fiji Islands in the Twentieth Century* (University of Hawaii Press, 1992), 37.

¹⁶⁵ See James Belich’s article “Colonization and History in New Zealand” in Winks, *Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume V: Historiography*; Merze Tate, “The Australasian Monroe Doctrine,” *Political Science Quarterly* 76, no. 2 (June 1, 1961): 264–84, doi:10.2307/2146220.

conservative in our feelings; but when we are convinced that changes are necessary we can also exhibit that dogged obstinacy and determination that is the heritage of our race, and which in the defence of Mafeking we have had the latest instance.”¹⁶⁶ Here the federationists made a connection with South Africa that invoked firstly competition – British resistance to the (German client-) Boer siege at Mafeking symbolized British resistance to German encroachment in the South Pacific. Anti-Germanism again helped Australasian colonists connect South Africa to their own local aspirations in an imperial grand strategy of containing Germany. They attempted this with Japan as well, to less success. Secondly, connection to South Africa invoked colonialism’s racial hierarchy, inherent in the ability to look after native populations, whether these were African, Maori, or Fijian; perhaps even Indian. Also inherent in their racial arguments was a claim about rights – the right to the franchise as a British inheritance. This argument allowed federationists to appeal to democratizing liberals across the Empire in much the same way some of them had come to support the Boer War at its outset – as a struggle to democratize a repressive regime. The enfranchisement of nonwhite subjects remained a tenuous prospect.

Despite Seddon’s persistence and the enthusiasm of the Fiji Federation League, their dreams went unfulfilled. Governor O’Brien successfully persuaded Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain in Whitehall that the ringleaders of the federation movement in Fiji were dangerous rascals, even if he was subsequently sacked for taking this smear campaign too far, having proclaimed to the tribal chiefs that they should

¹⁶⁶ “Pacific Islands – Papers, federation of Fiji with New Zealand, 1900,” ACHW 8634 SEDDON 2/3 Item Reference 9, 1900, NANZ, Item 1, Extract from the *Fiji Times*, 21 July 1900, 3

renounce federation, and attempted to imprison anyone who publicly called for constitutional change in Fiji.¹⁶⁷ That O'Brien won Chamberlain's support at all is remarkable, given Chamberlain's warm embrace of federalism in other colonial contexts, namely Australia and South Africa, as well as on Empire-wide matters. A likely reason was the influence of the Aborigines' Protection Society, which vociferously opposed the end of Fiji's Crown Colony status in London.¹⁶⁸ Chamberlain's energetic ministerial activism at the Colonial Office mobilized the federal principle at both operative levels – as a way of building stable, populous states out of multiple smaller colonies, and as an organizing principle for the whole Empire that could solve thorny constitutional problems. Still Seddon, never knowing when he was beaten, went so far as to raise the federation issue again, out of turn, from the floor of the 1902 Colonial Conference, whereupon Chamberlain was forced into the exceedingly uncomfortable position of rebuking the Premier for impropriety.¹⁶⁹ Still, the episode demonstrates the peculiar way in which the South African War had emboldened colonial actors on the other side of the world, and how they related their experiences to those of both the soldiers and the settlers in South Africa.

It also showcases some of the reasons why federation was such a popular idea at this time – namely, because it allowed ambitious colonists to cast themselves as strategic makeweights for Britain on the global gameboard, and in so doing secure to themselves greater autonomy in their own strategic goals and in specific policy sectors like the

¹⁶⁷ This was the notorious "Ordinance 11," See Fieldhouse, "New Zealand, Fiji and the Colonial Office, 1900–1902," 125.

¹⁶⁸ Lal, *Broken Waves*, 38.

¹⁶⁹ "Paper Relating to a Conference between the Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Prime Ministers of the Self-Governing Colonies," CAB 18/10 1902.

Fijians' labor and migration concerns. The Boer War served here as the opportunity to lobby the imperial center on strategic matters, which had never seemed so salient. The Fijian federationists realized that diplomatic relationships across the Empire had intensified because of the war, and believed this gave them greater space to negotiate directly with the Imperial government rather than with the irritatingly conservative Governor normally assigned this task. Finally, South Africa served as a convenient case onto which colonists could project their fears and hopes about racial and political order in the Empire and the world at large. As the garrulous Mr. Hedstrom observed that night in Levuka, channeling Brutus from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, "Remember, 'There is a tide in the affairs of men which leads on to fortune.' We are working for a country we believe in – we live in – the cannibal islands. We are here to-night the makers of an Empire. (Cheers)"¹⁷⁰

1.6 CONCLUSION

The twentieth century broke like a tidal wave over the Pacific Rim, bringing strategic upheaval and new challengers to old order. In the north, Japan carved out space at China's expense and began to challenge Russia for maritime supremacy. In the equatorial band, the United States began operating more vigorously out of Hawaii and seized the Philippines from its former Spanish masters. In the south, the new Australia

¹⁷⁰ Extract from the *Fiji Times*, 21 July 1900, "Pacific Islands – Papers, federation of Fiji with New Zealand, 1900," ACHW 8634 SEDDON 2/3 Item Reference 9, 1900, NANZ, Item 1, 3.

and its neighbor New Zealand looked to a future when they would call themselves Mistresses of the Southern Seas. France and Germany did their best to slither into the cracks between. To prescient observers, there was no region more volatile. Henry Bournes Higgins said in summer 1901 that “the storm centre of the world has shifted to the east of Asia,” making Australia dependent for survival on naval protection.¹⁷¹ When a group of naval officers gathered in Melbourne in 1899 to discuss strategic priorities for a future federal Australia, their official memo stated: “Within the last half-dozen years the keen attention of .the political world has been concentrated on the Pacific. There is every indication that it will play the part of the Mediterranean in the past century as the arena of national contending forces. France, Russia, Japan have established naval bases and possess powerful fleets in the north of the Pacific. Nearly every other European power has effected a lodgment in the seas to our north.”¹⁷² These observers had no way of knowing they were a decade away from the catalog of horrors that was World War I, but they *did* know they had just witnessed wars erupt in Manchuria, China, the Philippines, and South Africa, and that numerous other localities had required cartographic re-shading, war or no war. These events drove a strategic wedge between Australasian (and later, western Canadian) subjects of the Empire and their metropolitan cousins.

British grand strategy in the early twentieth century was not a monolith then, but Melbourne and Wellington and Levuka faced tough odds in contesting London’s views, which is why they took such a keen interest in the South African War. By helping to

¹⁷¹ H.B. Higgins, Member for North Melbourne, “Defence Bill, Second Reading,” (24 July 1901), *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates (Hansard)*, Commonwealth of Australia: House of Representatives, 2991.

¹⁷² Report: Conference of Naval Officers assembled at Melbourne, Victoria, to consider the question of Naval Defence for Australia,” AWM124-1.23, Australian War Memorial (AWM), 7.

crush the Boers (and constantly referring back to the fact that they helped crush the Boers), they further insinuated themselves into the Empire's strategic logic. Richard Seddon's visit to Fiji was also a stopover on his voyage to South Africa, where he toured battlefields and met with officers and politicians. Through local anti-German sentiment, Australasians also painted a larger strategic canvas in which their efforts to stave off a spectral German menace in the Pacific linked directly to the thwarting of Germany's grand ambitions in South Africa. The *New Zealand Herald* fulminated that in Germany's failure in South Africa, "which she unquestionably planned to seize someday, with the rest of the Dutch inheritance...she sees another scheme brought to nought. Her hatred is the hatred of feebleness and impotence, that vociferous and venomous hatred which exhausts the passions of nations that shrink from staking their claims upon the cast of the iron dice of war."¹⁷³ Such arguments go some way towards explaining the intensification of the Anglo-German rivalry in coming years, a rivalry that scholars intuitively locate in the North Sea but whose tensions were shaped and driven by peripheral issues and actors as well.

It also explains the strategic bent and paranoia that suffused and motivated the state-building projects in the British Pacific. The ideological and constitutional (never mind metaphysical, as Kipling would have it) transition from colony to federation to a misty, future sovereign statehood, advanced with a security-driven logic. This logic served two purposes – it sniffed out common interests with Britain that failed to materialize elsewhere, as in trade policy, and it chased norms established by Britain and

¹⁷³ No title. *The New Zealand Herald*, January 22, 1901. Filed in "South African War: Cuttings on German Press," 1902 ACHW 8634 SEDDON2 5/16 R19467554.

other colonizing powers, that sovereign statehood required the capable marshaling of military force, if not outright imperialism itself. A center/periphery model does not suffice here; the involved parties did not agree on what was the center. Instead they pushed and pulled one another in a strategic and political argument about the future of political order in the British Empire. The Colonial Office played an influential role in the successes and failures of these federation projects. It conspired to block the New Zealand-Fiji experiment, but vociferously supported the Australian. The common denominator for the Colonial Office's position involved non-white races – it supported federations between white, self-governing colonies, but did not trust these to manage relations with large native populations of the kind present in Fiji.

In the coming years, the resounding clatter of the South African War provoked change in governing corridors across the British world. This was to be an era of reform, of economizing, of national “efficiency,” in which the failures of the fractious turn of the century would hopefully be rationalized away and followed by an era of stability or, barring that, tidier victories. This too meant institutional change, especially where military matters were concerned. British officialdom scrambled to recalibrate its methods; colonial governments scrambled frantically to build up their capabilities and to contest changing imperial orthodoxies. The constitutional ramifications of these new strategic realities continued to vex, as the likes of Dicey and Keith would attest, but they resounded loudest far from the cobbled streets of Whitehall. In the Government of India, lumbering semi-annually between its winter quarters in Calcutta and its summer throne high in the mountains of Simla, the era's greatest civil-military debate took place. The impossibly vast Indian Army exercised a commensurately vast hold on imperial strategic

thought, and its constitutional future was also up for grabs. George Curzon, the rosy-cheeked Tory romantic serving as Viceroy of India, insatiably ambitious and obsessed with creating a durable basis for British world power, went toe to toe with the era's most formidable military man – Herbert Kitchener, the hero of Khartoum and butcher of the Veldt, who was to assume as his next post the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army. Their vicious battle over the constitutional and strategic foundations of British world power pointed the way to the bloody, tempestuous future that lay ahead.

2 CHAPTER 2 – THE CENTRE HOLDS: REFORM AND REACTION IN THE NEW CENTURY, 1902-1906

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The South African War ended on 31 May 1902 with the ringing of bells in Pretoria and the wringing of hands in London. While the ink dried on the Treaty of Vereeniging, Whitehall prepared itself for a painful reckoning. As early as 1900, at the height of the war and by which time it was painfully clear that things would not go smoothly for the imperial war effort, Hugh Oakley Arnold-Forster published his incendiary *The War Office, the Army, and the Empire*.¹⁷⁴ Under ordinary circumstances, a pamphlet brimming with such barely-concealed contempt for imperial security policy and so many professional bridge-burnings would have sounded the death knell on the author's political career. But these were not ordinary circumstances, and instead of his suicide note, the tract was Arnold-Forster's ticket to the office of Secretary of State for War in 1903.

Arnold-Forster thundered against the military deployment plan to South Africa and the War Office's acute negligence in managing its imperial resource pool. He praised

¹⁷⁴ H.O. Arnold-Forster, *The War Office, the Army, and the Empire: A Review of the Military Situation in 1900* (London: Cassell and Company, Ltd., 1900).

the “courage and patriotism of our Colonial fellow-subjects,” which alone enabled them to help the imperial war effort, but crowed that “the war has taught us that as far as any preparation or organisation on the part of the War Office was concerned, the Colonies might have been non-existent.”¹⁷⁵ He reserved special opprobrium for Lord Lansdowne, the incumbent War Secretary. “If, and when, an inquiry is held into the condition of our stores at the outbreak of the war,” he wrote, “the public will be startled. Hundreds of people knew that this would be so; scores of competent people pointed it out over and over again. At the twelfth hour it *struck* Lord Lansdowne... The manager of any private business who had so acted would be instantly, and rightly, discharged. So would Lord Lansdowne if we regarded his responsibility as anything more than a joke.”¹⁷⁶ Member for West Belfast and acting financial secretary at the Admiralty, Arnold-Forster already had a reputation as a security Cassandra. A relative of both Matthew Arnold and the Huxleys, his record of prophesying military Armageddon with poetic acuity stretched back to the Cardwell Reforms of 1870. Considered rash and insufferable by many of his contemporaries, he had finally found his moment. He returned, towards the end of the pamphlet, to the matter of imperial security cooperation, its merits, and its future. “It is difficult to exaggerate the value of the help that has been given,” he reiterated, “a value perhaps even greater from a moral than a material point of view.”¹⁷⁷ He closed thus:

And now it only remains to sum up, as briefly as possible, the lessons which these articles have been intended to enforce. It has been the object of the writer to show that the Empire was never more in need of a well-

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 37.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 73.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 97.

organised defensive system than at present; to point out that, though that need exists and is admitted, little or nothing has yet been done to organise the great resources of the Empire upon any reasonable basis for the purposes of defence; that those who might fairly be regarded as chargeable with this duty show no signs of an intention to perform it, and that our institutions are of such a character that, unless an impetus be given from without, no change is likely to take place in the methods or in the results of our present military system.¹⁷⁸

Arnold-Forster, like so many of his contemporaries, had come to the realization that the norms and institutions of the British Empire no longer met the needs for which they had been built.

This chapter will begin with an overview of the attempts at reform in Britain in the aftermath of the South African War. During these years, a number of the crucial offices of state were occupied by fierce modernizers with an agenda for change: Joseph Chamberlain at the Colonial Office, Arnold-Forster at the War Office, who oversaw the reporting of the Elgin Commission and the Esher Committee charged with discerning the lessons of South Africa, Admiral John “Jacky” Fisher at the Admiralty and his civilian superior Lord Selborne, and the previously-maligned Lord Lansdowne, who had fallen from the War Office to a soft landing at the Foreign Office, and presided over two of Britain’s most critical diplomatic agreements: the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1902 and

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 99.

the Entente Cordiale with the French in 1904.¹⁷⁹ Arthur Balfour's Conservative government watched uneasily over them all, with moments of active intervention as with the creation of the Committee of Imperial Defence in 1902. The chapter will continue with some of the social dimensions of this moment, such as the movement for "national efficiency" and related Darwinist paranoias.¹⁸⁰ It will then move to India, to examine the tumultuous Viceroyalty of George Curzon, and the way the central conflicts of his administration both drove and recapitulated similar debates in Britain. Curzon attempted to reform the funding and force structure of the Indian Army, partitioned the critical province of Bengal, and staked his career on an acrimonious struggle to stop General Herbert Kitchener from merging India's highest civilian and military offices: Military Member of the Government of India, and Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army. Curzon's battles, and his opposition, reveal how many of the most crucial questions of political order in this period centered on Asia and its growing indigenous and settler populations. Finally, the chapter will pick up the stories of the major Pacific colonies – Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, to show how they continued to forge institutional

¹⁷⁹ See such classic works on reform as Arthur J. Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow: The Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, 1904-1919*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961); Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* (New York: Scribner, 1976); Nicholas A. Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution* (Columbia S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 2002); Jon Sumida, *In Defence of Naval Supremacy: Financial Limitation, Technological Innovation and British Naval Policy, 1889-1914* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989); Robert Kubicek, *The Administration of Imperialism: Joseph Chamberlain at the Colonial Office* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1969).

¹⁸⁰ See G. R. Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency: A Study in British Politics and Political Thought, 1899-1914* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971); G. R. Searle, *A New England?: Peace and War 1886-1918* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 294–306; Martin Pugh, *The Making of Modern British Politics: 1867 - 1945*, 3rd ed. (Wiley-Blackwell, 2002), chap. 5 – "Edwardian Crises, 1895–1914"; E.H.H. Green and Duncan Tanner, *The Strange Survival of Liberal England: Political Leaders, Moral Values and the Reception of Economic Debate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), chap. 2 – James Thompson, "Political Economy, the Labour Movement, and the Minimum Wage, 1880–1914."

military capability, and especially how they contested metropolitan perspectives on imperial strategy in the matter of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance.

The fallout from the Boer War touched off debates over military reform not just in Britain but across the British Empire. This chapter explores the colonial states, which were often in financially precarious situations due to their rapid expansion and centralization, proved averse to relatively cheap subsidies to Britain in order to obtain security. Instead, they preferred to undertake militarizing schemes to develop independent military, naval, and diplomatic assets. Liberals, the natural enemies of such schemes, either failed to stop them or made their peace with them. This unexpected outcome occurred because subsidies infringed on emerging norms of sovereignty, and independent military assets gave colonial states greater freedom to act. The chapter shows how liberal, democratic governments in British colonies made the same arguments against subsidies as those made by Indian princes to the British Raj about the Indian Army. This unexpected congruence shows the globalizing trends of early twentieth century militarization: self-governing colonies echoed the quasi-feudal arguments of Indian princes about providing military service to the Empire, while the Indian princes in turn openly praised German militarism and German unification as a template for state aggrandizement that might be replicated within British India and, by extension, elsewhere in the Empire.

The conclusion of a troubling war – and the expectation of a future one – imbued heady political debates in the Empire with strategic weight and heightened the urgency of security questions in rapidly-changing colonies. The military reforms that followed the South African War in Britain have been well-studied by historians, since they are an

obvious point at which to measure Britain's institutional ethos, and its military competence, on the eve of World War I.¹⁸¹ The role of the Empire in these processes has been less well-studied. Despite its heavily-scrutinized domestic debate on military reform, Britain's capacity for real change was narrower than that in South Asia or the Pacific Rim, where colonial state institutions were newer, the geostrategic situation more fluid, and the range of possible futures broader.¹⁸² One task of this chapter will thus be to re-situate this struggle – to shoehorn new military realities into old structures of British rule and constitutionalism – in Asia, rather than Europe. Faced with an onslaught of uncertainty, Britain's colonies across Asia began making themselves into fortress-states. The disparity with the liberal tenets of the British constitution were already evident in India, which lacked democratic institutions and kept a large standing army, the *bête noir* of classical liberal order. But Britain's own militarizing reforms narrowed this distinction after South Africa. In this way, the forms of constitutional order prevailing across the British Empire, including the metropole itself, began to converge around the purpose of

¹⁸¹ See for example Nicholas D'Ombrain, *War Machinery and High Policy: Defence Administration in Peacetime Britain, 1902-1914* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973); Franklyn Arthur Johnson, *Defence By Committee: The British Committee of Imperial Defence, 1885-1959* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960); Edward M Spiers, *Haldane: An Army Reformer* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1980); Zara Steiner and Keith Neilson, *Britain and the Origins of the First World War, The Making of the 20th Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

¹⁸² For the domestic dimensions of Britain's foreign dilemmas, see Aaron L. Friedberg, *The Weary Titan: Britain and the Experience of Relative Decline, 1895-1905*, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), chap. 3, "3 – Financial Power: The Growing Burdens of Empire"; Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Random House, 1987), chap. 5 – "The Coming of a Bipolar World"; J.M. Hobson, "The Military Extraction Gap and the Wary Titan: The Fiscal Sociology of British Defence Policy, 1870-1913," *Journal of European Economic History* 22 (1993): 461–506; Lance Edwin Davis and Robert A. Huttenback, *Mammon and the Pursuit of Empire: The Political Economy of British Imperialism, 1860-1912* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Ross McKibbin, *Parties and People: England 1914-1951*, Ford Lectures, 2008 (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), chap. 1 – "Edwardian Equipose"; E.H.H. Green, *The Crisis of Conservatism: The Politics, Economics, and Ideology of the British Conservative Party, 1880-1914* (New York: Routledge, 1995), chap. 1 – "The Political Economy of Decline," and 2 – "Conservatism and Empire"; Searle, *A New England?*, chap. 10 – "The Unionist Project, 1902–1905."

war-fighting.¹⁸³ The outcomes of the process varied, but the process nonetheless drove a parallel convergence in the way British imperial subjects imagined and projected sovereignty at home and abroad. The highly-charged racial and strategic tensions of southern-, eastern-, and Australasia also began, in this period, to reshape the international hierarchy through which Britain had managed its colonies for the better part of a century. Diplomatic voices from New Zealand to India to Japan called the world's attention eastward, adding counterweight to the Empire's strategic balance and inaugurating a new era of geopolitical dilemmas for the "Weary Titan," as Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain called the British Empire in a famous 1897 speech.¹⁸⁴

Adjusting perspectives in this way rearranges some of this period's most vexing historical puzzles. It complicates the Eurocentric narrative of militarization and imperial rivalry before the First World War – imperial competition is rightly considered a key causal force motivating that conflict, but the colonial sphere is usually couched as a set of broader liabilities and advantages that the European belligerents quibbled over, rather than as players who actively contributed to a global process of militarization from which

¹⁸³ A study that has examined the specific militarism of the British state in the modern period, and which dates its onset after the First World War, is David Edgerton, *Warfare State: Britain, 1920-1970* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

¹⁸⁴ Chamberlain made this allusion in a speech he gave as Lord Rector of the University of Glasgow; he quoted Arnold-Forster's famous uncle Matthew, who wrote in an 1867 poem "Heine's Grave":

"Yes, we arraign her! But she,
The weary Titan, with deaf
Ears and labour-dimmed eyes,
Regarding neither to right
Nor left, goes passively by,
Staggering on to her goal;
Bearing on shoulders immense,
Atlantean, the load,
Well-nigh not to be borne,
Of the too vast orb of her fate."

Matthew Arnold, *The Poems of Matthew Arnold, 1840-1867*, (London, New York: Oxford University Press, 1909); Bartleby.com, 2011. www.bartleby.com/254/124.html, l. 87-96.

their conspicuous participation in the war logically followed.¹⁸⁵ After South Africa, successive British Governments lost the ability to maintain either Victorian Liberalism's instinctive aversion to foreign adventures or Victorian Toryism's distinct lack of interest in formal diplomatic entanglement outside the Vienna system.¹⁸⁶ Instead, Britain's rivalries with other empires became more beholden to the concerns of Calcutta, Melbourne, Auckland, and Vancouver; London found itself devoting ever greater energy to restraining its clients, who as such qualified as clients more poorly by the day.¹⁸⁷ As Dicey remarked in 1914, they had lost the luxury of holding one another in benign neglect. At points from 1902-1906, Indian military questions risked destabilizing the British Government. Britain's ability to conduct bilateral diplomacy came under increasing pressure from colonial governments and interests, especially where Japan was concerned. Observers in 1905 did not know they were less than a decade away from a war that would destroy much of Europe. What they did know was that Japan had just destroyed Russian naval power at Tsushima, and upended the strategic – and racial – order in East Asia. They knew that western imperial powers had just launched a swashbuckling joint military operation, replete with romantic and press-worthy turns, by

¹⁸⁵ For instance, Robert Gerwarth and Erez Manela, eds., *Empires at War: 1911-1923* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Hew Strachan, *The First World War* (New York: Penguin, 2003), 40; Avner Offer, *The First World War: An Agrarian Interpretation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

¹⁸⁶ See again Green, *The Crisis of Conservatism*, chap. 2 – “Conservatism and Empire”; Michael Howard, *The Continental Commitment: The Dilemma of British Defence Policy in the Era of the Two World Wars*, The Ford Lectures at the University of Oxford (London: Maurice Temple Smith Ltd, 1972); Christopher H. D. Howard, *Splendid Isolation: A Study of Ideas Concerning Britain's International Position and Foreign Policy during the Later Years of the Third Marquess of Salisbury* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1967); George W. Monger, *The End of Isolation: British Foreign Policy, 1900-1907* (New York: T. Nelson, 1963).

¹⁸⁷ For recent work that considers Britain's alliance-management dilemmas, see Steven E. Lobell, “Britain's Paradox: Cooperation or Punishment Prior to World War I,” *Review of International Studies* 27, no. 2 (April 2001): 169–86; Christina L. Davis, “Linkage Diplomacy: Economic and Security Bargaining in the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1902-23,” *International Security* 33, no. 3 (December 1, 2008): 143–79, doi:10.2307/40207144.

invading and subduing China. Asia, not Europe, was the bubbling cauldron of the century's first decade.

The issue of security subsidies across the British Empire serves as an excellent barometer for the changing nature of sovereignty in this period, and the ways that change resonated in the processes of internal state-building and external relations between colonial and imperial governments. By the end of the nineteenth century, the colonies considered here paid Britain some form of fiscal subsidy in exchange for protection, increasingly not for land forces but emphatically still for the Royal Navy. These subsidies, originating as taxes on colonial populations, were in reality a fantastically cheap means by which nascent states could obtain security; relative to the cost of building indigenous military forces (and especially navies), and to the rates of defense expenditure paid by European powers, they were miniscule.¹⁸⁸ But subsidies proved intolerable to colonial governments and polities. India and the large Pacific colonies preferred to obtain their security through means that were more tangible, more local, and often more costly. Subsidies came to be understood as a tributary act that placed limits on the sovereignty of colonial states under emerging norms; proprietary military assets, by comparison, could support colonial claims to legitimacy and peer national status, even when used for collective imperial ends (such as liberating Peking or subduing Afrikaner republics). The multiple valences of the subsidy question point to crystallizing norms of sovereignty in

¹⁸⁸ In fact, it has been argued by a several scholars that Britain itself bore low fiscal burdens for military spending, in both relative and absolute terms, due to its force-structure, tax powers, and ease of access to credit. Quantitative figures from the Correlates of War longitudinal database confirm the assertion. For this debate see Paul Kennedy, "The Costs and Benefits of British Imperialism 1846-1914," *Past & Present*, no. 125 (November 1, 1989): 186–92, doi:10.2307/650865; Niall Ferguson, *The Cash Nexus: Money and Power in the Modern World, 1700-2000* (New York: Basic Books, 2001); Hobson has also argued that the extent of Britain's under-spending amounted to a deterrence failure ahead of the First World War. Hobson, "The Military Extraction Gap and the Wary Titan: The Fiscal Sociology of British Defence Policy, 1870-1913."

the early twentieth century and its twofold, internal and external nature.¹⁸⁹ They also foreshadow the strategic quid-pro-quo Britain would make with colonial representatives at a series of colonial and imperial conferences, ceding the right to colonial navies in exchange for coordination and cooperation in imperial defense.¹⁹⁰

Race both simplified and complicated efforts to find new political equilibria in Asia and the Pacific in the early twentieth century. Recent scholarship on the British Empire, and on colonial state-building projects, has highlighted the growing role of racism in shaping political and institutional developments in this period.¹⁹¹ British and American colonizers may have hoped to form an Anglo-Saxon bulwark in Asia and the Pacific that could keep co-ethnic migrant flows in, rival Europeans out, and indigenous populations down, but instead they found themselves diplomatically split by Britain's formal alliance with Japan. Race acted as a strategic heuristic that allowed colonial state-builders to sort friends from foes, and those who could help secure the state from those who would endanger it. Race had multiple valences too, however – it sometimes worked across “color lines” to construct Japanese or Indians as worthy, martially fit allies. Colonial state-building in the early twentieth century has been described as an exercise in building “white men's countries,” and this insight has been rightly influential, but it

¹⁸⁹ A recent book that has explored the way constitutional documents are essentially outward facing is David Armitage, *The Declaration of Independence: A Global History* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2007), 19 “The Declaration affirmed the existence of a population (‘One People’) and implied a form of government, but it did not define a territory. Instead, it stressed firmly the capacities of the United States as international actors alongside other such actors. My analysis in this book will follow this emphasis in the Declaration by highlighting the outward-looking rather than the inward-looking face of the state.”

¹⁹⁰ See Chapter 3.

¹⁹¹ See especially Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); David Theo Goldberg, *The Racial State* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2002).

subordinates the exigencies of security problems to population-focused issues like immigration, and its “color line” is too impermeable; it does not capture the fluidity of racial paradigms that sometimes served collaboration as well as division.¹⁹² Whatever its valence, though, race readily served discussions of military security, and by extension of sovereignty, as these too were discourses of power.

2.2 BRITAIN AND THE AFTERMATH OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN WAR

While ensconced at the Colonial Office from 1895-1903, Joseph Chamberlain was one of the most compelling political characters in the British Empire. A product of Birmingham’s manufacturing sector and formerly that city’s mayor, Chamberlain brought a workmanlike approach and an improving mentality to a ministerial portfolio usually assigned to career water-treaders. Much of his energy was devoted to economic matters; he spearheaded the Colonial Stock Act in 1900, a law that encouraged City investment

¹⁹² Reviews of the book have been overwhelmingly positive; some have criticized the excessive weight of Australia in the text, or its reliance on two key sources, but only Thomas Metcalf seriously critiqued the book for focusing exclusively on one kind of racial discourse to the detriment of others. See Antoinette Burton, *The International History Review* 33, no. 4 (December 1, 2011): 744–46, doi:10.1080/07075332.2011.634216; Steve Garner, *Canadian Journal of History* 44, no. 3 (Winter 2009): 582–84; Alan Lester, *The American Historical Review* 114, no. 2 (April 1, 2009): 425; Thomas R. Metcalf, *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 39, no. 4 (April 1, 2009): 560–61; Andrew Muldoon, *Journal of British Studies* 48, no. 2 (April 1, 2009): 551–53; G.A.C. Quinn, *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 55, no. 1 (March 1, 2009): 121–53, doi:10.1111/j.1467-8497.2009.01508a.x; Philippa Mein Smith, *Australian Historical Studies* 40, no. 3 (September 2009): 378–79, doi:10.1080/10314610903089403. The thesis is, however, occasionally carried too far. For instance, Lake and Reynolds reduce Teddy Roosevelt’s deployment of the Great White Fleet to a matter of immigration policy (p.191), and do not generally address the extent to which white colonial settlers across the Pacific harbored similar paranoias against German or French rivals or migrants in this period as they did against Japan. See Ch. 8 “White ties across the ocean: the Pacific tour of the US fleet” Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*.

stimulus to Crown Colonies in order to jumpstart development by guaranteeing low rates, and famously led the (doomed) movement to end Britain's decades-old orthodoxy of free trade and replace it with a tariff barrier privileging colonial markets.¹⁹³ This and the problem of Irish Home Rule saw him fall out with the Liberal Party and eventually to his service in Tory governments. Chamberlain's mission entailed a wholesale re-imagination of the Empire, and he fought for that goal on many fronts. One of these was his attempt to create new institutional machinery for governing the Empire that would spread responsibility for its core functions among the colonies. He chose the recently-developed practice of colonial conferencing as his vessel for fashioning a new imperial body, but when he proposed a "council" of representatives from the self-governing colonies at the 1897 Diamond Jubilee conference in honor of Queen Victoria, he encountered unexpected resistance.¹⁹⁴ Colonial representatives (especially Canada's Wilfrid Laurier) feared that any formal decision-making body would formalize their subordination to Britain on key matters, and preferred that deliberation between governments remain ad hoc.¹⁹⁵ Chagrined, Chamberlain resolved to play his hand more conservatively in the future. When Israel Tarte, Canada's Minister for Public Works and a supporter of

¹⁹³ For more on these efforts, see Richard M. Kesner, *Economic Control and Colonial Development: Crown Colony Financial Management in the Age of Joseph Chamberlain* (Greenwood Press, 1981); Frank Trentmann, *Free Trade Nation: Commerce, Consumption, and Civil Society in Modern Britain* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2009).

¹⁹⁴ Conferences began as ad hoc meetings of visiting colonial dignitaries on the occasion of royal holidays in Britain. The first occurred parallel to Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887. John Kendle locates the impetus for this meeting in the initial wave of colonial opposition to the Cardwell Reforms. The event's title, "Colonial Conference," meant the attendees featured Crown Colonies and self-governing colonies, but not India, which strictly-speaking was not a colony but a sub-imperium. There was a decade lapse before another conference convened, this time with the self-governing colonies only, for Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897. See John E. Kendle, *The Colonial and Imperial Conferences 1887-1911: A Study in Imperial Organization* (London: Longmans, 1967), chap. 1 – "Early Years, 1869–94."

¹⁹⁵ See *ibid.*, chap. 11 – "Joseph Chamberlain and an Imperial Council."

imperial federation, publically called for conciliar Canadian representation in the peace settlement of the South African War, Chamberlain responded with rank sarcasm.¹⁹⁶ He wrote to Lord Minto, the Governor General of Canada, that if Canada received such representation it would be proportional to her contributing war expenditure – and at £20,000 to Britain’s £20,000,000, that thousandth amounted to about 2/3 of a Member of the House of Commons.¹⁹⁷

Chamberlain cautiously polled the self-governing colonies in advance of the 1902 Conference, asking for their desired topics of discussion. The response he received from Richard Seddon’s government in New Zealand, a 7-point proposal that included the creation of an Imperial Reserve Force and a new advisory body, comported well enough with Chamberlain’s wishes that he simply circulated it to the other governments as a draft agenda.¹⁹⁸ Less fortunately, the exchange of post between Britain and New Zealand and subsequent forwarding to still other geographic extremities proved cumbersome, and the other heads of government arrived in London lacking up-to-date memoranda.

Chamberlain laid out his priorities for the Conference and the future of the Empire in his opening speech, in a clear order: “Through our political relations in the first place; secondly, by some kind of commercial union. In the third place, by considering the questions which arise out of Imperial defence.”¹⁹⁹ Though Chamberlain’s approach apparently favored other vectors, he still saved time to admonish the visiting premiers

¹⁹⁶ Colonial interest in having representation on the councils that ended the South African War is discussed in Chapter 1.

¹⁹⁷ See FN 2, Kendle, *The Colonial and Imperial Conferences 1887 - 1911*, 33.

¹⁹⁸ See CAB 18/10 “Papers Related to a Conference between the Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Prime Ministers of the Self-Governing Colonies,” 1902, National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNA), vi-viii.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

about the disproportionately large sums Britain spent on defense relative to its colonies – about fifteen times more. He continued:

While the Colonies were young and poor, in the first place they did not offer anything like the same temptation to the ambitions of others, and, in the second place, they were clearly incapable of providing large sums for their own defence, and there-fore it was perfectly right and natural that the mother country should undertake the protection of her children. But now that the Colonies are rich and powerful, that every day they are growing by leaps and bounds, their material prosperity promises to rival that of the United Kingdom itself, and I think it is inconsistent with their position – inconsistent with their dignity as nations – that they should leave the mother country to bear the whole, or almost the whole, of the expense.²⁰⁰

“Inconsistent with their dignity as nations” invoked a matrix of abstract concepts that typified the spirit of the moment: honor, a moral duty to act within ethical parameters; kinship, the tie that bound the realms of the Crown together for mutual support; and an enticing picture of normative sovereignty, which beckoned the colonies to begin comporting themselves as sovereign states – by spending more on defense.²⁰¹

The political possibilities swirling around the 1902 Colonial Conference largely foundered on the rocky protuberance of Canada’s Wilfrid Laurier. Laurier, a Liberal,

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 3.

²⁰¹ For a recent turn in the debate on British imperialism as a fundamentally economizing exercise, see P. J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688-2000*, 2nd ed. (London: Longman, 2002); P.P. O’Brien, “The Titan Refreshed: Imperial Overstretch and the British Navy before the First World War,” *Past & Present*, no. 172 (2001): 146–69; Paul Kennedy responds to O’Brien’s earlier work in Kennedy, “The Costs and Benefits of British Imperialism 1846-1914.”

found himself caught in a vise – the Quebecois wing of his party under Henri Bourassa seized on any mention of military affairs to argue that Canada risked being made into Britain’s vassal state. Meanwhile, the Conservative opposition led by Robert Borden hammered him for refusing to take a more active role in addressing Canada’s (and the Empire’s) security concerns. Fearing he would be dragged down by either Scylla or Charybdis, Laurier simply refused to proceed, resolving instead to stonewall talk of imperial councils, secretariats, or reserve forces.²⁰² Thus, the opportunity for change presented by the aftermath of South Africa, and the eager proposals of Seddon, collapsed under the opposition of the Empire’s most senior self-governing colony. Laurier even attempted to skip the conference altogether. His opposition making that a political impossibility, Laurier decided instead to push hard on the issue of trade, on which Canada’s political spectrum looked more fondly to Britain given the draconian McKinley tariffs handed down by the United States from 1890 on, and their stultifying effects on regional commerce.²⁰³ Chamberlain, as above, was happy to engage. But Chamberlain did not speak for the Westminster establishment as a whole, least of all the Treasury, and the resolutions produced by the Conference in favor of trade preference fell on deaf ears elsewhere in Whitehall.

The 1902 Colonial Conference produced some interesting samples of its participants’ priorities, then, but failed to produce meaningful institutional change that measured up to the challenges of reform – political, economic, or military – facing the

²⁰² Laurier’s legacy at the conferences will be discussed below in Chapter 3. See also Kendle, *The Colonial and Imperial Conferences 1887 - 1911*, 43.

²⁰³ William McKinley introduced his first high tariff barrier as a Senator in 1890; Grover Cleveland’s Democrats lowered them in 1894, but McKinley saw to their reinstatement after his election as President in 1897.

Empire. When formal improvements to the imperial war machine did arrive, in the waning days of 1902, their cause was largely inadvertent. The Committee of Imperial Defence was conceived as a way to facilitate more efficient communication between the United Kingdom's service branches – the Admiralty and the (newly recalibrated) War Office. Yet, the CID evolved, in an informal and largely unforeseen manner, into the Empire's only inter-state military planning body. It emerged from the British Government's internal inquiries into the mismanagement of the Boer War, namely, from the Elgin Commission charged with investigating the War Office's failures, and from Lord Selborne's efforts to reform the Admiralty. Lord Elgin, the recently returned Viceroy of India, took over the inquiry into the war in 1902. Originally conceived as a fact-finding body only, the Elgin Commission eventually found itself overshadowed by one of its members, Lord Esher, who went beyond the remit of the commission and issued recommendations to the Government in a document that came to be known as the Esher Report. Esher argued forcefully in his report that the War Office in its present form could no longer manage the challenges of modern warfare, and that it should be reconstituted along the lines of the Admiralty, with a council of generals responsible for constant planning, instead of a single Commander-in-Chief. He also called for the reorganization of the council of civilian and military officials that advised the Cabinet on military matters, and suggested that this body be vested with strategic planning responsibilities.²⁰⁴ Esher's report stoked the sense of urgency surrounding the military in London's crowded news cycle, and rightly predicted the need to create plans for rapidly

²⁰⁴ A useful overview of the chronology and constitutional details is John Gooch, *The Plans of War: The General Staff and British Military Strategy, C. 1900-1916* (London: Routledge, 1974), chap. 2 – “The Triumph of Lord Esher.” “Esher was tentatively seeking an institution corresponding with the great German General Staff in concept, but rather adapted to the needs of a maritime empire,” 43.

up-scaling the size and operations of the British Army for the contingency of a larger war.²⁰⁵ Esher's report also motivated Lord Selborne, the First Lord of the Admiralty (Britain's highest-ranking civilian naval post), to co-author a memo to the Government with St. John Brodrick, the new Minister for War, calling for a new inter-service body that could coordinate military planning and policy, and advise the Government. That body would become the Committee of Imperial Defence.

In its first iteration, the CID was supposed to ease contact between land and sea forces, not between the states and colonies of the Empire, but it gradually assumed the latter function as well. In 1903 Sir Frederick Borden, the Canadian Minister for Militia and Defence, sat in on CID meetings, inaugurating a trend by which its ranks filled up with a revolving door of visiting colonial attendees. The War Office reorganization started by Brodrick made it more like the Admiralty and, less comfortably, like the Prussian-German general staff system.²⁰⁶ The Admiralty also saw its share of innovation and change – under Selborne and his radical First Sea Lord, Admiral Jacky Fisher, the Royal Navy underwent drastic changes in both force structure and posture, responding in turn to influential new treatises on naval power by Julian Corbett and Alfred Thayer Mahan.²⁰⁷ Overall, Balfour's Tory Government inherited the crises of Salisbury, the last

²⁰⁵ Johnson, *Defence By Committee*, 52 Johnson's Chapter 2 - "Emergence of the Committee of Imperial Defence, 1902-1905" is the best overview here.

²⁰⁶ For an excellent recent work on the evolution of German military institutions, see Isabel Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

²⁰⁷ Naval reforms will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter. For more on Fisher's tenure at the Admiralty see Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow: The Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, 1904-1919*; Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution*; Sumida, *In Defence of Naval Supremacy* "Mahan" and "Corbett" respectively served as synecdoches in this period for two competing naval philosophies: that of fleet concentration to effectively destroy enemy fleets, and that of dispersion to protect shipping lanes from smaller enemy attacks.

Victorian, and changed much of Britain's military governance. Balfour realized that the CID, insofar as it included colonial representatives, would have to remain an advisory body rather than an executive council, and in this he retained his predecessor Salisbury's views of the Empire as an organic whole rather than as a formal structure tending toward institutional unification. Meanwhile, he restrained Chamberlain's schemes for imperial union, trade preference, and a common reserve force, thinking them an improper imposition on colonial liberties.²⁰⁸

Post-war Britain's military reforms rippled beyond the corridors of Whitehall. They substantively realigned British politics, and overflowed into deeper social conversations about the country's imagined liberal soul. British strategic and social mentalities intertwined across centuries – the values encoded in Magna Carta, of safeguarded liberties and due process, were understood to be contingent on Britain's record of upholding sea-power offshore, and thus eschewing the kind of large standing armies and command-control political economies required by states with major strategic liabilities on land – France, Germany, and Russia most prominently. Since the Napoleonic Wars (and farther still, to the Hanoverian Settlement), Britain's grand strategy involved projecting naval force across the globe, and working to balance the powers on the European Continent to ensure stability (and manageable peace) there.²⁰⁹ This nexus of strategy, social memory, and ideology placed British reformers after the Boer War in a double-bind: the quality and efficiency of the German military command

²⁰⁸ Kendle, *The Colonial and Imperial Conferences 1887 - 1911*, 77.

²⁰⁹ Further reading on this topic is Kenneth Bourne, *Britain and the Balance of Power in North America, 1815-1908* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967); John Charmley, *Splendid Isolation?: Britain, the Balance of Power, and the Origins of the First World War* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1999); Howard, *The Continental Commitment*.

structure enjoyed near-universal admiration in this period, but emulating it involved a betrayal of the long-held British practice of forming national identity in opposition to “militaristic Prussia” or “absolutist/statist France.” The complications were summarized in a 1905 anecdote by GK Chesterton –

Mr. Rudyard Kipling has said complacently of the English, ‘We do not fall on the neck and kiss when we come together.’ It is true that this ancient and universal custom has vanished with the modern weakening of England...I willingly concede that Mr. Brodrick would not be likely to kiss Mr. Arnold-Forster, if that be any proof of the increased manliness and military greatness of England. But the Englishman who does not show his feelings has not altogether given up the power of seeing something English in the great sea-hero of the Napoleonic war. You cannot break the legend of Nelson. And across the sunset of that glory is written in flaming letters for ever the great English sentiment, ‘Kiss me, Hardy.’²¹⁰

Britain’s military crisis appears here as a crisis of masculinity – British men had stopped kissing one another in an effort to be more like the war-winning Germans, forgetting, according to Chesterton, the habits of their own past war heroes.

Though Germany would not become Britain’s central strategic preoccupation for some years hence (the title remained for the moment with the Old Enemy, France), only

²¹⁰ “Kiss me, Hardy,” was allegedly Nelson’s dying words to his adjutant as he lay on the deck of HMS *Victory* at Trafalgar. Gilbert Keith Chesterton, *Heretics*, (1905), ch. XV – “On Smart Novelists and the Smart Set.”

Germany seriously provoked this level of both envy and dread.²¹¹ The Liberal Party had the most to lose from this paradox, since its ostensible values were those at stake in a debate about militarism. The Khaki Election of 1900 had been an early warning of a challenging new era for the Liberals. Those challenges were legion, and included other quagmires such as Ireland, women's suffrage, and pensions and social insurance. But the literature on the erosion of British Liberalism tends to underplay the role of militarism in reshaping British politics around the question of security and "efficiency" and causing party defections amid top-level indecision.²¹² Popular liberal takes on war and security that attempted to downplay the danger and appeal to the mollifying effects of international trade, exemplified by Norman Angell's *The Great Illusion*, competed to capture the public imagination with a raft of alarmist, lurid invasion literature about the imminent destruction of Britain, exemplified by Erskine Childers' *The Riddle of the Sands*.²¹³ Meaningful distinctions on the issue of militarism between Britain and its colonies, much like those between Britain and its Continental rivals, should not be swept aside. But it should be noted also that Britain was not the liberal bastion against

²¹¹ Jan Rüger has explored this complicated relationship in a number of publications. Jan Rüger, *The Great Naval Game: Britain and Germany in the Age of Empire*, 1st ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Jan Rüger, "Revisiting the Anglo-German Antagonism," *The Journal of Modern History* 83, no. 3 (September 1, 2011): 579–617; See also the classic Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860-1914* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1980).

²¹² The exception has been GR Searle, whose studies of the "National Efficiency" movement recognize the difficulty entailed for Liberal philosophy in a society increasingly dominated by militarism, nationalism, and class. See Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency*; Searle, *A New England?*, chap. 10–11; The classic work, George Dangerfield's 1935 book *The Strange Death of Liberal England*, as well as a number of other more recent assessments either do not emphasize this dimension or locate its impact primarily in or after the First World War. George Dangerfield, *The Strange Death of Liberal England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), <http://www.sup.org/books/title/?id=2077>; Green and Tanner, *The Strange Survival of Liberal England*; Pugh, *The Making of Modern British Politics*.

²¹³ Cf. Erskine Childers, *The Riddle of the Sands: A Record of Secret Service Recently Achieved* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1903); Norman Angell, *The Great Illusion; a Study of the Relation of Military Power to National Advantage* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1913).

militarism in the North Atlantic that some wished it to be; at any rate it found itself increasingly in militarism's grip after 1902. As such it was converging with, rather than diverging from, more militaristic regimes in both its competitors and its colonies.

2.3 GEORGE CURZON, INDIA, AND THE DILEMMAS OF CONTINENTAL SECURITY IN ASIA

India stood apart from the rest of the British Empire in the early twentieth century. Its continental geography, massive population, territorial abutment of rival powers, eclectic and undemocratic institutions, and broad social diversity made it incongruous with the United Kingdom or the self-governing settlement colonies. Yet India experienced very similar pressures of militarization, nationalism, and state centralization in this period, and featured prominently in Empire-wide discussions of these topics. The period covered in this chapter overlaps with George Curzon's tempestuous tenure as Viceroy of India. Curzon, like his Prime Minister Salisbury, was in some senses already an anachronism upon his accession in 1899 – a Tory, an aristocrat, and a strong believer in British power and global primacy. He followed a well-trod path through Eton and Balliol and developed a reputation as an Orientalist that he augmented with tours of the Eastern Mediterranean, Persia, Central Asia, Russia, and the Hindu Kush as a young man in the 1880s. Curzon got himself elected as the Conservative Member for Southport, formerly a Liberal seat, in 1886, and many considered him a

rising star despite his fussy and conspicuously elitist manner. A verse composed about him by some of his Balliol classmates read:

My name is George Nathaniel Curzon,

I am a most superior person.

My cheek is pink, my hair is sleek,

I dine at Blenheim once a week.²¹⁴

Curzon's was and is easy to misread. His strongly conservative veneer obscured an aggressively activist operational mentality; Curzon attempted vigorously to reform most of the political posts he occupied throughout his career, and railed against any rigid, inefficient systems that impeded his progress. His aggressive reformism did not extend to democratization; in that he retained a fierce Salisburian suspicion, a sort of pre-Disraelian Toryism that informed his harsh resistance to democratic reform in India as in Britain.²¹⁵

These attributes existed in some tension – Curzon would show himself to be an incautious reformer on some fronts, like his ill-starred partition of Bengal, and a cautious stonewaller when dealing with the Indian National Congress. What he retained in all cases was a strong respect for prudent administration as he imagined it, beneficial to his subjects and consistent with their values (as he imagined those), like many fellow Tories of his time. His governing strategy as Viceroy was to make allies with the aristocratic rulers of India's princely states and to resist middle-class calls for democracy, which

²¹⁴ David Gilmour. "Curzon, George Nathaniel, Marquess Curzon of Kedleston (1859–1925)" *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* 2004, online ed. The rhyme is supposed to have been composed in part by Cecil Spring-Rice, one of the era's most important British diplomats, the framer of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, and holder of the most senior ambassadorial posts, including Persia, Russia, and the United States.

²¹⁵ Curzon enjoyed a peculiar array of fans and critics, as Gilmour notes, drawing posthumous praise from Jawaharlal Nehru and criticism from Winston Churchill.

emanated chiefly from the province of Bengal and the Indian National Congress. Curzon's complicated legacy and meteoric career are necessary backdrops to the controversies embroiling India through this period. His geostrategic agenda, his attempts to reform the organization and finance of the Indian Army, and his battle with Gen. Herbert Kitchener over civilian control of the military, made India the epicenter of political controversy on the burning questions of security, sovereignty, and British institutions at the turn of the century. The Indian Army proved an integral part of each of these controversies, and ensured that they reached well beyond the rapidly-expanding strategic borders of the Indian Empire. The Indian Army's size and significance meant that Curzon's gales battered governments from Australasia to North America to London itself. At its height, the faceoff with Kitchener threatened to destabilize the British Government itself. It drove an Empire-wide conversation about the future of sovereignty that included the self-governing dominions as well. India's civil-military debate also raised interesting questions and contradictions for liberalism in the British world. Curzon and other observers made essentially liberal critiques of military power while resisting democratization. Meanwhile, the conservative (and militarist) deals the Raj made with India's Princely States were echoed by liberal governments in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand in their bargaining with Britain. This strange confluence shows how security imperatives exerted a tightening grip on conceptions of sovereignty in this period.

The British Raj headed by Curzon faced rising competition from an insurgent Indian National Congress for political legitimacy on the subcontinent. The Congress had emerged some years before in the late-nineteenth century as a forum for the advancement

of the interests of Indians relative to the British Raj – among other things, to extend to them some form of the franchise.²¹⁶ Relations between the Raj and the Congress remained uneasy over the years as their political objectives took on a zero-sum quality, and by Curzon's Viceroyalty tensions were running high. The Congress itself contained two key factions – moderate, constitutional nationalists led by Gopal Krishna Gokhale, an Elphinstone-educated Maharashtran, and the radical nationalist faction led by another Maharashtran, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, who had studied law in Bombay and taught mathematics at Fergusson College in Pune. Gokhale's moderates remained at the reins for these years but steadily gave ground to the radical faction during Curzon's tenure.²¹⁷ The Congress itself was but the institutional face for brewing Indian nationalisms across the subcontinent, which increasingly opposed British rule and sought new ways to understand and assert sovereignty in the new century.

Thus, the field of Indian politics triangulated around the British Raj, the princes that ruled the subcontinent's Princely States as quasi-vassals of the Raj, and a constellation of nationalists loosely represented under the rubric of the Congress. When Curzon arrived in India to assume office in 1899, he went immediately to work on reform campaigns he had devised, grappling first with a grinding famine that had been sweeping the subcontinent and had claimed millions of lives. He oversaw the extension of famine relief to some five million Indians and went ahead with irrigation projects and land reforms designed to mitigate the severity of famine in the future. His other early

²¹⁶ See S. R. Mehrotra, *A History of the Indian National Congress* (New Delhi: Vikas Pub. House, 1995), <http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/003032916>; Robin Moore, "Imperial India, 1858-1914," in *The Nineteenth Century*, vol. 3, 5 vols., The Oxford History of the British Empire (London: Oxford University Press, 1999), 422–46.

²¹⁷ A classic comparative work is S.A. Wolpert, *Tilak and Gokhale: Revolution and Reform in the Making of Modern India*, California Library Reprint Series (University of California Press, 1962).

landmark policies involved Indian Army discipline – he discovered that regiments had hushed up their soldiers’ murders of Indian civilians, and sentenced those regiments to collective punishment, enraging British observers who felt it was a loss of face.²¹⁸ He also insisted on reforming the Indian Civil Service, increasing funds for university education, and passing a law to protect ancient monuments, including a notable restoration of the Taj Mahal. Crucially, he resisted calls emanating from Congress to “Indianize” the Civil Service. Curzon also endeavored to stay afloat in the changing seas of British institutional reform, especially on the Government of India’s relationship to the Committee of Imperial Defence. He set a precedent for the Departments of State in India to submit formal questions to the CID, and duly began a dialog about improving the coastal defenses of India’s major ports – Bombay, Calcutta, Karachi, and Rangoon.²¹⁹ He also saw to the appointment of an Indian Army member to the permanent secretariat of the CID, once it became clear that such positions could and would exist.²²⁰

Curzon also made several moves early in his Viceroyalty (and even ahead of his appointment) that altered the British Empire’s strategic balance to suit Indian priorities. Whereas other strategic thinkers in the Empire channeled Mahan or Corbett, Curzon aligned more with Halford Mackinder, a geographer and diplomat, who gave a famous 1904 paper at the Royal Geographical Society propounding a “Heartland Theory” of

²¹⁸ David Gilmour. "Curzon, George Nathaniel, Marquess Curzon of Kedleston (1859–1925)" *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* 2004, online ed.

²¹⁹ “Rules for the referral of questions to Imperial Defence Committee” Collection 145/64, IOR/L/MIL/7/6602, British Library (BL); and “Coast and Frontier Defences of India,” IOR/L/MIL/7/6603, BL.

²²⁰ Negotiations for shuttling officers between posts at the India Office in London and CID posts (and the expenses thereof) show up in “Collection 145/61 Appointment of Indian Officer (Captain A.B. Lindsay, Major T.E. Scott) to secretariat of Imperial Defence Committee” IOR/L/MIL/6599 [1904-1910], BL.

world power that pivoted upon the centers of large landmasses.²²¹ Since his early trips to Afghanistan, Curzon had been a Russian alarmist in London, constantly warning his often apathetic colleagues that the Tsar meant to extend his empire to the farthest possible extent, which meant deliberately destabilizing the vast regions of Central Asia in which Russian territory menaced British India. He convinced the British Government to maintain robust relations with the Emir in Kabul to counter creeping Russian influence, and to continue stationing troops in Chitral, to guard the Khyber Pass in India's Northwest Frontier.²²² Curzon also sealed two important deals designed to secure the far strategic flanks of the Indian Empire. First, he argued for well-resourced military presences in Kuwait and Aden from which the Royal Navy could police the Persian Gulf and Suez route through the Red Sea, which led to the Anglo-Kuwaiti Agreement of 1899, and later in 1903, the Lansdowne Declaration, which established a "British Monroe Doctrine" for the Gulf. Curzon held a lavish durbar in November of that year to underscore British-Indian power on its western interface with the Ottoman Empire. Second, he successfully persuaded Balfour's Government to pay up for a lease of the Chinese port of Weihaiwei in 1898, so the Royal Navy would have a workable position in the Yellow Sea from which to contest the presence of other European powers who had leased ports there. These commitments would be a source of tension between the British

²²¹ Curzon, as British Foreign Secretary later in 1919, would appoint Mackinder as Ambassador to South Russia during the Civil War there, demonstrating that the Bolshevik regime had done nothing to dampen his perennial obsession with the geopolitics of the Great Game. H. J. Mackinder, "The Geographical Pivot of History," *The Geographical Journal* 23, no. 4 (April 1, 1904): 421–37, doi:10.2307/1775498.

²²² Curzon said to his Legislative Council in March 1902, "If, therefore, the Government of India has disbursed a net sum of 10 lakhs (1m Rupees), or even more, is that, I ask, a small price to pay for the restoration of peace along the most difficult and troubled section of our border? Whether the peace will be lasting or not, I will not presume to foretell." Speeches by Lord Curzon of Kedleston, Viceroy and Governor General of India, Vol. II. 1900-1902. (Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, India, 1902) India Office Library, BL, T 31037 (1900).

and Indian Exchequers in subsequent years. In Curzon's Viceroyalty, Indian constitutional affairs provoked scrambled reactions from the British metropole, and Indian strategic interests likewise. The colonies were not a mere peripheral concern in Curzon's view; they sat at the "Heartland" of the British world and thus its geostrategic problems. His was an Indocentric British Empire.

Curzon also attempted to use the Indian Army to leverage other colonial governments and to press Indian interests across the Empire, albeit with less success. The most important issues here were security and Indian migration. To these ends he frequently referenced the efforts of the Indian Army to rescue the Empire in its hour of need during his tenure, at the Boxer Rebellion in China and in the relief of British colonies in South Africa during the Boer War. He thundered to his own Legislative Council in 1902, "...it was an Indian General commanding Native troops from India that relieved the Legations at Peking; and further that, in the absence of our European troops elsewhere, it has been by Native regiments that our garrisons in China have since been supplied."²²³ He went on to point out that "it is, I think, generally known that it was by the loan and prompt despatch of British troops from India that Natal was saved from being overrun by the Boers at the beginning of the South African Campaign. It was the holding of Ladysmith that prevented them from sweeping down to the sea."²²⁴ That the Imperial and other colonial governments were not more appreciative of India and its army enraged Curzon, who found the task of convincing them to admit Indians as labor

²²³ *Speeches by Lord Curzon of Kedleston, Viceroy and Governor General of India*, vol. II, 1900–1902 (Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, India, 1902), 469.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, II, 1900–1902:468–9.

migrants quite difficult.²²⁵ The racially selective policies of the new Australian Commonwealth, as well as those of other self-governing colonies, barred Indians from free entry.²²⁶ The reason for Curzon's consternation over migration was twofold: first, it put the lie to the concept of equal subjecthood under the Crown by racially disparaging Indians, and secondly, migration restrictions were an ironic expression of territorial sovereignty by colonial governments when, as he argued, the Indian Army underwrote their sovereignty through its timely interventions in colonial security crises.

Though he did not yet know it, George Curzon encountered his nemesis when General Herbert Horatio Kitchener, Lord of Khartoum, the British Empire's most famous living soldier, arrived in India at the start of 1903 to assume the post of Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army. Kitchener's fame made him an ideal choice for the Empire's most prestigious military post, and Curzon thought him a perfect candidate for carrying out the kinds of robust reform that he felt the Indian Army needed. Kitchener arrived in time to participate in Curzon's lavish and epochal 1903 Durbar in Delhi, the historic Mughal capital of India. The Durbar, a grand royal pageant that fused British royal courtliness with Mughal custom and ritual, was held to mark the succession of Edward VII to the British throne (and as Emperor of India) after the death of his mother, Queen Victoria, in 1901. Curzon hoped Edward himself would attend, but ultimately had to settle for his brother, the Duke of Connaught. Nevertheless, several hectares of Delhi were given over to parade grounds and tent complexes as the Raj staged its elaborate

²²⁵ The issue remained vexed; it was a major topic of discussion at the 1907 Colonial Conference, see "Minutes of the Colonial Conference," CAB 18/11A 1907, TNA, 152-183.

²²⁶ For more on these see Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*, chap. 6, "White Australia points the way."

show of power. It all fit Curzon's plan for strengthening his alliances with India's native aristocracy. He rode to the dais on a massive elephant festooned in rugs. Kitchener stood at attention as rank upon rank of Indian soldiers from across the Indian Empire, and princes from every state, marched past. An early film reel captured some of the pageantry, and audiences across the greater Empire would later marvel at the show.²²⁷ Yet, as the great external show of force played out in 1903, Curzon knew the time was running out on his Viceroyalty, and that he had much more (far less glamorous) work left to do. For this reason, he petitioned Balfour's Government to grant him an additional term as Viceroy as the year waned. Reluctantly, Balfour agreed, and Curzon remained in India. The moment marked a watershed in his career – he was slated to lead the Tory bid for re-election in Britain after Balfour's term in Downing St. ended, and was widely believed to be on a shortlist of future Prime Ministers. As it happened, he would never occupy Number 10.²²⁸ His new counterpart as Secretary of State for India, the British Cabinet member responsible for liaising with the Government of India, was St. John Brodrick, who had been reshuffled from the War Office in favor of Arnold-Forster. Curzon's next big project involved the Indian Army. He wanted to make it a more efficient fighting force capable of facing down the Russian threat at home and deploying as the Empire's Asian police force abroad, and to repair its complicated financial machinery. He imagined Kitchener would be his ally in these tasks. He was wrong.

Much as Chamberlain admonished colonial premiers at the 1902 Colonial Conference, Curzon sent letters in early 1904 to the rulers of the Indian Princely States

²²⁷ See <http://www.colonialfilm.org.uk/node/1956>

²²⁸ David Gilmour. "Curzon, George Nathaniel, Marquess Curzon of Kedleston (1859–1925)" *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* 2004, online ed.

with the goal of cajoling them into increasing their subsidies to the Indian Army. His exchanges with some of the prominent princes reveal the interplay between the military capabilities of the state and the way India's political actors imagined and constituted their sovereignty. The negotiation of this sovereignty had a complex recent past. The 1857 Rebellion in India forced a re-making of British institutions and power in Asia, namely the demise of the once-potent East India Company and its replacement by the formal government of the British Raj. Even the Company had articulated its rule as a joint matter of British Royal Charter and Mughal sovereign writ to govern Indian territory. Central to the project of re-legitimizing British rule in India after 1857 was the creation of a new honors system that attempted to merge local forms of fealty with that of Britain's feudal past in the person of the newly-dubbed Empress, Victoria.²²⁹ This honors system privileged acts of loyalty to British rule, which were formally tabulated and which often consisted of Indian princes supplying soldiers from their domains to serve in the newly reconstituted Indian Army, and ruling on the basis of agreements with the Viceroy not to wage war on the subcontinent. Thus the ritualized constitutional system that governed India after 1857 was one in which the Raj-as-incipient colonial state monopolized military force within India via compact with its princely clients, and in which a figure's right to rule, from the Empress down to the local Nizam or Maharaja, was a function of his or her contribution to the incipient state's security. In this way the colonial Indian state, which continued to consolidate and centralize after 1900, was itself constituted by needs of the Indian Army - fiscal, infrastructural, and strategic.

²²⁹ A useful dialog about this system is Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition*, Past and Present Publications (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), chap. 5 Bernard Cohn, "Representing Authority in Victorian India"; and David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

Standing arrangements between the Raj and the princes in 1904 involved both subsidies and the provision of Imperial Service Troops – auxiliary corps usually delegated by the Indian Army to supply and transport tasks. Some of these arrangements predated 1857 and actually followed the Company’s victories against Tipu Sultan, and in the Anglo-Maratha Wars of the late eighteenth century. Curzon noted in his letters and memos that only 23% of the princes voluntarily contributed fiscal subsidies to the Army, and hoped to secure a 10% margin from as many of their revenues as possible in the future. He wrote, “It has been under the security guaranteed to them by the Indian Army against either external invasion or internal revolt that the revenues of the majority of Native States in India have doubled, and trebled, and in some cases been multiplied tenfold, during the past century. Moreover, if a Foreign Power [Russia] is continually drawing closer to the frontiers of India...that advance is as direct a menace to every Native State in India as it is to any portion of Indian territory.”²³⁰ Having sent his postal salvo, Curzon made his way back to Britain to settle accounts before the start of his second term. The tone of the princes’ replies caught him off guard. Instead of a dialog on the rate of subsidy, never mind an agreed increase, he found himself reading principled rejections of the concept of subsidy itself. The princes’ responses reveal the complex interplay between their local sovereignties and the defense of greater India. Some of the wealthiest made conspicuous offers to contribute more troops, while others insisted they could not spare more from their local duties, but they uniformly expressed displeasure at the subsidies they paid to the Raj, however small. Curzon and his government soon

²³⁰ Confidential, Curzon, 27 April 1904, “Contribution to Imperial Defence by Native States. Mysore State Contribution.” File 4 1904 IOR/R/2/Box32/305, BL.

realized they would need to reposition their requests to target troop contributions, since these seemed to comport with the princes' self-image as sovereign actors and co-defenders of the realm.

Krishna Raja Wadiyar IV, the Maharaja of Mysore, wrote to Curzon, in 1904, "Your Excellency has indeed correctly divined the true feeling in the hearts of the Indian Princes, viz., that to ensure their willing co-operation, it is essential that the Military service rendered [to the Raj] should not assume the character of periodically discharging a mere fiscal obligation."²³¹ Mysore had paid a military subsidy to the Government of India since its defeat, under Tipu Sultan in 1799, at the hands of the East India Company, and in 1904 the Maharaja's subsidy stood at 41 lakhs annually.²³² He hoped to seize on the occasion of Curzon's audit of military clientage to return Mysore to its former glory as a partner, rather than a client, of the Raj. He closed his letter by drawing explicit parallels to the period's most conspicuous (and violent) example of state consolidation – Germany:

I am hopeful that before Your Excellency leaves India after your next term of office, the movement will have assumed a practical shape, and, like the German Confederation, the threads composing the bonds of common interest between the Imperial Government and the Indian Princes will have been woven closer than at present. We may then hope, as Your Excellency has observed, to see emerge from the present lack of a system, a confederation of the armed forces of India with each Prince holding ready

²³¹ Maharaja of Mysore to Viceroy George Curzon, 18 July 1904. "Contribution to Imperial Defence by Native States. Mysore State Contribution." India Office Records, IOR/R/2/Box32/305, File 4, BL, 42.

²³² Ibid., 12.

and efficient at all times, his contingent for participation in Imperial Defence.²³³

The Maharaja's message here abounds with allusion to contemporary events and speaks directly to the issue of sovereignty. By invoking German unification, the Maharaja posited a model of state-formation predicated on cooperative militarism and security. By invoking "contingents for Imperial Defence," he also invoked the diplomatic boons that had accrued to colonial participants in the South Africa and China interventions. Prussian militarism, the *bête-noir* of British liberalism, had arrived in India.

The Maharaja of Travancore, meanwhile, noted in his letter to the Government that Travancore had sent sepoys to fight alongside the Company *against* Tipu Sultan, but since that time had usually paid an 8 lakh annual subsidy. He offered to add to this sum funding for troops from Travancore from his personal guard to train with the Indian Army.²³⁴ The Raja of Cochin likewise noted that "...an invasion of India by a foreign Power, God forbid a thing like that for ever, will be a danger no less disastrous to the Native States than to the British Government," but protested that his regime could not afford to pay subsidies.²³⁵ The princes' animosity to paying subsidies became abundantly clear as they responded to the Raj's entreaties. The Chief Secretary receiving these reports for the Government of India noted, "...any impression of a defence-tax, as such,

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ A lakh, in the Indian numeral system, represented a unit of 100,000 (Indian notation 1,00,000). Letter from His Highness the Maharaja of Travancore, to His Excellency the Viceroy, at Trivandrum, July 1904, "Contribution from Native States Toward Imperial Defence," IOR/R/2/893/292, File GO No. 484-5, 1904, BL, 11.

²³⁵ Ibid., 12.

should be avoided, and even were a pecuniary standard accepted in principle, it would probably be thought advisable to convert it into some form of military service in practice.”²³⁶ This diplomatic conversation was about more than the fiscal costs involved. It was a conversation about the way the Indian princes and the British Raj imagined and manifested their sovereignty, and how they managed their relationships accordingly. Paying subsidies to the Raj (and the garrison its Army provided) for security and stability in their autocratic realms was an efficient solution for the Princely States, but it also resembled tribute and magnified their subservience to British power. Providing troops directly though, even in token quantities, allowed them to position themselves as fellows of the Raj and joint guarantors of Indian sovereignty. Curzon had to settle for more troops than money. In many cases this too caused tension, as the princes still had their own internal sovereignty to uphold.²³⁷

Curzon’s negotiations with the princes involved a group of elites ensconced within or invested in the colonial Indian state, but similar arguments also emerged from those working in more obvious ways to reform and subvert British power. The Congress still held a measure of respect for the Indian Army as a symbol of the nation, and advocated for the advancement of Indians through its ranks, whose upper echelons were dominated by the British just as was the case in the Raj itself. A 1908 Congress resolution underscored the importance of the army as a symbol of Indian sovereignty: “this Congress prays that the high recognition of the valour and fidelity of the Indian

²³⁶ Ibid., “Confidential Notes,” Sep. 1904.

²³⁷ Cf. the Nawab of Rampur, who offered his 3rd household cavalry in 1904 but waffled by 1907, writing that he had thus denuded Rampur of mounted troops. Letter, the Nawab of Rampur to Cruikshank, Shahabad Castle, 25 May 1904; and Dar ul Insha 27 February 1907, “Contribution by Nawab of Rampur to Imperial Defence” File 150/1858-1908, IOR/R/2/801/9, BL.

troops by His Majesty the King Emperor in his message to the Princes and Peoples of India should include the throwing open to Indians of higher career in the Army from which, as this Congress has repeatedly pointed out, they have been hitherto excluded.”²³⁸ For the Congress too, then, the Army represented India itself, and as such its purpose transcended its role as a guarantor of security. It also symbolized sovereignty on the subcontinent, and the racial divide that kept Indians in a subordinate position under British rule. Thus, while they had divergent objectives for the future of Indian politics, both the Raj and the princes on the one hand, and the Congress on the other, appreciated that the Indian Army played the pivotal role in upholding the sovereignty of the Indian state. This was true both for questions of territorial defense and for how India was represented abroad, where the Army’s regional role supplied diplomatic leverage that was the best hope for helping the Indian diaspora in other colonies. The Army also guarded against external menace, whether this was Russian or Muslim or even British. Military logic framed also the territoriality of the Indian colonial state, and framed the way this diverse array of political actors imagined and asserted their sovereignty and legitimacy.

At this very moment, a conflict erupted over precisely who commanded the Indian Army. General Kitchener, imperious and mustachioed, began telling his interlocutors in 1904 that his position in India was “intolerable” – the problem, he fumed, was the meddlesome Government of India itself and its role in the command of the Army. The constitutional arrangement at the time involved Kitchener, the Commander-in-Chief, presiding over a general staff that ran the Army. His was the most prestigious and well-

²³⁸ *The Indian National Congress, Containing an Account of Its Origin and Growth, Full Text of All the Presidential Addresses, Reprint of All the Congress Resolutions, Extracts from All the Welcome Addresses, Notable Utterances on the Movement, Portraits of All the Congress Presidents* (Madras, G.A. Natesan, 1909), 172.

resourced military post in the British Empire, eclipsed only in prestige by the First Sea Lord who commanded the Royal Navy – and even the First Sea Lord had less operational freedom than Indian Commanders-in-Chief enjoyed. But the latter had a counterpart, the “Military Member” of the Government of India, another military officer who traditionally oversaw matters of supply and logistics, who sat on the Viceroy’s Council, which was effectively the Cabinet that comprised the Government of India.²³⁹ Kitchener could not abide sharing his command with another officer who could second-guess his decisions in council, or worse, de-fund or reallocate resources for his initiatives. He said as much, loudly, to his politically-connected friends in India and Britain. He proposed, furthermore, that the Military Member position be abolished as part of the ongoing reforms of the Indian Army. The issue transcended its technical nature – civilian control of the military was a cornerstone of British constitutional culture, a principle imagined to have been inviolable for untold misty centuries (with perhaps a brief intermission of Cromwellian tyranny).

Neither was the Indian conundrum wholly new – previous Viceroys had grappled with it also. Lord Dufferin, Viceroy from 1884-1888, left extensive notes on the matter. “It is out of the question,” he wrote in 1888, “to suppose such perfection in human nature

²³⁹ A more precise overview, provided in an 1888 memo by then-Viceroy Lord Dufferin: “Thus we have in India a great executive officer styled the “commander in chief” who is ex officio a member of the Government, but who is at the same time subordinate in certain respects to the Government of India. The “military department” is not a War Office in the European sense of the term, still less in the English sense, but the ministerial agency through which the authority of the Governor General in Council [Viceroy] was exercised. This Department is in charge of a Member of Government who is titled the Military Member of Council. That high official has no military Command nor any executive military functions, but, through the Military Department, under its constitutional head the Secretary to Government, he controls the great spending departments of the Army, namely the Ordinance, the Supply and Transport, the Military Works, the Army Remount, the Army Clothing and the Royal Indian Marine, as well as the Military Accounts Department.” Dufferin, Simla, 1 Oct. 1888, MSS Eur E420/3, Barrow Papers, “Organization and administration of the Army in India,” BL, 11-12.

as would enable one man accurately to weigh military efficiency and financial considerations, to hold the balance between the traditions of the past and economy, and the innovations or expenditure desired; the whole weight of his enormous and uncontrolled authority would be thrown into that side of the scale which represented military power, and to use words which have been employed before against this proposition, the revenue of the country would be at his mercy.”²⁴⁰ Ten years prior, an Army Reorganization Committee had considered the perils of embedding the Commander-in-Chief within the Government, and concluded: “The position of the Executive Commander in Chief as a Member of Council is, in the opinion of the Majority, one without precedent in the organization of any European Government or Army. It is contrary to one of the most essential and salutary principles of sound administration, and the common instinct and experience of all administrations, whether representative or despotic, has everywhere rejected it.”²⁴¹ Not even the Germans, so beloved of the Maharaja, were this beholden to their military. Curzon, predictably, was not about to cede his power or influence as Viceroy, or personally to capitulate to Kitchener. He rebuffed the proposal.

In this, Curzon joined a lengthening list of people who underestimated Herbert Kitchener’s recalcitrance. During Curzon’s brief return to Britain, Kitchener was writing privately to many of the very people the Viceroy was dining with, doubling down on his demands. One memo captures his attitude and characteristic tone:

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 4-5.

²⁴¹ Annexure 1 – “Extracts from the Report of the Army Organization Committee, 1879 - Position of the Commander in Chief as a Member of Supreme Government” Cd. 2718 1905 and MSS Eur E420/3, BL, 141.

Since writing my Minute, I have studied all that has been urged against my proposals in the Minutes of His Excellency the Viceroy... Some attempt has been made to dispute my facts, but, in my opinion, without success. My assertions have been contradicted, but not, I think, disproved. My arguments remain uncontroverted, and are, I believe, incontrovertible. I adhere, therefore, to everything that is contained in my memorandum, and it follows that I entirely dissent from the accompanying Despatch.²⁴²

Curzon attempted routinely to appoint General Edmund Barrow, who had led British forces in the Boxer intervention in China, to the Military Member's position in the Government. He began to understand his predicament when St. John Brodrick, Secretary of State for India, stalled on approving the appointment. Curzon wrote reflectively to Barrow in autumn 1905 that leaks of Kitchener's memos revealed "what a farce Lord K's repudiation was," and that their publication had "discredited him to a phenomenal degree."²⁴³ But Curzon had misjudged his position. Kitchener threatened to resign his post if his demands were not met, and that was an eventuality the British Government could not afford. Balfour's premiership looked shaky ahead of the 1905 election cycle, and General Kitchener was one of the few people who inspired British public confidence in the upheaval following the Boer War moment, which war Kitchener was also widely credited with salvaging. The Empire's most famous soldier acrimoniously resigning the

²⁴² Cd. 2842 1906 - Further Papers regarding the Administration of the Army in India, UK Parliamentary Papers, (UKPP), 83.

²⁴³ Curzon to Barrow, 21 Sep 1905, MSS Eur E420/18-22, Barrow Papers, "Letters from Lord Curzon, Lord Kitchener, and others. (1903-1904)," BL, E420/19.

Empire's most prestigious military post would have sounded deafening klaxons on Balfour's ability to manage his associates. Privately, Balfour even favored Curzon's position, but reluctantly informed him through Brodrick that he was being overruled and would need to go ahead with Kitchener's plan.²⁴⁴ After a last-ditch attempt to forge a compromise position with Kitchener, Curzon resigned in August 1905.²⁴⁵ He was forty-six. His career did not recover for a decade. Kitchener proceeded to remake the Military Department in his image, and to centralize command of the Indian Army in himself.

The *Times of India*, an establishment-favoring newspaper, wrote on 2 September that "The publication of the minute by Lord Kitchener and the reply by H.E. the Viceroy has created a new, as well as a decidedly painful, sensation here. Many men here are now desperately weary of the military controversy and wish they could have been spared this further washing of uncommonly dirty linen in public."²⁴⁶ James Mackenzie Maclean, a former Tory MP and journalist in Bombay, wrote that "next to the Prime Minister himself Mr. Brodrick is the most martial member of the Cabinet. The supremacy of the military element in English society, which unhappily has become one of the most characteristic features of the age has in him one of its most doughty supporters... Lord Curzon has become the champion of Constitutional government against militarism." Maclean added that "very soon" the people of India would get control of representative government, and "[what] must be their amazement to find that the Governor-General [Viceroy], to whom

²⁴⁴ See 1905 Cd. 2572 East India (army administration). Correspondence regarding the administration of the army in India, UKPP, 57-67.

²⁴⁵ A helpful overview is available in David Gilmour. "Curzon, George Nathaniel, Marquess Curzon of Kedleston (1859–1925)" *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* 2004, online ed.

²⁴⁶ LORD CURZON - MORE MESSAGES OF REGRET - KARACHI'S THANKS - VIEWS OF THE NATIVE PRINCES, *The Times of India* (Delhi), 2 September 1905.

they have always looked up, has been replaced by a soldier who knows nothing of civil life?”²⁴⁷ Curzon himself remarked, on his return to Britain, that ceding constitutional authority to soldiers in this way was “what lost Charles II his head.”²⁴⁸ This unquiet spirit stalked the annals of British history – Thomas Jefferson had written of General Gage’s 1774 appointment as Governor of Massachusetts as one of George III’s many abuses in the Declaration of Independence: “He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil power.”²⁴⁹

Indian reactions to Curzon’s departure were not uniformly characterized by goodwill and sadness, however. Though he had enjoyed cordial relations with Congress and moderate nationalists in his early Viceroyalty, his last successful signature policy destroyed those relationships. Convinced that the Province of Bengal, which contained the Government’s winter capital in Calcutta, was both too populous and too complex to be efficiently governed, he resolved to partition it into eastern and western halves, corresponding to areas of Hindu and Muslim predominance respectively. Partition also served his *divide et impera* strategy of keeping Bengal, and by extension the Congress, weak. Despite considerable controversy and public denunciation by nationalists, Curzon finalized the partition shortly before his final departure of India. Speaking from Benares in Uttar Pradesh, Gokhale, in a Presidential address to the Congress in December 1905, compared Curzon to the seventeenth century Mughal emperor Aurangzeb. Aurangzeb

²⁴⁷ THE VICEROY’S POSITION: OPINION AT HOME: MR. J. M. MACLEAN’S VIEWS, *The Times of India* (Delhi), 26 September 1905, 7.

²⁴⁸ Speeches by Lord Curzon of Kedleston, Viceroy and Governor General of India, Vol. IV. 1904-1905. (Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, India, 1906) India Office Library, BL, T 31037 (1900), p

²⁴⁹ See Armitage, *The Declaration of Independence*, 168.

was responsible for formalizing Islamic law in the Empire, a decision that paralleled Curzon's establishment of a de facto Muslim province in East Bengal, and, though Aurangzeb presided over the Mughal Empire's nominal height, sent it into terminal decline through profligate spending and overambitious military campaigning.²⁵⁰ Congress had already attempted to circumvent Curzon altogether on the matter, and to send representatives to petition the British Government directly.²⁵¹ Already, Gokhale was losing ground to Bal Gangadhar Tilak and the more radical factions. Shyamji Krishnavarna, a Sanskrit scholar and radical nationalist who had matriculated from Balliol at the same time as Curzon, wrote in his London-based nationalist newspaper *The Indian Sociologist* that Gokhale was useless, as were any Indians who were "members of Indian Legislative Councils, holders of titles, and persons who pride themselves on being called 'Honorable,'" referring to Gokhale's government pension, "while a self-sacrificing, unbending patriot" (like Tilak) "suffers at the hands of an alien Government."²⁵² The ensuing years in Bengal marked the most volatile and violent in India since the 1857 Rebellion, as radical nationalists like Tilak and Surendranath Banerjee launched the *Swadeshi* movement to boycott British goods. A generation of Bengali nationalists marked the 1905 partition as a moment of national awakening, including future Nobel Prize for Literature winner Rabindranath Tagore, who composed *Banglar Mati, Banglar Jol* as an ode to the Bengali nation in the months after partition.

²⁵⁰ "The Benares Congress," *The Times of India* (New Delhi), 28 December 1905, 6.

²⁵¹ "NATIONAL CONGRESS: The Bombay Meeting POLITICAL MISSION TO ENGLAND: Congress and the Viceroy," *The Times of India* (New Delhi), 29 December 1904, 7.

²⁵² "WEST AND EAST: Lord Curzon and the Government," quoted in *The Times of India* (New Delhi), 4 December 1905, 6.

The pivotal years of Curzon's Viceroyalty, 1899-1905, marked a new contest to define and assert sovereignty in greater India. Increasingly, new players joined that contest and challenged the Raj's ability to monopolize the conversation. Though relations between nationalists and India's British rulers became markedly more oppositional, especially after 1905, their conceptions of sovereignty converged around the issues of territoriality and security. Curzon's and his princely and nationalist interlocutors' mental maps of the incipient Indian state looked remarkably similar; their strategic preoccupations, nearly identical. The rulers of India's princely states tried to reduce their financial liabilities to the Raj, and fiercely protected their local sovereignties, but where possible they made an effort to contribute more troops to the service of the Indian Army. They did so because they recognized, as did the Congress, that the Army was the most constitutive agent of sovereignty on the subcontinent, and as such could act as a vehicle for legitimating their own regimes. These congruencies, alongside Curzon's constitutional tug-of-war with Kitchener over the levers of command, mark the years 1899 to 1905 as moment of consolidating and ascending military power in India. The Army's commander shirked the nominal oversight heretofore constraining him; military relations between the Raj and the Princes tightened, and as James Maclean put it above, militarism had triumphed on the subcontinent. Curzon's partition of Bengal was likewise calibrated to deliver closer administrative oversight on the two resulting provinces. Balfour even told a meeting of the CID in 1905 that he wanted to bring the command of the Indian Army and the British Army under the same general staff, though he noted the

many obstacles facing that wish.²⁵³ The British constitutional ecosystem was being contorted into ever stranger (and more Teutonic) shapes, and the forces driving it emanated substantially from outside the Mother Country.

2.4 FISHERIES MINISTRIES AND *MANA* FROM HEAVEN: SOVEREIGNTY IN THE PACIFIC, REDUX

In May 1903, Mahuta Tāwhiao became a member of New Zealand's Legislative Council, the colony's upper chamber, analogous to the British House of Lords. Tāwhiao was the Maori King – the third of his line; the Kīngitanga or “king movement” had only existed since 1858, when accelerating land purchases by British settlers in New Zealand drove the Maori to innovative political tactics. Realizing that their political disunity vis-à-vis the Pākehā (the Maori word for white Europeans) was a serious disadvantage, the Maori appointed a single King they hoped would ease their diplomatic and legal relations with the British Crown. The Kīngitanga eventually developed its own judicial system and small bureaucracy, but never attracted unanimous legitimacy among Maori iwi (tribes), much less from the Government of New Zealand – Pākehā militia fought a series of small wars with “Kingites” in the 1860s over the issue of recognition. Mahuta Tāwhiao's entry to the Legislative Council was controversial though, and epochal. After a few uncertain

²⁵³ Extract from the Minutes of the 68th Meeting of the CID, 29 March 1905 "Extracts from minutes of Imperial Defence Committee" Collection 145/63 IOR/L/MIL/7/660.1, BL.

decades regarding the future of the Kīngitanga, its relationship with the British monarchy, and its role in mediating the Treaty of Waitangi that governed relations between Maori and Pākehā, Tāwhiao's move marked a capitulation of sorts to the institutional structure of British power in New Zealand. James Mackay, a government agent charged with negotiating land agreements, summed up Tāwhiao's appointment thus: "Sir George Grey [Governor of New Zealand from 1845-1854 and from 1861-1868] once said to me 'How do you account for the present difficulties with the Natives now; they did not formerly arise so acutely?' My reply was 'Your Excellency, when we came into the colony we were *their* Pakehas, we are now trying to make them *our* Maoris.' Messrs Seddon and Carroll have now succeeded in making them *our* Maoris."²⁵⁴ King Mahuta, in the eyes of his critics, was making the same mistake as Gokhale in India – allowing himself to be subsumed within Britain's imperial machine.

Kīngitanga invoked familiar problems in the changing world of the colonial Pacific at the turn of the century. It marked a need to create consolidated, centralized institutions through which political actors could stay afloat in the rising tide of migration, colonization, and war. Inchoate though it was, Kīngitanga also invoked the essence of the political struggle between the Maori and Pākehā in New Zealand – *mana*, the loose Maori translation of the English word "sovereignty." The Treaty of Waitangi (as read aloud to the chiefs by the missionary Henry Williams in 1840) translated the English passage "...all the rights and powers of Sovereignty..." that were being ceded to Queen Victoria

²⁵⁴ "THE APPOINTMENT OF KING MAHUTA," *Ohinemuri Gazette*, Vol. XIII, Issue 1140, 21 August 1903, 3.

as “Ko te kingitanga ko te mana i te wenua...”²⁵⁵ The suitability of the term and concept *Mana* to stand for “sovereignty” has been the main subject of over 150 years of subsequent judicial dispute between Maori and the Government of New Zealand.²⁵⁶ The wars fought sporadically in the decades following Waitangi in 1840 were, in a more widely-acknowledged sense, wars for mana. Mana meant both the metaphysical right to rule and the manifest evidence of legitimate rulership.²⁵⁷ The concept lay at the heart of land rights and other thorny issues, but also of the military domination of territory; Maori chiefs were said to have mana when they defeated other tribes, and the Pākehā victories in the late nineteenth century cemented Pākehā (and the Pākehā Queen’s) mana over New Zealand. King Mahuta’s entry to the Legislative Council symbolized that reality in acute fashion.

The remainder of this chapter will examine the coalescence and institutionalization of sovereignty in Australia, New Zealand, and Canada in the years 1902-1906. Following the federation of Australia, the new Commonwealth faced a complicated task building federal military institutions for the first time. New Zealand, having opted out of the Australian federation, needed to forge its own path, one that effectively triangulated regional interests with its metropolitan links which, above all the other large colonies, it could not afford to jeopardize. Canada, under Laurier’s careful stewardship, aimed at more robust state institutions and built a Department of External Affairs and a comically distended Ministry for Marine and Fisheries to oversee naval

²⁵⁵ See John Laurie, “Translating the Treaty of Waitangi,” *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* 111, no. 3 (September 1, 2002): 255–58.

²⁵⁶ See for example <http://www.justice.govt.nz/tribunals/waitangi-tribunal/>

²⁵⁷ One Fijian put it in 1921, “A thing has mana when it works; it has no mana when it does not work”; Robert Blust, “Proto-Oceanic *mana Revisited,” *Oceanic Linguistics* 46, no. 2 (December 1, 2007): 405.

defense, all the while balancing its British, American, and French identity and interest groups. These were complex games that played out in a period of institutional fluidity in the British Empire, allowing these colonies to negotiate new positions in the matrix of relationships that constituted the Empire. As in India, the issue of subsidy became a controversy for the Pacific colonies, and they contested the practice of simply paying Britain for naval security. As in India, developments in the Pacific colonies resolved in a centralizing, militarizing fashion that enhanced their institutional and ideational congruence with the British state in debates about the suitability of a Commander-in-Chief. Once again, Japan acted as a flashpoint that propelled these negotiations and provoked colonial contestation of imperial diplomacy and strategy. The reactions of the Australian, New Zealand, Canadian, Indian, and later, South African governments to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance treaties in 1902 and 1905 serve as revealing evidence of the way colonial actors imagined sovereignty and security, and the way they were prepared to contest metropolitan perspectives on security strategy.

The issue of security subsidies across the British Empire had been festering for at least a half-century and enjoyed an even longer history stretching back to before the American Revolution. During Gladstone's 1868 government, Secretary of War Edward Cardwell reorganized the Empire's policies on military garrisons, initiating a withdrawal of regular British troops from colonial posts and encouraging colonial governments to pick up the slack.²⁵⁸ The transition proved piecemeal and controversial, but by 1900 the self-governing colonies had mostly cobbled together militia forces that, at least in theory,

²⁵⁸ A good overview is Donald C. Gordon, *The Dominion Partnership in Imperial Defense, 1870-1914* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1965), chap. 2, "The Withdrawal of the Legions."

could act as forces for self-defense. While land defense remained the central preoccupation in India as a continental power, the conversation in the other colonies turned to the issue of naval subsidies. There had been no Cardwell-style reform of the Royal Navy; the British Admiralty jealously guarded its central command over a globe-spanning network of ships and bases. Colonial recompense to the Admiralty, for maritime security and the protection of their vital shipping links to the Empire, came from fiscal subsidies, and the Admiralty preferred this no-strings arrangement.²⁵⁹ Though subsidies were far cheaper for the Dominions than the alternative – building and crewing their own ships – they provoked considerable opposition along the Pacific Rim.²⁶⁰ Aversion to subsidies, and the fiscal hit entailed in scrapping them, was an aversion to dependence and clientage. Such was the cost of sovereignty.

Following the federation of Australia, the individual Australian colonies had to turn over control of their modest naval forces to the federal government by March 1901. The ships in question made for a rather underwhelming armada – they were coastal vessels, mostly obsolete, some even grizzled ironclad monitors, like HMVS *Cerberus*, from the birth of the steam age. There was much to be done before the Commonwealth Naval Force could reach something approximating that of a sovereign naval power; it remained in the shadow of the Royal Navy's Australia Squadron, itself a modest force of

²⁵⁹ See Reginald McKenna. "Imperial Conference on the Subject of the Defence of the Empire, 1909. Minutes of Proceedings," 1909, CAB 18/12A, TNA, 65.

²⁶⁰ The Dominions spent between 3 pence and 1 shilling per capita annually on naval expenditures including subsidies, compared with Britain's 15 shillings. See Part II Table I, "Statement showing Naval and Military Expenditure of the United Kingdom, Self-governing Dominions, India, and Crown Colonies," 1909, CAB 18/12A, TNA. For a discussion of individual governments' spending increases for building ships, see "Proceedings of a conference at the Admiralty, August 1909," CAB 18/12A, pp. 12-18. The initial agreement involved, in Australia's case, trading a £200,000 annual subsidy for a £750,000 annual upkeep on a fleet unit; even after a £250,000 rebate from British coffers until Australia could afford the whole bill, this more than doubled spending.

mostly torpedo cruisers under the command of a British commodore, a position that was upgraded to Vice Admiral following federation. The development of Australia's military and naval institutions in the years following federation owed much to two relentlessly activist officers, Colonel Edward T.H. Hutton and Captain William Creswell. Before arriving in Australia, Hutton had already been effectively banished from Canada by Laurier's Government after he used his posting there to publicly whip up support for the deployment of Canadian forces to South Africa. To the Veldt he went instead, and commanded a force of colonial cavalry there, under General Roberts, which earned the latter's respect and his recommendation to take over as the commander of Australia's first combined military force in late 1901.

Hutton's goal was to expand his portfolio to its maximal extent, like a petty Kitchener, a goal made obvious by his interference in Australia's preliminary attempts at passing a Defence Bill. His civilian counterpart, Sir John Forrest, Australia's inaugural Secretary of Defence, had the pleasure of trying to usher these bills through the Commonwealth parliament, a job that would bring his career to a disappointing end.²⁶¹ The first iteration of the bill arrived in the first Australian parliamentary session. Forrest noted in the debate following the Bill's second reading that "sole power" over the Army in Australia was being vested in the Governor (not the Government), and that while this contradicted the political direction of the Commonwealth's other institutions, there was "no precedent whatever to guide us, in British countries," of acting without a Governor's

²⁶¹ For further assessments of Hutton's career see Luke Trainor, *British Imperialism and Australian Nationalism: Manipulation, Conflict, and Compromise in the Late Nineteenth Century*, Studies in Australian History (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), chap. 12 – "Sinews of War"; Eric Andrews, *The Department of Defence*, The Australian Centenary History of Defence, V (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2001), chap. 1 – "Federation and Imperial Defence, 1901–1914."

oversight.²⁶² The bill also called for a multi-tiered defense force in which Regular troops on active duty could serve in any theater, Militia likewise on a part-time basis, and finally a force of Volunteers would be tied to their own districts and forbidden from deploying outside Australia. The combination of a powerful officer (Hutton) heading a combined force holding itself ready for imperial use, and of an imperially-appointed Governor charged with directing that force, provoked sufficient opposition to collapse the bill. Billy Hughes, the Member for West Sydney, called it an “*olla podrida*” of old colonial statutes.²⁶³ This legislative setback for Edmund Barton’s Government forced him to tread carefully on the issue of an “imperial reserve force” the following year when he attended the 1902 Colonial Conference in London. Though Hutton was chagrined by the failure of the first bill, he doubled down on his efforts and produced a heavily-annotated copy of the next Defence Bill for Forrest in 1903, recommending “improvements” in meticulous detail.²⁶⁴ The final Defence Act provided for a very small regular Army, numbering around 1,300, and with the rest comprised of citizen-soldiers that would not be available for use outside Australia, a special point of ongoing acrimony to Hutton. He publicly dissented the Government’s moves and, when they opted to replace the Commander-in-Chief’s position with a Military Board of the kind Britain was moving to, Hutton went fully rogue and began leaking his concerns to the press.²⁶⁵ The distinguishing act of his tenure as commander was to send Australian officers to observe the Russo-Japanese War

²⁶² DEFENCE BILL, 9 July 1901, Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Debates (hereafter CPD) (*Hansard*), Sir John Forrest to Alfred Conroy.

²⁶³ *Olla Podrida* is a sort of Spanish goulash whose name literally translates as “rotten pot.”

²⁶⁴ See “Military Forces of the Commonwealth,” 13 October 1903, Melbourne, 1901-06 A2657-VOLUME 1 227758 Military Board Papers of Historical Interest Department of the Army, National Archives of Australia (NAA).

²⁶⁵ See Andrews, *The Department of Defence*, 19.

in 1904 – Hutton (and his position) were dismissed later that year, and replaced by the Board system he feared and opposed. Hutton, like Kitchener in India, did his best to entrench power in the hands of the colonial state’s ranking soldier. He was not as successful (nor had he as much fame and political capital) as Kitchener, but he forced the early Australian government to react to his initiative. The 1904 Defence Act banned the Government of Australia from sending troops abroad, largely because of the fears raised by Hutton.²⁶⁶ This problem echoed a familiar critique of the Indian National Congress – that the Army would be used for purposes outside Indian interests, politically and geographically.

Barton and Forrest thus attended the Colonial Conference in 1902 with an as-yet-undetermined constitutional framework for Australia’s defense. They were certain, however, that Australia’s continued payment of subsidies to the British Admiralty did not comport with their plans. Subsidies had become a controversial topic in the Australian press as well.²⁶⁷ While most still accepted the principle of central Admiralty control, as above the primary trouble was in providing a fiscal contribution to imperial defense rather than a material one. Lt. John Biddlecombe, a Victorian (of the Australian state) who had served in South Africa, gave an address to the Royal United Services Institute, a London-based research center for the military, in 1902, in which he explained that Australia could have its own navy but still remain under Royal Navy command; “like certain banks and many other commercial institutions in Australia, having their head

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 21.

²⁶⁷ The phrase “naval subsidies” appears in Australian newspapers over 1,800 times between 1900 and 1907. See <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/result?q=%22naval+subsidies%22&exactPhrase=&anyWords=¬Words=&requestHandler=&dateFrom=1900-01-01&dateTo=1907-12-31&sortBy=>

office in London is desirable.”²⁶⁸ Biddlecombe went on to launch a familiar critique of colonial defense subsidies: “From what one sees in the newspapers – it is now proposed to give to the Royal Navy a sum of £200,000 a year. Then, having given away another 2 millions at the end of the next ten years, what amount of material and personnel will the Commonwealth have to show for it? – None. ...It appears to foster the old fatal idea of levying a Colonial tribute – Taxation without representation.”²⁶⁹ A contemporary article in the *Spectator* agreed, arguing that “Canada, Australia, and New Zealand will never attain to that naval spirit which is the life-breath of maritime Empire if they hire their naval protection in Britain or merely pay in money.”²⁷⁰ Ahead of the Conference, the Sydney *Daily Telegraph* invidiously compared Australia’s naval spending to that of Latin American countries like Chile, and after it the Adelaide *Advertiser* stated grimly: “It is no use mincing words – under present conditions a direct contribution to the British navy by Australia would be naval tribute from a dependency to a sovereign power.”²⁷¹

Metropolitan observers looked on these arguments with some disdain. Selborne attempted to underscore the logic of concentrating naval power in Britain to the colonial delegates at the 1902 Conference with a twee pastoral metaphor - “The first effort of the

²⁶⁸ Lt. Biddlecombe, 1902 AWM124-1.10 667480 Naval Policy for Australia, Australian War Memorial (AWM), 8.

²⁶⁹ Lt. Biddlecombe, *Ibid.*, 10-11.

²⁷⁰ It continued, “They will only foster the naval spirit by having sea-going ships of their own, for whose upkeep and equipment their own statesmen and their own people take the fullest responsibility. When Australians man and officer ships paid for by Australian money, we shall see Dockyards and Naval Reserves and naval bases of real value spring up in Australia. Mere money subsidies to the Home Admiralty will never create the spirit on which naval power rests. It is because we are so intently convinced of the importance of sea-power to the Empire, and of the sea-spirit, that we want to see Canadian, Australian, New Zealand, and South African Squadrons, for which the four free nations of the Empire are responsible, even though they place them in far distant waters to learn their business and to take their share of creating and maintaining the command of the sea for the British Empire.” *The Spectator* (London), 5 July 1902; quoted in 1902 AWM124-1.10 667480 Naval Policy for Australia, AWM, 15.

²⁷¹ Press Cuttings on Australian Naval Defence, 1899-1903 AWM124-1.14 489243, AWM, 57, 91.

enemy would be to destroy the sheep-dogs, and then they would prey on the flock” – imagery that understandably did nothing to mollify the colonial delegates.²⁷² *The Times* dismissed the “taxation without representation” refrain with its own allusion to famous colonial oratory – Edmund Burke’s lament that (here), in the erosion of colonial cooperation on naval funds, “chivalry” had gone, to be replaced by “sophisters, economists, and calculators.”²⁷³ The subsidy question also had strong fiscal and strategic dimensions – this was both an argument about payment and procedure (as the colonial dog-whistling suggests), and, fundamentally, about strategy – both sides took pains to argue that the works of Alfred Thayer Mahan, the strategist-thinker *du jour*, vindicated their positions.²⁷⁴

William Creswell already had a long naval career behind him when he assumed command of Australian naval forces in 1904, having served in posts from the English Channel to Malaya, and most recently commanding an Australian gunboat in support of British forces in the Boxer Rebellion. Creswell endorsed the creation of an autonomous Australian naval force, unlike many of his contemporaries who still clove to the Admiralty’s orthodoxy of central command, including Hutton and Forrest who actually agreed on that matter if little else. But Creswell was not as meddlesome as Hutton, and bided his time. Alfred Deakin, who succeeded Barton as Prime Minister in 1904, sent Creswell and Bridges (Hutton’s de facto replacement as head of the Military Board) to

²⁷² Selborne, “Minutes of Proceedings and Papers Laid Before the Conference,” 1902 CO 885/8, TNA, 19.

²⁷³ Press Cuttings on Australian Naval Defence, 1899-1903 AWM124-1.14 489243, AWM, 71, 97.

²⁷⁴ Selborne’s sheep/sheepdog image drew on Mahan’s theory of concentrated, fleet-to-fleet warfare as the optimal course; the *Spectator* likewise noted in the same column above that “Captain Mahan apparently does not regard this notion [building up mobile national navies] as forbidden...” See *The Spectator* (London), 5 July 1902; quoted in 1902 AWM124-1.10 667480 Naval Policy for Australia, AWM, 15.

Britain to sit on the Committee of Imperial Defence, though he placed them on strict orders to simply observe, and forbade Bridges from traveling home to Australia by way of Canada, fearing he would generate inconvenient press along his way.²⁷⁵ Ultimately, the efforts of Creswell, Hutton, and others to set up command-and-control structures for the Australian state, and the consultations with imperial partners at the Colonial Conference and the Committee of Imperial Defence left Australia, in 1906, with an effectively localized (albeit tiny) military force. Its naval future was similarly uncertain – Creswell had at his disposal a handful of coastal ships, and the Commonwealth still paid a subsidy to the Admiralty to defray the cost of the Royal Navy ships at Australia Station. Per the advice of Rear Admiral Sir Lewis Beaumont, the officer commanding Australia Station, Forrest’s memo on Australian naval defense for the 1902 Conference conceded that for the immediate future, an autonomous and fully-realized Australian Navy was impracticable, and that subsidies funding Australia Station would have to continue.²⁷⁶ But public opinion and subsequent Australian governments chafed under these provisions.²⁷⁷

New Zealanders reacted to the issue of naval subsidies in similar ways, even if their positions on the future of imperial relations differed from those of their neighbors. Richard Seddon, the long-serving Prime Minister of the colony, who earned the name “King Dick” for his political longevity and imperious manner (as seen in matters like the Fiji Question) remained in office until removed from it, and life, by a heart attack in 1906. Having successfully set the agenda for the 1902 Conference itself as noted above,

²⁷⁵ Andrews, *The Department of Defence*, 27.

²⁷⁶ Forrest, “Papers Related to a Conference between the Colonial Secretary and the Heads of Government of the Empire,” 1902 CAB 18/10, TNA, 9-14.

²⁷⁷ This will be explored further in the following Chapter.

Seddon “repudiated” any notion of New Zealand building and funding its own naval force, and instead opted to push Chamberlain and the British on reinforcing Australia Station, offering to increase New Zealand’s contributions toward those specific ships.²⁷⁸ He also wrote Selborne after the Conference to ask whether one of the obsolete ships attached to Australia Squadron (a subtle reminder of the need to upgrade) might be used to train New Zealand’s Naval Reserve seamen.²⁷⁹ Seddon referred here to the terms of the agreement made about Australia Station, which in addition to the colonial subsidy allowed that Australia and New Zealand would begin training capable naval crew – enough to fully staff a second-class cruiser on a permanent basis, and a further Reserve force that would train on drill ships.²⁸⁰

The issue of crews and training mirrored the broader implications of New Zealand’s place in the greater Pacific – the link to Britain remained inextricable but was increasingly understood as something that also signified the voluntary will of the colony and a path to enhancing its national interests. Regional threats posed by the likes of Japan, but also France and Germany, were perceived in New Zealand as not just vexing problems, but as auspicious opportunities. An association of East Coast Maori cabled an assurance to Chamberlain in the aftermath of Germany’s 1902 diplomatic condemnation of the Boer War, “If they want war they should like chiefs say so...His Majesty's Maori sons of the Empire hasten to assure him that they will always devote themselves to the

²⁷⁸ Seddon, “Minutes of Proceedings and Papers Laid Before the Conference,” 1902 CO 885/8, TNA, 22, 26.

²⁷⁹ Seddon Papers, “Correspondence with Selborne re: Obsolete Ships,” 1902 ACHW 8633 SEDDON1.2 4.35 National Archives of New Zealand (NANZ) R11184503.

²⁸⁰ “Scheme for Australian and New Zealand Navy,” 1903 ACHW 8634 SEDDON2.5.21 R19467559, NANZ, 1-3.

maintenance at all hazards of His mana in the sovereignty, in the Empire, and the Nation, and that they are prepared to do battle with his enemies whenever called upon.”²⁸¹ While subsidy of Australia Station was as much naval aggrandizement as New Zealand could realistically handle in 1902, in the coming years this solution became progressively less acceptable locally. During a 1908 House of Representatives debate on subsidies, one Member thundered, “I want members to consider for a moment if we are doing all that is necessary when we simply say to our mother, ‘Here is £100,000 per annum for ten years; you look after us.’ Are we everlastingly to go crying to our mother for everything we desire? Are we never going to grow up? Are we always to be children depending upon our mother for sustenance and support?”²⁸²

Canada’s strategic future and approach to imperial diplomacy included the major complication that Canada was a two-coast, continental state, and contained two divergent national identity factions, Anglo and Quebecois. Laurier’s political difficulties wrangling Anglo imperialists and Quebecois liberals was compounded thus by regional splits – western, Pacific-facing Canada harbored different strategic preoccupations than that of the Atlantic side, namely Asian migration and the growth of rival naval powers. Teddy Roosevelt once warned that the US and Canadian Governments ignoring the Asian immigration question would provoke civil war and the creation of a new Canadian-American white megastate west of the Rockies that could enforce its own immigration

²⁸¹ “Newspaper cuttings and resolutions of Local Bodies concerning attacks by the German press on Britain on the conduct of the South African War,” 1902 ACHW 8634 SEDDON2 5.16 R19467554, NANZ, 9-10.

²⁸² Debate on the Naval subsidy, 30 Sept 1908, New Zealand Parliamentary Debates (*Hansard*), vol. 145, 694. I am grateful to Cornelis Heere of the London School of Economics for directing me to this quote.

preferences.²⁸³ Richard McBride, the Premier of British Columbia who assumed office in 1903, encouraged local Navy Leagues to put pressure on Laurier and the Canadian Government to commit to higher spending on defense, and to build a Canadian navy.²⁸⁴ Laurier did his best to deflect these political currents – one of his most famous utterances came at the 1902 Colonial Conference when he professed a desire to keep Canada from being sucked into the “vortex of militarism” that typified European politics. The falcon had shut its ears to the falconer. He also rejected, out of hand, Chamberlain’s and Selborne’s contention that colonial military spending lagged Britain’s, given colonial liabilities on infrastructure costs from which Britain was immune.²⁸⁵ For this purpose the development of Canadian naval forces – a Naval Reserve, a coastal force, an officer’s college – were tonally very different than in Australia. Canada’s civilian oversight of its navy under Laurier, as such, continued under the auspices of the Ministry for Marine and Fisheries, a suitable euphemism for a nascent military body. Laurier also kept its leadership reliably stocked with Quebecois, first Raymond Préfontaine and then Louis-Philippe Brodeur who, if not radical French-Canadien nationalists themselves, were at least minimally provocative to them.

The Canadian Government also felt an institutional shortfall in the matter of diplomacy and external affairs. The question of whether and how Canadian troops should join the Boer War, as well as the numerous complications arising from Canada’s proximity to the United States, complicated Britain’s ability adequately to represent

²⁸³ See Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*, chap. “Defending the Pacific Slope.”

²⁸⁴ McBride to Laurier, 9 June 1909, 1909 MG26-G reel C-877 Laurier Papers, Library and Archives Canada (LAC)

²⁸⁵ Laurier, “Minutes of Proceedings and Papers Laid Before the Conference,” 1902 CO 885/8, TNA, 28

Canadian interests abroad. Following rumbling confrontations like the Venezuela Crisis of 1895, when the United States intervened in Britain's boundary dispute with Venezuela (and which recurred over debt repayment in 1902-3), British diplomats concluded that war with the United States was an unthinkable proposition. Necessary arrangements followed, most immediately the Hay-Pauncefote Treaty of 1901, in which Britain abandoned its objections to sole American construction of an isthmian canal. The canal concession also tacitly ceded naval hegemony in the Caribbean, once a British lake, to the United States. Britain's further concession to the American position in the Alaska Boundary Dispute of 1903 brought the new thrust of British diplomacy home to Canadians, provoking especial rage in British Columbia. Finally, rapprochement with the United States (and the vague dictums of Alfred Thayer Mahan) led to the phased withdrawal of British forces from the Royal Navy's two main bases in Canada from 1904 to 1907: Halifax in the east and Esquimalt on Vancouver Island in the west. The combined effect of these moves was to harm British credibility with Canadian observers and to create worrying security vacuums, as far as Canada was concerned, in its littoral zones. It also pushed the Canadian government to raise around 3,000 troops to replace the vacated British garrisons, to nearly double its military spending over the intervening period, and to build up its institutional footprint in the realms of defense and foreign affairs.²⁸⁶ Joseph Pope, a Canadian bureaucrat working as a secretary and clerk to the Privy Council, began informally representing Canadian interests at international conferences and advocating for the creation of a Canadian department of external affairs

²⁸⁶ The best short overview of these moves is Roger Sarty, "Canadian Maritime Defence, 1892-1914," *Canadian Historical Review* 71, no. 4 (December 1, 1990): 462-90.

to coordinate communication between the British Government, the Colonial Office, the Canadian Government, and foreign interlocutors. Working against institutional inertia (the Colonial Office was loath to concede diplomatic power to any Canadian body), and with little public support beyond Brodeur at Marine and Fisheries, Pope finally got his wish for legislation creating a foreign ministry in 1908, though he still found himself effectively competing with the Governor and the Colonial Office in the matter of Canadian foreign affairs for some years hence.²⁸⁷

These diplomatic and strategic imbroglios that complicated relations between Britain and its colonies enveloped roughly half the globe after the signing of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. Though they each had their own specific interests and objectives, the Pacific colonies and India shared a common, difficult goal: to reorient the Empire's strategic focus away from the internecine squabbles of European arms races and to focus it instead on the more politically fluid and (potentially more rewarding) East. The strategic game-board in the greater Pacific changed drastically in the first decade of the twentieth century, beginning with the international intervention to neutralize the Boxer Rebellion in China. That conflict had seemed to underscore, for Europeans and Americans, the importance of colonial expeditionary warfare, and the danger of European enclaves in Asia being overwhelmed by recalcitrant local populations. Japan's 1905 rout of the Russians at Tsushima just a few years later disrupted conditions further, proving that Japan would be an active and formidable force in the Pacific – a reality Britain had already acknowledged when it agreed a treaty pact with the Japanese in 1902.

²⁸⁷ An excellent overview of Pope and early Canadian diplomacy is James Eayrs, "The Origins of Canada's Department of External Affairs," *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science / Revue Canadienne d'Economie et de Science Politique* 25, no. 2 (May 1, 1959): 109–28.

This treaty sent shockwaves through international diplomatic channels, as it amounted to a formal acknowledgement of partnership between a European and an Asian power. Viewed from London, this alliance carried obvious benefits.²⁸⁸ An agreement from Japan to defend British interests in the Pacific allowed the latter to write off thousands of miles of space and to redeploy ships closer to home waters in order to balance against the rising German naval threat.²⁸⁹ This was, after all, the logic advocated by the omnipresent Mahan. Yet, while the Anglo-Japanese alliance may have seemed like a prudent and economical measure to metropolitan officials, the alliance was neither as intuitive nor as stable as it seemed.²⁹⁰ The first iteration of the treaty did not contain provisions for India, Britain's chief military liability in Asia. This was rectified when the alliance was renewed in 1905 after Tsushima, but the Government of India remained skeptical of Japan's commitment to their strategic interests.²⁹¹ Likewise, if the Pacific colonies were uncomfortable with paying Britain subsidies to look after their security, they were that much less keen to entrust it to the Japanese in good faith, especially after Japan's comprehensive thrashing of Russia and the alliance's renewal in 1905. The "Anglo-Saxon instinct" to pacify the Pacific, as one Australian officer put it in racialized terms, would not yield that responsibility to an Asian nation, a matter underscored by

²⁸⁸ For a discussion of the Anglo-Japanese Treaty and a testing of the theory that economic cooperation enhances security partnerships, see Davis, "Linkage Diplomacy."

²⁸⁹ A recent article that has examined the way Britain and Japan managed their relationship is Antony Best, "Race, Monarchy, and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1902-1922," *Social Science Japan Journal* 9, no. 2 (October 2006): 171-86; Two classic works on the Anglo-Japanese relationship are Ian Nish, *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance: The Diplomacy of Two Island Empires, 1894-1907* (London: Athlone Press, 1966); Ian Nish, *Alliance in Decline: A Study in Anglo-Japanese Relations, 1908-1923* (London: Athlone Press, 1972).

²⁹⁰ For more on this theme see Antony Best, "The 'Ghost' of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance: An Examination into Historical Mythmaking," *The Historical Journal* 49, no. 3 (2006): 811-31.

²⁹¹ See "Notes on the Anglo-Japanese Agreement," IOR/L/MIL/5/711, 1905, BL.

notorious and widely-studied immigration policies designed to keep these British settler states free of infiltration by Asians, such as the White Australia policy, which infuriated a young M.K. Gandhi in South Africa and George Curzon alike. Furthermore, insofar as the incipient colonial states of the Empire hoped to access international legitimacy through robust naval and military capabilities, it suited them to construct the Pacific itself as fraught with instability and peril, and teeming with adversaries and infiltrators. It would be their task and, they argued, their duty as mature nations, to meet these challenges, rather than to sit idly by.

2.5 CONCLUSION

An instructional document published by the Colonial Office in August 1903 detailed a set of magic lantern slides for teaching schoolchildren about the British Empire. The intended audience was the “Eastern Colonies...classes at the top of elementary schools...with some modifications for adult hearers.” The material was divided into seven lectures, which began with slides intending to display a voyage from Colombo, Ceylon west to London with all the usual stops between. The final lecture’s topic was “Imperial Defence.” It included slides on famous battles in British history – Trafalgar, Waterloo, South Africa. It also attempted to explain the joint nature of land and sea forces, and the combination of these necessary to defeat enemies of the Empire. It specifically stated that “Trafalgar...had no immediate effect on Napoleon’s military successes,” for which it was necessary to raise large combined land forces including

militia. It continued in notational form, “The Army at Waterloo [was] largely recruited from, and composed of, Militia. So in South Africa home Militia and Volunteers and Colonial Contingents.”²⁹² The end result, the Colonial Office hoped to impress on young colonials, was an image of imperial security that was contingent on the effective cooperation of all the Empire’s subjects working in concert. In other words, precisely the opposite of the grim image invoked by Arnold-Forster in his *War Office, Army, and Empire* screed. The recent South African War was still uppermost in all their minds. Worryingly for the Colonial Office, though, the lessons of South Africa were subject to a variety of interpretations in the colonies, and as if War Office disorganization were not enough, their colleagues in the Foreign Office were making diplomatic deals like the Japanese Alliance that complicated the operational harmony between Britain and its far-flung clients.

Contemporary observers struggled to explain the new conditions and relationships crystallizing before them – at once, Britain’s large colonies were becoming more independent from the Mother Country; their interests, more distinguishable and dialogic. But they also grew closer together, both in form – the more colonial governments built military and diplomatic capacity, the more they resembled Britain, and in function – in the new era of joint military operations, committees, and conferences, Britain increasingly operated with its colonies in a parallel fashion. The Wellington, New Zealand *Evening Post* put it this way in a February 1902 article reflecting on the Colonial Conference:

²⁹² “Imperial Lantern Slides,” 1902 CO 885/5/15, TNA.

The political trend in the British Empire has of late been towards what may paradoxically and somewhat imperfectly be termed centralised decentralisation. There has been an enormous increase of local independence; within certain wide and elastic limits the various parts of the Empire enjoy to the full the rights of self-government. At the same time there have been operating powerful centripetal forces; local autonomy, instead of proving a source of division, has allowed the different States of the Empire to gravitate more freely towards a common centre of attraction. Political decentralisation has, in fact, produced greater solidarity. The Empire is more closely united, more organic, to-day than it has ever been since the Kingdom of England grew into the world-wide British Empire.²⁹³

This “centralized decentralization,” as the *Post* put it, typified the new era of British imperial politics. Whether as “united” in “solidarity” as the *Post* hoped, the incipient states mutating from colonial status into more fully-realized norms of sovereignty were suddenly making rapid progress via the “common centre” of security. Security gave their states a reason to be. Security gave them a point of common weal with the imperial center that they could leverage.

Key differences remained – India’s centralizing, militarizing trends eclipsed even Britain’s in magnitude with the defeat of Curzon and the victory of Kitchener, and

²⁹³ *Evening Post* (Wellington), 21 February 1902, quoted in 1902 ACHW 8633 SEDDON 1.1 2.27a R11184693 Cuttings - Defence Taken to England, NANZ.

lacking democracy, the Indian state had less need than the settler colonies to obsess over racist population controls to placate its constituents. Likewise the colonies themselves disagreed on the preferable security roadmap, with the continental powers in India, Canada, and Australia advocating fuller autonomy and the more isolated states in South Africa and New Zealand advocating more closely-pooled resources.²⁹⁴ The great irony here was that instead of India becoming more like the self-governing colonies, as the Indian National Congress wanted, the self-governing colonies were becoming more like India: garrison states aiming to project regional power. What they shared here was a tendency to articulate their sovereignties, their legitimacies as states, and their very reasons for being as matters of security. Laurier and the other colonial premiers were careful to avoid direct assimilation into Britain's command structure – security represented an opportunity to cooperate to mutual advantage, but only if this was voluntary and preferably informal. Informality gave them the best defense against radical critics, a lesson evident in the travails of Gopal Krishna Gokhale and Mahuta Tāwhiao. The following chapter will examine how the holiest symbol of central imperial authority – the Admiralty, and its Royal Navy – came into question in the following years, and how the constitutional framework holding the Empire together began to slouch ever closer toward the Bethlehem of “centralised decentralisation.”

²⁹⁴ The South African colonial premiers, owing their recent victory to joint imperial military intervention, understandably favored the idea of an Imperial Reserve.

3 CHAPTER 3: DEFENSE AND THE BIRTH OF DOMINIONHOOD, 1907-1909

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In 1907, Robert Baden-Powell sat down to write a serialized handbook, *Scouting for Boys*, which would become the constitutional document of the Boy Scouts. Baden-Powell's career had been a global "adventure;" since the relief of his forces at Mafeking he had thrown himself into reform of all stripes – the Army took his first attention, but he turned it increasingly to British society at large. After returning from South Africa he pursued the first objective as Inspector General of Cavalry from 1903, a largely ceremonial Army position. "The Chief," as some called him, wrote now for the more ambitious goal of reversing the decline of the British Empire. Baden-Powell outlined how Scouting, his new adventure, would do so in the ninth chapter of *Scouting for Boys*, "Patriotism; or, Our Duties as Citizens," whose first section was artfully titled "Camp Fire Yarn No. 26 – OUR EMPIRE: How it Grew – How it Must Be Held."²⁹⁵ Baden-Powell

²⁹⁵ Robert Stephenson Smyth Baden-Powell of Gilwell and Elleke Boehmer, *Scouting for Boys: A Handbook for Instruction in Good Citizenship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 273.

conceived Scouting as a remedy to the malaise he feared was undermining the Empire from within: embodied physical degeneration, unraveling social ties, declining martial aptitude, and absence of civic duty.

The pages of *Scouting for Boys* also evince the growth of colonial nationalism in the first decade of the twentieth century. Between the diagrams for estimating the height of a tree with a stave and the warnings that smoking is for “loafers,” repeated references to patriotism and duty to the nation show a concerted effort to give the reader a firm national framework within which to position himself. Baden-Powell’s imperial tutelage for young Scouts also featured a remarkable geopolitical preoccupation. Chapter IX opened by inviting the Scout to appreciate how long it took him to travel by train for an ordinary holiday, and then to imagine the longer and longer journeys necessary for him to reach various British colonies. Next it listed the landmasses of the colonies, expressed in proportion to Britain’s. From there, it turned to the real strategic peril the Empire faced – “If our island of Britain were attacked and taken, down comes our Empire like a house built of cards... We have had this danger always, even before our Empire was a paying one and worth taking. Nowadays it is much more tempting for other people to take.”²⁹⁶ The Chief wished to drive this point home. Several pages later, next to a jaunty illustration, he did so with help from a tentacled aquatic creature:

Great Britain has been compared to a cuttle-fish, the British Isles being the body and our distant Colonies the arms spread all over the world. When anyone wants to kill a cuttle-fish he does not go and lop off one of its arms; the other arms would probably tackle him and hold him for the

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 276.

cuttle-fish to suddenly eat. No, the way to kill a cuttle-fish is to suddenly stab him in the heart, and then his arms fall helpless and dead.²⁹⁷

The basic strategic axiom Baden-Powell strove to impart upon young British Tenderfeet – that defending Britain was tantamount to defending the colonies – had long vexed imperial officials in their negotiations with colonial politicians. Consider the Duke of Newcastle, Colonial Secretary, answering questions before a House of Commons Committee on colonial military expenditure in 1861: “I have frequently had to state to the Colonists that in truth our [English] Channel fleet constitutes a defence to Australia.”²⁹⁸ The inability of youths or colonists to grasp these concepts points to an older tension that was reaching crisis in Baden-Powell’s time – how to reconcile the growth of local, colonial sovereignties, especially those enjoying a measure of democracy, to a security strategy that was global in scope.

This chapter will explore how Britain’s self-governing colonies reimagined themselves as “Dominions” after 1907, the way they deployed the logic of security to justify their new status, and how the implications of this shift, for security and sovereignty, were complicated by Britain’s naval crisis with Germany in 1909. 1907-1909, bookended by a Colonial and Imperial Defence Conference respectively, marked the moment at which the British Empire perhaps came closest to finding a formal, institutional solution to its dual dilemma of security and sovereignty. Not since the

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 282–283.

²⁹⁸ Report from the Select Committee on Colonial Military Expenditure; together with the proceedings of the committee, minutes of evidence, appendix and index, 1861, XIII, UK Parliamentary Papers (UKPP), 199.

American Revolution, with its Quartering Acts and tax controversies, had these issues reached a crescendo resulting in serious change across the Empire. Arguably, since 1776, no reliable settlement existed for reconciling colonists' wishes for autonomy and self-government with the need to harmonize imperial security schemes and, crucially, to tax colonists for the provision of their security.²⁹⁹ Such a solution failed to materialize again, presaging greater tensions and upheavals to come.

The making of the Dominion as a constitutional construct is crucial to understanding how these tensions played out in the twentieth century. The concept "Dominion," originally describing the power the British Crown wielded over its domains generally, evolved in 1907 as a category that signified a medial position between colony and sovereign state. This evolution was as much about creating distance from "colonies" as it was about reaching proximity to Britain, and military calculation proved crucial to defining that position. Its most important criterion was self-government, but this criterion was necessary, not sufficient. Several other British colonies enjoyed self-government in some form but were not considered for Dominion status in this period.³⁰⁰ Moreover, the colonies that *did* achieve Dominion status in 1907 had enjoyed responsible government for nearly sixty years in the case of eastern Canada and nearly fifty for eastern Australia. The Dominion moment arrived in 1907 for other, more complex reasons. It was born of an exchange of concessions: Britain conceded greater autonomy in military and

²⁹⁹ For a discussion of the political dynamics of American colonial security and the fiscal realities of the eighteenth century Empire, see Eliga H Gould, *The Persistence of Empire: British Political Culture in the Age of the American Revolution*, Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

³⁰⁰ The Cape Colony, Natal, the Orange Free State, and the Transvaal were all self-governing but did not achieve Dominion status until the Union of South Africa in 1910; Southern Rhodesia and several Caribbean colonies were ruled by partially-elected Legislative Councils with equivalent franchise qualifications to those extant in the Dominions.

sometimes diplomatic affairs; colonies in turn promised to look after their own domestic security but crucially also to underwrite the security of the Empire beyond their borders. This exchange followed the growing centralization and militarization of colonial states over preceding years, as discussed in previous chapters. It also marked the creation of a kind of social contract between the members of what Richard Jebb called the “Britannic Alliance” – autonomy entailed obligation to imperial security goals.

Dominion status, as a medial category, meant asserting both proximity to Britain and distance from its other colonies. The most notable outlier here was India, which did not receive the Dominion label in 1907 (and struggled to gain admittance to the Conferences that produced it), further entrenching and institutionalizing its exceptional nature and its distinction from the self-governing white settlement colonies. Any discussion of Dominionhood must account for India’s exclusion from Dominion status, which it would not achieve until the 1947-50 period before its independent state constitution came into effect. Ireland is another outlying case; its Home Rule movement gained steam in this period, and neither did it reach Dominion status until after its rupture with Britain, as the Irish Free State, from 1922-37. Ireland will be discussed further in subsequent chapters. The story of the British Dominions, and of other British colonies who sought Dominion status, highlights the need for incipient colonial sovereignties to be cohere with the general will of imperial security goals. The variable of democracy made this prospect tenuous, and shaped the way political elites both signaled to their domestic audiences and electorates, and the way they negotiated with counterparts from other colonial states. Ireland and India found themselves on the wrong side of this calculus;

Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Newfoundland, and South Africa (after 1910) were luckier.

One interesting dimension of the Dominion moment was the new institutional machinery coming on-line simultaneously – the coalescence of such bodies as the Committee of Imperial Defence and the Imperial Conference system (and the failure of more holistic ideas for imperial institutions such as federation or an imperial senate) structured imperial politics around groups of experts and officials: chiefly colonial premiers and the military officers and bureaucrats they brought with them. This level of imperial policymaking bore more than a passing resemblance to the ruling apparatus of imperial Germany.³⁰¹ The issue of official secrecy remained fluid in this period – much of the Conference happenings were matters of public record, and were discussed in newspapers, but the CID kept a tighter rein on its deliberations, and that ethos spread increasingly to the conferences as well. Metropolitan officials counted this among the costs of bringing colonists into their councils, and were duly irritated. Colonial officials faced excruciatingly long sea voyages at regular intervals to access the highest levels of imperial politics; their health, time, and ability to manage their legislative schedules at home had to cope with this reality. These messy compromises marked a new era of imperial politics in which some old distinctions began to collapse and others were reinforced. The issues of security and sovereignty remained central, however. Dominionhood set a new constitutional standard for incipient colonial states to pursue, and the exigencies of security shaped their efforts to do so.

³⁰¹ For more on the powerful influence of military elites in contemporary Germany, see Isabel Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

The aftermath of the Boer War, explored in previous chapters, drove strategic realignment in the Empire; the process matched colonial aspirations for autonomy with imperial needs for closer policy coordination, especially on defense. This chapter will investigate the meaning of Dominionhood in the British Empire at two critical moments: first, the 1907 Colonial Conference, at which the concept of the Dominion was agreed and the mode of imperial institutions altered to reflect it. Second, the 1909 Defence Conference, an urgent response to the naval crisis between Britain and Germany at which the Dominions were called to assist with imperial defense in an agreement called the “fleet unit” scheme. These two events, which featured variety of colonial participants, are snapshots of evolving imperial policymaking. Together they show how Dominionhood was born as a political construct meant to reconcile simultaneous demands for democratic sovereignty and the production of security.

Before narrating these two events it is useful to consider the environment of political, technological, and strategic upheaval in which they took place. Politically, the states that made up the British Empire faced increasingly complex internal and external challenges during this period. The breadth of the franchise had grown throughout the nineteenth century in the United Kingdom and its colonies alike; where local self-government did not already exist it was increasingly sought, as in India and Ireland.³⁰² Sluggish reforms in India, such as those of Indian Secretary John Morley (Brodrick’s

³⁰² Several scholars have debated the relationship between democracy and imperialism. John Mackenzie argues that the age of “high imperialism” was marked by a need for the British state to sell its electorate on the imperial project, John M. MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (Manchester University Press, 1988); Twenty years prior Eric Hobsbawm argued that Britain’s newly enfranchised adopted bourgeois values in the late nineteenth century, underwriting the growth of imperialism, Eric Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire: An Economic History of Britain Since 1750* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1968).

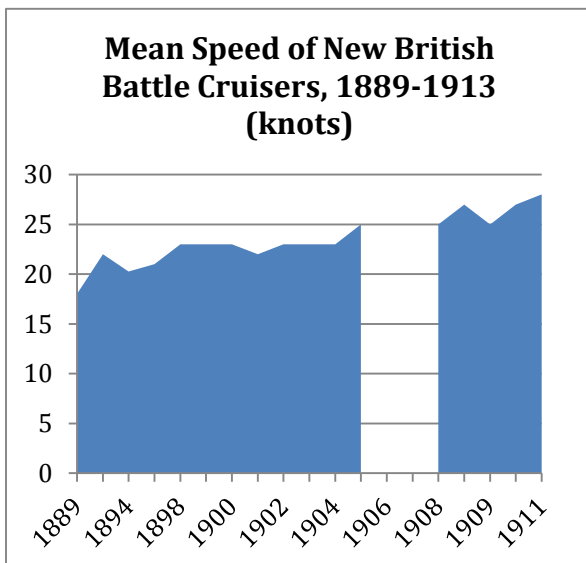
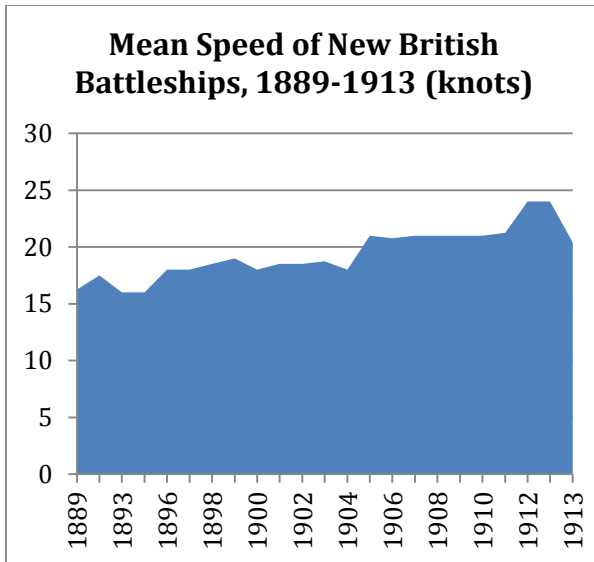
successor) and Viceroy the Earl of Minto (Curzon's successor) in 1909, concentrated more power and money in the central government with a new Legislative Council and grand new capital in Delhi to match. In nearly every part of the Empire, state structures expanded and demanded more participation from their citizen-subjects. At the same time, nationalism placed new strains on these states to satisfy the people over which they ruled, evidenced by the increasing salience of the Irish Question in the United Kingdom and other notable cases like that of Quebec and the Indian National Congress.³⁰³ The shifting international order and Britain's rash of new diplomatic relationships, as in the case of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, added external pressures to the crisis of sovereignty Dominionhood was trying to solve.

In addition to these political upheavals, the launch of HMS *Dreadnought* in 1905 radically changed naval technology. The ship, which ultimately leant its name to the ensuing era of shipbuilding, made use of technological breakthroughs that allowed it to significantly improve its armor and weapons without sacrificing speed.³⁰⁴ The drive to realize these improvements (which, to an extent, collapsed the battleship and battlecruiser design concepts together), came from Jacky Fisher, first in his capacity as Controller (Third Naval Lord, the Admiralty officer responsible for shipbuilding and procurement)

³⁰³ Recent works have emphasized racial and economic salience in these processes. Here again James Belich and John Darwin are advancing the discussion of self-governing colonies as part of an "Angloworld" and a "British world system" respectively in James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Angloworld, 1783-1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830-1970*, 1st ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

³⁰⁴ These breakthroughs involved steel plating, new ways of mounting and sighting guns, and turbine-style rather than reciprocating steam engines. For an extensive discussion of ship design advancements see Jon Sumida, *In Defence of Naval Supremacy: Financial Limitation, Technological Innovation and British Naval Policy, 1889-1914* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), Ch. 2, "The Strategy of Qualitative Superiority: Sir John Fisher and Technological Radicalism, 1904-1906."

and later as First Sea Lord. Especially fond of speed, Fisher's salty utterances included the adage "In Mrs. Somebody's Cookery Book, the receipt for Jugged Hare begins with 'First catch your hare.'"³⁰⁵ Fisher, a relentless technological innovator who believed that submarines and long-range torpedoes rendered large, slow ships obsolete, demanded that the Admiralty design faster ships for each successive year of construction.



³⁰⁵ John Fisher, *Fear God and Dread Nought: The Correspondence of Admiral of the Fleet Lord Fisher of Kilverstone* (London: J. Cape, 1952), 110–1; quoted in Sumida, *In Defence of Naval Supremacy*, 38.

*Source: Tables 16-17; Sumida, In Defence of Naval Supremacy*³⁰⁶

In fact, the new battleships and battle cruisers launched by the Royal Navy sped almost one knot faster every two fiscal years between 1892 and 1913, as the charts above indicate. As a result, discussions of technology and naval strategy were rife with the language of instantaneous obsolescence.³⁰⁷ The vast sums spent in consecutive years did not even have cumulative effects; last year's ships could be fatally outpaced or outgunned by this year's, and each new set of Naval Estimates brought a new crisis. Such a climate seemed to demand rapid adaptation; complacency could mean a loss of strategic supremacy or, at the last, destruction on the high seas.

Lastly and perhaps most importantly for understanding the links between naval policy and emerging Dominionhood, strategic paradigms changed significantly during this period as well. These new strategic norms involved sweeping changes to military doctrine, procurement, and a host of other directly related issues, but they also drove some of the Empire's thorniest political problems. For almost a century since the battle of Trafalgar, the Royal Navy had enjoyed virtually unchallenged control of global sea-lanes. Over this period it developed an extensive global network of bases and stations for coaling and resupply. Moreover, the breadth of the Empire demanded a commensurately broad security scheme. But at the turn of the century the tides of naval thought began to turn against the concept of a diffuse global force in favor of fleet concentration. The

³⁰⁶ Sumida, *In Defence of Naval Supremacy*, Tables 16–17.

³⁰⁷ See for instance [U.K. Prime Minister H. H.] Asquith's explanation for the new building program at the 1909 Defence Conference – "Imperial Conference on the Subject of the Defence of the Empire, 1909," 1909, CAB 18/12A, TNA, 3. Nicholas Lambert also uses this language in discussing battle cruiser innovations, Nicholas A. Lambert, "Economy or Empire? The Fleet Unit Concept and the Quest for Collective Security in the Pacific, 1909-14," in *Far-Flung Lines: Essays on Imperial Defence in Honour of Donald Mackenzie Schurman* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1997), 56.

American naval officer Alfred Thayer Mahan argued in his 1890 work *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783* that history favored nations who maintained large, unified fleets of capital ships that could deal Trafalgar-like knockout blows to enemy forces.³⁰⁸ Mahan's was a doctrine for an age of naval races.

Mahan's perspective proved highly influential amongst the world's naval strategists, and indeed to any armchair theorists of national power, like Baden-Powell with his cuttlefish. While the British Admiralty had its disciples and skeptics of Mahan (Fisher, for instance, hardly followed his precepts), Mahanian logic still underpinned the general direction of British strategy in the period, especially the pact with Japan and the growing preoccupation with Germany. Without Mahan's fleet concentration paradigm, Britain's naval race with Germany would never have reached the raw calculative crescendo it achieved in the years before World War I. It introduced a hard assessment of fleet size and strength in home waters that heightened the sense of alarm and confrontation in both countries.³⁰⁹ Fleet concentration animated Britain's withdrawal of major naval assets from whole sections of the globe, and the accompanying diplomatic deals that ended its "splendid isolation" from entangling alliances.³¹⁰ It is perhaps

³⁰⁸ For a good overview of Mahan's influence on the British and American navies, see Keith Neilson and Elizabeth Jane Errington, eds., *Navies and Global Defense: Theories and Strategy* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1995).

³⁰⁹ Contrast Mahan's paradigm with that of his British contemporary, Julian Corbett. Corbett, who was close to Fisher among others, advocated in his *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy* a diffuse fleet posture that placed more emphasis on protecting shipping interests and conducting access-denial operations. Corbett taught at Britain's Naval War College from 1902, shortly after its founding. He later wrote the official history of British navy in World War I.

³¹⁰ Even Fisher, far from a committed Mahanian, played a role here in recalling British ships from the Pacific after the Russo-Japanese War, feeling they were isolated and vulnerable. See Lambert, "Economy or Empire?," 57; For a discussion of Britain's diplomatic balancing efforts, see John Charmley, *Splendid Isolation?: Britain, the Balance of Power, and the Origins of the First World War* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1999).

unsurprising then that Britain's colonies and Dominions were less comforted by the implications of fleet concentration than metropolitan officials were, as the preceding chapters show.

The contingency, if not the peculiarity, of the newly-created Dominions' interest in developing robust naval forces, and of acquiring top-line capital ships, should not be underestimated. Myriad forces militated against it. Liberalism, afire with the spirit of Gladstone's aversion to militarism and high spending, was a deeply-held value by many in the Empire, from Henry Bournes Higgins' warnings to nascent Australians in Chapter 1, to the recently-elected British Governments led by Henry Campbell-Bannerman, who took office in late 1905, and Herbert Henry Asquith, who succeeded him in 1908. Other problems, like those expressed by Wilfrid Laurier at the 1902 Colonial Conference, pointed to the difficulty of colonial states simultaneously pursuing large domestic infrastructure investments and diverting significant sums to defense. Dominion governments certainly had strong incentives to continue benefiting from the protection of the Royal Navy at low cost, or to cleave to plans for modest littoral defense only. But a variety of factors overrode these incentives. Strategically, the instability of international order heightened the sense of fear and uncertainty gripping Dominions that might have felt at ease, as seen in New Zealand's scramble for federation in the southern Pacific after the Tripartite Pact in 1900. Furthermore, colonial observers did, to some extent, internalize the argument inherent in Baden-Powell's Cuttlefish – for the first time, the British Empire confronted a future in which the colonies might need to underwrite the security of Britain rather than the other way round. Finally, while Dominion naval buildup might have been expensive or politically difficult or strategically inchoate, it

gave Dominion governments an opportunity to accrue prestige, diplomatic capital, and strategic autonomy. Imperial collective security served as a framework in which the new Dominions could reconstitute and assert their sovereignties as legitimate states. This logic, of embracing imperial defense as a social good that created unity of purpose between a group of autonomous actors, was a logic liberals could and did embrace.

Scholarship on the evolution of the Dominions has mostly avoided defining them formally or dating their birth exactly. This is for good reason; it was indeed an informal and drawn-out process. The strictest explanation finds Dominion status declared in the Balfour Declaration of 1926 and legally enshrined in the Statute of Westminster in 1931, which will be discussed in subsequent chapters. Historians have seen little reason to problematize this moment. But these conspicuous concessions by the British Government only acknowledged what had already been the case for some years, and the First World War, as ever, serves as a convenient watershed for dating the ruptures of the early twentieth century.³¹¹ The first wave of scholarship on the Dominions, typified by the *Cambridge History of the British Empire* series begun in the 1930s, described them in highly optimistic terms that served a story of progress to equality among the states of the British Commonwealth – the sort of progress Dicey and Keith warned, in the century’s first years, was too tidy to hope for. This work tended to acknowledge the role of security cooperation in binding together the British family of nations.³¹² The *Cambridge History*

³¹¹ John Darwin’s entry on the Dominion idea in the *Oxford History of the British Empire* series suggests as I do a mainly security-focused motivation for their creation. Yet Darwin sees Dominionhood mainly as a prize won in the trenches of the Western Front and cleaves to the interwar moments as their genesis. See John Darwin, “A Third British Empire? The Dominion Idea in Imperial Politics,” in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Twentieth Century*, vol. IV, V vols., *The Oxford History of the British Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 64–87.

³¹² E.A. Benians argued of imperial politics and conferencing that “defence and economic questions were the centre of the matter,” and “to the mother country the problem of defence seemed the most urgent, while the Dominions pressed for closer economic relations in the form of mutual trade preferences.” E.A.

even provided a picture of Dominionhood as the herald of a bright new future for the global community: “Self-government gave the political freedom; the federal principle...ensured the necessary economic and political strength, and the spirit of nationality gave character and personality to each...[Britain’s] political genius foreshadowed in this an international system, beginning in a family of nations.”³¹³ But this radiant optimism obscured the fissures and rifts Dominionhood created as well. The perspectives offered by subsequent waves of scholarship from historians of the former Dominions themselves brought new assessments. These tended to emphasize the often divergent interests between the Dominions and Britain, and other logics that helped create the Dominion idea, especially race.³¹⁴ Happily though, the renewed scholarly attention on race, and the arguments for reemphasizing the settler colonies found in a few large, synthetic works on the British Empire, has resulted in an emerging consensus on the centrality of the Dominions in understanding the history of the British Empire and of international politics generally in the twentieth century.³¹⁵

Benians et al., eds., *The Cambridge History of the British Empire*, vol. 3 (London: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 5, 7.

³¹³ Ibid., 3:12.

³¹⁴ The most important of these is Donald Gordon’s, who tracks the emerging self-interest of Dominion governments and the way this complicated imperial politics. Donald C. Gordon, *The Dominion Partnership in Imperial Defense, 1870-1914* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1965); More recent scholarship has especially emphasized the role of migration, especially its white selectivity, in forging Dominionhood. See Luke Trainor, *British Imperialism and Australian Nationalism: Manipulation, Conflict, and Compromise in the Late Nineteenth Century*, Studies in Australian History (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), chap. 13 – “Federating in a White World”; Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men’s Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Eric Richards, “Migrations: The Career of British White Australia,” in *Australia’s Empire*, ed. Stuart Ward and D.M. Schreuder, The Oxford History of the British Empire Companion Series (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*.

³¹⁵ See for example Darwin, *The Empire Project*; Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*; Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); Marjory Harper and Stephen Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, The Oxford History of the British Empire Companion Series (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); Ronald Hyam, *Understanding the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Gary

3.2 DOMINIONHOOD AT THE 1907 COLONIAL CONFERENCE

1907 proved an auspicious year for security and politics in the British Empire. After the Liberal victory in the British election of 1905, Richard Haldane succeeded Arnold-Forster at the War Office, where many of the central recommendations of the Esher Report had not yet been implemented. Over the next two years Haldane, an ardent Germanophile destined to play key roles in doomed crisis negotiations with the German government, saw to the realization of Esher's prescriptions for an Army Council system, and a Territorial Force to balance the expeditionary segment of the British Army. The Foreign Office concluded yet another major treaty with a rival empire, signing the Anglo-Russian Entente in the summer, which attempted to soothe the strategic fears of Central Asia stoked by the likes of Curzon and Halford Mackinder by agreeing formal Anglo-Russian buffer zones in Persia and Tibet. Curzon, predictably, railed on against Russia's danger to India from his new position as Chancellor of Oxford (which he was busy aggressively reforming), and continued to do so when he entered the House of Lords the following year. Furthermore, the Liberal Government got a big opportunity at the second Hague Convention in 1907 to secure an arms limitation deal with other major powers. Such a deal collapsed under German (and other) protests that arms limitation would only reify British naval hegemony. The 1907 Colonial Conference was set to be the first fully-ordinary event of its kind, having been agreed based on a regular elapse of time rather than an auspicious royal occasion. Still, it began almost a year behind schedule due to the democratic obligations of colonial prime ministers – they needed a break from their own

Bryan Magee and Andrew Thompson, *Empire and Globalisation: Networks of People, Goods and Capital in the British World, C.1850-1914* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

legislative business in order to steam for London. The crowded diplomatic calendar of summer 1907 made it somewhat of a sideshow. The British camp had begun to assess their visiting colonial counterparts as equal parts boorish and boring. The Earl of Elgin, Colonial Secretary under the Campbell-Bannerman Government recalled after the Conference, “if you had been condemned to eat twenty meals day after day in their company, and to hear [Australian Prime Minister Alfred] Deakin yarn away hour after hour, I believe you would be as heartily glad to see their backs as I am.”³¹⁶ The delegates endured a litany of social engagements and dinners.³¹⁷ C-B’s Government, for its part, had its mind in The Hague. It was the likelier of the two Conferences to save them money.³¹⁸

Despite the distractions and the irritability, the 1907 Colonial Conference provides important clues as to how elites across the Empire interpreted the idea of national sovereignty at the time. The two most obvious qualifiers for the select states that won Dominion status at the Conference were self-government and a complex, preferably federal structure that in some sense confirmed the colony’s institutional maturity in the manner discussed in previous chapters. But the Conference also entrenched Dominionhood as a status befitting states within the Empire possessed of commensurately-sized military ambitions. Finally, the Conference established institutional structures to reinforce the new Dominion status, from participation on the

³¹⁶ MM. 2/73, 90 and 115, 15 Jul. 09. quoted in Ronald Hyam, *Elgin and Churchill at the Colonial Office 1905-1908: The Watershed of the Empire-Commonwealth*, 1st ed. (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1968), 318.

³¹⁷ Hyam footnotes the list of these in *Elgin and Churchill*. (p. 317-18); it is extensive.

³¹⁸ See A. P. (Archibald Paton) Thornton, *The Imperial Idea and Its Enemies: A Study in British Power*. (London: Macmillan, 1959), 140.

Committee of Imperial Defence to the reorganization of the Colonial Office and the tacit concession of Dominions' rights to some level of autonomy in building naval forces.

Discussions over official terminology at the Colonial Conference reveal the importance colonial delegations, and their constituents at home, attached to their own rhetorical signifiers. The term "Dominion" had no clear meaning in the British Empire prior to 1907, save that it was found in the King's official title: *By the Grace of God, of Great Britain, Ireland and the British Dominions beyond the Seas...* It was most commonly associated with Canada, the first of the colonies to federalize, where "the Dominion" was used as shorthand for the confederation's official title, "the Dominion of Canada." A British pre-dreadnought battleship, HMS *Dominion*, had been christened in 1903 as a (rather confusing, given subsequent events) homage to Canada. Perhaps because Canada thought of itself as the Empire's senior colony, its "Dominion" moniker was seized by colonial premiers in 1907 as they expressed displeasure with their "colonial" designation. Canada's precedent proved influential in interesting ways. For their part, metropolitan officials felt far more comfortable with the adoption of Canada's "Dominion" label, which evoked the authority of the Crown, than with the title Australia adopted when it became the Empire's other large federal state in 1901 – "Commonwealth," which evoked England's republican seventeenth century and all its accompanying radicalism and bloodshed. Joseph Ward, Seddon's successor as Prime Minister of New Zealand, summed up this sentiment at the Conference when he argued over the wording of a resolution, "I think the term 'Colony,' so far as our countries are concerned, ought to cease, and that that term ought to apply to the Crown Colonies purely, and that those of us who are not at present known as Dominions or

Commonwealths, should be known as States of the Empire or some other expressive word.”³¹⁹

A debate ensued over the suitability of the term “Dominion,” and its precise meaning. None present seemed able to define it in absolute terms, but relative ones abounded – Ward was comfortable with any definition suggested as long as it included New Zealand; Wilfrid Laurier, by now a venerable institution of the Conferences, insisted that whatever the definition, it should not be so broad as to include the likes of Trinidad.³²⁰ But a few salient qualities emerged. A Dominion ought to be self-governing, it seemed, but this alone was too broad. It should also (if possible) be federalized, which qualified Canada and Australia but placed New Zealand and the South African colonies on uncertain ground, never mind poor Newfoundland, which had achieved responsible government in 1855 but had not joined the Confederation of Canada. Dr. Thomas Smartt, the Commissioner of Public Works in the self-governing Cape Colony, opined that while his own colony lacked Dominion credentials, a unified South Africa (which looked increasingly likely in 1907) *would* qualify, and that New Zealand should meet the federal criterion as well, “being two islands under one Government.”³²¹ These 1907 preoccupations with federation went some way to validating the federal crazes that had gripped southern Africa and the southern Pacific in the preceding years. Federation, as discussed in Chapter 1, served as a proxy for stability and security, and these qualities proved critical to the Dominion conversation as well.

³¹⁹ Minutes of the Colonial Conference, 1907, CAB 18/11A, TNA, 30.

³²⁰ Ibid., 80.

³²¹ Minutes of the Colonial Conference, 1907, CAB 18/11A, TNA, 82.

It is worth thinking further about what distinguished Canada, Australia, and New Zealand from South Africa and Trinidad, Laurier's preferred antithesis, in 1907. Neither of the latter was yet federally organized. Neither had white majorities either. The delegates at the Conference did not overtly mention race at this moment; that would have to wait until later when they debated imperial defense. Meanwhile, despite the apparent distinction between white- and black-majority colonies, every one of the "settlement colonies" contained a significant non-Anglo-Saxon population. Thus if Dominion credentials were a function of a colony's whiteness or Britishness, each delegation at the Conference will have harbored its own anxieties about qualifying. Race and security intertwined here in two important ways, to be discussed further below. First, the need for ostensibly sovereign states to guarantee their own internal security had to contend with racialized fears about groups within the state that did not share its security goals. Secondly, sovereign states' desires to project security beyond their borders, to create order in the international system, built upon racialized concepts of their populations as nations martially and spiritually fit for this role. Here again India's omission stands out, and the absence of Indian representatives was not for lack of effort – since the first Colonial Conference in 1887, a group of prominent Indian businessmen had petitioned the Indian Secretary to join the conferences.³²² Their only representation as such would be Indian Army officers attached to the CID, and Indians would not attend until after the First World War.

³²² They wrote an extensive petition that was politely rebuffed, saying "Your Lordship's memorialists having until the 2nd day of April constant, understood that the Conference was on solely of the self-governing Colonies, were unable to take any steps earlier either by memorializing your Lordship or by communicating with the various representative societies and associations in India..." "Memorial from Natives of India in England as to the Representation of India on the Colonial Conference." April 15, 1887. IOR/L/PJ/6/200, File 677. BL.

Haldane, fresh off his War Office successes in army reform, was slated to address the Colonial Conference two days after the debate on Dominionhood. He felt confident about Britain's example in the matter of military organization, but knew as Balfour had reflected some years before that the colonies could not simply be ordered to comply with British aims. He hoped therefore that his system would speak for itself. Haldane's presentation explained his splitting British forces in two, one part for home defense (the Territorial Army) and the other as an expeditionary force (joint with the Royal Navy) for deployment across the Empire.³²³ Haldane casually offered this system by way of suggestion to the visiting colonials, noting that they would of course choose their own national military schemes. The system bore more than a little resemblance to the idea of an Imperial Reserve Force that had caused controversy at the 1902 Conference. In the debate that followed, Dr. Smartt of the Cape Colony, for his part, heartily endorsed the same paradigm as his South African predecessors had. He expressed hope that when South Africa achieved Union, it would vote into being a naval reserve force that would serve anywhere the Admiralty liked. He went even further, calling for a collective resolution that "a certain portion of the forces of all the Colonies or Dominions beyond the Seas should be enrolled upon the basis that, with the consent of their Governments, their services would be available wherever required."³²⁴ The other representatives present were less enthused about this, but Smartt's words deserve close reading for elucidating some core components connected to the Dominion idea: sovereign democratic sanction ("consent of their governments...") for local military outfits (reserve forces) deploying

³²³ Minutes of the Colonial Conference, 1907, CAB 18/11A, TNA, 95.

³²⁴ Ibid., 112.

abroad for collective, imperial purposes (“wherever required.”) These ideas contained payoffs for the colonial delegates hoping for greater autonomy from imperial control – namely, the right to give their own consent to military action and the tacit invitation to develop more capable militaries – yet also bound them and their increasing capabilities to collective imperial goals, which pleased the Colonial Office, the brain of the imperial cuttlefish.

The dilemma of local versus collective security had vexed officers in would-be Dominions for some years by this point, placing a high premium on military strategies that could manage the tensions between political autonomy and joint security operations. In 1906 a group of Australia’s senior naval officers had convened in Melbourne to sketch out their common goals ahead of the Colonial Conference. In a resulting memorandum they circulated to other imperial Governments, under the heading “Australia’s Birthright,” they stated, “It is surely permissible, however, for those at the furthest extreme of Empire’s dominions, without losing in any degree their full responsibility and participation in the Empire’s wars, to propose measures for defence against dangers that come immediately home to them—measures that in no way detract from, but aid, the Imperial plans of naval strategy.”³²⁵ These words optimistically sweep aside the strategic debate between diffuse and concentrated fleet postures then swirling in London. This strategic debate was not strictly theoretical but contained serious legal ramifications as well, a fact the Admiralty realized, for even if the Dominions were to exercise their “birthrights” and build up local navies, these were still His Majesty’s ships under

³²⁵ Papers Prepared for the Colonial Conference, 1907, no. 2 “Report of Committee of Naval Officers of the Commonwealth Assembled at Melbourne, Victoria, to Consider the Memorandum of the Committee of Imperial Defence, and Report as Regards the Naval Defence of Australia,” 1907, CAB 17/77, TNA, 24.

international law, making London ultimately liable for any maritime imbroglio caused by Melbourne, or Ottawa.³²⁶ This legal haze pointed to another complication of sovereignty – just as the nascent Dominions worked to define their sovereignty on their own terms, and thence to assert and negotiate that sovereignty with their counterparts and superiors in Britain, they faced an additional challenge in making that sovereignty legible to the world outside the British Empire. Existing naval agreements meant that any supposed Dominion fleets would count as British in the eyes of French, Russian, or German fellow seafarers. Admiralty officials kept this fact in hand during subsequent discussions.

The 1907 Conference adjourned with a resolution that formally altered the Empire’s constitutional structure, changing the name of the conference system from “Colonial” to “Imperial” to reflect its shifting political norms:

That it will be to the advantage of the Empire if a Conference, to be called the Imperial Conference, is held every four years, at which questions of common interest may be discussed and considered as between His Majesty’s Government and his Governments of the self-governing Dominions beyond the seas. The Prime Minister of the United Kingdom will be *ex-officio* President, and the Prime Ministers of the self-governing Dominions *ex-officio* members of the Conference.³²⁷

³²⁶ These ramifications are discussed at length by the Colonial Office in a memo, Further Correspondence Relating to the Imperial Conference, no. 98 “Australia, Colonial Office to Admiralty,” 1907 CO 886/1/7, TNA, 68-9.

³²⁷ Proceedings of the Colonial Conference, 1907, Cd. 3523, TNA, v-x.

The language of the resolution invoked a sort of Triennial Act for the Empire – the 1641 statute designed to protect against Stuart tyranny by obligating Parliament to meet at regular intervals. With the elevation of select colonies to Dominions came new institutional machinery. The British Government agreed to restructure the Colonial Office, for like the Conference, the Dominions could hardly now take their cues from an office so named.³²⁸ Instead, a special Dominions Department was to be formed within the Colonial Office, which would handle inter-governmental communications. The Imperial Conference, given a new charter and permanent secretariat, effectively became the policymaking organ for the Empire. For the first time, the Conference would meet regularly rather than sporadically at imperial celebrations like jubilees. It also included a clause for extraordinary meetings, “That upon matters of importance requiring consultation between two or more Governments which cannot be conveniently postponed until the next Conference...subsidiary Conferences should be held between representatives of the Governments concerned specially chosen for the purpose.”³²⁹ This clause would prove important in just two years’ time.

Dominion status also came with an invitation to permanently join the Committee of Imperial Defence.³³⁰ The Conference resolutions conceded both the right of colonials to influence imperial policy and the institutional mechanisms for them to do so.³³¹

³²⁸ Reorganization of the Colonial Office, 1907, CO 885/19 Misc. No. 214, TNA.

³²⁹ Proceedings of the Colonial Conference, 1907, Cd. 3523, TNA, v-x.

³³⁰ Only Canada managed to make good on this provision before the outbreak of the First World War, with Robert Borden’s spiritedly collaborative Conservative Government, succeeding Laurier’s, appointing a Minister-without-Portfolio to the CID in early 1914.

³³¹ For an extended discussion of the various groups lobbying for specific models of imperial organization in 1907 and the resistance they faced, see John E. Kendle, *The Colonial and Imperial Conferences 1887-1911: A Study in Imperial Organization* (London: Longmans, 1967), Ch. 5.

Franklyn Johnson, in his book on the Committee of Imperial Defence, underscored the extent to which military issues dominated intra-imperial relations: “The C.I.D. [by 1911] was now not only an organ, under the cabinet, for the co-ordinated planning of national policies, but it was also one of the key institutions of collaboration in foreign and military policy planning between the mother country and the respective Dominions.”³³² The global nature of naval policy had placed it at the center of these discussions of sovereignty, and the new Dominions also won a tacit concession from the Admiralty when the First Lord, Tweedmouth, told them, “We do not wish to insist that the contributions from the Colonies should necessarily be in the form only of money...His Majesty’s Government recognize the natural desire of the self-governing colonies to have a more particular share in providing the naval defence force of the Empire,” and that so long as unity of command was maintained, “they are ready to consider a modification of the existing arrangements.”³³³ That the British Government apparently considered this desire “natural” spoke to the pace at which sovereignty was being redefined.

Tweedmouth raised the issue of the hated subsidies again, and the Australian delegation duly introduced a motion to reconsider the prior agreement on naval subsidies agreed with the British Government. 1907 left the Empire in a state of paradox – for the first time it was bringing colonists into its councils and strengthening institutional bonds, but it was also granting some of them unprecedented autonomy. This mirrored the strategic paradox over whether to distribute the Royal Navy’s strength amongst new Dominions,

³³² Franklyn Arthur Johnson, *Defence By Committee: The British Committee of Imperial Defence, 1885-1959* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), 122.

³³³ Imperial Conference on the Subject of the Defence of the Empire, vol. I, “Précis of Important Events Connected with the Question of Colonial Naval Contributions,” 1909, CAB 18/12A, TNA, 8.

or to obey the axioms of Mahan and concentrate it, ships and command, in Home waters. It was not long before the ringing hammers of German shipyards forced the issue to the fore again.

3.3 DOMINIONHOOD IN CRISIS: THE FLEET UNIT PLAN AT THE 1909 CONFERENCE ON THE DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE

The Dominions were scarcely over a year old when their new status, and the reciprocal security arrangement on which it was based, was tested. Britain found itself embroiled in a naval crisis with Germany in 1909, and invoked the 1907 Conference's "extraordinary meetings" clause to bring colonial delegates back to London for a special conference on imperial defense. As ever, the 1909 meeting produced both tensions and opportunities. It produced another useful example of the convergence between imperial security imperatives and the ongoing quest for sovereignty among the new Dominions: the "fleet unit" scheme. In basic terms, the scheme allowed the Dominions to begin building their own autonomously-operated naval forces, but made provisions for these to be agglomerated into a single, imperial naval force under command of the Admiralty during times of crisis. Conceived as a solution to the Anglo-German naval crisis because it would diffuse the costs of shipbuilding across the Empire while preserving the ability concentrate the fleet(s), the fleet unit scheme also purported to reconcile the Dominions' naval ambitions to the goals of imperial collective security. The scheme was never fully

realized. The Admiralty crafted it as a sort of crisis solution; it provoked serious opposition among some in the Dominions (and the Admiralty itself), and a young First Lord of the Admiralty named Winston Churchill eventually strangled it at birth. Yet, it briefly gave a tangible life as policy to the idea Baden-Powell articulated with the cuttlefish. It tested the Dominion idea and further probed the limits of the new forms of sovereignty taking shape in the British Empire.

Making sense of the 1909 Anglo-German naval “crisis” as such requires acknowledgement of its non-military ingredients: the party politics of both states, and the fiscal ramifications of shipbuilding.³³⁴ The crisis provoked a surprisingly swift response across the Empire. Mountains of books have been written attempting to make sense of the strategic aims of the German state on the eve of World War I, but it should suffice to point out that after Britain’s noted accords with France and Russia in Europe, with Japan to free the Pacific, and its increasingly cozy relationship with the United States, Germany felt strategically encircled. There were foes on both its flanks, and the Royal Navy’s dominance of the high seas limited its available outlets. Fork-bearded Alfred von Tirpitz, commander of the German High Fleet and close, if occasionally strained, confidant of Kaiser Wilhelm II, argued that an aggressive naval building program was the only way for Germany to effectively leverage its rivals. Tirpitz’s “risk theory” held that if the German fleet reached a critical mass, the Royal Navy would be sufficiently averse to confrontation that its absolute hold on the high seas would be neutralized. With the backing of the Kaiser, Tirpitz successfully shepherded unprecedentedly aggressive Naval

³³⁴ The standard and very thorough work is Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860-1914* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1980), chap. 22, “From Antagonism to War (1907–1914).”

Laws through the Reichstag in 1898 and 1900, and with subsequent augmentations of the shipbuilding timetables in 1906 and 1908.

The trouble of 1909 began when British naval intelligence discovered that German shipyards, which could already out-build Britain in gun fittings and other critical ship components, was stockpiling these in order to accelerate its general shipbuilding program surreptitiously. Worse, its allies Austria and Italy were laying down dreadnought-style ships in the Mediterranean, in coordination with the *Kaiserliche Marine*. The arithmetic of naval supremacy suddenly did not add up to the Admiralty's liking. These revelations scuttled what little hope for arms limitation had come out of the lukewarm Hague Peace Conference in 1907. Reginald McKenna, who had succeeded Tweedmouth as First Lord of the Admiralty under Asquith's Government, delivered the grim news to Parliament in a speech on the year's naval estimates. McKenna had lobbied his Government, headed then by reform-minded HH Asquith and packed with other economizing Liberals irked by defense spending in principle, for six new dreadnoughts to match the German threat. When the new information came to light and the press frenzy began, McKenna had the whip-hand. Winston Churchill, then President of the Board of Trade, later recalled, "the Admiralty demanded six Dreadnoughts, the economists offered four, and we eventually compromised on eight."³³⁵

Specific policies and fiscal math, rather than some sense of rivalry or strategic danger, made the above into a legitimate crisis. Because of the "2-power standard," which committed Britain to building enough ships to match the two next largest navies

³³⁵ Quoted in G.R. Searle, *A New England?: Peace and War 1886-1918* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 489.

(France and Russia, when the policy was instituted), revelations about German shipbuilding meant instant demands on Britain's industrial capacity and public finances.³³⁶ Potentially worse, and often overlooked by scholarly treatments of the 1909 crisis, the Asquith Government was in the process of remaking the British state into something more oriented to social services than providing security.³³⁷ Chancellor David Lloyd George's "People's Budget," which introduced higher taxes and social insurance programs, came the same year. The urgency of 1909 was less about preparing for a German attack than it was about rapidly recalibrating the fiscal-extractive habits of the British state. Hence the crisis must be viewed through the lens of political economy and not simply strategy and security.³³⁸ The same holds for the fleet unit plan, the proposed answer to the naval crisis. The few scholarly treatments of the fleet unit scheme are mainly concerned with the manner of and reasons for its eventual failure.³³⁹ Yet, the fleet unit plan can be brought to bear on broader questions as well. It foreshadows not just

³³⁶ This problem in fact led the Government to abandon the policy soon thereafter.

³³⁷ Kennedy's classic account leaves matters of economic power mostly to the subsequent volume, *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers*. Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860-1914* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1980); A recent work that covers the story's details from an intelligence perspective is Matthew S. Seligmann, *The Royal Navy and the German Threat, 1901-1914: Admiralty Plans to Protect British Trade During a War Against Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

³³⁸ G.R. Searle argues in a similar vein that the environment of "crisis" in Britain's domestic politics before the First World War put the lie to Liberal hopes that social reform could deliver stability; Searle, *A New England?*, 392-8; See also Rhodri Williams, *Defending the Empire: The Conservative Party and British Defence Policy, 1899-1915* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991). Ch.11

³³⁹ Donald Gordon shows the scheme as doomed to failure by the incompatible strategic interests of the Dominions, specifically, between Australia and Canada. Donald C. Gordon, "The Admiralty and Dominion Navies, 1902-1914," *The Journal of Modern History* 33, no. 4 (December 1, 1961): 407-22; Gordon, *The Dominion Partnership in Imperial Defense, 1870-1914*; Neville Meaney pronounces a similar doom, but locates it in the strategic incoherence of London's position, sending its precious new battleships to the edges of the world. Neville K. Meaney, *The Search for Security in the Pacific, 1901-14* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1976), 186; Nicholas Lambert sees the plan's failure as a missed opportunity perpetrated by the impetuous young Churchill, a conclusion largely confirmed by Richard Toye in his book on Churchill and Empire. Lambert, "Economy or Empire?," 73-; Richard Toye, *Churchill's Empire: The World That Made Him and the World He Made* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2010).

decolonization but a re-imagination of sovereignty intimately linked to security.

Likewise, the scheme was more than just a chapter in the story of institutional maturation in the British Empire. It was a moment in the lurching militarization of states in the early twentieth century that presaged yet greater upheavals.

When word of the intelligence on Germany, and the Admiralty's plight, spread through the Empire's telegraph cables, the Dominion governments responded quickly. New Zealand cabled just days later on 22 March 1909 offering to subsidize the construction of at least one and, if necessary, two dreadnoughts.³⁴⁰ This was a bold offer, and put pressure on the other Dominions to measure up. While Laurier would have liked to offer a similar ship donation, since it would involve fewer strings attached, he could not afford the assumption by other parties that Canada was to go on subsidizing the Royal Navy. He had studiously avoided this issue during the 1908 elections, hoping to avoid controversy. Instead, he fell back on a statement from earlier in 1909 by George Foster, the MP for North Toronto: "in view of...that spirit of self-help and self-respect which alone befits a strong and growing people, Canada should no longer delay in assuming her proper share of the responsibility and financial burden incident to the suitable protection of her exposed coastline and great seaports."³⁴¹ In another week's time the Canadian Parliament passed a resolution promising to assume the duty of looking after its own coastlines and territorial waters, which would ostensibly save the British Admiralty

³⁴⁰ The cable left the precise class and specification of the ship vague; one complication for working with these sources is that contemporaries used the term "Dreadnought" liberally – it originally referred to a single ship that gave its name to a new class of battleships as noted above, but served as a synecdoche for a whole era of naval technology, and represented a liminal ship class between those designed for speed and for firepower. As such its usage is a source of confusion. Where possible I will specify the difference between the heavier battleship and the lighter battlecruiser as they arise.

³⁴¹ § House of Commons, *Debates*, 29 March 1909, 3484. Quoted in Sarty, "Canadian Maritime Defence, 1892–1914," 478 where a longer discussion is given.

money. By mid-April Australia telegraphed its support to London, hoping to build its own fleet of destroyers in line with its aspirations to eschew subsidy and replace it with real materiel. Asquith's Government smiled on the potential savings these offers represented. The Admiralty and the Colonial Office, meanwhile, saw the unresolved strategic and political quarrels still swirling beneath the surface. Andrew Fisher's Labor Government in Australia was fragile; Fisher was a pacifist ill-suited to playing popular militarism. Laurier's Liberals, as usual, could not afford to alienate the Quebecois, who had no taste for British imperial defense coordination. All Dominion camps, even the enthusiastic Joseph Ward's in New Zealand, held beneath the velvet glove of friendly offers the iron fist of strategic self-interest.

Realizing the need to coordinate these offers and confer with their Dominion counterparts, the British Government called them to London for an urgent meeting under Resolution 1 of the 1907 Conference.³⁴² While the Government relished the opportunity to offload some of its fiscal burden, the Admiralty readied a different pitch to the Dominions: a modified version of the proposals for Dominion navies it had wrangled with Alfred Deakin's Australian Government, impatient as ever with the naval subsidies it paid, in 1908. What had been a plan for Dominion governments to fund auxiliary ships for the Royal Navy in their home waters was revamped – instead they would fund “fleet units,” each based around a new battlecruiser of the *Indomitable* class.³⁴³ In a stroke, the scheme would relieve fiscal pressure on London, satisfy Dominion national aspirations

³⁴² Confidential Papers Laid Before the Imperial Defence Conference, opening remarks, 1909, CO 886/2/9, TNA, 29.

³⁴³ The rest of each unit would consist of 3 *Bristol*-class cruisers, 6 destroyers, and 3 submarines. While Dominion governments might not have imagined taking on the German High Fleet with these squadrons, they were formidable forces capable of dealing with most conceivable enemies in the Pacific, especially when combined. *Ibid.*, 30.

for local navies, and re-assert British dominance (and thus Dominion security) in the Pacific, relieving the old Dominion anxieties about the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. The outcomes of the scheme were much less tidy than this. Clashing interests plagued the Defence Conference discussions, and though the fleet unit scheme eventually earned a loose consensus, it later unraveled. For, as in the discussion on Dominionhood at the 1907 Conference, the fiscal, strategic, and democratic dimensions of the issue played important roles in the way colonial states imagined their sovereignties. These parameters will now be considered in turn.

Discussions of Dominion defense spending at the Conference transcended ordinary cost-benefit analysis. Asquith, much like Joseph Chamberlain had done at the start of the 1902 Colonial Conference, set the tone with a jeremiad on the Empire's per-capita defense spending figures, brandishing a chart he had prepared for the task. After enumerating the huge imbalance of defense spending against the United Kingdom vis-à-

vis its colonies, he concluded with wry politeness, “That, I think, is a striking table.”³⁴⁴

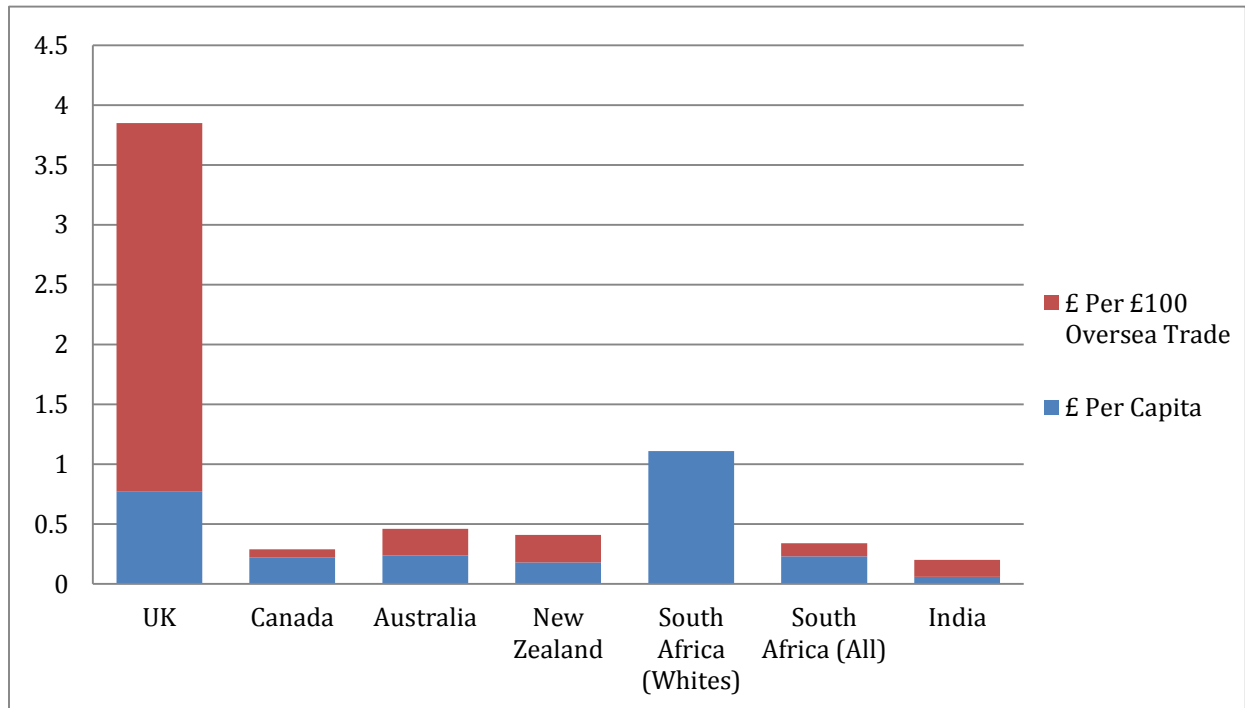


Figure 3 – Asquith’s Table on Defense Spending in the British Empire, 1907-08, bar chart ³⁴⁵

Asquith was correct, of course – Britain did indeed significantly outspend the Dominions on defense, but the entire purpose of the Conference then convening was to discuss ways the Dominions could helpfully spend more, so Asquith was perhaps piling on. One truly striking facet of the table, though, was the racial distinction made in the data from South Africa – whereas the other Dominions and India were considered by whole population, the South African data disaggregated white and non-white inhabitants, which drastically inflated the “per-capita” amount paid by South Africans toward defense. In the ensuing discussion, Cape Colony Prime Minister J.X. Merriman proudly

³⁴⁴ Defence Conference Minutes, 1909 CAB 18/12A, TNA, 4.

³⁴⁵ Data from Defence Conference Minutes, 1909 CAB 18/12A, TNA, Table I, III. Quantities were converted to decimal values from Sterling old style. No data was given for overseas trade by South African whites only. Per capita spending is both naval and military; per trade spending is naval only.

held forth on South Africa's incredibly robust per capita outlay when Louis-Philippe Brodeur, Canadian Minister for Marine and Fisheries, took issue:

Mr. BRODEUR: Does that include all your population?

Mr. MERRIMAN: It includes the whole—the whole of the European population.

Mr. BRODEUR: Yes, but what about the others?

Mr. MERRIMAN: As to the others, I am sorry to say that we have to keep a force to control them.

Mr. BRODEUR: We have included everybody else as far as we are concerned.

Mr. MERRIMAN: Yes, because you are all a homogeneous white population,

Mr. BRODEUR: We have some Red Indians,

Mr. MERRIMAN: How many? You bottle them up and keep them for show.

CHAIRMAN: I think we are rather getting away from the Questions 1, 2, and 3.³⁴⁶

Here, the nexus between race and internal security is laid bare. The visiting South African delegation felt it had tougher liabilities to its internal security than the other Dominions, who in turn resented the South Africans' cooking of the numbers to artificially inflate their defense spending data and, by extension, the weight they carried at the imperial negotiating table. This was also a quantitative argument about sovereignty – the state was a security-producing structure, and membership of it hinged on whether the individual in question served that end. The colonial governments in South Africa (they would not achieve Union until 1910) considered their white subjects contributors to collective

³⁴⁶ Ibid., 25.

security, and their black subjects threats. This way of sorting the imagined nation reveals the complicated ways that security constituted sovereignty, and also the way it fit easily with the racial and ultimately racist attitudes of colonial governments, especially in southern Africa.

Even less certain than absolute levels of defense spending was precisely what the governments in question received in exchange for their investments. To begin, “security” itself was a nebulous concept – the value one could attach to continued security hinged on the perceived likelihood that it might be violated, and those who saw little to fear thus valued it the least. The Dominion representatives knew naval spending in particular was a direct stimulus to Britain’s economy – jobs for British workers and orders for British shipyards.³⁴⁷ Their desire for navies of their own in part stemmed from displeasure at paying subsidies directly to the Admiralty (and hence the British economy) when these might be diverted to their own economic development. McKenna acknowledged as much in his memo detailing the fleet unit scheme ahead of the conference.³⁴⁸ He reiterated during debate, “I can imagine that the electors of the Commonwealth [of Australia] would be far more willing to contribute to the cost of the Navy, if the money was spent in the Commonwealth, and was not spent over here.”³⁴⁹ He was correct. When the

³⁴⁷ For more on this issue, see J.M. Hobson, “The Military Extraction Gap and the Wary Titan: The Fiscal Sociology of British Defence Policy, 1870-1913,” *Journal of European Economic History* 22 (1993): 485–8 Possible Margins for Error in the Military Burden Estimates The Causes of the low British Military-Extraction Ratio.

³⁴⁸ “*Pari passu* with the creation of the fleet unit, it would be necessary to consider the development of local resources in everything which relates to the maintenance of a fleet. A careful enquiry should be made into the shipbuilding and repairing establishments with a view to their general adaptation to the needs of the local squadron. Training schools for officers and men would have to be established; arrangements would have to be made for the manufacture, supply, and replenishment of the various naval, ordnance, and victualling stores required by the squadron.” Confidential Papers Laid Before the Imperial Defence Conference, 1909 CO 886/2/9 TNA, 32.

³⁴⁹ Defence Conference Minutes, 1909 CAB 18/12A, TNA, 35.

Dominions eventually placed shipbuilding orders for their fleet units, Australia and Canada paid exorbitant premiums to have some of them built locally, which involved obtaining plans and vetting contractors with the Admiralty, then shipping many of the manufactured components from British and Irish yards to their own yards for assembly.³⁵⁰ The Canadian naval command under Admiral Kingsmill launched an inquiry about how shipbuilding firms could be induced to open yards in Canada, and commissioned comparative estimates of building costs at a variety of yards.³⁵¹ The fiscal dimension of the fleet unit story reaffirms the political-economic context of the naval crisis. It also demonstrates the link between defense spending and sovereignty – Asquith’s chart was a yardstick to which the Dominions hoped to measure up. Subsidies, to the Dominions, were its antithesis. In fact, the Imperial Government making good on the Dominions’ new status as sovereign nations, and the duties attendant to that status, was the very pretext of the Defence Conference. These were duties they were willing to meet in fiscally imprudent ways if it meant they could show their electorates the local payoffs of militarization, as McKenna suggested. Matters of spending also mapped on to the nagging issues of strategy that complicated the Dominions’ efforts to cement their sovereignties and arrive at a strategic consensus with Britain.

³⁵⁰ For the process of planning and contracting see “Construction of Ships - Liaison with High Commissioner and Admiralty Re Canadian Naval Programme,” 1909, RG24-2604, Library and Archives Canada (LAC). For the discrepancy in cost (the Government of Australia paid £776,000 for HMAS *Brisbane*, built at Cockatoo Island in Sydney, versus £385,000 and £405,000 for HMAS *Sydney* and *Melbourne*, respectively) see: “Fleet Unit expenditure while based in London,” 1912-20, 16/20/407 830456, National Archives of Australia (NAA).

³⁵¹ For the memoranda on planning and contracting, as well as the cost estimates, see: Construction of Ships - Liaison with High Commissioner and Admiralty Re Canadian Naval Programme, 1909, LAC, RG24-2604, 2-3, folio pagination 111-112.

As noted above, most scholarship that addresses the fleet unit scheme assumes that the Admiralty and the Dominions had completely divergent strategic interests. In reality, agreeing the scheme in the first place represented a major tilt by McKenna and Fisher to the Corbett-inspired, diffuse fleet posture – in other words, if Mahanian fleet concentration represented orthodoxy, the fleet unit scheme was shockingly heterodox. It proposed to build several state-of-the-art capital ships, and then to send them as far away from home waters as was geographically possible. Nevertheless, Mahan's core assertions – of the danger of cataclysmic fleet battle and the of the inextricable link between naval power and the relative power of states (a proxy for sovereignty), remained on the minds of all the delegates at the Conference. This is particularly evident in the variety of opinion between the Dominions themselves on the Empire's strategic priorities.

The sharpest discrepancy existed between Canada and Australia. Though both were keen to build their own navies, Australia's justifying logic had far more to do with strategic necessity. It felt isolated in the South Pacific with few friends within a week's steam and expansionist rivals encroaching on its waters, while Canada shared the North Atlantic with a watchful Royal Navy and a land border with a friendly or at least benign United States.³⁵² But perceptions of safety proved wildly variable across Canada's vast expanses. Sir Charles Hibbert Tupper, President of the Vancouver Navy League told the Vancouver *World* that he wanted to "point out to Ottawa that we have the willing material at hand" to run a Canadian fleet unit in the Pacific, and Laurier received

³⁵² Canada in fact contained significant factions in the Quebecois and agricultural lobbies who favored a Continentalist, Halford Mackinder-influenced perspective of Canada's security rather than a maritime, British-oriented one; See Gordon, *The Dominion Partnership in Imperial Defense, 1870-1914*, 226.

similarly worded telegrams from Richard MacBride, Premier of British Columbia.³⁵³ Balancing east and west was yet another electoral headache for Laurier. He was all too conscious of this when he dismissed a 1909 letter from E.H. Bronson, a hydroelectric power magnate and former Ontario provincial minister, urging that Canada should build its navy and thus its global profile, by replying “We are not a sovereign power, we have no diplomatic relations, and I think it is well that we should maintain as far as possible our isolation.”³⁵⁴ Laurier was exaggerating; Canada indeed had diplomatic relations and took a major step towards asserting them just three weeks later by establishing a new Department of External Affairs under Joseph Pope.³⁵⁵ It also had ample concern for its sovereignty. During the Conference, the Canadian Minister of Militia and Defence Frederick Borden argued that discussions of Canadian defense should be kept secret so as to avoid needlessly provoking the United States.³⁵⁶ When the Admiralty attempted to determine the legal status of fleet unit ships on the high seas, it even figured that Canada’s “territorial waters” had a narrower radius than Australia’s.³⁵⁷ This quantitative spatial calculus shows the way the Admiralty, for its part, connected territorial sovereignty to the issue of security – and as above, the way perceptions of security risks

³⁵³ See MacBride to Laurier, Laurier Papers, 1909, LAC, MG26-G, Reel C-877. The BC Premier forwarded a resolution by the Vancouver Navy League to that effect; see Naval Militia in Pacific, 1909, LAC, RG24-2498.

³⁵⁴ Laurier Papers, Laurier to Bronson, 10 May 1909, MG26-G, Reel C-876, LAC.

³⁵⁵ See Chapter 2 above and James Eayrs, “The Origins of Canada’s Department of External Affairs,” *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science / Revue Canadienne d’Economie et de Science Politique* 25, no. 2 (May 1, 1959): 109–28.

³⁵⁶ Defence Conference Minutes, 1909 CAB 18/12A, TNA, Frederick Borden, 20, “We are alongside very friendly neighbours... it would seem to me better if these war establishments could be kept secret and not published to the world. I throw that out as a suggestion.”

³⁵⁷ “Status of Dominion Ships,” 1910, RG25-1102, LAC.

skewed the relative value observers attached to their security. Frederick Borden had gone some way to rebuffing Asquith's salvo at the Conference, in fact, when he replied:

In considering the statistics, the interesting statistics, which have been placed before us to-day by the Prime Minister, so far as they refer to Canada, and in which I admit Canada makes a very small showing, I think it is only fair to remember, and only a fair and proper thing to say – that, while that is true, Canada has nevertheless been doing its share in the way of developing the power and strength of this Empire by expending, not millions, not tens of millions, but hundreds of millions of dollars in developing the public works of that country.³⁵⁸

The antipodean Dominions were indeed less sanguine about their security than Canada and Newfoundland. It is worth reiterating here that British possessions in the Pacific technically fell within the protective cordon of the Anglo-Japanese alliance in 1909, but the strategic discussions at the Conference either ignored this fact completely or referenced it in utter contempt. Joseph Ward lamented that Australasia could not share Canada's confidence in repelling an invasion or receiving relief from Britain if one occurred; this would be "practically asking us to shut the door after the horses were out."³⁵⁹ Colonel Justin Foxton, representing Australia's defense forces, added, "We are in close proximity to the teeming millions of two great Asiatic powers. The awakening of the East has very great significance for Australia and New Zealand."³⁶⁰ In 1908 Deakin's

³⁵⁸ Frederick Borden, Defence Conference Minutes, 1909, NA, CAB 18/12A, p. 8

³⁵⁹ Defence Conference Minutes, 1909, CAB 18/12A, TNA, Joseph Ward, p.23

³⁶⁰ Ibid., Justin Foxton, p.46

Government in Australia drove home its exasperation over progress on the naval issue when it telegraphed the United States to say it had heard Teddy Roosevelt's "Great White Fleet" was touring the world – would it like to visit? The Americans were received by roaring crowds in Sydney and Auckland, underscoring Antipodean enthusiasm for a strong – and appropriately, glistening white – naval force that could shield them from regional threats.³⁶¹ This is all exceedingly peculiar behavior from a state against its alliance partner. Suffice to say, the Australasian Dominions were not comfortable with the strategic assumption that their greatest national peril lay in the English Channel rather than the Tasman Sea or the Strait of Malacca.

For their part, Canadian delegates at the Conference shared Australian skepticism of Japan. Clearly possessed of greater incentives to keep the Americans onside, the Canadians directly colluded against the Anglo-Japanese agreement by insisting they should keep warships positioned in Pacific waters that could support American vessels in any possible conflicts with the Japanese. Fisher admitted during a round of negotiations with Dominion representatives at the Admiralty, that "A further reason for stationing the vessel on the Pacific coast was, that the United States would regard Canadian vessels in these waters as potential support to them against Japan."³⁶² Here is Britain's highest-ranking naval officer discussing the logic of deploying British ships such that they might assist a foreign power in a war *against* one of Britain's treaty partners. These arguments

³⁶¹ See "Review in honour of the visit of the Fleet of the United States of America to New South Wales," F355.1709944 R454, AWM.

³⁶² Fisher, "Proceedings of a Conference at the Admiralty, Tuesday 10 August 1909" CAB 18/12A 1909, TNA, 2.

underscore the way notions of strategic danger in the Pacific were articulated along racial lines.

But the Dominions' strategic interests encompassed more than simply their own internal security. They also hoped to build regional influence (and international credibility through the Empire) by projecting power abroad. Haldane's two-level force posture became especially relevant here, for, as he tried to impress upon the delegates at the Conference, sovereign states had to prepare for contingencies abroad, and do their duty to their strategic partners.³⁶³ However, coming to a collective understanding of shared security goals proved a difficult task. The fleet unit scheme, with its provision for Dominion control in peacetime and Admiralty control in war, was the Empire's first and last attempt to force those square interests into round strategic holes. Frederick Borden, his confidence in Canadian security notwithstanding, offered this in debate: "it [Canada's fleet unit] should be not only a local service, but that it should be also a local force... which might, in case of war, if Parliament so decided, or the Government so decided, be joined to the British Navy for the general defence of the Empire."³⁶⁴ This preoccupation with the extra-territorial projection of force highlights the extent to which concepts of the nation were contingent on external rather than simply internal factors. How the Dominions touched the outside world meant as much to their legitimacy as states as the way they ordered their internal affairs.

One other aspect of the fleet unit negotiations helped smooth the Empire's strategic wrinkles – a naval service would develop Dominion populations to their full,

³⁶³ Haldane, *Ibid.*, 15.

³⁶⁴ Borden, *Ibid.*, 43.

martial maturity and help them seize their national destinies. McKenna assured the colonials in his opening speech that “Nobody recognises more fully than we do at the Admiralty that you have to take other things into account besides strategy,” and that the Dominions must have capital ships in their units because “if you are going to enlist men into the Navy you must offer them a future.”³⁶⁵ If the implied decision to include capital ships in fleet units hinged on the edification of colonial mariners, this entailed hundreds of thousands of pounds and years of production time over the alternative. The Dominions embraced the reasoning. Australian Secretary of Defence Samuel Pethebridge, Forrest’s successor, wrote to the Colonial Office ahead of the Conference, expressing his hope that the “Commonwealth will become a people efficient at sea.”³⁶⁶ Ward, stopping in Vancouver on his way back from the Conference, told the local Canadian Club, “When we look at the movement that is going on in the old countries, the increase of population and the advancement of science, it is our duty to realise that we cannot be stationary; we must move forward and accept our duty as partners in this great Empire.”³⁶⁷ Creswell, mindful of Australia’s naval prestige, reflected on the fleet unit scheme a month later, adding “The splendidly generous manner in which we are to be assisted to take our part and the great trust and responsibility which it imposes upon us, demand at the least on our part the determination that no effort shall be spared to make the vessels of the

³⁶⁵ Reginald McKenna, *Ibid.*, 46.

³⁶⁶ “Correspondence re Naval Defence” 16 April 1909, MP178/2 2152/1/9 444377, NAA, Melbourne The full text reads, “Whereas all the Dominions of the British Empire ought to share, in the most effective way, in the burden of maintaining the permanent Naval supremacy of the Empire: And whereas this Government is of opinion that, so far as Australia is concerned, this object will be best attained by encouraging Naval development in this country, so that the people of the Commonwealth will become a people efficient at sea, and thereby better able to assist the United Kingdom with men, as well as ships, to act in concert with the other sea forces of the Empire.”

³⁶⁷ Naval Militia in Pacific, 1909, RG24-2498 LAC. Joseph Ward, speech to the Canadian Club, October 1909.

Australian Unit such an efficient addition to the Royal Navy as to do us honour even in that distinguished company.”³⁶⁸ This language of racial edification constructed Australian, New Zealander, and Canadian men as the torchbearers of Anglo-Saxon heritage – of law and order, of liberty and commerce – in a way designed to comport with imperial security goals in the Pacific.

Thus the strategic discussions at the Defence Conference were fraught with tensions the fleet unit plan tried to patch. British officials would relinquish new capital ships to the Dominions despite the current crisis with Germany, and Dominions hoping to press their own strategic interests would volunteer for expeditionary warfare far from their shores. The agreement demonstrates the intertwined natures of security and sovereignty. The final aspect of this security-sovereignty nexus to consider is the constitutional implications of the fleet unit scheme, and the role of Dominion democracies in the scheme’s precepts. Despite the extensive rhetoric on naval cooperation, both British and Dominion officials repeatedly stressed that Dominion Parliaments would have final say on any naval cooperation, even though the scheme called for instantaneous Admiralty control of ships in the event of war. This assertion contained a significant reinterpretation of Parliamentary sovereignty that struck at the heart of Britain’s authority over its Empire. As constitutional commentaries like Dicey’s and Keith’s pointed out, all sovereignty in the Empire emanated from the Crown-in-Parliament. While all governments in the British Empire were agents of the King’s business in their respective states, the Westminster Parliament exercised supremacy over them all, especially on core constitutional principles like warfighting. When the King was

³⁶⁸ “Imperial Conference, 1909,” Creswell, 16 Nov. 1909, AWM124-1/22 489184, AWM, 3.

at war (as His Majesty surely would be if Britain were ever threatened), all his subjects were therefore automatically at war, and that war status hinged on the official sanction of the Westminster Parliament. In this way, Britain had the constitutional prerogative to put the entire Empire at war at its whim. The fleet unit agreement, which allowed Dominions to sanction the release of their units for imperial use, thus ran counter to traditional Parliamentary supremacy in precisely the way A.V. Dicey worried over in his *Law of the Constitution*.³⁶⁹ Fully twenty-two years before the Statute of Westminster, colonial governments asserted their parity with the Mother of Parliaments by arguing that they, not Westminster, had the right to mediate the sovereignty of the Crown into rightful authority over decisions for war. In this way, the fleet unit plan shows us how security imperatives pushed conversations about sovereignty in the Empire well ahead of 1931 and even the First World War. The same issue had been tacitly raised by the sending of the colonial contingents in the South African War nine years earlier.

At the outset of the Defence Conference, Dominion representatives sought clarification on the wording of McKenna's scheme memo, which stated that in the event of war, fleet units would "automatically" be placed under the command of the Admiralty. Col. Foxton suggested a revision "So that it would meet our national sentiment, so to speak, that the control should not pass automatically, but that it should be clearly by a voluntary act on the part of the Commonwealth [of Australia] Government and Parliament."³⁷⁰ In a return to the theme of racial peril, Merriman of South Africa wanted the British diplomats who had negotiated the Anglo-Japanese alliance to know his

³⁶⁹ See Introduction: The Widening Gyre

³⁷⁰ Colonel Foxton, Defence Conference Minutes, 1909, CAB 18/12A, TNA, 44.

thoughts on his country's democratic prerogatives: "Supposing that by any misfortune, or mischance, your alliance with Japan was to bring you into collision or conflict with the United States, if any such calamity was possible, do you suppose that any colonist would for a single moment send an expeditionary force to help an Eastern Power? Never."³⁷¹

Frederick Borden expressed the same reservations about including Canadian ships in imperial conflicts.³⁷² Even Joseph Ward, enthusiastic though New Zealand was about collective imperial defense, pressed its democratic prerogative to abstain: "our local governments have an undoubted right to do whatever they consider proper within their own territory and without interference from the British Government."³⁷³ But, as elsewhere, the saltiest words came from one J.X. Merriman, who was fond of cutting through his colleagues' statesmanlike rhetoric with what he probably imagined were doses of reality: "You must recollect that you have got to deal with democracies. We come over here and we are sometimes carried away, but when we get up in Parliament there are always oppositions, and there is nothing so much opposed as anything like military combination in any shape or form."³⁷⁴ Merriman's admonishment targeted what he considered the flighty concerns of both the Dominions and Britain, for, as was made clear in the discussion of per capita defense spending, the South African colonies believed they had overwhelming local liabilities that all but precluded their participation in expeditionary conflagrations elsewhere in the Empire. This also confirmed, whether

³⁷¹ J.X. Merriman, Defence Conference Minutes, 1909, CAB 18/12A, TNA, 24.

³⁷² Frederick Borden, *Ibid.*, 20. "That is the whole point, that we shall be ready if we wish to take part; but we are not bound to take part if we do not wish to do so. We shall be able to do so if we desire it. If we do not desire it we are absolutely free to abstain or refrain from doing it. It seems to me that is the whole thing."

³⁷³ Joseph Ward, *Ibid.*, 22.

³⁷⁴ J.X. Merriman, *Ibid.*, 24.

Merriman realized it or not at the time, that the South African colonies did not yet qualify for Dominion status based on the norms and principles of 1907.

Most of the Dominion delegations seemed confident, contra Merriman, that their Parliaments would of course vote their assent to assist in any imperial war, and the ensuing decade proved them right.³⁷⁵ This tone even suggested that democratically-sanctioned naval service would be healthy for young nations. An Australian pamphlet, extolling the benefits of an Australian fleet unit, argued that Australia's democratic spirit would keep its navy free of the stultifying class divisions of the Royal Navy (which, implicitly, mirrored those of British society).³⁷⁶ But the form Dominion navies might take in the future was still unclear in 1909. Deakin cabled Foxton on the issue of local consent, expressing his understanding that if the Admiralty did take command of Australia's fleet unit, it would be in the context of a greater Far Eastern Fleet and not, say, orders to steam for the North Sea.³⁷⁷ As noted above, the Admiralty would nervously seek legal advice after the Conference over their liability for the doings of Dominion ships on the high seas. Even if they could not put the Dominions "automatically" at war, they feared the inverse would still be true. The experience of strategic aggression by colonial actors in recent memory, from Queenslanders' attempts to seize Papua New Guinea, to Seddon's designs on Fiji, to Curzon's activities on the Northwest Frontier,

³⁷⁵ Indeed, the Australian fleet was placed under Admiralty control voluntarily and secretly not long after the outbreak of World War I, without any public consultation whatsoever.

³⁷⁶ Keith Murdoch, *The Homecoming of the Fleet Unit* (Sydney: Sydney Day, The Printer, Ltd., 1913), 5.

³⁷⁷ Telegram, Deakin to Foxton, quoted in Meaney, *The Search for Security in the Pacific, 1901-14*, 185.

made them rightfully wary. Democracy did prove critical to the Dominion idea, and its true test came in the matter of who ordered military deployments.³⁷⁸

3.4 CONCLUSION

Many of the ships planned for the fleet unit scheme were built, christened, and plied the seas; some were even built in Dominion shipyards. They bore names that evoked their symbolic roles as carriers of national honor: HMS *New Zealand*, HMAS *Australia*, HMCS *Canada*.³⁷⁹ William “Billy” Hughes, who would serve as Australia’s Prime Minister during the First World War, said as he watched the newly-built Australian Fleet Unit steam from Britain’s shipyards into Sydney harbor for the first time:

The arrival of the Australian fleet unit is not only an historic event, it is one of supreme significance. It marks a new era in Australian development. By the establishment of the Commonwealth the old colonial regime came to an end. We had created the means by which we could become a nation. The Australian fleet unit is a formal notification to the outside world that we have recognised our responsibility, our danger, and our duty to ourselves, to the Empire, and to the cause of civilisation.

Australia has assumed the toga of nationhood. It is no doubt a very

³⁷⁸ This reality presaged Carl Schmitt’s criterion of sovereignty - the state of emergency - two decades later. Carl Schmitt, *Dictatorship* (Wiley, 2015).

³⁷⁹ *Canada* was actually laid down in 1904 and was meant to serve as a training ship for the Canadian unit’s centerpiece battle cruiser. Ultimately, none such was built.

scathing commentary on civilisation and on all those institutions upon which civilisation rests that in these days, as in the grey dawn of human history, force is the only safe foundation upon which a nation can rest.³⁸⁰

Hughes recapitulates the Australian confusions discussed in Chapter 1 – when, precisely, did the Australian Commonwealth come into being? Was it the moment of its constitutional ratification in Sydney or London, or was it one of a series of military deployments by Australians from South Africa to the Fleet Unit to the First World War? Hughes’ invocation of the “grey dawn” of human affairs was an argument about the nature of sovereignty – the past, present, and future of the concept. It invoked the State of Nature, that famous playground of philosophers, and the essential foundations of human civilization that would support international relations in the new, globalized century. Self-defense was at the core of this idea. Hughes’ paradigm of sovereignty bore a certain resemblance to much older treatises on the subject, from Thomas Hobbes’ *Leviathan*, with its own grey dawn a “war of all against all,” to Vegetius’ classic phrase, *Si vis pacem, para bellum*.³⁸¹ The Fleet Unit, then, was a “scathing commentary” on the need for self-defense in the modern world, but for Hughes it was also a bold statement of Australian sovereignty, of parity with foreign powers, and of intent to play a role in shaping the future of international affairs. The glinting, smoking sovereignty of the Australian fleet unit meant that some things about human affairs were perennial. Australia had arrived, and it would stand on a foundation of force.

³⁸⁰ “Mr. Hughes’ View,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 Oct. 1913

³⁸¹ Loosely, ‘If you desire peace, prepare for war.’ Vegetius was a scholar in the late Roman Empire and recapitulated classical wisdom on warfare in his treatise *De Re Militari*.

Still, by the time Hughes uttered these words, the scheme itself had unraveled. The seeds of its defeat were present from the beginning – in the imbalanced perceptions of strategic danger across the Empire, and especially in the exigencies of democracy Merriman so forcefully evoked. Public life in the Dominions was unused to prolonged contact with soldiers and sailors; Ward told the Conference that a large standing army would be unimaginable in New Zealand, hearkening to the competing ideas about militarization that still swirled across the Empire.³⁸² Australian press support for a locally-funded navy that might serve imperial needs struck Lord Dudley, the Governor-General, as downright suspicious – surely, he wrote, they meant surreptitiously to divert these funds to social entitlements.³⁸³ McKenna even admitted, revealing that he was a more orthodox Mahanian than his First Sea Lord Fisher, that the Admiralty thought colonial subsidies were the most strategically effective option for the Royal Navy, as they did less to jeopardize the principle of central command.³⁸⁴

Furthermore, the fleet unit scheme raised more fiscal questions than it answered.³⁸⁵ Dominion-financed ships had strings attached in the form of crews, which would need to be pulled from other Royal Navy posts until sufficient Dominion sailors could be trained. The preliminary agreement also called for the British Government to pay a rebate of up to £250,000 per year in upkeep on Australian ships, though this was later waived by the Australian Government. As for the Dominions, if they had been

³⁸² Joseph Ward, Defence Conference Minutes, 1909, CAB 18/12A, TNA, 22.

³⁸³ Dudley to Admiralty, quoted in Gordon, *The Dominion Partnership in Imperial Defense, 1870-1914*, 224.

³⁸⁴ McKenna, Defence Conference Minutes, 1909, CAB 18/12A, TNA, 65.

³⁸⁵ For more on this point see Sumida, *In Defence of Naval Supremacy*, chap. 6 – “Radical Finance and Dominion Aid.”

driven by fiscal imperatives, Asquith's chart should have pleased them – they enjoyed relative safety (at least compared to Britain) at peace on the pound. Yet, Canadian protests, which nearly killed the scheme at the Defence Conference, stemmed from the fact that Canada apparently aspired to a full *two-ocean* navy, and the scheme only proposed to cover the Pacific.³⁸⁶ This protest, while partly disingenuous, implied even greater expenditures than the fleet unit scheme asked.

Democracy proved an even more lethal obstacle. The Dominions might be willing to vote for participation in imperial wars, and did so in 1914, but in peacetime it proved too much to take on, as will be explored in the following chapter. Laurier's Government crumbled after an unsuccessful Naval Bill, and when his Conservative successor Robert Borden tried to salvage the situation with a scaled-back subsidy bill, this too failed. Worse was the revolving door of officials in London – none did more to torpedo the fleet unit scheme than Winston Churchill. When he succeeded McKenna as First Lord of the Admiralty in one of Asquith's Cabinet reshuffles, he swept aside all diplomatic progress of the preceding three years and planned to scrap two of the new ships in order to save £5 million for Lloyd George's People's Budget.³⁸⁷ He casually informed the Government of New Zealand that HMS *New Zealand* would be stationed in Gibraltar and instructed the Colonial Office to start preparing Australia for similar news.³⁸⁸ Fisher was replaced by a

³⁸⁶ This was yet another politically tenuous play by Wilfrid Laurier – Pacific constituents lauded the idea of a Canadian fleet unit based in Vancouver. See Laurier Papers, McBride to Laurier, 1909, MG26-G, Reel C-877, LAC. The BC Premier forwarded a resolution by the Vancouver Navy League to that effect. Sir Charles Hibbert Tupper, President of the League, told the Vancouver *World* that he hoped to “point out to Ottawa that we have the willing material at hand...” See Naval Militia in Pacific, 1909, RG24-2498, LAC.

³⁸⁷ See Lambert, “Economy or Empire?,” 68.

³⁸⁸ In addition to his budgetary priorities, Churchill also thoroughly subscribed to Mahan's argument that core defense concerns trumped all; he resolved to bolster the Mediterranean squadron at the Pacific's expense.

succession of more pliable First Sea Lords. The transience of democracy meant that the relative predictability of the old Empire was lost.

But officials across the Empire had not initially endorsed the fleet unit scheme because it was fiscally tidy or strategically coherent or politically predictable. They embraced it at the outset, despite these things, because it was a messy compromise that satisfied their quest to access legitimacy for their young states through security cooperation. Toward the end of the Defence Conference, Colonial Secretary Lord Crewe said in prophetic weariness:

It is quite true that though questions of strategy in a sense ought to take the first place in composing an organisation intended for war, yet there are occasions in which questions of strategy in composing that organisation have to take second place. We cannot impose any system upon the Dominions. We do not desire to, and we could not if we would. We do not speak of them now as Colonies; we speak of them as Dominions, and very largely as allied nations. Well, allied nations have to bear the disabilities which depend on their respective forces not being under identical control.³⁸⁹

Crewe spoke of “centralized decentralization.” He spoke of the new realities observed by Dicey, and of the “Britannic Alliance” envisioned by Richard Jebb. These were inchoate ideas, but they grew more solid by the day. And they made clear that Britain was no longer fully sovereign over parts of the Empire.

³⁸⁹ Crewe, Defence Conference Minutes, 1909, CAB 18/12A, TNA, 75.

The fleet unit scheme looked ahead to the same future, despite Churchill's efforts to ensure it never survived to see it. It presaged many of the emerging international norms of the twentieth century – self-determination, international security cooperation, and the rising expropriation of wealth by state institutions, military and civilian. In the same way, a 1908 Radio and Telegraphic Conference held in London saw the Dominions press for independent voting rights (which would have given the Empire six votes collectively).³⁹⁰ This met strong resistance from Germany, who would grudgingly accept only Canada, Australia, and India – India, which despite its conspicuous absence from the subsequent Defence Conference and low per capita figure spent roughly £20 million in public money on defense that year. Sovereignty in the British Empire thus entailed more than simply self-government or military potency alone. It demanded a state sufficiently organized to look after its own security and capable of projecting that security abroad. It demanded a polity willing to voluntarily endorse the project, and disqualified those who individually or collectively failed the test.

This in part explains the notable omissions of India and Ireland from the Dominions' origin story. India certainly spent money on defense and maintained the largest professional army in the world, but British command of these had no democratic strings attached. Irish politics remained fixated on the issue of Home Rule during this period, but the acceleration of British shipbuilding and the stimulus it created for the shipyards of Belfast only reinforced the unionist-Protestant contingent in the north of the country. As John Darwin notes, the postwar Anglo-Irish Treaty gave Ireland a half-

³⁹⁰ Action Taken on Colonial Conference Resolutions, 1907, CO 886/2/1, TNA, 21.

hearted version of Dominionhood with extra fiscal and military controls.³⁹¹ In these two settings, strategic risks that either Ireland, which after all was part of the cuttlefish's head, or India, which contained the Empire's largest manpower reserve, would refuse to cooperate with imperial security goals were too high for British officials willingly to invite the constraints and uncertainties of democracy.

Vice Admiral Wilmot Fawkes, the officer in charge at the Royal Navy's Australia Station, wrote to Lord Northcote, the Governor-General of Australia in February 1907, "As yet no arrangements for giving political representation to the Colonies has been devised, and the payment of a subsidy [from Dominions to the Royal Navy] recalls days without Parliaments and is perhaps contrary to the instincts of an Anglo-Saxon race, who wish not only to contribute to the sea power of the Empire, but also to send their own sons to serve in the Fleet."³⁹² Fawkes' view of the unsuitability of subsidies versus active participation hangs on a concept of mature nationhood that has collapsed its democratic and military dimensions. That he also employs the Anglo-Saxon racial paradigm to validate this argument shows, as has been demonstrated above, how colonial elites imagined nations under the Empire as racialized units that either added to or detracted from the security of all.

Keith Murdoch, the Australian pamphleteer who praised the fleet unit scheme and printed his works alongside recruitment flyers for the Australian Navy (and whose son Rupert would later become even more successful in the newspaper business), captured what the fleet unit moment in history meant as he lyricized:

³⁹¹ Darwin, "A Third British Empire? The Dominion Idea in Imperial Politics," 75.

³⁹² Fawkes to Northcote, "Naval Agreement and Imperial Conference Discussions," 1908, 2115/1/46 334238, NAA.

The payment for our navy has been in greater things than coins. We have paid in fighting males. In droughty wayback villages, in golden wheat valleys, on sun-baked pastoral plains, and in our own pleasant city suburbs, homes are poorer because the boy has 'gone into the navy.' What matters the four million sovereigns compared with this? The boys are gone - that they are gone to polish the guns and stoke the fire and explore the Pacific seas does not minimise their departure to mothers. But as against the loss of able men from reproductive employment, and the loss of our own people from our homes, there is the gain of something new and big in our occupations and our thoughts. The nation has become productive of new things-

...the sailor men

That sail upon the Seas,

To fight the Wars and keep the Laws.

Murdoch's concluding verse is lifted from a contemporary anthology of poetry and recollections on naval life called *A Gun-Room Ditty Box* by G.F.S. Bowles.³⁹³ It speaks directly to the national future chased by Dominion governments: armed with their navies, they would join, and shape, the world as sovereign states. Murdoch omitted the final line in the stanza: "...and live on yellow peas."

The following chapter will explore the continued breakdown of consensus over imperial security matters in the years 1910-1914. As crisis after crisis again rippled

³⁹³ G.F.S. Bowles, *A Gun-Room Ditty Box* (London: Cassell and Company, Ltd., 1898).

through the Empire, the tensions – racial, political, strategic – militating against working solutions grew stronger. In these years it became clear to British observers that constitutional upheaval and political instability were not simply the problems of the colonial sphere – an unquiet Ireland brought them ripping through heart of the Empire.

4 Chapter 4 – Things Fall Apart: The Collapse of Consensus and Control, 1910-1914

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In May 1912, the SS *Titanic* sank to the bottom of the North Atlantic, taking with it over a thousand lives. Two months later, Canadian Prime Minister Robert Borden boarded an ocean liner in Montreal to steam for London and confer with the British Government. His diary entries for the Atlantic crossing make ominous references to foggy weather and iceberg sightings. Borden soothed his nerves in the usual ways – shuffleboard, fine company, and light reading in the form of A.B. Keith’s 1909 *Responsible Government in the Dominions*.³⁹⁴ Keith’s complimentary words on the durability and exemplary nature of Canadian institutions, and on the timeless wisdom of Lord Dunham’s 1838 tract on federation in Canada, must have comforted Borden. Troubled waters for troubled times – Borden left behind a Canadian parliament bitterly divided over naval questions, and sailed to a Europe boiling with military tensions. Borden was no Virgil or Dante; he was an irascible Nova Scotian – but his voyage seems, with hindsight, like a posh, Atlantic journey across the Styx. Borden’s Tories had successfully torpedoed Wilfrid Laurier’s long-serving Liberal Government just months

³⁹⁴ Entry 29 June 1912, Borden, Sir Robert Laird and Rose, Kathryn (1912) *The Diaries of Sir Robert Borden, 1912-1918*. Transcription by Dr. Kathryn Rose. Documentation. Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Ottawa, ON. (Unpublished) digitized by Memorial University Libraries.

before, catching him a pincer between Henri Bourassa's hardline Quebecois Liberals and Anglo immigration hawks from western Canada eager to fence out Asian laborers and skeptical of Laurier's imperialist credentials. In so doing, Borden had deprived future Imperial Conferences of their longest-serving statesman, and their longest-serving obstructionist. Just as well – Lord Grey, the British Foreign Secretary, had observed after the 1907 meeting that the conferences took a horrible toll on Laurier's digestive constitution – 1907 had “nearly killed him,” Grey remembered.³⁹⁵ Over a decade of stymying imperial integration and creeping militarism apparently made one dyspeptic. By 1912, the British constitution was faring little better.

The intervening years since the 1909 naval crisis with Germany and the attempted fleet unit compromise went poorly for imperial defense and federation proponents. The moment of hope for a future of technological, strategic, and political unity for the Empire had been heady, but fleeting. Admiralty officials had argued amongst themselves about Britain's optimal strategic posture for decades, sometimes acrimoniously – Jacky Fisher told a journalist in late 1909 that his Admiralty colleague and professional rival, John Beresford, was like a monkey climbing a flagpole: “the higher he gets the more you see of his arse.”³⁹⁶ If outright consensus on strategic matters seemed elusive in London, it was even scarcer in the Dominions. Henry Stead, a prominent magazine editor, wrote to the Colonial Secretary in 1914 that for Churchill, the First Lord of the Admiralty, to claim “that Japan safeguards them in the Pacific is simply gall and wormwood to the

³⁹⁵ John E. Kendle, *The Colonial and Imperial Conferences 1887-1911: A Study in Imperial Organization* (London: Longmans, 1967), 228.

³⁹⁶ Quoted in Matthew S. Seligmann, *The Royal Navy and the German Threat, 1901-1914: Admiralty Plans to Protect British Trade during a War Against Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 34.

Australians on whom the Asiatic danger has been worked for all its worth for many years.”³⁹⁷ Though Dominion governments were busy building armies, navies, and the institutions necessary to run them, none were sure what they should, or even could, do with them. But in the years since the South African War, they had carved out space to carry on their own conversations about how to move forward. Suddenly, the British establishment found itself obliged to convince colonial governments to support its strategic visions. Matters of imperial defense that had been one-way conversations, even lectures, became cacophonous.

By 1910, a decade of distance separated the British Empire from the South African War. To show for it, there were three new alliances with great powers, two new colonial federations, a new Dominion category in the British constitutional ecosystem, and two new institutional bodies in the formal Conference system and the Committee of Imperial Defence. It had been a decade of militarization – socially, politically, and intellectually. Sovereignty, conceived in the collective minds of political actors and made tangible in institutional and constitutional forms, had relied on the logics of security to expand and grow. But this was a Faustian bargain – the more militarized ideas of sovereignty became, the less they synergized with the ostensibly liberal principles of the British constitution, especially the principle of civilian supremacy over the military prevailing since the days of Cromwell. As military institutions, capabilities, and assets spread across the British Empire, and were understood to be critical instruments of political power, they touched off competitions between those who would marshal and

³⁹⁷ Stead to Harcourt, 22 April 1914, Harcourt MSS, f. 80 dep. 457; quoted in Nicholas A. Lambert, “Economy or Empire? The Fleet Unit Concept and the Quest for Collective Security in the Pacific, 1909-14,” in *Far-Flung Lines: Essays on Imperial Defence in Honour of Donald Mackenzie Schurman* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1997), 75.

control them. These competitions took place within and across the borders of colonial states – colonial governments fought to control the military beasts they had fed, as Curzon had done, and with each other for strategic primacy, as was the case with Australia Station and the roles of the Australian and New Zealand governments in its basing arrangements. These swirling forces made the years after 1909 characterized more by fracture than by the unity for which some hoped. Moreover, they came to exert themselves more than ever on the imperial center itself. British politics was already beginning to realign itself around the issue of “union,” both in abstract terms and concrete ones to do with Ireland’s place in the United Kingdom. The basic strategic axiom that underpinned the growth of the Conference system – that the colonies now had a role to play in defending Britain as well as the converse – now had a constitutional dimension also. The British constitution was coming apart; the Union of the Kingdoms that had been the British state’s first exercise in projecting imperial power overseas threatened to collapse. This problem, too, was substantively driven by the colonies inward. Irish migrant populations in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States placed international diplomatic pressure on Britain that complicated metropolitan politics and, due to spatial dislocation and the growing autonomy of colonial states, proved difficult to suppress. But the paradoxes continued; even as colonial governments grew more independent of Britain and one another from 1910-1914, they also grew more alike. Their institutional forms – federal, centralized, increasingly democratic – and their overriding preoccupations – security and diplomacy – were converging rather than diverging.

This chapter will discuss the ongoing progress of colonial military and naval buildup in the years following the fleet unit negotiations of 1909. It will also examine the 1911 Imperial Conference, at which a robust and imaginative plan for imperial federation died, and the failure of naval legislation in Canada, which changed the political direction of that Dominion. These episodes will demonstrate how imperial central planning failed to hold together. The next section will discuss efforts to consolidate and centralize the Indian and South African states using infrastructure and security, and how this exemplified the ongoing centralization at state level in the Empire. Next it will return to the United Kingdom to examine the accelerating constitutional crisis caused by Irish Home Rule, and the way the British constitution finally came under threat from the same military exigencies that so often menaced colonial spheres, culminating in the outbreak of the First World War

4.2 THE SWORD OF DAMOCLES: SOVEREIGNTY AND THE FAILURE OF CENTRALIZED IMPERIAL DEFENSE

The central internal question of imperial security after 1909 was whether the agreements between Britain and its increasingly autonomous colonies would hold. What Richard Jebb called the “Britannic Alliance,” had by 1909 assumed the form of networked settler societies, appointees to the colonial machine, and the social ties running between colonial states, and between them and the metropole. These were undergirded by the remaining constitutional architecture that bound the colonies to the Crown and

Colonial/Dominion Office, and guaranteed through emerging deals over security, which bridged the gulfs created by trade and immigration issues.³⁹⁸ Between the Imperial Conferences, the Committee of Imperial Defence, and the idea of the fleet unit scheme, an ad hoc institutional and political basis for maintaining this equilibrium arguably existed. Yet within a few years the tenuous balance unraveled. The erosion of constitutional hierarchy in the Empire made strategic axioms harder to impose on a diverse and far-flung Empire. The same is true of militarism – it unleashed a logic of state-building in colonial states and provoked strategizing and competition. Liberal ideas and liberal heads of government complicated the balance further – one of the period’s greatest ironies is of liberal icons like Wilfrid Laurier and the radical governments of Asquith and Lloyd George presiding over turbulent and foreboding militarization to which they were nominally opposed.

The benefits of cooperation, for Britain and colonial governments, were fairly clear – they could defray the costs of defense in specific cases and mutualize costs generally, forge more robust collective security measures that would be more effective at deterring possible enemies, and of course create pathways to sovereignty and status in the Empire and the world more broadly. The drawbacks of cooperation, meanwhile, were that it required conceding strategic priorities – namely, in taking Britain’s word about whom to trust and whom to fear. In the parable of Damocles, the courtier is allowed to assume the throne of the king, Dionysus, but soon finds that he sits under the point of a

³⁹⁸ Richard Jebb, *The Britannic Question: A Survey of Alternatives* (London: Longmans, 1913), 252. For the idea of networks in the Empire see James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Angloworld, 1783-1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860-1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); Gary Bryan Magee and Andrew Thompson, *Empire and Globalisation: Networks of People, Goods and Capital in the British World, C.1850-1914* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

giant sword suspended by a single horsehair, symbolizing the danger and responsibility of great power. In March 1910, a Canadian MP wondered in a debate on Canadian naval spending whether it hung also over the Royal Navy, and over Canada.³⁹⁹ Few seem to have felt its menace more acutely than Wilfrid Laurier. The collapse of consensus on the issue of imperial defense, the failure of political reform at the 1911 Imperial Conference, and a series of setbacks at the domestic level like that of the Canadian naval bills, attested the weight and danger of the new realities of sovereignty in the British Empire.

Social scientists have extensively theorized the functioning of alliances and groups, which became increasingly institutionalized through the twentieth century. The waxing and waning fortunes of the “Britannic Alliance” in the years before World War I make for interesting analysis from this vantage point, as opportunities for testing some theories and as an early example of characteristically twentieth-century forms of international agreement, with formal precepts and imperatives for military intervention. Another benefit of deploying theoretical frameworks to understand the development of British colonies as states (and the role of security therein) is that it helps evade some of historical narrative’s teleological pitfalls, especially where the arc of colonial history is concerned. But the travails of Wilfrid Laurier, and other Dominion heads of government besides, are not easily understood through the idiom of Jebb’s “alliance,” however. Relations between Britain, India, and the various Dominions were at once too centrally-controlled for some affairs, and too ad hoc for others, to easily fit description as alliances. The matter of imperial security in the early twentieth century, rather, appears more

³⁹⁹ Official Report of the Debates of the House of Commons of the Dominion of Canada, 2nd Session, 11th Parliament, 9-10 Edw. VII, Vol. XCV, 1 March 1910, 4477.

clearly through the paradigm of the political scientist Mancur Olson: the collective action problem. Olson described the way joint endeavors create perverse incentives for parties to default on working toward the common goal, betting that some other party will be sufficiently motivated to carry on the work (or that the effort will collapse and each will see to itself).⁴⁰⁰ This dilemma applied strongly to the British Empire – Britain possessed preponderant resources, and the colonies and Dominions could rightly bet that it would cover their real or imagined security liabilities for nightmare scenarios. As Olson puts it, “there is...a surprising tendency for the ‘exploitation’ of the *great* by the *small*.”⁴⁰¹ To work around this problem, Olson argued, the joint endeavor must be made to produce “selective” goods, which either fence off access to non-participants or increase access based on engagement level on the one hand, or punish or coerce non-participants on the other.⁴⁰² Security posed just such a collective action problem for the British Empire. Creating straightforwardly selective goods (simply leaving colonies that did not contribute to imperial security undefended) would have been unthinkable; as the Board of Admiralty wearily admitted in a 1911 briefing on naval defense, “Whatever may be the decision of Canada at the present juncture, Great Britain will not in any circumstances fail in her duty to the oversea Dominions...to watch over and preserve the vital interests

⁴⁰⁰ “If the members of a large group rationally seek to maximize their personal welfare, they will not act to advance their common or group objectives unless there is coercion to force them to do so, or unless some separate incentive, distinct from the achievement of the common or group interest, is offered to the members of the group individually on the condition that they help bear the costs or burdens involved in the achievement of the group objectives. Nor will such large group form organizations to further their common goals in the absence of the coercion or separate incentives just mentioned. These points hold true even when there is unanimous agreement in a group about the common good and the methods of achieving it.” Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*, Harvard Economic Studies 124 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971), 2.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid., 3.

⁴⁰² Ibid., 51.

of the Empire.”⁴⁰³ Instead, the Empire tried to make security “selective” by leveraging the issue of sovereignty – vigorous contributors to imperial defense hoped for certain political payoffs that they believed enhanced their sovereignties and credentials as legitimate states. Tangibly, these payoffs appeared as seats on the Committee of Imperial Defence or at the Conferences, greater autonomy in diplomacy or military planning, and other boons discussed in previous chapters.

Other theoretical work on alliances has explored the extent to which their foremost purpose is actually for stronger members to constrain their weaker alliance partners, rather than solely to constrain or deter the alliance’s enemies.⁴⁰⁴ This dynamic certainly obtained for the British Empire; as discussed in previous chapters, the Colonial Office had its hands full restraining colonial expansionism in the Pacific, and the British Government in restraining the Government of India from starting an Indo-Russian (and inevitably, Anglo-Russian) war on the Northwest Frontier. A clear agreement on imperial collective security (similar to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance), and defined procedures for military command-and-control (like the fleet unit plan), should have helped the imperial center by supplying predictability and sufficient assurance to discourage risky unilateral acts by colonists, like Queenslanders’ 1883 attempted seizure of New Guinea.

Meanwhile, sovereignty added an abstract variable to the equation by providing an incentive to cooperate with collective security schemes that shoehorned participants into closer alignment with norms of statehood shaped by imperialism and war. Admiral Sir

⁴⁰³ Report on the Naval Defence of the Empire, AWM1.24-126 489227, 1912, Australian War Memorial (AWM), 4.

⁴⁰⁴ See Jeremy Pressman, *Warring Friends: Alliance Restraint in International Politics*, Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008).

George King Hall, remarked in 1912, “It is bad policy to throw cold water on the efforts of a young, and rising nation, to taking measures for their own defence, it might do harm: whereas if encouragement is given, and sympathy, they will place confidence in the old country, and be ready to place their defence forces certainly and always at our disposal, and if we act wisely, we become more and more amalgamated with the Home Forces.”⁴⁰⁵

This encapsulated Britain’s bid to overcome the collective action problem by constructing a system that politically (and even competitively) rewarded colonial cooperative with imperial security goals.

Some have argued that the militarization of the Dominions and India was not a matter of persuasion on Britain’s part, but rather one of necessity, due to British fecklessness and miscalculation.⁴⁰⁶ This claim seems tenuous; there was certainly no shortage of attempted persuasion, as previous chapters have documented, though there is something to the asymmetric perception of threat by colonial observers and Britain in explaining why colonies might have had incentives to arm. And while Britain’s response to its circumstances can and has been criticized, its appraisal of its strategic situation withstands near-term historical scrutiny at minimum for holding together war-winning coalitions.⁴⁰⁷ Authority and hierarchy were central to these dilemmas. Authority, distinct

⁴⁰⁵ Quoted in Lambert, “Economy or Empire?,” 74–5 Lambert makes this point about the fleet unit scheme most emphatically on the same page: “To save a comparatively trifling sum, or for some other short term interest, Churchill, as First Lord of the Admiralty, with the backing of the Liberal Cabinet, dismantled a highly imaginative and surprisingly popular system of collective security designed to protect imperial interests in the Pacific.”

⁴⁰⁶ Aaron L. Friedberg, *The Weary Titan: Britain and the Experience of Relative Decline, 1895-1905*, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 207.

⁴⁰⁷ Some realists have strongly disagreed; Friedberg maintains, again, that Britain was insufficiently hawkish to deter Germany; while Niall Ferguson makes the perpendicular argument that British militarism and strategic encirclement of Germany created its own path-dependency that led directly to war, thus indicting it with war guilt. Friedberg, *The Weary Titan*; Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War: Explaining World War I* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

from coercion in its voluntary nature, helps construct sovereignty by defining the source of legitimate power.⁴⁰⁸ It also shared sovereignty's two-level nature – incipient Dominion and colonial states used military power to legitimize and assert authority over their own spaces, and to qualify for entry to the international community, a condition that has been called “Westphalian sovereignty.”⁴⁰⁹ A major complicating reality of this period was that the states of the Empire, including Britain, still faced serious challenges to authority in their domestic spaces, and those challenges commanded first priority.⁴¹⁰ Authority begat hierarchy, since acknowledging and consenting to the power of another creates an inherently vertical relationship. Hierarchy thus existed both within incipient states, as they consolidated and centralized their control, and between them, as they negotiated their relationships with Britain and began mutually to acknowledge the rights of sovereign states to conduct their own internal affairs without interference. Some have persuasively argued that hierarchy simplifies alliances and coalitions because it can reliably enforce compliance.⁴¹¹ While the British Empire's hierarchy did streamline collective security in some of the ways such work suggests – it ensured the congruence of combat technology, command and officer training, and access to revenue for relevant institutions – hierarchy was also unravelling in this period, and thus so were its payoffs.

⁴⁰⁸ For more on the role of authority, see David A. Lake, *Hierarchy in International Relations* (Cornell University Press, 2009), 37; David A. Lake, “The New Sovereignty in International Relations,” *International Studies Review* 5, no. 3 (September 1, 2003): 304.

⁴⁰⁹ For more on this term see Stephen D. Krasner, *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999).

⁴¹⁰ For example, the United Kingdom's impending inability to control paramilitarism in Ireland, South Africa's perceived need to police its black majority, or the Pacific Dominions' needs to fence out Asian migrants and guard against incursion from rival European colonizers.

⁴¹¹ David A. Lake, “Beyond Anarchy: The Importance of Security Institutions,” *International Security* 26, no. 1 (July 1, 2001): 129–60, doi:10.2307/3092080.

It remains to discuss why the British Empire's security cooperation might have failed, from a theoretical perspective. To begin, serious debate about strategic first-principles continued, complicating observers' appraisals of their best options. Alfred Thayer Mahan's concentrated fleet posture, Julian Corbett's dispersed fleet posture, Halford Mackinder's emphasis on land-power and heartlands – these ideas competed for primacy in the minds of colonial politicians, officers, and officials, and shaped the way they approached the thorny dilemmas of imperial politics. One of these dilemmas was simply about which rival powers to cooperate with, and which to punish or deter. This binary did not necessarily cleave to Britain's newfound formal treaty partners; Britain had pacts with France and Russia but continued attempting to constrain their behavior, especially the latter's. Conversely, it lacked a formal operating agreement with the United States but largely ignored or acquiesced to its expansionism in the Pacific, and the Caribbean.⁴¹² The wisdom of these choices was not equally understood as such across the British Empire. The Government of India, especially during Curzon's Viceroyalty, considered rapprochement with Russia folly, and assurances from Japan unconvincing. Deal-making with France and Germany in the Pacific provoked New Zealand's direct action in the attempted annexation of Fiji, and a similar scenario played out in the Caribbean with Canadian designs on the Bahamas in 1911.⁴¹³ These rogue moments pointed to the strategic dissonance among the several governments of the Empire, an important reason that a clear consensus on imperial security policy and constitutional

⁴¹² This paradox is explored further in Steven E. Lobell, "Britain's Paradox: Cooperation or Punishment Prior to World War I," *Review of International Studies* 27, no. 2 (April 2001): 169–86.

⁴¹³ For more on New Zealand's designs on Fiji, see Chapter 1 – A Tide in the Affairs of Men: Fear, Federation, and the South African War in Australasia.

arrangements remained elusive. Additionally, some of the Empire's attempts at formal strategic cooperation, especially the deployment mechanics of the fleet unit plan (which transferred command to the Admiralty immediately upon the outbreak of war), created deep absurdities. They meant that the Dominions were encouraged to build navies, for example, but could only control them during peacetime. "Canadian warship" thus became, after 1909, an oxymoronic concept.

Moreover, the institutional consensus on these questions was not uniform within Britain itself – the Colonial Office and the Admiralty, for all their clutching at the pearls of central command in this period, actually showed remarkable flexibility on innovative schemes for the Empire, as in Chamberlain's endorsement of imperial federation, or Fisher's reconciliation to the fleet unit scheme despite its command implications. The Foreign Office, meanwhile, conducted its dealings largely without concern for the ramifications in colonial capitals.⁴¹⁴ Finally, the outbreak of the First World War constituted an obvious failure of deterrence for Britain, considering Germany's eventual appraisal of the costs and benefits of choosing war. This question has proved especially vexing for historians, some of whom have argued that, despite the extensive militarization and naval buildup in Britain and across the Empire, this was still insufficient to make war unattractive to Germany and to force it to abandon its quest for military prominence.⁴¹⁵ On this analysis, the British Empire's insufficient aggressiveness

⁴¹⁴ This argument is made insightfully in Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997), 140.

⁴¹⁵ For this argument see Friedberg on choosing relative decline, Ferguson on "Understretch," and Hobson on the "extraction gap" Friedberg, *The Weary Titan*, 302; Niall Ferguson, *The Cash Nexus: Money and Power in the Modern World, 1700-2000* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 411; J.M. Hobson, "The Military Extraction Gap and the Wary Titan: The Fiscal Sociology of British Defence Policy, 1870-1913," *Journal of European Economic History* 22 (1993): 497.

constituted a massive policy failure, and the price of this languor totaled in the hundreds of thousands of lives and the billions of pounds. Any appraisal of this question must account for the fact that Britain was making serious efforts to mutualize its security costs with colonial partners in this period, at some detriment to central command and control. Thus, even if it can be said to have failed to deter Germany, it must be acknowledged that it was working to thwart another disastrous eventuality: the breakup of the Empire. Britain managed to keep that particular coalition together, and to utilize its aggregate resources, through two world wars. This can hardly be construed as failure, even if the objective of deterrence failed.⁴¹⁶

4.3 WILFRID LAURIER, THE CANADIAN NAVAL BILLS, AND THE ‘VORTEX OF MILITARISM’

The dream of a uniform scheme for imperial defense did not deteriorate in a rapid or even linear fashion, but its first obvious setback occurred in Canada. The Dominion contained some of the most diverse political realities in the Empire – a dilemma between continentalist and navalist strategic modes, the necessity of accounting for two oceans in the latter case, and the Empire’s most politically-empowered minorities (non- Anglo-Saxon or Protestant) in the Quebecois and Irish. The most remarkable thing about Laurier’s downfall over the 1910 Naval Service Bill is that it did not occur sooner. The

⁴¹⁶ This point has been argued persuasively by David Edgerton, *Britain’s War Machine: Weapons, Resources and Experts in the Second World War* (London: Allen Lane, 2011).

tenets of the fleet unit scheme – especially the provision placing ships under Admiralty control during war (when they were ostensibly most useful) – deeply perplexed many Canadians of all political stripes. W.B. Nantel, the Conservative Member for Terrebonne, said in a debate on the Naval Bill in March 1910, “Mr. Speaker, we will try to reassure these good people [farmer constituents] by saying to them ‘in time of peace...you will sell your eggs just as you did before. Only you will please to lay aside a little percentage out of each dozen...to pay the cost of these floating fortresses...In time of war, your fleet will have to be protected by the British Navy or else it will be blown out of existence.’”⁴¹⁷ Nantel’s example hit home – Canadian taxpayers would be funding a navy that would only be commanded by Canadians so long as no actual hostilities occurred. Such a force was, theoretically, not valueless to Canadian security, since it could still function as a deterrent during peacetime, but it was clearly not a fully-realized instrument of Canadian interests. Ironically, the only way to ensure the ships continued to defend Canada in wartime would have been to use them to start a war in Canadian waters. A July 1910 policy document circulated by Lt. Col. John Chancellor, Secretary of the Colonial Defence Committee (the pre-CID subcommittee of the Colonial Office tasked with formulating security policy for the colonies), noted that to “dispatch reinforcements to distant seas” in wartime would be a “false strategy,” and that such things would have to wait until the “clearing of the situation in home waters.”⁴¹⁸ The brief went on to emphasize to Dominion governments the importance of keeping a stiff upper lip during

⁴¹⁷ (Translated) House of Commons Debates (Hansard), 11th Parliament, 2nd session, vol. 3, Canadian Parliamentary Historical Resources, 2 March 1910, 4535.

⁴¹⁸ “General Principles of Imperial Defence Affecting Overseas Dominions and Colonies” Collection 308/41 [1910] IOR/L/MIL/7/13589, British Library (BL), Section 16, 4.

naval bombardment – with no fleet protection, enemy ships might threaten to bombard Dominion ports if the besieged British subjects refused to pay indemnities. “Surrender would entail more moral, if not material, loss to the place than the result of a few shells,” Chancellor lectured rather aloofly.⁴¹⁹ This was scarcely reassuring stuff for a skeptical Canadian Parliament.

The evolving nature of Canadian military and diplomatic institutions created space for questioning and contesting strategic mentalities of sacrifice for the good of England. On Laurier’s watch, Canadian institutions had evolved into more fully-realized forms, from Marine and Fisheries under Louis-Philippe Brodeur, to External Affairs under Joseph Pope, to Militia under Frederick Borden. To this group was added Capt. Charles Kingsmill, a retired Royal Navy officer from Ontario who was appointed to Marine and Fisheries in 1909 and created Rear Admiral commanding the Canadian Naval Service in 1910.⁴²⁰ It would be this last issue – the navy – that finally sank Laurier. To fully comply with the fleet unit framework, the Canadian Government would have needed to fund a battlecruiser attack group, and to base it at Esquimalt, at the tip of Vancouver Island in British Columbia (adjacent such evocative landmarks as a town called Ladysmith and a mountain called Majuba), leaving the Atlantic to the Royal Navy. But it was scarcely ever clear that Laurier was willing or able to fund a force of that size. Instead, his Government set about acquiring two secondhand Royal Navy cruisers, *Niobe* and *Rainbow*, and Kingsmill began inquiries into the possibility of developing local

⁴¹⁹ Ibid., Section 46, 11.

⁴²⁰ George V would officially grant it the title “Royal Canadian Navy” in 1911.

shipbuilding capacity robust enough to produce future warships.⁴²¹ As Reginald McKenna admitted in 1909, the Admiralty understood the Dominion governments would likely rather build warships in their own yards rather than contracting with British ones, despite the technical and fiscal efficiencies entailed in doing so.⁴²² In March 1910, Kingsmill wrote to the Admiralty asking about obtaining the plans for building Britain's then-current *Bristol*- and *River*-class destroyers. He coyly attached a newspaper clipping about the British shipbuilding firm Vickers, Sons & Maxim fitting out Argentine shipyards at preferential rates.⁴²³ The replies disappointed him. He informed Laurier in August that plans would be "grudgingly given," and in September Lord Strathcona, Canada's High Commissioner (its diplomatic representative in London), informed Kingsmill that he anticipated "considerable difficulty" in securing contracts to build British-designed warships in Canadian yards, "though there would, of course, be no such difficulty [building them] in Great Britain."⁴²⁴

This episode only highlighted the lacunae in Canada's sovereignty – Canada lacked the facilities and the expertise to build its own warships, and could not secure these from Britain even under seemingly reasonable circumstances. Now that the Canadian navy was an official entity, however, issues of legality in international waters resurfaced. The British Admiralty's worst fear was of a disaster on the high seas – of a

⁴²¹ Construction of Ships - Liaison with High Commissioner and Admiralty Re Canadian Naval Programme, 1909, LAC, RG24-2604, 2-3, folio 111-112.

⁴²² "I can imagine that the electors of the Commonwealth [of Australia] would be far more willing to contribute to the cost of the Navy, if the money was spent in the Commonwealth, and was not spent over here." Defence Conference Minutes, 1909 CAB 18/12A, National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNA), 35.

⁴²³ Construction of, 1909, LAC, RG24-2604, 3-5.

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*, 28, 57.

Canadian vessel firing on a German one, say, and consequently starting an Anglo-German war. Conversely, Henri Bourassa's Quebecois Liberals feared that the transfer-of-command provisions of the fleet unit scheme meant that Canada's assets would be automatically implicated in *any* British war, no matter how remote to Canadian interests, ensuring Dominion susceptibility to the "vortex of militarism." A September 1910 memo from the Foreign Office and Admiralty laid out some policies: RCN ships could fly Canadian ensigns in Canadian territorial waters, but they would remain fully British in all extra-territorial contexts and must fly the (Royal Navy) White Ensign from their main masts.⁴²⁵ By late 1910, the Canadian Government had succeeded only in purchasing two obsolescent cruisers and in getting tentative agreements from the British firm, Vickers, to fit out Canadian shipyards. Laurier's Naval Service Bill had satisfied no one. Imperialists to his right decried it as a plan for a "tin pot navy" capable of little beyond blundering around the Canadian littoral; certainly not of deterring a foreign aggressor, or of decreasing British reliance on the Japanese alliance in the northern Pacific, an agreement Laurier was inclined to trust. To make matters worse, Laurier also advocated preferential tariff agreements with the United States, not Britain, which enraged conservative voters in Ontario and British Columbia.

Having spent the last ten years trying to fortify Canada against the vortex of militarism, Laurier found himself sucked up by it anyway. Laurier's eventual downfall was not in his failure to understand the security-sovereignty nexus – his protestations that Canada was "not a sovereign power" and his foot-dragging on building a Canadian navy suggest he understood the link better than most. It was in his apparent belief that he could

⁴²⁵ Status of Dominion Ships, 1910 RG25-1102, LAC, 8023-5.

triangulate away from them; to build Canadian institutional capacity in infrastructure, diplomacy, and politics, toward a sovereignty that dare not speak its name. He retained his liberal bona fides to the last, searching for cost-efficient ways to secure Canada and participate in imperial politics without becoming entangled in them, trying to serve the state primarily through trade concessions. It is perhaps appropriate that Nantel, a Quebecois Tory, saw him with such piercing gaze in 1910. In his hours-long speech on the Naval Service Bill, he insisted, as Laurier once had, that Canada was “not a nation,” and that to claim otherwise invoked the kind of nonsense mumbled “after a banquet, among the fumes of wine that lead to boasting, to overestimation, and to the burning of frankincense.” He compared the idea of creating a Canadian navy that would be used to defend other parts of the Empire equivalent to Canada “establish[ing] a postal service for New Zealand.”⁴²⁶ On the Colonial Defence Committee’s controversial advice about bombardment, he warned of the way it constrained Canada’s choices, calling it “imperialism in action” and pronouncing gravely “I see there written in letters of fire: ‘You must bend or be broken.’”⁴²⁷ In his final assault on Laurier, Nantel dubbed him an “imperialist against his will,” and quoted the damning critique launched against Laurier by David Lloyd George as the latter opposed the Boer War in 1901 – “Sir Wilfrid Laurier...stated that Canada was an independent nation, and yet, that colony pretending to be independent has sent troops in South Africa to crush down the independence of men who have an equal right to the independence Canada claims for herself.”⁴²⁸

⁴²⁶ Official Report of the Debates of the House of Commons of the Dominion of Canada, 2nd Session, 11th Parliament, 9-10 Edw. VII, Vol. XCV, 1 March 1910, 4539.

⁴²⁷ Ibid., 4545.

⁴²⁸ Ibid., 4548.

These fusillades went on for days. The Naval Service Bill actually passed in May, going through on support from Anglo Liberals and some Tories who were content to see a formal Department of Naval Services and associated funding, hoping they could build on it later. It alienated the Quebecois, however, and Laurier lost the subsequent election having galvanized his opposition and hollowed out his own support base. A Canadian Navy was born, fitfully, with its own Department, two obsolescent ships, and a new staff college to be built in Halifax. But the sword hanging over him ultimately forced Laurier to vacate the throne. He deserves credit for understanding the changing nature of sovereignty the sword symbolized, and the gathering storm of militarism he described from out of his own visions, even if, in the end, he failed to arrest or harness it.

Robert Borden, whose Tory government succeeded Laurier's in late 1911, entered office with a mandate to do something about the navy. Thus far he had advocated for building a Canadian Navy along reasonable lines, rather as Laurier had, but with the crucial difference that Borden hoped to operate jointly with the Royal Navy to the greatest extent possible, and thus to secure for Canada a formal influence in the British Government's decisions on war and peace.⁴²⁹ Knowing he needed to manage both the Quebecois and the imperialist wing of his own party, Borden tried to do this by campaigning for the repeal of Laurier's Naval Service Act, but the Liberal-controlled Senate stymied his strategy.⁴³⁰ Unfortunately for him, his path to an aggressive naval spending program was obstructed by the upper house, who wanted no such thing. This

⁴²⁹ Borden, *Memoirs I*, p. 269-270, 296-7. Quoted in F. H. Soward, "Sir Robert Borden and Canada's External Policy, 1911-1920," *Report of the Annual Meeting of the Historical Society of Canada* 20, no. 1 (1941): 65-82.

⁴³⁰ Roger Sarty, "Canadian Maritime Defence, 1892-1914," *Canadian Historical Review* 71, no. 4 (December 1, 1990): 487.

forced Borden to fall back on the mechanism of subsidy – a mechanism with a rich recent streak of political failure. Winston Churchill, the First Lord of the Admiralty, had done his share to maneuver Borden back into the subsidy trap during his visit to London in 1912, by throwing more cold water on the prospect of contracting warships in Canadian yards and entreating Borden for funding to relieve the Admiralty’s fiscal burden.⁴³¹ In the prior debate on the Naval Service Bill alone, the concept of “taxation without representation” (and all its historical baggage in North America) had been referenced on seventeen different occasions.⁴³² Per his consultation with Churchill, Borden’s Naval Aid Bill would have earmarked \$35 million for three new dreadnoughts – for the Royal Navy. His bill tried to sidestep the command-and-control problem by simply conceding it altogether. Borden attempted to assure the chamber during the debate that Canada’s naval efforts and position on the CID meant “no important step in foreign policy would be undertaken without consulting such a representative of Canada.”⁴³³ This was an optimistic statement, and Borden’s audience knew it. In a spectacle of futility worthy of its predecessor, the Naval Aid Bill endured six months of Liberal filibuster, after which Borden’s Government invoked the first formal cloture in Canadian parliamentary history to end the debate. The bill died anyway, as expected, in the Liberal-controlled Senate.

⁴³¹ See Richard Toye, *Churchill’s Empire: The World That Made Him and the World He Made* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2010), 128.

⁴³² Search, Canadian Parliamentary Debates, 11th Parliament, 2nd Session. (http://parl.canadiana.ca/search?pkey=oop.debates_HOC1102&t=any&so=seq&q=%22taxation+without+representation%22).

⁴³³ Hansard 1912, I, 676-7, 692 Soward, “Sir Robert Borden and Canada’s External Policy, 1911-1920,” 68.

4.4 THE 1911 IMPERIAL CONFERENCE: FEDERALISM'S FAILURE

As the long struggle for a Canadian naval settlement played out, the United Kingdom returned H.H. Asquith's Liberal Government for another term in the January 1910 General Election by a hair's breadth – two seats, and behind, in the popular vote, to Arthur Balfour's Tories. To continue in power, Asquith had to cut a deal with John Redmond's Irish Parliamentary Party to support him. The election itself followed a constitutional crisis in which the House of Lords had refused to pass David Lloyd George's "People's Budget" the previous year. Asquith's win gave him the technical means to pursue constitutional reform and break the Lords' veto, but a mandate and a margin that was not particularly reassuring for a task so momentous. It also obliged him to push harder on the issue of Home Rule for Ireland, now that Redmond backed up his Commons majority.⁴³⁴ The British constitution was coming apart at the seams. As it reached its ripping point in summer 1911 with the new Parliament Acts, the next iteration of the Imperial Conference convened in London, adding to the circus of politics taking place in the imperial capital. A beleaguered Laurier, on the last legs of his premiership, did his utmost to skip the Conference, his continued association with which did him no favors and diverted him from his myriad political problems at home. But Borden forced him to go, loudly offering to adjourn Parliament from the opposition benches, thus priming Laurier for more uncomfortable imperial imbroglios and freeing Borden for further machinations in Ottawa. The Canadian delegation naturally declined to submit any proposals ahead of the Conference, and had submitted little besides to the permanent

⁴³⁴ Home Rule had been a Liberal position (and debate) for some years hence. See TW Heyck, "Home Rule, Radicalism and the Liberal Party, 1886-95," *Journal of British Studies* 23 (1974).

Conference Secretariat in the intervening years since the last meeting.⁴³⁵ The Australians, considering their journey, had to plan a seven-month recess for the Commonwealth Parliament; the South Africans were deeply distracted by the business of their recently-accomplished Union. But New Zealand, as ever, came prepared.

Joseph Ward had big shoes to fill in Wellington and at the Conferences in London – literally, Richard Seddon had been a large man. Ward hit the ground running shortly after assuming office at the 1907 Conference and intended to keep up his form in 1911. He arrived in London with a fresh portfolio of exciting new proposals, but these were not entirely his making – they were the fruit of a trans-national network of officials, thinkers, and writers known as the Round Table. The Round Table was a self-styled Arthurian club of blue-sky thinkers who set about planning the future of world order from well-suited positions atop the British Empire’s pinnacles of power.⁴³⁶ Imperial federation was one of the Round Table’s central objectives, which is how it came to link up with Joseph Ward. At the time of the 1911 Conference, the Round Table’s master document on the imperial federation issue was a schematic paper called the “Green Memorandum.” The Green Memo contained Lionel Curtis’s sketch of how an empire-wide parliament would work, and included a bicameral legislature with a population-based lower house and a twelve-member Senate containing two representatives from each Dominion that would serve as

⁴³⁵ Kendle, *The Colonial and Imperial Conferences 1887 - 1911*, 170–171.

⁴³⁶ The movement’s leadership grew from an informal club called Milner’s Kindergarten, which had sprung up around former High Commissioner for Southern Africa Alfred Milner in the years surrounding the Boer War, to theorize the future of government in that region. Lionel Curtis, a Boer War veteran who had assumed its leadership after Milner’s death, helped found the Round Table in 1909 to continue the same work on an Empire- (and world-) wide scale. The organization held summits and published a quarterly eponymous journal. Curtis parlayed his position into the Beit Professorship at Oxford, and the Round Table began setting up branches in the Dominions. It also enjoyed the tacit endorsements of the *Pall Mall Gazette* and the *Times*, through friendly relations with their editors W.T. Stead (who also edited the *Review of Reviews* and died on the *Titanic*) and Valentine Chirol.

an “Imperial Council of Defence.”⁴³⁷ This was an ambitious plan, and would certainly have laid to rest any lingering ambiguity about central planning on defense and foreign policy in the Empire. It was also far too radical to be useful for public consumption at the time, and most of the members of the Round Table understood this. Ward did not. After receiving an advance copy of the Green Memo at a caucus with a Round Table group in Wellington, Ward thought it would be a perfect item of business to submit at the Imperial Conference for which he was shortly to depart.⁴³⁸

In Canada, the Round Table enjoyed a reputation among some Liberal and Quebecois observers as a sort of dangerous jingo cult trying to marionette the Dominions.⁴³⁹ Curtis, for his part, tried to steer his members away from direct intervention in politics, but Ward took no such steering. The Round Table offered direct and systematic thinking about the Empire’s policy problems, and drawing on its literature seemed an intuitive move. The third issue of the group’s quarterly in 1911 directly addressed the “New Problem of Imperial Defence” in its opening article. The quarterly offered a familiar diagnosis of the “problem” – dreadnought technology had upended the calculus of British naval superiority, and the Empire’s naval strategy and foreign policy, formerly under central command, now rested among the several Dominions collectively.⁴⁴⁰ It called the Dominions “no longer colonies, but nations,” and went on to

⁴³⁷ *Report on the Green Memorandum, Prepared by the Oxford University Segment of the Round Table Society*, C.S. Mortimer, Secy., Canada, 1912 (archive.org), 9-11.

⁴³⁸ Kendle, *The Colonial and Imperial Conferences 1887 - 1911*, 172-4; James Eayrs, “The Round Table Movement in Canada, 1909-1920,” *Canadian Historical Review* 38, no. 1 (March 1, 1957): 3-5, doi:10.3138/CHR-038-01-01.

⁴³⁹ According to Quebecois former Cabinet minister Rodolphe Lemieux, see Eayrs, “The Round Table Movement in Canada, 1909-1920.”

⁴⁴⁰ “The New Problem of Imperial Defence,” *The Round Table* 1, no. 3 (May 1, 1911): 249, doi:10.1080/00358531109413894.

link their new autonomy to a certain responsibility for imperial defense: “In undertaking the management of their own affairs the Dominions have ipso-facto made themselves responsible for the safety of the Empire of which they are part.”⁴⁴¹ The Green Memo, meanwhile, began by listing a series of resolutions on the importance of preserving the British Empire, the first two of which were that Britain would cease to be a first-rate power without it, and perhaps Canada (but probably none) of the Dominions could possibly maintain their independence without its security umbrella.⁴⁴² The Round Table, then, also grasped the paradox that developing and acquiring military resources brought the Dominions both freedom and constraint; it decentralized the Empire’s decision-making, but brought the individual parts into closer alignment by forcing them to consider the same basket of international security issues and to behave according to the same norms of sovereign state conduct, invariably shaped, a priori, by Britain. To Ward, these were obvious points to put before the Imperial Conference, preoccupied as it was in trying to reconcile the interests of the Dominions on the matter of security.

Unlike the previous conferences, 1911 did *not* begin with the sitting UK Prime Minister berating the visiting colonial heads of government about their poor contributions to imperial defense spending. Asquith even said, “I am not going to trouble you with statistics,” in his introductory remarks.⁴⁴³ This departure from established tradition had many causes, not the least of which was that colonial military spending actually did climb over the interim. Moreover, many of the attendees had years of experience with imperial

⁴⁴¹ Ibid., 255, 262.

⁴⁴² “Report on the Green Memorandum, Prepared by the Oxford University Segment of the Round Table Society,” 1909, 3, University of Alberta - The CIHM Monograph Collection, https://archive.org/stream/cihm_75787#page/n7/mode/2up.

⁴⁴³ Minutes of the Imperial Conference, 1911, CO 886/5A, 23 May 1911, TNA, 21.

conferencing under their belts by 1911, and there was less need to belabor the urgency of imperial defense, or the danger of Germany, or the necessity of aggressive shipbuilding. Asquith also directly recapitulated the writings of A.V. Dicey and A.B. Keith on the arc of imperial history – the false choice between “centralization” and “disintegration.”⁴⁴⁴ The assembled Conference, he implied, had solved that dilemma, if it had also introduced a new one about whether the CID or the Conferences should serve as the primary instrument for making common imperial policy.⁴⁴⁵ Laurier, the Conference’s longest-serving member, spoke next, and briefly stated that Canada had nothing to report but prosperity and general contentment, a statement as sincere as it was disingenuous.⁴⁴⁶ Beginning the first day, Ward laid out in alarming detail his plan for a federated imperial government, along the lines of the Green Memo, to his somewhat bemused colleagues. It was a poorly-timed speech, both for the reasons outlined above and because it directly recalled the early days of the 1902 Conference, at which Joseph Chamberlain had expected colonial support to greet his plans for federation and instead had his hopes dashed.

Ward actually laid even more emphasis on security than the Green Memo did, extemporaneously redubbing the proposed governing bodies an “Empire Parliament of Defence” and an “Imperial Council of Defence.”⁴⁴⁷ Clearly he believed this subtle

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid., 22, cf. Arthur Berriedale Keith, *Responsible Government in the Dominions* (London: Stephen and Sons, 1909), 3; A.V. Dicey, *Introduction to the Study of the Law of the Constitution*, (1915) 8 ed. (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1982), 29.

⁴⁴⁵ This question has been a primary focus of much of the literature on the conference system; see Kendle, *The Colonial and Imperial Conferences 1887 - 1911*, chap. 10 – “Conference or Committee? The Continuing Debate.”

⁴⁴⁶ Minutes of the Imperial Conference, 1911, CO 886/5A, 23 May 1911, TNA, 24.

⁴⁴⁷ Kendle, *The Colonial and Imperial Conferences 1887 - 1911*, 173.

rebranding would enhance their appeal. He told Asquith that he considered the concepts “state” and “defence” interchangeable when challenged about his inconsistent usage: “Yes. Perhaps I ought to use the term Imperial Council of State. Defence is above all other questions the one in which every part and subject of the Empire is vitally concerned. It is the great vital topic which can be treated only by a proper Council of State. I am going to assume that this is obvious, and I will not occupy the time of the Conference by arguing the matter.”⁴⁴⁸ Ward made himself perhaps too clear to his colleagues – his proposal, proceeding from the axiom that security begat sovereignty, meant taking much of the hard-won sovereignty the Dominions had accrued in recent years, and re-investing it in a centralized imperial authority. His colleagues saw forfeiture rather than progress in this plan. He tried to head off criticisms, from Laurier especially, by pointing out that (if no scheme were agreed) Canada’s planned navy would still be subject to the war-making power of the British Government. But his alternative seemed little better, and Laurier knew full well his own troubles without being reminded. Andrew Fisher, the Australian Prime Minister, politely called the scheme a “benevolent revolution.”⁴⁴⁹ A memo prepared ahead of the Conference by the Australian government listed some key priorities for the delegation: figuring out how to transfer sailors currently posted to the Royal Navy’s Australia Station to the Australian Fleet Unit itself, how to build warships in Australian yards as Canada hoped to do, and how to transfer control of Sydney’s naval base from the Royal Navy to the Commonwealth government, among

⁴⁴⁸ Minutes of the Imperial Conference, 1911, CO 886/5A, 23 May 1911, TNA, 47.

⁴⁴⁹ Minutes of the Imperial Conference, 1911, CO 886/5A, 23 May 1911, TNA, 55.

others.⁴⁵⁰ The other Dominion governments were clearly busy clawing power and resources back from the imperial center, not ceding them.

For the case of South Africa, the newest unitary delegation at the Conference, the response to Ward's proposal once again illuminated the way imperial concepts of security interlocked with those of race. In an ironic reversal of the ripostes made at the 1909 Conference – at which South Africa had tried to inflate its per capita defense spending figures by omitting its black population from the denominator, and incurred the wrath of their fellow delegates for this sleight of hand – the Minister for Education for the new Union of South Africa, F.S. Malan, probingly asked Ward whether his figures for representation in an imperial federal parliament had figured in the coloured population of his Dominion.⁴⁵¹ For once in the debate, Ward went on the offensive and found his rhetorical footing:

I understood that when you were framing the South African Constitution you refused to give the coloured population there the right to vote. Speaking generally, you could hardly expect in connection with an important proposal such as this, that a departure should be made so different to what has been carried out in South Africa...⁴⁵²

⁴⁵⁰ Memo, Minister of State for Defence, Commonwealth of Australia, Melbourne, 9 January 1911, Correspondence on Defence, A5954-11853 693751, National Archives of Australia – Canberra (NAA), 8.

⁴⁵¹ Minutes of the Imperial Conference, 1911, CO 886/5A, 23 May 1911, TNA, 57. The proposed number of delegates in Ward's imperial parliament, based on population, he quoted as Canada 37, Australia 25, South Africa 7, New Zealand 6, Newfoundland 2. Malan apparently felt chagrined by the quotation of these figures.

⁴⁵² Ibid.

Here, Malan inverted the logic of his predecessor J.X. Merriman, who statistically omitted black South Africans, while still managing to remain fully true to the spirit of South Africa's growing tradition of opportunistically instrumentalizing its black population in conversations about security. As with Merriman, Malan (and Ward) ensured that the intersections of race, security, and sovereignty that surfaced in 1909 would have obtained for a theoretical imperial parliament as well – black South Africans ostensibly played no role in (and perhaps even compromised, in the Union government's view) South African security, and thus they would not be counted among its full citizens. Neither could they count, then, as full citizens of the Empire's "parliament of defence."

Those speaking after Joseph Ward expressed polite dissent with his proposals, if in private they equivocated less. Louis Botha, Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa, wrote home to his colleague Jan Smuts in the Union government that the Conference had "easily defeated" Ward's "idiotic proposal."⁴⁵³ The Conference attendees in 1911 enjoyed access to a forum in which they could lobby the British Government with equally-weighted voices, and whose resolutions they enjoyed the luxury of standing aloof from if they chose. An imperial parliament, however fairly designed, would have lent a measure of democratic legitimacy to the use of their military assets for imperial ends, but it would also have re-imposed a numerical representative hierarchy on the Dominions vis-à-vis Britain. Furthermore, what had already been true for Chamberlain in 1902 was the more so in 1911 – the erosion of hierarchy meant that the Dominion governments could no longer be compelled to adopt one scheme or another, yet as contributors to imperial security Britain was forced to try to bargain with them for

⁴⁵³ Quoted in Kendle, *The Colonial and Imperial Conferences 1887 - 1911*, 177, FN. 2.

strategic cooperation. To underscore the extent to which strategic cooperation was fraying by 1911, a quiet campaign was gathering pace in Canada for the Dominion to annex the Bahamas. In an eerie echo of the New Zealand's federal dreams of a decade prior, a coalition of Canadian lawyers, grocers, and newspapermen began visiting Nassau in 1910 with the object of investigating the payoffs to Canadian trade of having a tropical foothold in the Bahamas, but crucially also of shoring up the growing void of British power in the Caribbean.⁴⁵⁴ As with the case of the Australasians, the Colonial Office (with its reconstituted Dominion Office) vigorously opposed this idea, and did its best to constrain Canadian aspirations, fearing they would interfere with the principle of free trade and generate tensions with local powers, especially the United States.⁴⁵⁵ At its root, the bid for the Bahamas drew on Canadian suspicions that Britain no longer acted in its interests regionally, and that these would be better served by taking a greater share in defending the Empire's interests.

Some proactive measures did emerge from the 1911 Conference on the matters of diplomacy and defense. In a new departure, the Foreign Secretary Lord Grey held a special session of the Conference in Whitehall at which he painstakingly explained the logic of British diplomatic strategy, confidentially, to the Dominion heads of government. Among other things, he told Dominion delegates they would be consulted in advance of future Hague international conferences, and even represented "in whatever way they

⁴⁵⁴ Paula Hastings, "Shifting Center of Gravity: The Panama Canal and Canada in the British Empire," Annual Conference of the British Scholar Society, (Austin, TX), 2015.

⁴⁵⁵ The British Government commissioned extensive consultations with relevant parties in the matter, including questioning involved parties in Canada and the West Indies before a tribunal. See statements taken in Cd. 5370 and Cd. 4991 1910, "Canada and the West Indies – Royal Commission on Trade Relations between Canada and the West Indies, Minutes of Evidence Taken..." *Parliamentary Papers* (Chadwyck Online).

found most convenient.”⁴⁵⁶ This briefing constituted somewhat of a climb-down for Grey, who had remarked in 1909 that even the likes of Canada possessed only three men who knew anything about foreign affairs, and, worryingly, one was a drunk, the second woefully inarticulate, and the third was Joseph Pope, who was a really first-rate official. He also deemed Australia’s foreign affairs department “incapable of translating an ordinary French letter correctly.”⁴⁵⁷ While the briefing offered the Dominion governments little space to steer imperial policy, the dialog was another crack in the edifice of central command. This was offset somewhat by the progress made in the years since the 1907 Conference on developing an Imperial General Staff – a uniform training and modular command system for the Empire’s senior military officers. The initiative, like so many others, grew out of dismay at the general disorder of troop training among the contingents in the South African War.⁴⁵⁸ By 1911, the Dominions had made some progress towards filling out the positions in their respective military staffs, and had agreements with Britain over harmonizing officer examinations and training.⁴⁵⁹ Dominion officers could travel to one of two locations to attend staff college – Camberley, in Surrey, or Quetta, in India. The General Staff agreement reinforced one of the interesting facets of emerging sovereignty in the Empire – the ability of (and need for) colonial states to deploy military forces in an expeditionary capacity, wherever they

⁴⁵⁶ Kendle, *The Colonial and Imperial Conferences 1887 - 1911*, 203.

⁴⁵⁷ Minute, CO 532/19/39643; and Grey to Elgin, 23 March 1908, Box 1793, Elgin Papers. Ibid., 226.

⁴⁵⁸ “It will be remembered that, when Lord Roberts landed in South Africa at the beginning of 1900, owing to the heterogeneous nature of the force placed under his command, he had to spend more than a month of valuable time in evolving a new transport organization for the Army, before any further strategical measures could be undertaken.” Correspondence on Defence for the 1911 Conference, A5954-11853 693751, NAA, “Possibility of Assimilating War Organization Throughout the Empire,” 19-20.

⁴⁵⁹ Commonwealth of Australia, Imperial Conference London, 1911: Naval and Military Defence, Papers Laid before the Conference, AWM124-1.25 489185, 1911, Australian War Memorial (AWM).

were needed. As the agreement itself stated: “the first point to note is that it is a cardinal military maxim that no organization for defence can be regarded as adequate or complete which does not contemplate offensive action. Passive defence seldom, if ever, wins decisive results.”⁴⁶⁰ Such were the expectations for the highest political echelon of the British Empire. The college at Quetta, and the tendency of Dominion officers to seek military experience in the Indian Army, represented one of the Army’s tangible payoffs to the Government of India relative to the other states of the Empire. It meant prestige and influence, but less abstractly, it helped inculcate in the Empire’s future military leadership the exigencies and strategic primacy of Indian defense. It also made India yet more indispensable to the Empire’s collective security as a primary node of producing quality officers.

India, meanwhile, had come no further in 1911 toward representation at the Imperial Conference. From the British House of Commons, the matter actually saw daylight through the person of Col. Charles Yate – an Indian Army officer who asked on 6 April 1911 whether the Imperial Conference could adequately discuss the defense of the Empire without India present.⁴⁶¹ The answer, from Colonial Secretary Lewis “Lou-Lou” Harcourt, was as ever that India’s interests were represented by the Indian Secretary, who would be present at Conference sittings if he were needed. Yate, of course, represented India only insofar as he represented the Indian Army; namely, its British officer corps. Security here remained India’s primary point of entry to imperial politics. The matter arose during the Conference as well – as Joseph Ward delivered his

⁴⁶⁰ Correspondence on Defence for the 1911 Conference, A5954-11853 693751, NAA, 6.

⁴⁶¹ “Imperial Conference,” HC Debate (*Hansard*) 06 April 1911, vol. 23, 2419-20.

ham-fisted call for an imperial federation, he faced questions as to its proper composition, and the place of India. He proposed to amend his proposed resolution affirming an imperial federation to include the words “representatives from all the *self-governing* parts of the Empire.” The sitting President, (Harcourt), advised him – “the effect of it is to omit...the Crown Colonies and India.” “That’s so,” Ward replied.⁴⁶² The *Times of India*, an organ of the British establishment, had little to say on the matter. It did report fairly extensively on the Conference proceedings, though, and more importantly, on the issue of labor migration within the Empire. On Ward’s dismissal of the problem of Indian migrants – “every colour going back to its own zone” – the *Times* asked sardonically: “What answer would [Ward] make if it were pressed on him by a delegation of Maoris?”⁴⁶³

The British Government’s position on India followed from constitutional principle – the Indian Secretary stood for Indian interests; popular representation of the British Indian state was no more welcome at the Conference than it was in the Raj itself. Yet the officers who alone spoke for Indian interests were correct – India’s vast importance to imperial matters of all stripes made its absence at the Empire’s highest forum a problem, especially so for matters of defense. The enforced absence of an Indian delegation, even so much as one of British Indian officers, spoke to the way incipient Dominionhood hinged on creating strong distinctions with other colonies. It also spoke to the incredibly high stakes of Indian security – whereas British officialdom seriously doubted the risk of a Dominion being invaded by a foreign power (as evidenced by the

⁴⁶² Minutes of the Imperial Conference, 1911, 1st day, CO 886/5A, TNA, 37.

⁴⁶³ “Some Imperial Problems,” *Times of India*, 17 July 1911, 6.

Colonial Defence Committee brief), they seriously feared a Russo-Indian conflagration. Furthermore, while the Admiralty Board and others took an exasperated parent's tone on security cooperation with the Dominions (as seen in the Board's memo about having to do its duty, even if Canada chose not to help), they could afford no such pronouncement about India. In contrast to the Royal Navy's power at sea, it was far from clear that the British Empire's land-based security liabilities could be covered without the might of the Indian Army; conversely, the small British Army could scarcely contemplate fighting a war in India or Central Asia without the Indian Army's cooperation. Allowing "Indian interests," however construed or constituted, to contest the principles of imperial strategy with the power of the Indian Army hanging in the balance would have been truly momentous, and have placed the idea of central command in far greater jeopardy than any of the Dominions' "tin-pot" navies could have done. As above, this sort of strategic discord proved to be a major obstacle, and the British Government would not imperil the hierarchy that allowed it to ensure the Indian Army remained its instrument. The direction of government in India and Africa, meanwhile, took this problem to heart by trying to do to the Empire's vast continental spaces what the sea did for the Royal Navy – allow ubiquitous access, through infrastructural penetration on a grand scale.

4.5 INFRASTRUCTURAL POWER: THE DELHI DURBAR AND THE UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA

If imperial strategists felt like they could rely on the Royal Navy to do what it must in any corner of the Empire, they dreamed of land forces with a similar reach. As Halford Mackinder had argued in his famous 1904 lecture “The Geographical Pivot of History,” Central Asia was the “heartland” of the world itself; India meant the British Empire was perched on its margin. The Royal Navy’s security backstop, to a significant extent, prefigured the expansion of British imperialism itself – outward in a series of “bridgeheads” that could be reinforced or relieved from the sea if necessary.⁴⁶⁴ As such, colonial capitals and seats of power tended to be coastal – Calcutta, Sydney, Melbourne, Wellington, Cape Town, Vancouver, etc. – rather than interior. But that dynamic began to change in the late nineteenth century, as imperial state-building trended toward the federalizing projects discussed in previous chapters. The new seats of power – Canberra, Ottawa, Pretoria, Delhi, tended to be interior, continental cities. This posed a serious challenge to imperial security over how to defend them, deepened by memories of the Empire’s worst military failures in South Africa and India half a century earlier.⁴⁶⁵ The best available solution, in a word, was railways. Railway grids gave land forces a

⁴⁶⁴ John Darwin has used the term “bridgehead” more abstractly, to describe the process whereby British power developed interfaces in societies from which to build and consolidate power. John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830-1970*, 1st ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 51–63.

⁴⁶⁵ Contemporary military doctrine, discussed in the sections above, held that no invading power could possibly maintain an invasion bridgehead in a British oversea territory without control of the seas. It was on this advice the Admiralty hoped to mollify Dominion governments. See “Naval Limitations of an Oversea Attack,” “General Principles of Imperial Defence Affecting Overseas Dominions and Colonies” Collection 308/41 [1910] IOR/L/MIL/7/13589, British Library (BL), no. 21, 4.

modicum of the deployment flexibility enjoyed by naval forces, and thus the great project of federalizing and securing incipient colonial states meant building extensive railway grids that could make interior spaces legible to, and securable by, military force. In this sense railways underpinned the domestic dimension of sovereignty as Weber described it: monopolizing the use of force within a given territory. In a remarkably concentrated stretch of time: from 1910 to the outbreak of World War I, seats of government in major colonial states moved inland: Calcutta to Delhi, Sydney to Canberra, Cape Town (and others) to Pretoria and Johannesburg. As the British government fought to keep Dominion and colonial governments on the same strategic page in naval matters, debates on the military intensified also. Interior seats of government shifted the security burden (and its attendant political leverage) away from Britain and the Royal Navy, and towards colonial governments and their fledgling security forces. This shift imbued state-building projects with military logic and touched off major programs of railway construction. The problems of collective imperial security had sprouted legs and begun to crawl inland.

India and South Africa experienced the most intense processes of infrastructural and constitutional development over the period 1909-1914. As their seats of government moved to Delhi and Pretoria, their constitutional systems evolved also: the 1909 Indian Councils Act (known as the “Morley-Minto Reforms” for its two sponsors, Viceroy the Earl of Minto and Indian Secretary John Morley) introduced legislative advisory councils for Raj governors, while South Africa’s individual colonies combined in 1910 to form the Union of South Africa. Both of these developments took place in conjunction with coordinated railway development plans. The bureaucrats and officials who conceived these schemes described railway planning as a way to construct political order itself,

offering a glimpse into the logic of imperial rule as a spatially and technologically contingent exercise. Scholarly explanations of the role of technology in imperialism have generally fallen into two camps, with some positioning technology as the primary variable explaining imperial conquest, and others suggesting a more double-edged phenomenon whereby technology-transfer happens swiftly and complicates colonial encounters.⁴⁶⁶ The role of railway technology in India and South Africa seems to support the latter argument; it produced unintended, and sometimes detrimental, consequences to the stability of the colonial states. Early waves of scholarship on colonial railways focused on their effects on economic development and their relationship to British capital.⁴⁶⁷ More recently, scholars have turned to the issue of railways as agents of cultural change and as points of contact between colonized and colonizer.⁴⁶⁸ Because of their unique role as manifestations of geopolitical power, colonial security, and public service, railways offer a useful point of entry to both the logic and experience of colonialism. They have been described as sites of “collaboration,” because of the range of actors required to build, service, and use them, and yet they also serve as examples of

⁴⁶⁶ For this debate see, respectively, Daniel Headrick, *The Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981); Robert Kubicek, “British Expansion, Empire, and Technological Change,” in *The Nineteenth Century*, vol. III, *The Oxford History of the British Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

⁴⁶⁷ Amba Prasad, *Indian Railways: A Study in Public Utility Administration* (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1960); P. J. Cain, “Railway Combination and Government, 1900-1914,” *The Economic History Review*, New Series, 25, no. 4 (November 1, 1972): 623–41, doi:10.2307/2593952; Daniel Thorner, *Investment in Empire: British Railway and Steam Shipping Enterprise in India, 1825-1849*. (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1950); Daniel Thorner, “The Pattern of Railway Development in India,” *The Far Eastern Quarterly* 14, no. 2 (February 1, 1955): 201–16, doi:10.2307/2941731.

⁴⁶⁸ See: Ritika Prasad, “Tracking Modernity: The Experience of Railways in Colonial India, 1853-1947” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 2009), <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.bc.edu/docview/304851715/abstract?accountid=9673>.

how collaboration broke down – both in colonial societies, and among colonial states.⁴⁶⁹

Railways were another arena in which the British Empire's strategic tensions pulled in various and sundry directions, chipping away at the primacy of naval strategy in the minds of government officials and complicating intra-imperial security cooperation.

Upon George V's accession as King in 1910, the Empire gained a Sovereign in sufficient health to travel. No British monarch had ever visited India, the dominion of the Crown responsible for their styling, since Victoria, as "Empress/Emperor." None had visited the Dominions either since that term had gained its new constitutional significance after 1907. George resolved to remedy this, and to physically manifest sovereignty in his various realms where its meaning had changed so much in recent years. The Government of India had been moving toward Mughal-style royal Durbar celebrations for some years already, dating back to Curzon's 1903 celebration for Edward in absentia.⁴⁷⁰ With George fit to travel, they now had a chance to mount a fully-fledged Durbar in India. Such an event was an anti-modern statement of symbolism and aesthetic, but it was also wedded to a thoroughly modern program of policy reform concerning Indian politics and infrastructure. Ahead of the planned visit, the Government of India planned to announce several measures that would help secure the subcontinent and mollify hardline nationalists gaining influence in Bengal and the Indian National Congress. The plan involved emphasizing the Morley-Minto reforms, investing heavily in the railways,

⁴⁶⁹ Clarence B. Davis, Ronald E. Robinson, and Kenneth E. Wilburn, eds., *Railway Imperialism*, Contributions in Comparative Colonial Studies 26 (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991).

⁴⁷⁰ See Chapter 2 – The Centre Holds: Reform and Reaction in the New Century, 1902-1906. For more on the role of ceremony and symbol in solidifying imperial rule, see David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Bernard Cohn, "Representing Authority in Victorian India," in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, Past and Present Publications (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

moving the Government of India's official capital from Calcutta to Delhi, and reversing Curzon's incendiary partition of Bengal.⁴⁷¹ Each of these measures was designed to enhance the colonial state's ability to manage space, and to consolidate its sovereignty over the subcontinent.

Since the advent of formal British rule in India, the seat of government had been a matter of some schizophrenia. Calcutta, the old stronghold of the East India Company in Bengal, possessed a warm and humid climate that gifted its British migrants persistent irritation and exceedingly high mortality rates. Since the 1860s, the Government's practice had been to relocate its entire apparatus to the temperate Himalayan hill-station at Simla during the summer, a journey that took personnel and materiel 42 hours by rail according to a government estimate.⁴⁷² The ubiquitous Rudyard Kipling, after observing this circus-like affair on his visits to India, composed for it a wry ode called "A Tale of Two Cities," which told the story of how British presence in India grew from a merchant operation based in Calcutta to sovereignty over the whole subcontinent:

Once, two hundred years ago, the trader came

Meek and tame.

Where his timid foot first halted, there he stayed,

Till mere trade

Grew to Empire, and he sent his armies forth

South and North,

⁴⁷¹ East India. Papers relating to the reconstitution of the provinces of Bengal and Assam, 1905, Cd. 2658, 17.

⁴⁷² No.4, Hardinge to Crewe. East India coronation durbar. Announcements by and on behalf of His Majesty the King-Emperor at the Coronation Durbar, 1911, Cd. 5979, 8. For a broader analysis of the role of the hill-station in warm imperial settings, see Anthony D King, *Colonial Urban Development: Culture, Social Power, and Environment* (Boston: Routledge & Paul, 1976), 7.

Till the country from Peshawar to Ceylon
Was his own.

The course of history, though, had caused much turmoil. Kipling compared residence in Calcutta to being fried over a fire, as in the martyrdom of St. Lawrence, who was roasted to death by Roman officials. The city, personified, demands:

“Cast the Viceroy and his Council, to perspire
In our fire!”

But the situation had become intolerable, and, in Kipling’s view, had to change. For,

Nor can Rulers rule a house that men grow rich in,
From its kitchen. ...
Let the City Charnock pitched on [Calcutta] —evil day!—
Go Her way.
Though the argosies of Asia at Her doors
Heap their stores,
Though her enterprise and energy secure
Income sure,
Though “out-station orders punctually obeyed”
Swell Her trade—
Still, for rule, administration, and the rest,

Simla's best!⁴⁷³

But the Sisyphean ritual of annual relocation to Simla, presumed an ethno-medical necessity by Raj officials, provoked a storm of criticism from Indian nationalists over its expense and waste of resources.⁴⁷⁴ The Simla exodus relied heavily on India's railway network, which had already been expanded specifically to service the hill-station by the turn of the century at great expense (and eventually, financial loss to the state and investors).⁴⁷⁵ India's railway network, densest in the north, was already one of the most extensive in the world by the turn of the century. In 1907 a committee on India Railway finance and administration cited its extent at over 29,000 miles at a total capital outlay exceeding £286,500,000.⁴⁷⁶ Notwithstanding the massive financial commitment, much of the Indian railway network was not market-oriented but strategic. India's Northwest Frontier was the British Empire's most perilous land border, and if the Indian Army could not rapidly deploy there to counter a Russian incursion, it was feared, the entire subcontinent would fall to Russian designs on central Asia, the world's "heartland" – and Britain would lose the "Great Game." Thus the Army encapsulated the tension Kipling outlined – Calcutta represented the commercial and the maritime, but for *rule* – for consolidating and securing the colonial state, its interior spaces had to be plied with ties and rails.

⁴⁷³ Rudyard Kipling's *Verse, Inclusive Edition, 1885–1918*. Garden City: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1922; Bartleby.com, 2013. www.bartleby.com/364/

⁴⁷⁴ See Pamela Kanwar, *Imperial Simla: The Political Culture of the Raj*, 2nd ed. (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990), 40–45.

⁴⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁴⁷⁶ East India (Railways). Report of the Committee on Indian Railway Finance and Administration, 1908, Cd. 4111, 11.

The functioning of India's railways under this often conflicting set of priorities required aggressive intervention by the colonial state. The extent of this intervention varied: some railway companies were both owned and operated by the Government, while others were only partially state-owned and run by private firms, and a handful were completely private, if subject to close Government oversight.⁴⁷⁷ New construction of lines and the scheduling of construction and repairs were done in consultation with the Raj's Railway Board. Crucially, the Government of India also guaranteed a five percent return on private investment in Indian railway companies to ensure they remained robustly capitalized and solvent. This fantastic return attracted massive investments from across the Empire, yet constituted a heavy financial obligation on the Government itself, and by extension, on Indian taxpayers. After 1905 the Government of India consolidated its railway oversight under an India Railway Board which would bring strategic coherence to financial and technological policy and whose planning was meant to smooth budgetary cycles.⁴⁷⁸ Subsequent Government profits on existing railway assets skyrocketed.⁴⁷⁹ Government of India policy at the time was for budget surpluses to be consumed by purchasing specie that would bolster the value of the rupee and thus preserve its Sterling convertibility, but the 1907 Committee on Railway Finance and Administration recommended pumping the excess directly back into the railway system,

⁴⁷⁷ For the struggle between local railway interests and the Government, see: Tara Sethia, "Railways, Raj, and the Indian States: Policy of Collaboration and Coercion in Hyderabad," in Ronald E. Robinson, *Railway Imperialism* (Greenwood Press, 1991), 103-120.

⁴⁷⁸ The creation of the Board followed an aggressive period of railway growth from the turn of the century. Between 1900 and 1906, annual Government spending on railways nearly doubled, rising from £5.3 million annually to £9.7 million. Around £50 million total was spent in that period, approximately half each going to maintenance and new lines. Committee on Indian Railway Finance and Administration, 1908, Cd. 4111, 8.

⁴⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, (from £228,949 in 1902 to £2,105,438 by 1906)

arguing that as much as £20 million in annual railway investment would not be too high.⁴⁸⁰ Scholars often describe trade balance as the foremost concern of British colonial rule in India, so budgetary realignment of this magnitude speaks to the urgency of the infrastructure question within the Government of India in this period.⁴⁸¹

George's Durbar was to help mark that realignment with due pomp and circumstance. The 1909 Indian Councils Act provided the first prong. It expanded the Legislative Councils kept by the governors of each province in India, allowing for publicly-elected members (between thirty and sixty depending on the population of the province in question).⁴⁸² Though the Councils could not overrule their Governors, they were meant to hold Governors accountable in matters of finance and the public interest, a measure designed to bring an incremental form of responsible government to India.⁴⁸³ But incremental reform could not solve deep problems like Curzon's partition of Bengal. Worse still, the provisions of the 1909 reforms called for the creation of a separate Muslim electorate – a specific allotment of Legislative Council seats for Muslims, for which only Muslims could vote. This linkage of political representation with religion

⁴⁸⁰ Gross annual revenue over the same period increased 27.65%, from £21 million in 1902 to £26 million in 1906. But the remarkable shift in profits came not from spiking revenue, but rather from the Government paying down its liabilities on railway capital, the accruing interest of which had previously consumed a significant proportion of railway revenue. A budgetary windfall of this magnitude begged immediate questions about how it could be reallocated and put to use. Committee members, not content with India's 20,000 railway miles in 1908, aspired to bring the total to at least 100,000 miles in the near future. *Ibid.*, 18, 13.

⁴⁸¹ See, for example, Eric Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire: An Economic History of Britain Since 1750* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1968); For a more recent exploration of the historiographical stakes of the question of the economy of British India, see D.A. Washbrook, "The Indian Economy and the British Empire," in *India and the British Empire*, ed. Douglas M. Peers and Nandini Gooptu, *The Oxford History of the British Empire Companion Series* (London: Oxford University Press, 2012), 44–74.

⁴⁸² Government of India Bill [H.C.], 1909, 9 Edw.

⁴⁸³ The reform actually highlights the distinction between "Responsible" government in the British Empire and its opposite. Legislative Councils operated on a principle of "accountability" and critique, but the *responsibility* remained the same – to the Viceroy, and thence to the British Government. The rulers of Canada, say, were by contrast responsible to Canadian voters, who could ultimately remove them.

only entrenched the social tensions ripping through Bengal. Charles Hardinge succeeded the Earl of Minto as Viceroy the following year. He resolved to compliment the work of his predecessor by burnishing the security capabilities of the British Indian state, and also in using railways to solve the dilemmas of British sovereignty in India.

Hardinge oversaw final preparations for the King's arrival. When the Durbar celebration took place in late 1911, George V announced that the Government would not only undo the partition of Bengal, but would relocate India's capital from Calcutta to Delhi, where a shining new administrative district would be built. The Durbar pronouncement, from the mouth of the Sovereign himself, allowed the colonial state to reinvigorate its sovereignty by looking both to a future of technological and infrastructural progress, and to a past of imperial rule from Delhi, the Mughal capital in the subcontinent's interior. Its added payoff was in following Kipling's rhyming advice, and leaving Calcutta to the "Babu, dropping inflammatory hints, in his prints." Hardinge underscored the crucial role of railways in this departure. He wrote in a secret 1911 letter to Indian Secretary the Marquess of Crewe, "The considerations which explain [Calcutta's] selection as the principal seat of Government have long since passed away with the consolidation of British rule throughout the Peninsula and the development of a great inland system of railway communication."⁴⁸⁴

After the Durbar, Hardinge continued to expound on the strategic realities of governing a vast, continental space. "It is generally recognized," he wrote, "that the capital of a great central Government should be separate and independent, and effect has

⁴⁸⁴ No.4, Hardinge to Crewe. East India coronation durbar. Announcements by and on behalf of His Majesty the King-Emperor at the Coronation Durbar, 1911, Cd. 5979, 6.

been given to this principle in the United States, Canada, and Australia.”⁴⁸⁵ While Delhi (like Calcutta) remained too hot for British officials to tolerate in the summer, the rail journey to Simla on recently-laid track would be reduced by three quarters, to around 12 hours.⁴⁸⁶ Railway planning also played a central role in the design of New Delhi, as the Planning Committee worked with the India Railway Board to create a holistic new plan for railway infrastructure in the capital. Its objectives were twofold: to harmonize the incompatible rail gauges that passed through Delhi and to serve the massive new Indian Army cantonment under construction in the new capital. The infrastructural basis of British power in India is perhaps most obvious in these plans for New Delhi’s military installations. Spending levels bore this out: the Government of India spent around 20 million on defense in FY 1911, roughly a quarter of its entire budget (and, since it ran a small surplus, its revenue also).⁴⁸⁷ Hardinge’s logic followed Kipling’s. The sea, and the Royal Navy that ruled it, had been for centuries the great ligament and muscle of British imperialism. But the proliferation of new skeletal structure across India meant the colonial state could control continental territory in a way hitherto impossible, and could actualize Halford Mackinder’s dictum to control the world’s (and the Empire’s) strategic heartlands. “New” Delhi would forge the link between the distant imperial past and this grandiose vision of the future.

Westward across the Indian Ocean, a comparable process was unfolding in the British Empire’s newest Dominion, the Union of South Africa. Lord Selborne, who had

⁴⁸⁵ East India coronation durbar. Announcements by and on behalf of His Majesty the King-Emperor at the Coronation Durbar, 1911, Cd. 5979, 7.

⁴⁸⁶ No.4, Hardinge to Crewe. East India coronation durbar. Ibid., 14.

⁴⁸⁷ “Estimate of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Government of India, for the Year 1911-1912,” (129), 1912-13, *Parliamentary Papers*, Chadwyck Online, 3.

moved from his position as First Lord of the Admiralty some years prior to become High Commissioner to South Africa, had been one of the most vociferous proponents of Union, the ultimate goal of British strategy in southern Africa for decades. Like his counterpart Hardinge in India, Selborne felt he had no handier tool for carrying out this vision than railways and railway planning. Writing in 1907, at the same time as India's Committee on Railway Finance and Administration, Selborne summed up the challenges of imperial government in South Africa with a characteristic flair for the dramatic: "Of all the questions so fruitful in divergence of opinion or of interest to the Colonies of South Africa, there is none so pregnant with danger as the railway question...As long as the Governments of the five British Colonies in South Africa are wholly separated from, and independent of, each other, their railway interests are not only distinct but absolutely incompatible."⁴⁸⁸ Selborne gestured here to the monumental task of interlinking five individual states across unforgiving terrain, and of creating an infrastructural grid that could unlock the true economic potential of South Africa's mineral wealth. The several colonies' mutually-incompatible rail grids meant that it was often cheaper to ship goods and raw materials directly east, to the Portuguese colony of Mozambique, and its major port, Delagoa. He worked with the Prime Ministers of the various colonies, notably with Leander Starr Jameson, who had recovered from his disastrous raid to become premier of the Cape Colony, to advance the cause of Union, which would allow a unitary South African government to integrate the rail networks and keep shipping running through British ports. As Selborne floridly stated it, "This divergence, this conflict of railway interests, this cloud of future strife, would vanish like a foul mist before the sun of South

⁴⁸⁸ South Africa. Papers relating to a federation of the South African Colonies, 1907, Cd. 3564, 6.

African Federation, but no other force can dissipate it.”⁴⁸⁹ Selborne and Jameson got their wish when a National Convention convened in 1908 to oversee South Africa’s federal project. The Convention reached a settlement by 1909, and the Union of South Africa came into being in May of 1910. According to Lord Crewe, who spoke in the House of Lords debate on the Union of South Africa bill, the Union had a threefold purpose: to allow South Africa to take its place beside the Dominions of the Empire (crossing the hurdle of federalism discussed in previous chapters), to facilitate trade, and to allow for a unitary and comprehensive railway network.⁴⁹⁰ The geostrategic logic of colonial state-building is visible here in a concise summary – moving from coastal enclaves to territorial sovereignty required infrastructure and security. Half a world away, work was beginning on the new city of Canberra that would serve as the capital of the Commonwealth of Australia. Future occupants would call it the “bush capital” for its natural green-spaces, and its distance from Australia’s major coastal cities.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid., 6.

⁴⁹⁰ “Now, there were two great motive forces which propelled South Africa towards union. In the first place, there were the Imperial considerations which made South African statesmen desire to form a union which could take a place in the Empire beside the Dominion of Canada, the Commonwealth of Australia, and the Dominion of New Zealand, and that was undoubtedly a strong motive. But in addition to this, there were, of course, local and practical considerations of the first importance. In the first place, there was an obvious and desirable economy in working the four colonies as one. In the second place—and this, I think, perhaps more than anything, was the immediate cause which brought practical men to see how necessary union was—there were the difficulties and complications arising out of the railway systems of the different Colonies.” House of Lords Debates (*Hansard*), 27 July 1909, vol. 2 “South Africa Bill. [H.L.],” cc. 753-97.

4.6 CONCLUSION: HOME RULE, THE CURRAGH INCIDENT, AND (PARA)- MILITARIZATION

Back Home, as many across the Empire still called London's imperial metropolis, all was not well. The British Government remained paralyzed by a constitutional crisis that complicated its efforts to control, or cajole, colonial governments on matters of security or sovereignty. If the definition of sovereignty in the British Empire had coalesced around a few core features: constitutionally-managed federalism, effectively-ruled interior space, and above all, the ability to underwrite security at home and abroad, the United Kingdom itself was about to fail the very tests its ruling elite had helped construct. Within the capital itself, the constitutional question of women's suffrage produced organized public disorder as suffragettes resolved to forcibly demonstrate their lack of consent to the legitimacy of Parliamentary rule. A more dangerous problem emanated from Britain's first overseas possession: Ireland. Ireland occupied a peculiar place in the United Kingdom and the British Empire more broadly, aligning in some ways more closely with India than with Scotland or another country within the UK. While it sent over 100 MPs and peers to Parliament in Westminster, it was also ruled by a Viceroy (officially called "Lord Lieutenant") and Council, who occupied the feudal seat of Dublin Castle and served as agents of the sovereignty of the British monarchy. Ireland's judiciary and local administration were overseen by the Viceroy and his Privy Council. Growing nationalist sentiments there, and the island's Protestant minority, would soon demonstrate the true price of failing to monopolize the use of force within a sovereign territory. Rather ironically, the challenge to British power in Ireland came as much from Ulster's Protestants, steadfastly loyal to the Crown, as it did from the island's

nationalists and republicans, drawn mainly from the Catholic majority. The rumbling constitutional pressures of Home Rule and the Lords crisis eventually erupted – not, as they are usually marked, in the Easter Rising of 1916 or the Anglo-Irish War a few years after – but in the 1912 Solemn League and Covenant through which Ulstermen pledged to oppose Home Rule by force of arms, and in the Curragh Incident, in which British officers refused orders to stop them arming themselves. How could Britain bend the Dominion governments to a common security strategy when it could not even guarantee the security of the metropole? Ireland, and the significant contingents of Irish migrants inhabiting the other states of the Empire, posed difficult questions on the eve of the First World War.

After his narrow and unconvincing win in the General Election of 1910, Asquith tried calling yet another election in December of the same year, but it produced virtually identical results. He resorted to tapping-up the newly-crowned monarch, George V, to guarantee assent to a new Parliament Bill that would remove the Lords' veto. When Balfour tried to rally Conservative opposition to Asquith's plans in the upper chamber, he found himself undermined by press leaks about the King, and the Ulster issue. The House of Lords feared that Asquith (and George V) would simply pack the house with new, Liberal peers if they continued to stonewall the Parliament Bill. Lord Lansdowne, the Tory leader in the Lords, urged his fellows to abstain from the vote and allow the bill to pass, so they could avoid the peer-packing nightmare and hopefully retain control of the Lords, which they could at least use to continue delaying and opposing Home Rule. But the Ulstermen balked, and so did a rump of sympathizers, including Lord Selborne. Fearing disaster, twenty-nine Tory peers and Bishops actually voted *for* the Bill, a crew

later dubbed the “Judas Group.” The Bill passed, and the way was cleared for Asquith’s agenda of reform (or catastrophe, for unionists).⁴⁹¹ The Government, backed by Redmond and the Irish nationalists, put its Third Home Rule Bill on the floor the following spring, 1912.

Ireland’s Protestants braced for a future of minority status under a Dublin-based government. At the point of crisis, Belfast was Ireland’s largest and most prosperous city. It boasted the world’s largest shipyard, which had just christened the world’s most glamorous ocean-liner, *Titanic*.⁴⁹² Irish Unionism had no intention of acquiescing to Home Rule, and worse for the British Government, much of right-wing Britain felt strong sympathy for their position. Some of the leading lights of British conservatism: Andrew Bonar Law, Edward Carson, James Craig – were Ulster unionists. Craig, and many others besides, had fought in South Africa, and had deeply internalized the linkage between military power and emerging sovereignty across the Empire. Their hand seemingly forced by the machinations in Westminster, Ulster unionists prepared to make their own bid for sovereignty. Their first move was rhetorical and constitutional. Gathering in Belfast City Hall in late 1912, prominent unionists signed, on a table spread with a Union flag, “Ulster’s Solemn League and Covenant” – a deliberate echo of the compact signed by Scottish Covenanters in 1643 that pledged their support to the Parliamentary faction in the English Civil War. Carson signed first, followed closely by Craig and Lord Londonderry, a former Viceroy. An officer named Frederick Crawford, according to

⁴⁹¹ An excellent overview is G. R. Searle, *A New England?: Peace and War 1886-1918* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 421–3.

⁴⁹² A useful summary of the state of Ireland on the eve of Home Rule is Diarmaid Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland, 1900-2000* (London: Profile Books, 2004), 110–122.

legend, signed the document in his own blood. 470,000 others followed. Nearly half of the signatories were women. They made their own pledge to affirm the Covenant, support the men who signed it, and appeal to God to bless it. The language invoked constitutional principle and sovereignty, stating that Home Rule would imperil their “civil and religious freedom,” their “citizenship,” and “the unity of the Empire.” They pledged to resist by “all means which may be found necessary.”⁴⁹³ Kipling, unsurprisingly, emptied his inkwells to memorialize the occasion, and captured some measure of the betrayal the Ulster faction felt toward London:

The blood our fathers spilt,
Our love, our toils, our pains
Are counted us for guilt
And only bind our chains -
Before an Empire's eyes
The traitor claims his price.
What need of further lies?
We are the sacrifice.⁴⁹⁴

Kipling quoted in the poem’s header the prophet Isaiah – “Their webs shall not become garments...their works are works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in their hands.”⁴⁹⁵ Isaiah’s evocative prose itself alludes to Job, the Bible’s most famous beleaguered soul,

⁴⁹³ http://www.proni.gov.uk/no.5_-_ulster_s_solemn_league_and_covenant__99kb_.pdf

⁴⁹⁴ http://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/rg_ulster1.htm

⁴⁹⁵ Isaiah 59:6, KJV.

who spoke to God of “hope cut off” and how “trust shall be a spider’s web.”⁴⁹⁶ Whereas the Australian Billy Hughes would presently watch HMAS *Australia* steam into Sydney and declare his country had donned the “Toga of Nationhood,” Ulster unionists felt themselves arrayed in nothing more substantial than the filaments of spiders’ webs.⁴⁹⁷

Their next move, then, was to seize sovereignty by force of arms. James Craig, Frederick Crawford, and other military-minded unionists culled 100,000 military-aged men from the roll of the Covenant, who agreed to serve in a new militia to uphold its precepts – the Ulster Volunteer Force. The UVF quickly boasted impressive manpower. But it lacked equipment. There were no happier people in the world to arm a formidable paramilitary group operating inside the United Kingdom than weapons manufacturers in Germany and Austria. In a daring operation, Crawford arranged a shipment of over 200 tons of weaponry out of Hamburg and into ports along the Ulster coast, eventually placing in UVF hands over 20,000 firearms and 5,000,000 rounds of ammunition. The British Government, by spring 1914, faced the prospect of a Boer War-style military conflict taking place within its own sovereign borders. Over a decade’s worth of work to solve the Empire’s constitutional and military conundrums – reforms, planning, conferencing, federation, committees – seemed poised to explode in the flames of civil war. Britain’s military establishment, recognizing the constitutional and military severity of the situation, had already moved into action to stamp it out. Jack Seely, the Secretary of State for War, and Winston Churchill, the First Lord of the Admiralty, ordered troop

⁴⁹⁶ Job 8:14, KJV.

⁴⁹⁷ “Mr Hughes’ View,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 Oct. 1913. His full thoughts began with yet more specificity on the links between military strength and nationhood: “The arrival of the Australian fleet unit is not only an historic event, it is one of supreme significance. It marks a new era in Australian development. By the establishment of the Commonwealth the old colonial regime came to an end. We had created the means by which we could become a nation...”

garrisons in Ireland to reinforce weapons depots, and ships moved into position in the waters off Belfast. One such garrison, stationed at a position outside Dublin called the Curragh, destroyed any hope of re-imposing central authority. Sixty officers of the 3rd Cavalry Brigade, led by Brig. Gen. Hubert Gough, refused orders to move against the UVF and resigned their army commissions on the spot.⁴⁹⁸ The effective sovereignty of the British Government over much of Ulster no longer existed.

News of the Ulster imbroglio met with bizarre and befuddled receptions across the Empire. The Empire's collective security, and the responsibilities of Dominion and colonial governments to uphold it, had been a running feature of Conferences and Committee of Imperial Defence meetings (and interminable *Round Table* and other societies' discussions). But while the need to station the Empire's fleets in Home waters, or of colonial troops to deploy in foreign theaters was certainly contentious, the imperative to assist the Empire's wars was never supposed to be aimed at Britain's *own citizens*. An exasperated New Zealander wrote to the *New Zealand Times* of the deteriorating Ulster situation in summer 1913, "...taking Ulster at its own estimation – grim and menacing – armed to the teeth – determined never to submit! No! Never! – I ask, will the [NZ Prime Minister William] Massey Government dispatch an expeditionary force 'at a moment's notice' to help quell the rebellion in Ulster...if requested to do so by the Imperial Government?"⁴⁹⁹ The Earl Grey, who had just retired as Governor of Canada, took a visit in New Zealand in early 1914 and found that the exceedingly

⁴⁹⁸ Searle, *A New England?*, 430–432.

⁴⁹⁹ "Letter: THE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE, 24 July 1913," *New Zealand Times* (Wellington, NZ), 28 July 1913, in "Press Cuttings on Expeditionary Force," ALLEN 1/13 R22319708, National Archives of New Zealand (NANZ), 99.

precarious circumstances in Ulster had followed him halfway around the world. Grey, an ally of the Liberal Party, found himself peppered with questions about Home Rule and Ulster at his public appearances. The Dunedin *Evening Star* quoted his replies at length. While he advocated some sort of federal solution for the United Kingdom (what was often called “Home Rule all-round”), he thought the present Home Rule Bill – and the Parliament Bill that made it possible – were utter disasters. “I cannot understand how any men of Liberal traditions could ever have thought the present Bill would be accepted by Ulster” he told the crowd. When asked if Ulster would “really fight,” he replied “I do not only believe it, but I am certain of it, and I should think they have the spirit of slaves if they do not.”⁵⁰⁰ In the Ulster problem, the dilemmas of sovereignty in the British Empire had found their way home. Militarization as a path to sovereignty posed difficult questions for civilian-controlled, liberal government, and by 1914 they were no longer being asked only in the colonies. Ulster offered perhaps the clearest picture of the erosion of hierarchy in the Empire – the UVF armed itself to resist the very entity to which it claimed undying allegiance: the British Crown. It was equally clear, meanwhile, that the British Government could no longer constrain Ulster unionists, their supposed allies in the joint endeavor of strengthening the British Union and its global position.

And yet, the forces of militarization, and the breakdown and remaking of sovereignty across the Empire, had also made its various states more alike; it reoriented their goals and operations around the exigencies of security even as it eroded hierarchy and fractured cooperation. This process would soon become more visible, and

⁵⁰⁰ “Earl Grey in Dunedin: Home Rule in Ireland,” *Evening Star* (Dunedin, NZ), 3 March 1914, in “Press Cuttings – Earl Grey,” ALLEN 1/13, R22319711, NANZ, 9.

accelerated, with the outbreak of World War I. The commanding officer of the New Zealand Forces, Maj. Gen. A.J. Godley, had only recently returned to the Dominion from a visit to Britain, during which he met with Kitchener and Roberts, and spent some time observing British Army maneuvers – in Ireland.⁵⁰¹ Godley's visit was part of the Imperial General Staff's regular observations and rotations, by 1914 one of the only well-functioning bits of the Empire's joint security apparatus. Instead of a clear-cut, modular imperial fleet as envisioned in 1909, Dominion navies continued to grow in fits and starts, all the while acting as tools building the incipient sovereignty and national self-image of colonial states. New Zealand, like Australia, was by then seeing the first fruits of its investment in naval power. HMS *New Zealand*, a glinting new battlecruiser, made its first visit to its home country in the summer of 1913. A newspaper account described the journey of Maoris to see the ship in Wellington. It told a concise history of the Maori people, and described their arrival in New Zealand as itself an act of naval conquest that proved "No other people have so good a claim to be called sea-born as the Maoris." It marked their migration from Hawaii and Samoa as a pretext for New Zealand's hegemony over the southern seas, and finished with a flourish:

Why should not the next one be called H.M.S. *Maori*, and why should not she be manned, in part at least, by descendants of the Argonauts from Hawaiiiki? Surely there need be no colour line here. When Maoris volunteered in great numbers for the war in South Africa it was no pleasant task for the Governor to explain to them why they could not go

⁵⁰¹ "Our Citizen Army – The General Returns – Lessons Learned Abroad," *The Dominion* (Wellington, NZ), 8 January 1914, in "Press Cuttings – Gen. Godley," ALLEN 1/13, R22319712, NANZ, 6.

with their *Pakeha* comrades. The reasons in that case were overwhelming.

There are no such reasons against Maoris being accepted into the Imperial Navy. Two things are very certain. Thousands of splendid men would be found eager to join the flag. Not one would ever disgrace it.⁵⁰²

The aspirations of the Dominions, and their growing military and naval capabilities, threatened to disintegrate the British Empire's centralized strategic command by the summer of 1914. This was true both for matters of internal security, and for the Empire's external security, for the Pacific Dominions continued extensively to scheme against the alliance with Japan. One Colonial Defence Committee planning document noted, "The whole strategic situation in the Far East, in the event of the possible termination of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, whenever that event takes place, will depend largely upon the extent to which Australia and New Zealand find it possible to develop their respective contributions to the naval forces of the Empire."⁵⁰³ Another noted ominously, "Japan could easily place over a million men in the field."⁵⁰⁴ But Britain would shortly receive a grim blessing in its efforts to reassert hierarchy and central command over imperial security, and by extension, sovereignty. In the dying days of summer 1914, the long-awaited war indeed ripped through the British Empire. But the opponent was not Japan. A flurry of telegrams from the Admiralty came through the Pacific undersea cables to

⁵⁰² "The Cruise of the New Zealand: The Maoris and the Navy: A Plea for a Sea-born Race," in *Visit of HMS New Zealand*, ACGO 8394 IA711/4 R3485893, NANZ, 49.

⁵⁰³ "Australia: Scale of Attack under Present Conditions: Memorandum by the Colonial Defence Committee," AWM124-1.31 489128, 1911, AWM.

⁵⁰⁴ "Position of Australia and New Zealand regarding the Anglo-Japanese Alliance," AWM124-1.32 489132, 1911, AWM.

New Zealand in the last days of July. It ordered the Dominion's local naval ships to steam north, to the very outlying islands that had been objects of New Zealand's desire for decades – the New Hebrides, Fiji, Tonga. The Dominion government, and its naval officers, acted immediately. New Zealand, its parliament, and its public were at war, and none save the Dominion's naval officers would learn of it for days.

5 Chapter 5 – The Blood-dimmed Tide is Loosed: World War I, Conscription, and the Crisis of Sovereignty

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Thirty-five days before he was executed by firing squad in Kilmainham Gaol, Patrick Pearse sat in his office at St. Enda's school in south Dublin and put the finishing touches on the pamphlet *The Sovereign People*. Pearse, a teacher by trade, founded St. Enda's in 1908 as a Gaelic riposte to centuries of Anglicized education in Ireland. His headmasterly duties had suffered in recent years as he became progressively more involved with radical, militant Irish nationalism. *The Sovereign People* was to be one of Pearse's final expositions of the nationalist position before Ireland's Easter Rising, during which he would lay waste to much of central Dublin, read the Proclamation of the Republic from the steps of its General Post Office, and ultimately endure capture and summary execution at the hands of British forces. The pamphlet propounded his theory on the nature of sovereignty and related it to the body of wisdom generated by notable Irish nationalists stretching back to the eighteenth century. It argued that "National independence involves national sovereignty. National sovereignty is twofold in its nature. It is both internal and external. It implies the sovereignty of the nation over all its parts, over all men and things within the nation; and it implies the sovereignty of the nation as

against all other nations.”⁵⁰⁵ Ireland’s internal case for sovereignty enjoyed the luxurious advantage, shared by Australia, New Zealand, and Britain, of island status – its territoriality had discrete and obvious limits. It would be the task of Pearse’s Irish Volunteers, and their republican allies, to secure that territory “and all things within” to fulfill the first criterion of Irish sovereignty. Their task began with Dublin in Easter 1916, while the First World War raged in Europe. “Nationality is a spiritual fact,” Pearse asserted, but he conceded the need to realize it in the temporal realm, for “nationhood includes physical freedom, and physical power in order to the maintenance of physical freedom, as well as the spiritual fact of nationality. This physical freedom is necessary to the healthy life, and may even be necessary to the continued existence of the nation.” It was a testament to Irish vitality, Pearse argued, that its nationhood had survived for so long absent physical freedom, but even Ireland could not hold out forever.⁵⁰⁶

Pearse (Pádraic, to his friends) never reached the point of achieving the second criterion, of vindicating Irish sovereignty abroad and securing its place and recognition among the community of nations. He understood its importance, however, and argued that sovereignty’s two dimensions formed a natural unity. He chose the idiom of family to explain this organic unity; “family” reflected the Catholic theological symmetry that bound together much of Pearse’s political ethos. *The Sovereign People* continues, “I assert the sovereignty and the sanctity of the nations, which are the people embodied and organised. The nation is a natural division, as natural as the family, and as inevitable.”⁵⁰⁷ Instead of synthetic constructs, Pearse posited nations as families within themselves – a

⁵⁰⁵ P.H. Pearse, *The Sovereign People*, Tracts for the Times (Dublin: Whelan, 1916), 335.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid., 336.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid., 343.

natural law governing the organization of humankind. As for Britain and the British Empire, they were artificial and even profane: “A nation is knit together by natural ties, ties mystic and spiritual, and ties human and kindly; an empire is at best held together by ties of mutual interest, and at worst by brute force. The nation is the family in large; an empire is a commercial corporation in large. The nation is of God; the empire is of man—if it be not of the devil.”⁵⁰⁸ The contrast with other imagined metaphors of imperial relations – Kipling’s idealized, classical mother-and-daughters, Jebb’s “Britannic Alliance” – may not be as great as it seems. Certainly “mutual interest” and “brute force” had been key determinants of collective imperial politics in recent decades. The point of contention, perhaps, was over the precise role of the Devil. Pearse drew heavily on the dichotomy between state and nation, material and spiritual. His nationalist ideology tried to locate sovereignty within the nation, and thus to sanctify it – to purify it from the iniquities of greed and fear that held venal institutions like the British Empire together. But Pearse was no more able to escape the snares of the Devil than his imperialist contemporaries. His theory of sovereignty still hinged on seizing control of territory: no less a material than the very soil of Ireland. And his revolutionary colleagues were about to launch a campaign of physical destruction on their enemies.⁵⁰⁹

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid., 336.

⁵⁰⁹ Isaiah 14:9-15 is instructive: “Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. All they shall speak and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us? Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols: the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee. How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.” (KJV).

The Easter Rising of 1916 marked one of the most contentious moments in the British Empire's experience of World War I. It imperiled the United Kingdom's internal, domestic sovereignty when it was most vulnerable, having focused nearly all the efforts of state and society on keeping a great conflagration sequestered to the external, international sphere. This partially explains the severity (and ultimately, clumsiness) of Britain's response in squelching it – namely, of executing its leaders. The executions seemed to signal, much like executions for cowardice or insubordination on the Western Front, that if individual subjects tested the absolute sovereignty of the state over their physical selves, the state would be compelled make an ultimate demonstration of itself by annihilating their bodies altogether. The above chapters have explored the ways colonial states increasingly used security as a way to define and construct sovereignty as they became more institutionally complex and powerful in the years after 1898. This chapter will explore how the experience of the First World War, and especially the issue of military conscription, brought deepening links between security and sovereignty home to unprecedented numbers of British subjects, especially soldiers and military-aged men. The war did not create these links, but it did give occasion for strengthening them, and more importantly, it implicated much wider sets of people in the growing power of states and the preoccupying logic of security. The clearest example of this phenomenon in action was conscription – the decision taken by the governments of Britain, Canada, and New Zealand, and debated hotly in Australia and Ireland, to compel military-aged males to serve in the war effort. Conscription forced publics to reckon with the true and full meaning of sovereignty – that the state could take possession of their bodies for its own service – and to question what this meant in the complex, variegated political context of

the British Empire. In this way, conscription (and colonial participation in a war led by European belligerents) became the purest version yet of the constitutional crisis enveloping the British Empire. Dicey wrote clairvoyantly about the problems raised by conscription just before the war began: “The Parliament which destroys one of the main guarantees for individual freedom must hold, whether wisely or not, that a crisis has arisen when the rights of individuals must be postponed to considerations of state.”⁵¹⁰ It also accelerated processes of institutional change meant to rectify the Empire’s constitutional complexities; the same complexities Dicey and A.B. Keith explored in *The Law of the Constitution and Responsible Government in the Dominions*.⁵¹¹ Days before the outbreak of war, New Zealand’s newly-arrived naval adviser, Captain Percival Hall-Thompson, said as much in his introductory speech to the Dominion: “All thinking men must realise that we have reached a crisis in the history of the Empire, when we must pursue a course different from that of the past.”⁵¹²

Conscription and war as crises of sovereignty produced public responses, and a corresponding array of sources, that reveal how people understood and negotiated their relationship to nation, state, and empire from 1914-19. This chapter draws on sources produced by incipient (in some cases, just a few years from inception) colonial military and diplomatic institutions as they scrambled to cope with the demands of a cataclysmic global war. Beginning with Australia, New Zealand and Canada, it will investigate how

⁵¹⁰ A.V. Dicey, *Introduction to the Study of the Law of the Constitution*, (1915) 8 ed. (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1982), 166.

⁵¹¹ See Introduction; Dicey, *Introduction to the Study of the Law of the Constitution*; Arthur Berriedale Keith, *Responsible Government in the Dominions* (London: Stephen and Sons, 1909).

⁵¹² “Naval Defence – Pressing Problems – Speech by the New Naval Adviser,” *New Zealand Times*, 23 July 1914, in Cuttings – Cpt. Hall Thompson, ADBQ 16145 ALLEN1/13 R22319710, National Archives of New Zealand (NZ), 2.

World War I and the conscription question exposed the potential of state power once unleashed by security logic, yet also exposed its limits, as colonial states' sovereignty claims collided with unresolved problems like the construction of national identities delineating populations, and their place within greater regional and global frameworks – much like the dichotomy posited by Pearse in *The Sovereign People*. Of particular interest will be Australia's strategic preoccupation with Japan and its wartime ironies, New Zealand's handling of conscription amid the formation of Māori battalions, and the difficulty non-British diasporic communities, especially the Irish and French, posed for wartime Canada as well as for the Australasians. The next section will consider how the war continued to strain the connections between the Empire's two great poles of Britain and India by investigating the continued efforts of Indians (and Britons purporting to speak on their behalf) to gain representation within the Empire's nascent institutional machinery, especially that governing war. The final section will return to Ireland, and will focus on two specific moments: the "conscription crisis" of 1918 when Lloyd George considered imposing Britain's conscription regime in Ireland, and the breakdown of civil government in Ireland near the conclusion of World War I, which ultimately led to the Irish War of Independence and the creation of the Irish Free State. These issues demonstrate how people and governments apprehended the British Empire's war as a crisis of sovereignty as well as a crisis of security.

5.2 THE BRITISH EMPIRE IN WORLD WAR I

The British Army, as has been widely noted, lacked the operational capacity and sheer size to greatly affect the outbreak of hostilities between Germany and France in late Summer 1914. In any case, it was not nearly formidable enough for British entry to the war to successfully deter Germany's initial march on Paris.⁵¹³ While the literature on colonial participation in the First World War often makes note of their comparative remoteness from the Western Front, this distance can be deceptive. The first British hostilities of the war came when Gold Coast troops assaulted German Togoland and seized its major ports and telegraph stations in the first weeks of August 1914. By September, the German cruiser *Emden* arrived in southern India and shelled the major port of Madras, killing dozens and touching off oil fires in the city's port district. The Colonial Defense Committee's hollow admonishment on the threat of coastal shelling from four years' prior, that "Surrender would entail more moral, if not material, loss to the place than the result of a few shells," failed to prevent many from fleeing the city, and served as a highly public reminder that the Royal Navy's policy of central command left colonies exposed and vulnerable, regardless of the fact that they helped fund it.⁵¹⁴

⁵¹³ This problem is explored by Hobson, who considers Britain's pre-war liberalism, which kept military spending relatively low, to be a costly deterrence failure. J.M. Hobson, "The Military Extraction Gap and the Wary Titan: The Fiscal Sociology of British Defence Policy, 1870-1913," *Journal of European Economic History* 22 (1993): 495; Aaron L. Friedberg, *The Weary Titan: Britain and the Experience of Relative Decline, 1895-1905*, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), chap. 5 – "Land Power: the Dilemma of Indian Defense", explores metropolitan strategists' costly bet that it was more important to prioritize deterring Russian designs in Asia than Germany's in Europe.

⁵¹⁴ See Chapter 4. "General Principles of Imperial Defence Affecting Overseas Dominions and Colonies" Collection 308/41 [1910] IOR/L/MIL/7/13589, British Library (BL), Section 46, 11.

As the Empire found its war footing, the problem in the colonies shifted away from pure security threats, as German colonies in Africa and the Pacific were lightly-guarded (and none extensively populated by settlers), usually consisting of telegraph stations and related staff. They fell quickly and without great resistance, apart from General Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck's raiders in East Africa. Likewise, the German fleet, with some notable rogue exceptions like *Emden*, was mopped up or kept pinned in Hamburg after the first years of the war. Instead, the Empire's challenges became matters of logistics (and thus of U-boats) – whether and how to produce large quantities of manpower and material, and to deploy them where needed in the global sweep of the British war effort. By 1915 and 1916 it became abundantly clear, after horror-shows like Verdun and the Somme, that the greater conflict would weigh the mobilization of manpower reserves and industrial capacity. The rationalizing military reforms after South Africa, the growth of the imperial conference system, the diplomatic squabbles between various colonial actors – all constituted, at some level, a bet on the future utility of imperial resources in an unknown war. The bet called, Britain now commanded (in theory) a greater resource pool than any other single belligerent, even if its level of engagement did not yet reflect the fact. Its overall strategy, as such, involved using the Royal Navy to starve Germany of resources while hopefully containing (amidst more plentiful French armies) its land maneuvers.⁵¹⁵ Colonial and Dominion governments responded to the outbreak of war much as they had to the naval crisis in 1909: by

⁵¹⁵ Avner Offer has argued that Allied resource superiority effectively prefigured the outcome of the war when German forces failed to achieve a breakthrough to Paris in late 1914. German strategists ought to have realized, in Offer's assessment, that they were not capable of winning an attritional war against the manpower and material resources of the British Empire and its Continental allies, to say nothing of the United States. Avner Offer, *The First World War: An Agrarian Interpretation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

telegraphing messages of support and promises of assistance. Canada managed to mobilize an expeditionary force as early as October 1914, and sent a million bags of flour along with it. Australia and New Zealand telegraphed on August 2 and 3 that their naval resources were at Britain's disposal and that they would immediately prepare deployable contingents. Even Ireland turned the fruits of its paramilitary arms race to the use of the war effort, when John Redmond's Irish Parliamentary Party chose to send the Irish Volunteer Force (raised to safeguard future Home Rule) to fight with the British Army alongside the Ulster Volunteer Force (raised to prevent Home Rule). Even India sent enthusiastic support from amongst the Government, its official and unofficial Legislative Council, and the princes, while the Indian National Congress remained momentarily silent. Only in South Africa were there murmurings of dissent among the Boer population.⁵¹⁶

Still, the War Office attempted to tread cautiously, preferring at the outset to use colonial forces in support and supplementary roles and to use the British Expeditionary Force for its appointed role of supporting France against German advances. Remarkably, these initial offers of support featured very little discussion of parliamentary sanction in the self-governing Dominions, let alone actual postponement for debating and votes. Colonial preoccupation with "automatic deployment," voiced in the aftermath of South Africa and vociferously during the Fleet Unit scheme discussions, seemed strangely

⁵¹⁶ For helpful overviews of initial colonial response to the war, see C.E. Carrington, "Chapter XVI - 'The Empire at War, 1914-1918,'" in *The Cambridge History of the British Empire*, ed. E.A. Benians et al., vol. 3 (London: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 605–606; Robert Holland, "The British Empire and the Great War, 1914-1918," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Twentieth Century*, ed. William Roger Louis and Judith M. Brown, vol. VI (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 114–116.

absent in August 1914.⁵¹⁷ Joseph Cook, the Australian premier in Summer 1914, announced that “whatever happens, Australia is part of the Empire, and the Empire is at war.”⁵¹⁸ Each of the Dominion governments announced similar pledges ahead of legislative approval; their entries to the war were no more democratic than India’s, and forfeited impassioned claims to input on the Empire’s decisions to go to war that had been staked in recent years. There were myriad reasons for this strange reversal – the affective and familial bonds between colonial populations and Britain, for example – but the willing cooperation of the colonies in Britain’s war effort masked political self-interest as well.⁵¹⁹ Militarization had already proved one of the most effective ways for colonial states to expand their institutional capacities and their tax bases. War – especially a world war – offered ever greater opportunities for colonial governments to continue that work at home and to pursue their strategic interests abroad. The Dominions’ wartime designs on the greater Pacific, and the Government of India’s campaigns in the Middle East, demonstrated the stakes of this game.

H.H. Asquith’s government knew this, and acted initially to constrain and control colonial participation. He also faced his own domestic debates over how vigorously to deploy to France (stirred by the ubiquitous Kitchener) and had no wish to juggle possible input from Dominion governments or to effect an “improvised deployment” like that of the South African War which could provoke another backlash like Arnold-Forster’s *The*

⁵¹⁷ See Chapter 3, “Imperial Defense and the Birth of Dominionhood” for further discussion of the Crown’s right to place all colonies and Dominions “automatically” at war.

⁵¹⁸ Carrington, “Chapter XVI - ‘The Empire at War, 1914-1918,’” 605.

⁵¹⁹ The idea that rational choice governs the behavior of people in a position to volunteer for (or be coerced into) military action has been explored by Margaret Levi, who argues that cooperation with conscription could be rational. Margaret Levi, *Consent, Dissent, and Patriotism*, Political Economy of Institutions and Decisions (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

War Office, the Army, and the Empire.⁵²⁰ Dominion troops found themselves having to resist being subsumed into British units, while Indian Viceroy Charles Hardinge had to insist upon the British government deploying Indian Army units to France in order to avoid the slight of mere garrison and support roles.⁵²¹ The course of the war eventually cured the British government of this sort of hesitancy. Colonial troops came to be seen as especially fierce and were disproportionately thrown at key tactical objectives in battlefield situations, as well as at strategic objectives like Gallipoli for the Australia-New Zealand Army Corps (Anzac) and Mesopotamia for the Indian Army. The British Army Council's operational planning for colonial deployments lagged far behind its enthusiasm over colonial fierceness, however, and both campaigns were wracked by ignominious failures like the destruction and capture of an Indian regiment at Kut despite the extraordinary endurance of the soldiers. Despite high rates of volunteering in Britain, the Dominions, and India, Asquith's government found itself unable to maintain Britain's liberal stance against compulsory military service. Setbacks on the Western Front forced Britain to impose conscription in early 1916 to supplement the monumental manpower demands of trench warfare. Conspicuously, the measures exempted Ireland. The following summer, New Zealand introduced its own scheme, and Canada joined in late 1917. Australia held two contentious referenda on imposing conscription, both of which failed in late 1916 and late 1917 respectively. Volunteering still produced hundreds of thousands of recruits, regardless of conscription regimes, though in the colonies it

⁵²⁰ See Chapter 2, "The Centre Holds: Reform and Reaction in the New Century, 1902-1906"

⁵²¹ See Holland, "The British Empire and the Great War, 1914-1918," 116 ; C.E.W. Bean, *The Story of Anzac: From the Outbreak of War to the End of the First Phase of the Gallipoli Campaign, May 4, 1915*, The Official History of Australia in the Wars of 1914-1918 (Hertfordshire, England: Prentice-Hall International, 1981), 32.

selected heavily on first-generation British transplants, who (fortunately for military officials) were plentiful.⁵²² By the Armistice in November 1918, the imperial contribution to the war had reached incredible proportions. Britain itself raised about £2 billion via war bonds and other internal debt instruments; Canada, Australia, and India combined to add a further billion.⁵²³ Canada produced about a third of Britain's artillery shells from 1917, when its war industry came online.⁵²⁴

	Est. Pop., 1914	Deployed	% Deployed	Killed	% Killed
Britain	46m	5,000,000	10.8%	705,000	14.1%
Ireland	4.3m	200,000	4.7%	35,000	17.5%
Canada	8m	458,000	5.7%	57,000	12.4%
Australia	5m	332,000	6.6%	59,000	17.7%
New Zealand	1.1m	112,000	10.1%	17,000	15%
South Africa (whites)	1.4m	136,000	9.7%	7,000	5.1%
India	320m	1,200,000 (826,000 combatants)	0.37%	65,000	7.8%

⁵²² For figures and literature on the composition of military recruits from the Empire, see Stephen Garton, "Chapter 8 - The Dominions, Ireland, and India," in *Empires at War: 1911-1923*, ed. Robert Gerwarth and Erez Manela (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 116 and FN 16.

⁵²³ Ibid., 155.

⁵²⁴ Holland, "The British Empire and the Great War, 1914-1918," 118.

*Table 1 - Deployment and mortality rates, British Empire, World War I*⁵²⁵

The magnitude of these combined resources augmented Britain's war-fighting capabilities and undoubtedly helped Allied forces outlast Germany's preponderant domestic resources and often superior battlefield effectiveness. But they also strained the British Empire's constitutional infrastructure as never before, and forced millions of imperial subjects to question the limits of legitimate state authority in wartime.

5.3 AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND, AND CANADA: PACIFIC DOMINIONS IN AN ATLANTIC WAR

Since its inception in 1902, the Anglo-Japanese Alliance had variously confused, outraged, and worried many Australians and New Zealanders. It complicated their plans to curb non-white immigration into the two Dominions, and it provided Britain with a convenient excuse to strategically ignore them. World War I invoked the Alliance's precepts, however, and British Australasians suddenly found themselves operating joint military operations with Japanese naval forces. The Commonwealth of Australia had begun assembling its fleet unit in 1912 with the arrival of its flagship, HMAS *Australia*. Though the Australian Parliament had earmarked £300,000 for further ship construction,

⁵²⁵ Figures drawn from *ibid.* and ; Garton, "Chapter 8 - The Dominions, Ireland, and India," 155; F.W. Perry, *The Commonwealth Armies: Manpower and Organization in Two World Wars* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988) Figures elide the service of black support units serving with South African forces, as well as over 50,000 West African troops serving in various African theaters.

by summer 1914 the Treasury had only released £130,000 of that sum.⁵²⁶ Australia Station lacked the strength to adequately patrol, never mind police, the southern Pacific. On 29 August 1914, five days before Britain formally declared war on Germany, a New Zealander force landed at Apia, German Samoa, and overran the colony with virtually no resistance. On 11 September, an Australian force amphibiously assaulted and captured the German telegraph station at Kabakaul in Kaiser-Wilhelmsland, German New Guinea.⁵²⁷ *Australia* helped convoy that task force, authorized by a sub-committee of the British Cabinet known as the “Offensive Sub-Committee.” and heartily agreed by the Australian government.⁵²⁸ In order to transport Australian and New Zealander forces west across the Indian Ocean, however, they would require Japanese escort to check the threat of Graf Von Spee’s marauding German Pacific fleet. They also used this Japanese-supported convoy to hunt *Emden* after its raid on Madras.⁵²⁹ It was destroyed by HMAS *Sydney* in November, while *Australia* helped hunt down and destroy Spee’s squadron near the Falkland Islands in December. Over the same period, Japanese forces laid siege to Germany’s Chinese concession port at Tsing-tau, which they finally seized with the joint aid of British Indian forces on 7 November. Though Britain had formally requested Japanese action along the Chinese coast, its diplomatic messaging tried to keep Japan’s

⁵²⁶ Commonwealth Naval Board, Request for Funds, National Archives of Australia (NAA), 3/14/3782 807253, 1914, 1.

⁵²⁷ Garton, “Chapter 8 - The Dominions, Ireland, and India,” 152.

⁵²⁸ Carrington, “Chapter XVI - ‘The Empire at War, 1914-1918,’” 607.

⁵²⁹ *Ibid.*, 608.

deployments within acceptable lines, fearing portentously that the Japanese had too much to gain from German and Chinese collapse across the northern Pacific.⁵³⁰

Thus, British subjects in the Pacific entered an uneasy wartime posture in which they depended on Japanese cooperation for protection from German raids (at least initially), and more importantly for protecting their long maritime supply lines connecting Anzac forces with theaters of war in Europe and the Middle East. Though Japan performed its duties faithfully, this did little to assuage British Australasians' paranoia about its intentions, or its potential postwar gains. Ronald Munro-Ferguson, Australia's wartime Governor-General, was one such paranoiac. In late August 1916, he wrote to Andrew Bonar Law, a prominent Tory and future UK Prime Minister originally from New Brunswick, who was then serving as Colonial Secretary in Asquith's coalition government: "A sign of the times, which may be likened to 'the writing on the wall' is the marked alteration in the demeanour of Japanese who are now met throughout the Pacific... there is an air of assurance and self-reliance which has been noticeable only since the outbreak of the war."⁵³¹ Quite why the confidence of a wartime ally should be compared to Belshazzar's Feast, at which God warned of the destruction of Babylon, only seems logical in light of pervasive fears of Japan's rise. This was a question of both security and migration policy, for, as Munro-Ferguson had written to George V earlier in 1916, the "emptiness" of the Australian continent was a "temptation to all over-peopled nations...the future of the Pacific and our attitude towards Japan and India concern

⁵³⁰ Frederick R. Dickinson, "Chapter 10 - The Japanese Empire," in *Empires at War: 1911-1923*, ed. Robert Gerwarth and Erez Manela (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 199 and FN. 11.

⁵³¹ Ferguson to Bonar Law, 31 August 1916, MS 696, Box 9, No. 6861, Robert Munro-Ferguson Papers, National Library of Australia (NLA)

Canada and New Zealand as much as Australia.”⁵³² A more immediate concern for the Australian government was the Dominion’s present demographic outlook in light of its manpower needs in war theaters half a world away.

Preliminary war-planning by Australia’s protean defense establishment in 1910 included a scheme whereby the proper Australian Army would deploy abroad in the event of an imperial war, while additional soldiers would be conscripted for homeland defense, the latter of which a perennial concern about expeditionary deployments given Australian remoteness from presumed imperial wars.⁵³³ The opening moves of the war – seizure of German possessions in Polynesia to create a sort of island buffer-zone – reflect this concern. With this accomplished, it soon became clear that Australian deployment (with Japanese assistance) to Europe and the Middle East would demand far greater numbers than the Army could then supply. The disastrous Gallipoli Campaign, for which some 35,000 Anzac forces deployed in late 1915 in a failed attempt to capture the Dardanelles Straits approaching Constantinople, only underscored this reality. Billy Hughes, who had serenaded the 1912 arrival of the Fleet Unit in Sydney, succeeded the Labor leader Andrew Fisher as Australian premier in October 1915, and early the next year moved to hold a national referendum on imposing military conscription. Two bitterly divisive referenda followed, the first in October 1916 and the second in December 1917. Both failed, and between them Hughes’ enthusiasm for conscription caused a schism within his own Labor party, from which he split and formed National Labor. He reemerged as Prime Minister leading a Nationalist Party after the next election.

⁵³² Ferguson to the King, 20 Jan 1916, MS 696, Box 1, No. 42, Munro-Ferguson Papers, NLA.

⁵³³ Eric Andrews, *The Department of Defence*, The Australian Centenary History of Defence, V (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2001), 35.

Even his resignation after the second referendum failure could not remove him from office; Munro-Ferguson reinstated him. Australian forces ultimately succeeded in consolidating their units and avoiding assimilation into British outfits or subordination under British officers. Under generals Birdwood and Monash, the latter a native-born Australian, the British Fifth Army in France became a largely Australian-commanded enterprise from the officer corps down to the enlisted men.⁵³⁴

Nevertheless, the conscription referenda exposed deep rifts within Australia's relatively young civil society. The country's labor movement (it was the first state in the British world to produce a Labor Prime Minister) harbored deep skepticism about the war generally and conscription specifically, hence its internal divisions.⁵³⁵ Ethno-religious splits proved even more acrimonious. Australia's mainline Protestant churches supported conscription and the imperial war effort, but its Catholic hierarchy, a powerful institution given the high numbers of Irish immigrants in Australia, did not. Irish Australians tended to sympathize with nationalist and republican sentiments in their mother country, and many also heard denunciations of conscription from the pulpits of their Church. As such, Irish Australians tended to resent compulsory participation in Britain's wars and became bitter partisans for the "No" side of the conscription referenda, though Catholics ultimately served in the war effort in roughly equal proportion to their population in Australia.⁵³⁶ Indeed, the figurehead of the anti-conscription cause was none other than Daniel Mannix, the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne. Mannix, born in Ireland,

⁵³⁴ See Jeffrey Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, 3 edition (Port Melbourne, VIC: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 103–106; Holland, "The British Empire and the Great War, 1914-1918," 131.

⁵³⁵ See Richard P. Davis, *Irish Issues in New Zealand Politics, 1868-1922* (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 1974) "New Zealand Labour and Irish Self-Determination."

⁵³⁶ Jeff Kildea, *Anzacs and Ireland* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2007), 85.

characterized World War I as a “trade war” in which Catholics were not obliged to participate if they did not choose to do so. He was also scandalized by the British government’s brutal response to the Easter Rising in 1916, an event still fresh at the time of Australia’s first conscription referendum later that year.⁵³⁷ Though research has shown that Australia’s Catholic vote was not unanimously against conscription (nor its Protestant vote unanimously for), Archbishop Mannix’s role in working against conscription led Billy Hughes to label him a German sympathizer and an enemy of Australia.⁵³⁸

Munro-Ferguson wrote despondently after the first failed vote that the backlash against Hughes was down to people who would “lose the war rather than abandon their rights” and that Labor’s seeming determination to shut out the outside world reflected a “spirit of selfishness, irresponsibility, and a total inability to realise Australia’s great stake in the struggle.” This spirit, Munro-Ferguson believed, gravely jeopardized Australian security and thus its future: “Not one of those sections of the community who are fighting the Government have any conception of the danger incurred in endeavouring to hold Australia with five millions of people or of the madness of doing so without the concurrence of the rest of the Empire and the protection of the British Fleet.”⁵³⁹ It was no good protecting Australian workers from competition and conscription, in this view, if one could not protect them from foreign invasion. “The Japanese press is most

⁵³⁷ Hilary M. Carey, “Chapter 8 - Religion and Identity,” in *Australia’s Empire*, ed. D.M. Schreuder and Stuart Ward, The Oxford History of the British Empire Companion Series (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 206–207.

⁵³⁸ Alan D. Gilbert, “Protestants, Catholics, and Loyalty: An Aspect of the Conscription Controversies, 1916-17,” *Politics* 6, no. 1 (1971): 15–25; in Carey, “Chapter 8 - Religion and Identity.”

⁵³⁹ Ferguson to Bonar Law, 25 Nov 1916, Box 1, No. 841; Ferguson to the King, 8 Dec 1916, Box 1, No. 64; and Ferguson to Bonar Law, 20 Sept 1916, Box 1, No. 825, NLA.

outspoken,” Munro-Ferguson continued ominously in a letter to the King, “on the character of the British occupation of Australia, and assumes that this continent could carry a population of 400,000,000.” He reported that the Japanese consul in Sydney had begun suggestively passing on German questions as to why Japan could lose “so glorious a chance of severe reprisals against British Dominions for their Legislative policy of Japanese exclusion” while the war raged. “This should give food for reflection,” Munro-Ferguson finished angrily, “to a Community which can put five Divisions in the Field when its existence is at stake and cannot, even for these, find adequate reinforcements.”⁵⁴⁰

Continued alarmism about Japan helped create a legitimizing logic for Australia’s regional ambitions during the war, a logic that also had the benefit of being easily digestible by the public. The Governor-General’s apprehensions about Australia’s future security were shared by the Commonwealth’s Navy Office. As the war drew to a close, the War Staff in Melbourne began preparing a dossier on the future of the Pacific in the form of a Secret Naval Intelligence Report entitled “NOTE ON THE JAPANESE SITUATION.” Published in August 1919, it began with the sentence: “The Japanese nation is as a whole, arrogant with respect to its position in Asia.”⁵⁴¹ It went on to describe several systemic issues that might cause Japan to start a greater Pacific war for dominance analogous to Germany’s attempt to seize Europe. The issues included Japan’s abiding sensitivity to slights (of the exact type inflicted by Billy Hughes at the Paris Peace Conference when he led opposition to Japan’s proposed Racial Equality Clause),

⁵⁴⁰ Ferguson to the King, 8 Dec 1916, Box 1, No. 64, NLA.

⁵⁴¹ “Secret Naval Intelligence Report: Note on the Japanese Situation,” Australian War Memorial (AWM), AWM124-3/172 8756374, 1.

resource scarcity (especially of oil) that threatened Japan's demographic future, and the possible need to start diversionary wars in light of burgeoning Japanese labor unrest. The nascent League of Nations had granted Japan a Class C Mandate over the German possessions it had captured during the war, allowing Japan to create a partially encircling cordon to Australia's northeast – the Marianas, Marshall, and Caroline islands, and Palau. It also clearly hoped to extend its hegemony over China, which the Australian Navy Office found nearly as ominous. The report concluded portentously, "It is only by securing for her own use the illimitable resources of China that Japan can make herself strong enough to risk, some day, a war in the Pacific comparable to that which has just ended in Europe."⁵⁴² A robust appendix followed, consisting of charts comparing British, Australian, and Japanese naval assets in the region and their respective building plans. Figures for Japanese dreadnoughts sat adjacent to glaring British figures of "NIL."⁵⁴³

The First World War had done nothing to cure Australian apprehensions that Britain's strategic focus sold its Pacific Dominions short, as its continuing preoccupation with Japan demonstrates. However, its play to use the war for strategic gains paid off, in the form of Class C Mandates recognizing Australian control over New Guinea and Nauru. The Commonwealth found itself in a bind: it could no longer depend on Britain to provide it with military and diplomatic safeguards against presumed regional menaces, but alone it lacked the resources and the population to provide those goods. The Australian state's internal divisions also confounded its incipient sovereignty claims. To begin, the Australian state's obsession with territorial sovereignty directly fed their

⁵⁴² Ibid., 8.

⁵⁴³ Much of this was to do with the Washington Naval Treaty, which placed restrictions on warship tonnage for each great power.

obsession with controlling inward migration, which contemporaries like Munro-Ferguson realized was self-defeating because sparsely-populated territory was impossible to defend. Making matters worse, discord about sovereignty and rights prevented the government from conscripting citizens for military service, which strategists feared would fatally undermine both efforts to resist foreign invasion and efforts to build confidence among allies by robustly supporting joint ventures like the Great War.

New Zealand's experience of the war featured many of the same issues, if not always with identical outcomes. New Zealanders shared in much of Australia's wartime highlights (and lowlights). To begin, they felt similarly shortchanged by the fleet unit scheme agreed in 1909, for at the outbreak of war the splendid new battlecruiser HMS *New Zealand* was tooling about the North Sea, not the Tasman. William Ferguson Massey, the acting Prime Minister in the summer of 1914, wrote angrily that "the agreement of 1909 has been ignored, and explanations given that do not meet the situation." Lord Liverpool, New Zealand's Governor-General, agreed in a letter to the Colonial Secretary.⁵⁴⁴ Responses to their concerns remained the same as ever. New Zealand's High Commissioner in London (and erstwhile Prime Minister in Wellington) Thomas Mackenzie said in a speech to the London Navy League in December 1913, what was the use of "peopling the waste spaces of the Empire," if this did not produce "inhabitants who are willing to train and defend and stand shoulder to shoulder with the Old Country in any emergency?"⁵⁴⁵ The Dominion's wartime government consisted of

⁵⁴⁴ Nicholas A. Lambert, "Economy or Empire? The Fleet Unit Concept and the Quest for Collective Security in the Pacific, 1909-14," in *Far-Flung Lines: Essays on Imperial Defence in Honour of Donald Mackenzie Schurman* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1997), 74.

⁵⁴⁵ "Navy League Banquet – London – T. Mackenzie Speech," *Otago Daily Times*, Dunedin, NZ, 17 December 1913, in Press Cuttings, T. Mackenzie, ADBQ 16145 ALLEN 1/13 R22319709, NANZ, 4.

Massey, head of a centrist Reform Party, in coalition with Joseph Ward and his Liberals, who had fought a late 1914 election to a virtual stalemate. With Britain suddenly buying massive quantities of New Zealand's produce for the war effort, Ward and Massey would spend the duration of the conflict dealing with the price-control problems and a worsening urban/rural divide propelled by the Dominion's raging export market. The coalition imposed conscription in 1916, shortly after Britain, and while New Zealand's labor movement was not robust enough to successfully resist it as in Australia, the experience did consolidate the Labour Party into a serious political force in the Dominion for the first time, having gifted it a polarizing issue by which to distinguish itself.⁵⁴⁶ Conscription also, along with the scheme of commandeering produce for the British war effort, produced new state institutions that drastically expanded the power of New Zealand's governing architecture, like the National Register and the Health Department, created to fight the flu pandemic of late 1918.⁵⁴⁷

As recently as the 1913 Naval Estimates produced by the New Zealand parliament, Massey's official statement noted that if Britain did not re-base ships in the Pacific, his government would be obliged to begin planning to set aside significant funds, up to £400,000, for building ships it could expect to retain.⁵⁴⁸ The report went on to state clairvoyantly, "It appears quite certain that we are on the eve of great changes in the Pacific, and it is well that we should commence to shoulder our responsibilities and look

⁵⁴⁶ Len Richardson, "Chapter 8 - 'Parties and Political Change,'" in *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, ed. Geoffrey W. Rice, 2nd ed. (Auckland, New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 217–218.

⁵⁴⁷ Erik Olsson, "Chapter 10 - Towards a New Society," in *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, ed. Geoffrey W. Rice, 2nd ed. (Auckland, New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 279.

⁵⁴⁸ Statement by the Prime Minister, W.F. Massey - Naval Defence, 1913, NANZ, AAYT 8495 N12/2/2 R21346614, NANZ, 3.

to the future both of the Empire and our growing Dominion.”⁵⁴⁹ New Zealand’s ostensible responsibilities were among the first questions invoked upon the outbreak of war, given the relative absence of friendly warships and the lurking possibility of German squadrons in the area. Amid the hundreds of telegrams that whizzed frenetically through Pacific sea cables in the final days of July and early August 1914, a few representative messages passed between the Governors of Fiji and New Zealand. The island group Seddon had tried and failed to annex a decade earlier had, nonetheless, developed a significant trading relationship with New Zealand and a troubling dependency on its produce. The Governor in Suva wrote to his counterpart in Wellington for assurances that the shipping lines between them would not be cut by enemy ships. If this could not be ensured, he expected “famine in Fiji within a few weeks.”⁵⁵⁰ With *Australia* preoccupied and the next available cruiser moored in Honolulu, shipping freight had to be suspended for the time being.

New Zealand wasted little time in readying contingents for oversea deployment; the government felt confident that its universal training scheme for boys, instituted a few years prior, had prepared the Dominion for just such an eventuality. The decision to impose conscription, following Britain’s and the major deployment of New Zealanders at Gallipoli, appears to have enjoyed broad consensus among members of parliament and in the community. The scheme called for mandatory registration of men aged 20 to 45 across the Dominion’s local jurisdictions; in the event that certain departments did not meet their allotted recruitment quotas, these registrations would be used to draw ballots

⁵⁴⁹ Statement by the Prime Minister, W.F. Massey - Naval Defence, 1913, AAYT 8495 N12/2/2 R21346614, NANZ, 3.

⁵⁵⁰ Admiralty Telegrams on Outbreak of War, 1914, NANZ, AAYT 8499 N20 6/9 R13344128, NANZ, 50.

for conscripts. As of late 1916, this had not been necessary, but by the end of the war the Military Service Act would be invoked for around 32,000 conscripts, about a quarter of New Zealand's total force under arms.⁵⁵¹ Imposing conscription via legislation, in the opinion of New Zealand's Defence Minister James Allen, allowed the Dominion to avoid the sorts of ugly popular confrontations endured by the Australians in their referenda. He wrote about the conscription controversies to Gen. Birdwood, the officer then commanding the Anzac Corps in France, in late 1917. "I am very hopeful that the Commonwealth [of Australia] will carry conscription," he said of their looming second referendum. "I am bound to say that in my opinion they have gone the wrong way about it. The only safe course is to act and to show to the people that your actions are well-founded. An appeal as to whether conscription should be brought in or not is not a fair thing to put to a public vote. There are too many who would be influenced by sentiment and personal feelings in the ballot box to get the real solid opinion of the country."⁵⁵²

By Allen's description, the personalization of an issue like conscription made it an untenable candidate for direct democracy; individual citizens would need to abstract away from themselves to fully grasp the political imperatives inherent in military service. In the end, he felt, parliament must remain sovereign in matters of security. Conscientious objection in New Zealand proved a rare and unpopular phenomenon. Its parameters stiffened significantly from their prewar form; the 1912 Defence Bill allowed individuals to positively object to combatant service on religious grounds. The Military

⁵⁵¹ Military Service Act 1916. 7 Geo V 1916, No. 8, 18e. also see "New Zealand's Firm Resolve – We Fight to the Finish says Her Prime Minister," *Evening Standard and St. James' Gazette*, 11 October 1916.

⁵⁵² Allen to Birdwood, 29 November 1917, 1914-1920 Correspondence between Allen and Birdwood, ADBQ 16145 ALLEN1/9 R22319674, NANZ, 3.

Service Act, by contrast, only permitted objector status if a person belonged, since before August 1914, to an officially-recognized church with pacifism as a core doctrinal feature, and personally affirmed that doctrine. Only Seventh Day Adventists, Quakers, and Christadelphians fit this description, and of these only a few dozen men received conscientious objector status.⁵⁵³ Allen had written to Birdwood in 1916, when the latter was still stationed in Egypt, that “we have had a great fight over the religious question,” and that he was “astonished to see how many people there are who have no consideration for the conscience or religious principles of others.” He went on to describe debates over how strong to set the thresholds for objection, adding that its unpopularity was a testament to “the people of New Zealand and their determination to make everyone take his share in the enormous struggle that is before us.” The public, he added, was even more rash in its bellicosity. “The Government have had a good deal of difficulty in keeping in check some people, especially women, who are out to victimize anybody who even has a German name.”⁵⁵⁴ The contrast with Australia is sharp here, and had much to do with the contrast in government and public perceptions of their domestic security situations. As many New Zealanders noted during their own federation debate, the Dominion was more defensible and well-stocked; an “Island Nation” like Britain, that could naturally turn its energies to the wider world without fear of infiltration.⁵⁵⁵

⁵⁵³ Nancy Taylor, *The Home Front: The Official History of New Zealand in the Second World War*, Ch. 7 “Conscientious Objectors and Defaulters,” 244.

⁵⁵⁴ Allen to Birdwood, 20 July 1916, 1914-1920 Correspondence between Allen and Birdwood, ADBQ 16145 ALLEN1/9 R22319674, NANZ.

⁵⁵⁵ See Chapter 1 – ‘A tide in the affairs of men’: Fear, Federation, and the South African War in Australasia

As the war dragged on into its final years, New Zealanders looked increasingly to the next fight: the renegotiation of relationships within the British Empire, and the realization of the Dominion's sovereignty in the international community. War service became, to a significant extent, instrumental to future political goals rather than immediate military ones. This dynamic began to emerge in the aftermath of Gallipoli, and the recognition it brought to Anzac forces. When that disastrous offensive was finally called off and the Anzacs prepared to redeploy to Europe, it was proposed to divide up the Corps and reassemble it into different Dominion units, which would then embed in the British Fifth Army.⁵⁵⁶ Furious outcry ensued in New Zealand at the prospect of its soldiers being dissociated from the Anzac name. A C.B. Morison wrote to the *Dominion Post*,

If the present state of things be permitted to continue, New Zealanders will, in the eyes of the Empire, gradually cease to be identified with the great and honourable tradition which should not only be handed down to our children, but acknowledged throughout the Empire. The traditions of a regiment are its life and spirit, and every New Zealand regiment which took its part at Gallipoli is entitled to claim 'Anzac' as the foundation of its traditions.⁵⁵⁷

⁵⁵⁶ Secretary of State for the Colonies to the Governor of New Zealand, 28 January 1916, Papers on the Formation of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force, ADBQ 16145 ALLEN1/7 D1/6/3 R22319755, NANZ, 59.

⁵⁵⁷ "Letters to the Editor – ANZACS – Why are the New Zealanders Now Excluded?", 11 April 1917, Papers on the Formation of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force, ADBQ 16145 ALLEN1/7 D1/6/3 R22319755, NANZ, 3.

Allen wrote an irritated annotation on the clipping advising that the newspaper avoid publishing speculation on official military decisions of this type in the future. By the end of 1916, both Massey and Ward had traveled to London to confer with the British government on the course of the war and attend the Imperial War Cabinet. They were determined, as New Zealander soldiers prepared to redeploy to the Western Front, that their efforts would be rewarded. “The Dominions have been united to the Empire by ties of blood, kinship, and tradition,” Massey told a London crowd, but “after the war, something more will be assuredly required; something which will distribute the responsibilities of Empire more satisfactorily and equitably than at present.”⁵⁵⁸ His coalition partner Ward echoed the opinion. “The Oversea Dominions, by their participation in the war without question,” he trumpeted, “have a right to look forward in the future to a place at the council table of the Empire.” The key privilege conferred by this status, according to Ward, would be input on decisions for war. “With adult age, the outlying countries of the Empire should at least have a say in the future before the Empire is involved in war...when peace is declared at the conclusion of this titanic struggle the Overseas Dominions should be taken into consultation by the Imperial Government.”⁵⁵⁹

As they had tried to do before the war, New Zealand’s advocates on the imperial stage also wanted to refocus the Empire’s strategic attention on the greater Pacific, not least to remedy their own profound isolation. This meant rehearsing old warnings about Japan, then guarding New Zealander troop and supply convoys. The tentative but

⁵⁵⁸ “MR. MASSEY – Trade of the Empire – Dominion Partnership,” *Daily Telegraph*, 13 October 1916, in Press Cuttings, Vol. 2, Massey Papers MSY-0884, Alexander Turnbull Library - National Library of New Zealand (NLNZ), 13.

⁵⁵⁹ “SIR J. WARD – Colonies and Imperial Affairs,” *Daily Telegraph*, 13 October 1916, in Press Cuttings, Vol. 2, Massey Papers MSY-0884, NLNZ, 13.

successful joint operations undertaken in the war's opening days gave way to rising tension after the controversial tour of Australia and New Zealand undertaken by the British General Ian Hamilton, whose visit coincided with the deterioration of the situation in Europe. Hamilton, a decorated soldier who had served in the South African War and embedded with Japanese forces as an observer during the Russo-Japanese War, gave a series of incendiary speeches that caused a press furor once they reached the Japanese press. New Zealand's geographic isolation might seem to confer some measure of safety, warned Hamilton, but it also masked a grave danger. In comments published by the *Dominion Post* under the headline "REMOTE BUT TERRIBLE – New Zealand's Danger," Hamilton used a series of grisly analogies to warn the locals of future destruction. With its bucolic mountain vistas and compulsory military training, New Zealand bore many resemblances to Switzerland, Hamilton explained. The trouble was, if Switzerland's neutrality and citizen-soldiery failed, it would endure conquest by a neighboring power that at least shared the linguistic, cultural, and religious assumptions of some proportion of the Swiss population. Not so New Zealand.

If you look upon the domain of nature, you find that in the struggles in the animal world they are much more alarming and terrible when the types are different. You may view a spider destroying an insect without much feeling, but if you see it catch a humming-bird and kill it, strangle it, you feel that something rather terrible is happening. Or if you think of an octopus and a man, you are filled with horror... I would say, then, that

there are dangers here in the Pacific which make up in terror for their remoteness.⁵⁶⁰

The General apparently gave little thought to the implications of this imagery to New Zealanders who were themselves attempting to forge social harmony from a preceding century of racial strife between the original Māori population and white Pākehā settlers. His dire racial pronouncements proved so extreme, in fact, that they provoked a backlash by letter-writers across Australasia. One respondent began his letter to the *Christchurch Star*, “The Japanese have a proverb that ‘the mouth is the front gate of all misfortune...’” while another averred that Japan would have every right to both outrage over the General’s comments and its deserved place among international powers.⁵⁶¹ That Hamilton provoked moderating pleas of this type is all the more remarkable given the official hostility towards Japan evident in Wellington and Canberra.

But the government of New Zealand still intended to make good on its regional interests, and to leverage security concerns to this end. By early 1915, strained communications had already passed between the Governor in Wellington and the Colonial Office on the fate of occupied German islands in the Pacific. The government of New Zealand wanted assurances that there was no secret agreement between Britain and Japan to carve them up in ways that could jeopardize the Dominion’s security; the Colonial Secretary dismissed the suggestion and reminded the Australasians they should be suppressing anti-Japanese sentiment among their population in view of the war

⁵⁶⁰ “REMOTE BUT TERRIBLE - New Zealand's Danger - Speech by Sir I. Hamilton - Conquests that Hurt - General's Hint at the Future,” *Dominion Post*, Wellington, NZ, 3 June 1914.

⁵⁶¹ “Letter to the Editor,” *Christchurch Star*, Christchurch, NZ, 20 May 1914, 21 May 1914.

effort.⁵⁶² Much like their suspicion of the Tripartite Pact decades earlier, New Zealand's apprehensions proved well-founded.⁵⁶³ As the war progressed, Japanese diplomats increasingly pressured their British counterparts to support Japan's claims against Chinese territory. Ward fumed at the 1917 Imperial War Conference that the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was complicating the main question of the future of the Pacific: "whether the White Races or the Yellow Races were to predominate."⁵⁶⁴ Ward and Massey told a luncheon crowd of the British Empire Club that they would not countenance the continued presence of Germans in the Pacific, either. "As long as Germany had a foothold in the Pacific she would ever stand a menace to our security and our peaceful development, and consequently the security of the Empire," they warned. The only reason Germans had ever gained a regional foothold was down to the "masterly negligence of British statesmen."⁵⁶⁵ In another London report on the New Zealanders the following month, a story about the valor and loyalty of the Māori people noted triumphantly that they fought "side by side with British troops in a colossal struggle against Teutonic despotism and all that barbarous system of exploiting native races of which Germany's treatment of the Herreros affords a signal example."⁵⁶⁶ Constructing Germans as domestic threats to New Zealand, regional threats to the southern Pacific, and finally, as despotic (or ineffective) colonizers allowed New Zealanders to legitimize their

⁵⁶² M.P. Lissington, *New Zealand and Japan, 1900-1941* (Wellington, N.Z.: A.R. Shearer, Government Printer, 1972), 27.

⁵⁶³ See Chapter 1 – "A Tide in the Affairs of Men: Fear, Federation, and the South African War in Australasia."

⁵⁶⁴ Lissington, *New Zealand and Japan, 1900-1941*, 32.

⁵⁶⁵ "NO HUNS IN THE PACIFIC – New Zealand's Resolve to Keep Them Out," *Evening News*, London, UK, 15 July 1918, Press Cuttings, Vol. 2, Massey Papers, 1918 MSY-0890, NZNL.

⁵⁶⁶ "Loyalty of the Māoris," *Daily Telegraph*, London, UK, 21 August 1918, Press Cuttings, Vol. 2, Massey Papers, 1918 MSY-0890, NZNL.

own wartime regional ambitions. A postwar League Mandate over German Samoa eventually validated their efforts.

The First World War politicized New Zealand's Māori-Pākehā relationship just as it had many others. The Māori reputation as fierce warriors meant that their participation in the war effort required sensitive handling by government officials. The Māori Pioneer Battalion, recruited from among the Dominion's tribes, eventually mobilized over 2,000 soldiers and was deployed with Anzac forces at Gallipoli and in France.⁵⁶⁷ As with the controversial King Movement of the previous decade, Māori leadership hoped that war service would burnish their community's reputation and improve its political position.⁵⁶⁸ Apirana Ngata, the figurehead of the Māori community in New Zealand's parliament, commissioned an official history of the Pioneer Battalion as soon as it deployed, and even composed a recruitment song in the Māori language to boost the unit's prestige.⁵⁶⁹ Early in 1915, Allen wrote to Birdwood with the Anzacs in Egypt asking him to keep a special eye on the Pioneer Battalion. "I do hope everything possible will be done to protect them from wine and women," he wrote. "New Zealand will be proud indeed to receive them back having honourably upheld the name of New Zealand, with clean records and having earned the respect of Britishers and Egyptians and others they may have come in contact with."⁵⁷⁰ Allen was also concerned to prevent the Māori from being slighted. After an episode in which some Māori unit commanders were relieved of their positions for incompetence and slated for return home, he wrote urgently to Birdwood to

⁵⁶⁷ New Zealand Māori Pioneer Battalion - War Diary, 1915 ACID 18432 WA97/157/[97a], NZNA.

⁵⁶⁸ See Chapter 2 – The Centre Holds: Reform and Reaction in the New Century, 1902-1906.

⁵⁶⁹ Petition from Mr. Ngata MP, 1915, ACIH 16036 MA11149 1915/3800 R22405894, NANZ.

⁵⁷⁰ Allen to Birdwood, 31 March 1915, Correspondence between Allen and Birdwood, Allen Papers, ADBQ 16145 ALLEN1.9 R22319674, NANZ.

intervene in the case and keep them with the Anzacs. “The Native Members of Parliament and many others...are deeply touched at the suggestion that any Māori officer should be guilty of cowardice,” he wrote, and if the situation were not resolved it would “seriously damage recruiting and create a very unpleasant feeling in the Māori Race.”⁵⁷¹ The episode demonstrates the myriad ways in which military service was important for political purposes among colonial polities – Māori service alongside Pākehā New Zealanders stood as an important symbol of the Dominion’s racial harmony in the eyes of its government. Recruitment figures, too, acted as a cipher for the unity of New Zealand’s society. That symbol of unity masked internal division, including among the Māori themselves. Ngata’s recruitment song named tribal iwi in sequence; he omitted disloyal tribes who did not produce recruits from his roll of glory.⁵⁷² Allen noted in 1916 that Māori enlistment continued apace among most of the tribes, but that “one large tribe could not be induced to join,” which he surmised was because “they still feel some grievance over the confiscation of the lands at the time of the Māori War.” He resolved to go among them and “bring them to a more reasonable way of thinking on the matter.”⁵⁷³ Conscription, after 1916, applied to Pākehā New Zealanders only. Much like the Dominions imagined their future in the Empire, the future in New Zealand would be forged from the mutual participation of Māori and Pākehā in the war effort, and the iwi

⁵⁷¹ Allen to Birdwood, 12 November 1915, Correspondence between Allen and Birdwood, Allen Papers, ADBQ 16145 ALLEN1.9 R22319674, NANZ.

⁵⁷² New Zealand History: Māori and the First World War, see <http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/war/Māori-in-first-world-war/resistence-to-conscription>

⁵⁷³ Allen to Birdwood, 20 November 1916, Correspondence between Allen and Birdwood, Allen Papers, ADBQ 16145 ALLEN1.9 R22319674, NANZ.

had to choose whether they would share in that future.⁵⁷⁴ The ones that did not, as in Ngata's song, would be left out.

Canada's entry to the British war effort, like many of its actions on the imperial stage, was calculated to demonstrate the Dominion's senior status among the states of the Empire. Nevertheless, despite the initial enthusiastic offer of troop contingents (and flour), there were immediate questions raised about whether it would even be legal, under Canadian law, for its soldiers to deploy without a threat to the Canadian homeland. The Governor-General wrote on 2 August 1914 that "a suggestion has been made that regiments might enlist for a stated period as Imperial troops," to find a way out of the problem.⁵⁷⁵ But as with the other pre-war platitudes about the domestic sovereignties of the Dominions, this was swept away as a mere technicality just days after Britain's declaration of war. An initial contingent of 31,000 soldiers, informally dubbed "Canada's Answer," arrived in Britain no later than the second week of October 1914. After the course of the war and its ghastly attrition became clear, Robert Borden's government tried to assure its British counterparts that Canada could be counted on for 500,000 recruits by the end of 1916, but this ambitious number did not materialize and Borden was forced to consider imposing conscription at the beginning of the following year, when he traveled to Britain for the Imperial War Conference. His public remarks during the visit echoed Massey's and Ward's calls for the future of imperial relationships to reflect the changed realities of the war. He hailed the Imperial War Cabinet as the "key of

⁵⁷⁴ A helpful overview of the Maori and other indigenous units' participation in the First World War is Timothy Winegard, *Indigenous Peoples of the British Dominions and the First World War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

⁵⁷⁵ Governor General to the Secretary of State, 2 August 1914, Correspondence regarding the Naval and Military assistance afforded to His Majesty's Government by His Majesty's Oversea Dominions," 1914 ADBQ 16145 ALLEN1/1 R22319697, NANZ.

future constitutional development,” a development that would lead, he argued, “to equality of nationhood.”⁵⁷⁶ Upon his return from the conference, Ward and Massey themselves accompanied him on a tour through Canada, and visited meetings of the Canadian Cabinet in Ottawa.⁵⁷⁷ The visit nearly ended in fiery disaster when the train car Massey and his wife had taken from Halifax to Montreal derailed and burst into flames, but they managed to escape unscathed. Railway mishaps notwithstanding, for the first time in decades there seemed to be a spirit of harmony between the Canadian and New Zealander outlooks on the constitutional future of the Empire.

While the war may have raised Canada’s diplomatic profile and enhanced its international bargaining position, it did not, as some hoped, galvanize the Dominion’s multi-ethnic society. Pre-war rifts between Anglo and Quebecois boiled over after the imposition of conscription in August 1917. Borden’s Unionist government faced expected opposition from Quebecois Liberals, and Henri Bourassa proved to be a formidable opponent who mobilized much of Quebec against the government. Recruitment among Francophones over the course of the war was already incredibly low – about 1.4% of military-aged Quebecois enlisted, compared to over 37% among the British-born population and about 6% in other demographics.⁵⁷⁸ Whereas young men across the British Empire faced wartime social pressures to enlist, like “white feather” activism, in which women presented them with white feathers in public to disgrace them

⁵⁷⁶ “The Future of the Empire – Speech by Sir Robert Borden,” *Lloyd’s List*, Manchester, UK, 23 April, 1917, Press Cuttings, Massey Papers, MSY-0888, NANZ, 3.

⁵⁷⁷ “MR. WF MASSEY IN OTTAWA,” *The Times*, London, UK, 24 May 1917, Press Cuttings, Massey Papers, MSY-0888, NANZ, 9.

⁵⁷⁸ Imperial War Cabinet, Figures, 1917, CAB 32/1, TNA, appendix 1.

as cowards, comparable social pressures in Quebec were pressures *not* to enlist.⁵⁷⁹ In all, over 24,000 conscripted Canadian soldiers saw combat in the year or so that Borden's Military Service Act was in force, a significant number but not a great proportion of the total numbers the Dominion fielded. The total number of conscripts reached just under 100,000, Borden's original target.⁵⁸⁰ Only about 1,500 Francophones reported for their call-ups, and in Easter 1918, a crowd of thousands ransacked and burned a recruiting office in Quebec City.⁵⁸¹ The local government was left to impose martial law, the fear of internal uprising haunted the Canadian government, especially in light of events in Ireland.⁵⁸² This, combined with the fact that nearly one in ten residents of western Canada had recently migrated from one of the Central Powers, meant that the Dominion government kept a significant garrison to ensure Canada's domestic security, a force that with troops in training exceeded 50,000.⁵⁸³

Borden managed to win the election that followed the conscription crisis by a comfortable margin, mainly by leveraging the information that the overwhelming majority of active soldiers supported both conscription and his Unionist government. Nevertheless, the experience of war had done more to divide the disparate parts of Canadian society than it had to unite them. Quebec's tepid response to service had many causes – Quebecois were not heavily recruited in the first place, and demographically

⁵⁷⁹ J.L. Granatstein, "Conscription in the Great War," in *Canada and the First World War - Essays in Honor of Robert Craig Brown*, ed. David MacKenzie (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 65.

⁵⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁵⁸¹ Quebecois resistance is all the more remarkable given that France was besieged by Teutonic invaders; this speaks to the extent to which Quebecois feared that the actions of the Dominion government represented a capitulation to British imperialism. This was the line taken by Henri Bourassa.

⁵⁸² See Martin F. Auger, "On the Brink of Civil War: The Canadian Government and the Suppression of the 1918 Quebec Easter Riots," *Canadian Historical Review* 89, no. 4 (2004).

⁵⁸³ Granatstein, "Conscription in the Great War," 66.

tended to be much more likely to have families than their Anglo countrymen, but these explanations counted for little in the moment, and Bourassa had to be vigilant against his own lynching.⁵⁸⁴ Furthermore, the evidence suggests that Canada's heralded battlefield role in World War I, its innovative and gritty capture of Vimy Ridge and the distinguished leadership of Canadian-born Gen. Arthur Currie, could not have been sustained without the guaranteed replenishment conscription provided.⁵⁸⁵ Canada's "senior" Dominion status hinged on its ability to compel its population to serve the imperial war effort.

Colonial contributions to the imperial war effort represented a highly important military advantage for the Entente; whether this advantage was decisive is obviously difficult to evaluate. That the conscription question forced its way into each of the Dominions in the war's final years attests the dire manpower situation at the Front, especially by Germany's Spring Offensive in early 1918. Though the Dominions that did conscript soldiers did so effectively, none was able to either recruit or conscript significant numbers outside the British-identifying demographic. This quantitative reality points to a more abstract one – that whatever national consciousness the war helped forge did so mainly for the Empire's Anglo-Saxon subjects, even if it also encouraged them to begin distinguishing themselves from British identity. The experience of war also exacerbated many of the Empire's open questions about sovereignty and constitutional integrity. The Pacific colonies could not guarantee that the ships they paid for would be

⁵⁸⁴ Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997), 260.

⁵⁸⁵ The leading scholar on Canadian wartime conscription, Jack Granatstein, recently changed his position on the military necessity of conscription to Canada's war effort, concluding that it was a necessary risk by Borden rather than merely a costly blunder. J.L. Granatstein and J. MacKay. Hitsman, *Broken Promises: A History of Conscription in Canada*, 1977; See Granatstein, "Conscription in the Great War," 74.

on-hand to protect them, or that the territory they seized would not be handed over to Japan in some bargain or another, and moreover, faced serious difficulties even getting information on these questions since they were being adjudicated by imperial officials thousands of miles away. Each colonial state had to balance the need to deploy troops abroad, supposedly vindicating its sovereign status as a peer actor among great powers, against the need to secure its own territory for domestic insurgency or foreign attack brought on by the selfsame war. The position that British Dominions should have formal sovereignty over their own defense, and a formal role in international politics, was not original to World War I, but did attract an unprecedented level of consensus because of the war. Wartime conditions, especially conscription, forced unprecedented numbers to consider the question. The British MP Percy Alden, a Liberal, radical and socialist, remarked on this shift in mentalities in late 1916 comments carried in the *Christchurch Star*. Noting that Liberals had always harbored misgivings about imperialism, this was no longer the case. He said: “henceforward our Dominions and Dependencies must occupy an entirely different position in the minds of Liberals who have passed through the fire of this war.” The constitutional ramifications were obvious to Alden. “In the future, all our self-governing Dominions must have a voice in the issues of peace and war, on the understanding, of course, that they take their fair share of the responsibility for finance in respect of the army and navy.”⁵⁸⁶ Alden directly illustrated how he believed sovereignty was constructed in these statements, and moreover how it was perfectly consistent with Liberal principles. Much like the problems raised by peacetime colonial military

⁵⁸⁶ “Liberals and The Colonies, by Percy Alden MP,” *The Star*, Christchurch, NZ, 2 November 1916, Press Cuttings, Massey Papers, Vol. 2, NLNZ, MSY-0884.

subsidies, a failure to politically reciprocate war-fighting colonies would produce a fatal crisis of sovereignty of the type that severed the American colonies in 1783. New Zealand's High Commissioner Thomas Mackenzie reflected on in summer 1914 – “We lost the American colonies by reason of taxation being imposed without representation...the same question is now arising, but in another form. The overseas people are willing to contribute towards imperial defense, but, as in the case of Canada, they desire representation with their contributions.” Mackenzie boiled the problem down to a single dilemma. “Just now, the question is being asked by thinking people: ‘Can a democracy rule an empire?’ The reply has yet to be found.”⁵⁸⁷

5.4 CONFERENCES, CABINETS, AND CONSTITUTIONS: BRITAIN AND INDIA IN WORLD WAR I

In the summer of 1914, India fielded the largest standing army and spent the most on its military in the British Empire, and over the ensuing four years it mobilized more people and materiel than any other colony or Dominion. It was also the first to endure domestic attack after *Emden* shelled Madras. Lacking governing legislature, India avoided the question, asked in a perfunctory fashion by the Dominions, of whether it would automatically join Britain's war. Charles Hardinge, the Viceroy, placed the Indian Empire at war as soon as its King found himself at war. The princely states expressed

⁵⁸⁷ “Royal Naval Club – Speech by the Hon. T. Mackenzie,” *Otago Daily Times*, Dunedin, NZ, 1 August 1914, Press Cuttings, T. Mackenzie, ADBQ 16145 ALLEN 1/13 R22319709, NANZ.

enthusiasm for the war effort, while the Indian National Congress momentarily avoided any strong pronouncement. Knowing at the outset that the demand on Indian resources for the war effort would become great, the British government then under Asquith took a two-pronged approach of promising future concessions to Indian political aspirations (a tactic well-rehearsed over the preceding fifteen years), and introducing measures to tighten India's domestic security. Given Russia's position as an Entente power, territorial invasion of India by enemy forces was not seriously anticipated by British strategists; instead, they feared domestic nationalists and dissidents who might now be inflamed or supported by Germany. The 1915 Defence of India Act, much like Britain's Defence of the Realm Act (DORA), granted government officials the power to make emergency rules, forbade the transmission of information from the enemy, and legalized effectively indefinite detention. The act provoked strong dissent from the nationalists in the Legislative Council, who, as ever, were unable to prevent its passage.⁵⁸⁸

The initial shape of the Indian Army included about 120,000 active duty troops, 30,000 reservists, and 22,000 Imperial Service Troops supplied by the Princely States.⁵⁸⁹ Despite the Army's size and strategic importance, it operated with relatively obsolete weapons compared to British, let alone German, forces; substandard equipment was a continuing reflection of British fears of mutiny since 1857. Bringing the Army up to full capacity also involved staggering increases in its recruiting – over 877,000 additional combatants by the end of the war. Augmentation on this scale required altering the

⁵⁸⁸ N. Gerald Barrier, "Ruling India: Coercion and Propaganda in British India during the First World War," in *India and World War I*, ed. DeWitt C. Ellinwood and S.D. Pradhan (New Delhi: Manohar, 1978), 85.

⁵⁸⁹ S.D. Pradhan, "Indian Army and the First World War," in *India and World War I*, ed. DeWitt C. Ellinwood and S.D. Pradhan (New Delhi: Manohar, 1978), 51–53.

“martial race” underpinnings of recruitment policy since 1857, a shift the Government of India justified on climate grounds since it now expected its soldiers to fight in Mesopotamia, Turkey, and France rather than against Russians in Afghanistan.⁵⁹⁰ This expectation proved true, as the Indian Army deployed in every major theater of the war. Like the Dominion contingents it earned moments of great distinction, such as when it arrived in France just in time to reinforce the beleaguered British Expeditionary Force during the initial German push on Paris, and similarly arrived to reinforce imperial troops at Gallipoli, but like the Anzacs its war record was marked by a great moment of ignominy. A large Indian force was captured at Kut in the Mesopotamian campaign and taken prisoner by Ottoman forces. The failure claimed the jobs of the commanding generals and of Austen Chamberlain, the Indian Secretary.

Fallout after Kut centered on the question of oversight – the Government of India was alleged to have fatally mismanaged its Army’s actions in the Mesopotamia Campaign. The dispute pointed at a larger question about constitutional autonomy and control between London and Delhi, and about India’s place in the Empire. With India providing more troops than any part of the Empire, it seemed more incongruous than ever that it was not represented at the Imperial Conferences that were held during wartime. Protests over the matter intensified. British Members of Parliament and military officers raised the matter in the House of Commons several times in December 1916, ahead of the proposed Imperial War Conference meeting to be held the following year. Sir Herbert Roberts proposed that India should be present “in view of place of India in the British

⁵⁹⁰ On “martial race” theory in practice see Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857-1914* (Manchester University Press, 2004); Pradhan, “Indian Army and the First World War,” 55.

Empire and the part which it has played in the war,” and Commander Wedgwood asked that when the prime ministers of the Dominions were called together to discuss peace terms, “a representative of India is also invited to the discussion.”⁵⁹¹ When the War Cabinet convened, it included Sir James Meston, the Lieutenant Governor of the United Provinces, and Maj. Gen. Sir Ganga Singh, Maharaja of Bikaner, the first non-white member of a British Cabinet and first full participant in the Imperial Conferences. Indian princes were formally granted diplomatic status as representatives of the Princely States at international functions.⁵⁹² Singh, Meston, and Sir Satyendra Prassanna Sinha, Law Member of the Viceroy’s Executive Council and Member of the Bengal Executive Council, toured Britain to some acclaim ahead of the 1917 meeting.⁵⁹³ When the War Conference met, it passed a unanimous motion to include India in all future meetings. Borden proposed the motion and Massey seconded it. This was a strange turn for New Zealand’s delegation at the Imperial Conferences – Joseph Ward had helped exclude India from the first officially designated parameters for membership at the 1907 meeting, and from membership in his ill-judged plan for imperial federation in 1911.⁵⁹⁴

⁵⁹¹ House of Commons, Question by Sir H. Roberts, Friday 22 December 1916, #43, and House of Commons, Question by Commander Wedgwood, Thursday 7 December 1916, #84. House of Commons Questions on the Subject of Indian Representation at a Forthcoming Imperial Conference, India Office Archive, British Library (BL), IOR/L/PJ/6/1467, British Library (BL), File 5180. See also Question by W.C. Roberts, Thursday 21 December 1916.

⁵⁹² “Indian States: Entertainment of Ruling Princes as State Guests; Arrangements and Expenses in Connection with Attendance of Maharaja of Patalia at the Imperial Conference,” 1918, IOR/L/PS/10/656/3-4, BL.

⁵⁹³ “Our Indian Visitors – Arrival Last Night,” *Manchester Guardian*, Manchester, UK, 23 April 1917, Press Cuttings, Massey Papers, MSY-0888, NANZ.

⁵⁹⁴ “Representation of India,” *Lloyd’s List*, London UK, 23 April 1917, Press Clippings, Massey Papers, NANZ, MSY-0888. For more on the decision to exclude India from conferences, see Chapters. 3 & 4 above.

Despite these official moves at the top levels of imperial politics, the war (and the hardships it created in India from failing infrastructure and high prices), tended to galvanize Indian nationalists, separatists, and revolutionaries. Local revolutionaries, holdovers from the 1905 Bengali partition unrest, also had significant international support networks – they conferenced with Irish republicans and received aid from the Indian diaspora elsewhere in Asia, from the Ghader Party of radical revolutionaries that operated mainly out of North America, and from an organization of Indian nationalists that had more recently coalesced in Berlin.⁵⁹⁵ Over 4,000 Ghader-backed militants managed to make their way back into India by the end of the war.⁵⁹⁶ Moreover, the Indian National Congress reacquainted itself with radicalism during the war years. The Congress had experienced schism in late 1907, when moderates attempted to block the election of the radical Bal Ganghadar Tilak as President, who was subsequently arrested for sedition in Bombay. That session dissolved in an actual brawl.⁵⁹⁷ But even Tilak would not cooperate with revolutionary elements like Ghader, and their inability to cement serious political support meant there would be no wartime uprising of the type achieved by Sinn Féin in Ireland.⁵⁹⁸ Instead, the war helped bridge religious and class divides that had hitherto fragmented opposition to British rule. At the war's outset, a Congress contingent led by Muhammad Ali Jinnah was in London unsuccessfully petitioning the Indian

⁵⁹⁵ Garton, "Chapter 8 - The Dominions, Ireland, and India," 159.

⁵⁹⁶ A.C. Bose, "Indian Revolutionaries during the First World War - A Study of Their Aims and Weaknesses," in *India and World War I*, ed. DeWitt C. Ellinwood and S.D. Pradhan (New Delhi: Manohar, 1978), 111.

⁵⁹⁷ John McLane, *Indian Nationalism and the Early Congress* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 367.

⁵⁹⁸ Bose, "Indian Revolutionaries during the First World War - A Study of Their Aims and Weaknesses," 114.

Secretary (Crewe) to appoint more Indians to the Viceroy's council. Jinnah, an influential member of both the Congress and the Muslim League, steered both organizations to agree on a list of core principles known as the Lucknow Pact in 1916. The Pact, acclaimed at a joint session of Congress and League, called for self-government in India and the Indianization of Raj appointments.⁵⁹⁹ But while Jinnah had managed to bring together disparate coalitions (including the Tilak and Gokhale factions of Congress), he still favored cooperating with British rule and advocated constitutional means of reform; the course of the war in India harmed him politically for this reason. Mohandas Gandhi gradually supplanted him as the focal point of Indian national politics during the war years. Gandhi proved more effective at leveraging religious populism, and despite tepid responses to his initial support for the war effort, was able to mobilize the population to resist the repressive Defence of India and Rowlatt Acts, especially when these persisted after the Armistice. Gandhi also forged relationships with the Khilafat Movement, a pan-Islamic movement that arose in South Asia to fill the void left by the crumbling Ottoman Caliphate, and leveraged British rule for concessions to Muslims. This allowed Gandhi to maintain a foothold in the Muslim community that did not depend on Jinnah's Muslim League. The Amritsar Massacre in April 1919, in which British soldiers attempting to enforce the Rowlatt Acts had murdered over a thousand civilians in a public square, further eroded the legitimacy of British rule. Jinnah resigned from his seat on the Viceroy's council, and Gandhi's calls for *satyagraha* gained more adherents.

⁵⁹⁹ S.A. Wolpert, "Congress Leadership in Transition: Jinnah to Gandhi, 1914-21," in *India and World War I*, ed. DeWitt C. Ellinwood and S.D. Pradhan (New Delhi: Manohar, 1978), 132.

One irony of India's wartime experience is that while the self-governing Dominions tended successfully to use the opinions (and voting preferences) of their active military personnel as a tool to influence their civilian electorates, the Government of India lacked access to this tactic despite having put well over a million Indians in military service. The Raj could not hector the population about how Indian soldiers were voting, because no such voting took place. Instead, they relied on their security apparatus, and the army itself, to coercively manage the population. Compared to a case like Ireland's, this was a success, and as noted above, Indian interests also made significant progress at the imperial level in the Conference system and the War Cabinet. The Secretary/Viceroy team of Edwin Montagu and Lord Chelmsford also introduced eponymous reforms in 1917, which promised a future of self-government in India and the addition of Indians to Legislative and Executive Councils; a loose approximation of the demands made by the Lucknow Pact. But the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms clove to the watchword of incrementalism (Lord Curzon himself ensured this about their language), and the experience of war led more Indian subjects to reconceptualize political sovereignty as a matter of spiritual import rather than simply the military technocracy typified by the Raj, and herein lay Gandhi's genius – the religious populism unleashed by satyagraha and Khilafat could not be placated with procedural reconfigurations of legislative councils.

Wartime pronouncements on the future of the self-governing Dominions were not dissimilar to the prevailing tone of discussions about the future of India. The concept of the Imperial War Cabinet was itself a recognition of the need for constitutional innovation in the midst of a dual crisis of security and sovereignty. Much like the

principle of a wartime coalition government, which prevailed in both the United Kingdom and New Zealand, the War Cabinet was meant to legitimize the collective effort of the British Empire and provide an institutional symbol of its unity of purpose. After Asquith's governments experimented with a variety of committees for delegating war tasks (such as the notorious Dardanelles Committee), Lloyd George's coalition that took over in late 1916 took a different approach. In the spring of 1917, he invited the Dominion prime ministers to participate in a series of Cabinet meetings. Robert Borden and his newly-appointed "Resident Minister in London" George Perley attended from Canada, Massey and Ward from New Zealand, E.P. Morris from Newfoundland, and General Smuts from South Africa attended this Imperial War Cabinet for six weeks before convening an ordinary meeting of the Imperial Conference. Billy Hughes was unable to leave Australia on account of the need to fight the election between his acrimonious conscription referenda.⁶⁰⁰ The 1917 Imperial War Cabinet did not fundamentally alter the direction of British policy in the war. It rather acknowledged what was already the case: that Britain's war-fighting capacity depended on the cooperation of colonial participants.

The 1917 Conference, joined by Ganga Singh and Satyendra Prassanna Sinha, passed the resolution formally recognizing India and also paved the way for the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms.⁶⁰¹ India thus formally entered the Conference system, and with it, the Empire's muddling attempt to solve its ongoing crisis of sovereignty. Resolution IX acknowledged the unresolved crisis directly:

⁶⁰⁰ Carrington, "Chapter XVI - 'The Empire at War, 1914-1918,'" 632.

⁶⁰¹ Papers Laid before the Imperial War Conference, 1917, CAB 32/1, TNA, Resolution VII, xiii.

The Imperial War Conference are of opinion that the readjustment of the constitutional relations of the component parts of the Empire...should form the subject of a special Imperial Conference to be summoned as soon as possible after the cessation of hostilities...Such readjustment, while thoroughly preserving all existing powers of self-government and complete control of domestic affairs, should be based upon a full recognition of the Dominions as autonomous nations of an Imperial Commonwealth, and of India as an important portion of the same; should recognise the right of the Dominions and India to an adequate voice in foreign policy and in foreign relations; and should provide effective arrangements for continuous consultation in all important matters of common Imperial concern, and for such necessary concerted action, founded on consultation, as the several Governments may determine.⁶⁰²

Inasmuch as conscription proved to be the purest expression of state sovereignty evident arising from the war, Britain's Military Service Act (1916) also carried a highly conspicuous exception: the British government disavowed the right to conscript Dominion subjects who were present in Britain. The Canadian and New Zealander representatives at the War Conference queried this fact in 1917, and Walter Long, Colonial Secretary and Chairman for the day, confirmed that for Dominion subjects "we

⁶⁰² Papers Laid before the Imperial War Conference, 1917, CAB 32/1, TNA, Resolution IX, xiii.

have no power over such a man.”⁶⁰³ This admission seemed appropriate and even intuitive to those assembled, but contained a crucial concession to Dominion sovereignty. Dicey’s *Law of the Constitution* asserted, three years prior, that the Imperial Parliament did *not* concede the right of any Dominion to stand neutral in the event of war between the King and a foreign power, but allowed that it *would* concede their “moral right” to legislate for “matters occurring within the territory of such Dominion.”⁶⁰⁴ The matter of conscription directly concerned the King’s ongoing war, and his (e.g.) Canadian subjects resident in Britain could in no way be said to be within Canadian territory, yet the Colonial Secretary conceded that Dominion sovereignty applied to Dominion subjects anywhere, even within Britain itself. He also conceded it *in principle*, notwithstanding the clear practical impediments to the British government rounding up Dominion subjects within its borders. The concession formed the essence of General Smuts’ reminiscence in Pretoria after returning from the Peace Conference in 1920: “Beyond [the Dominions’] borders, they had no power or authority...in other words, they had no international status. And in the future the Dominions have in principle authority and power, not only in respect of their domestic questions, but also over their international or foreign relations, and in the questions of peace or war which may affect them.”⁶⁰⁵

In summer 1918, the Admiralty prepared an anticipatory memo intended to defend the concept of the central command of the Royal Navy in the face of Dominion

⁶⁰³ Long (Chairman) to Perley, 26 April 1917, Papers Laid before the Imperial War Conference, 1917, CAB 32/1, TNA, 215.

⁶⁰⁴ These statements form part of Dicey’s exploration of 4 “rules” that generally governed UK-Dominion relations at the time of his writing in 1914. Dicey, *Introduction to the Study of the Law of the Constitution*, 27.

⁶⁰⁵ Jan Christian Smuts, *Rand Daily Mail*, 4 December 1920, No. 14 “Extract from a Speech by General Smuts,” Dominion Acts – Constitutional Relations of the Empire, CO 886/6/2 1917, TNA, 35.

opposition after the war, and the First Sea Lord, Admiral Wemyss, presented it to the Imperial War Cabinet. In his opening remarks he tried to assure them, “We tried to take the wider view of the Empire, as a partnership of nations under the Crown, and with the constitution of the Imperial War Cabinet somewhat as our guide.”⁶⁰⁶ Returning to form, the Canadian representatives at the July 1918 Imperial War Conference (Borden had returned to Canada), managed to have all formal discussion of the memorandum removed from the agenda, stating that their government preferred to have any such discussion of the naval future with the Admiralty, directly.⁶⁰⁷ This disappointed Massey and Ward, but they had time enough to reiterate that they considered the status quo of naval security in the Pacific unacceptable, and that they would put this concern to the Admiralty directly if they must. General Singh told the press that India also felt a renewed need to act as a stabilizing force in Asia given the deterioration of the Tsarist regime in Russia, and the renewed possibility of Russo-Indian conflict on the Northwest Frontier.⁶⁰⁸ If a consensus arose regarding the Empire’s constitutional crises during the First World War, it was that the status quo had become untenable. The exertions of states to meet the demands of war had an astringent effect on constitutional conversations – the Imperial War Cabinets, like the Conference system originally, had arisen on an ad hoc basis but quickly came to embody a minimum expectation for future business.

⁶⁰⁶ Naval Defence of the British Empire – Preparation of a Memorandum for the Imperial War Conference, 1918, ADM 1/8520/103, TNA, 33.

⁶⁰⁷ 24 July 1918, Minutes and Papers Laid before the 1918 Imperial War Conference, CAB 32/1, TNA, 165-9.

⁶⁰⁸ “India’s Devotion – Necessity of British Rule,” *Morning Post*, London, UK, 14 June 1918, Press Clippings, Massey Papers, MSY-0889, NANZ, 131.

5.5 THE CONSCRIPTION CRISIS IN IRELAND: A SOVEREIGN PEOPLE?

The rigors of war and the fraught politics of conscription proved the most incendiary and destructive to public order within the United Kingdom's sovereign territory itself. Pearse and his cadre managed, after their initially unpopular Easter Rising and rather fanciful and short-lived Proclamation of the Republic, to rally public support for radical separatism in southern Ireland.⁶⁰⁹ The Christ-like posthumous flourishing of Pearse's mission certainly would have pleased him. Still, the domestic drama created by Irish radicals tends to distract from the reality that over 200,000 Irish served the British war effort during World War I, and at about 5% of the military-aged male population, this number compared closely with the soldiering proportions of Canadians and Australians. Irish deployment did take a politically bimodal form, after the Ulster Volunteer Force and Irish Volunteer Force, constituted in the prewar years for a civil war over Home Rule, deployed respectively as the 36th Ulster Division and the 10th and 16th Irish Divisions.⁶¹⁰ Irish soldiers were some of the first British units to arrive in France, as they were conveniently already organized for war. The names of these units foreshadowed trouble ahead – *volunteer* recruitment produced significant returns during the war, but Ireland was formally exempt from Britain's Military Service Act, placing the Irish on par with Australia's Aboriginal subjects, New Zealand's Māori, and (informally) Canada's Quebecois. The severity of the constitutional crisis in Ireland also eclipsed that

⁶⁰⁹ See Charles Townshend, *Easter 1916* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, Publisher, 2005) Ch. 12 - The Politics of Militarization.

⁶¹⁰ Some recent work has complicated the perception of strong divisions between Catholics and Protestants in wartime deployment; see Richard S. Grayson, *Belfast Boys: How Unionists and Nationalists Fought and Died Together in the First World War* (London: Continuum Books, 2009).

of anywhere else in the British Empire – a bill authorizing Irish Home Rule sat passed but suspended on the floor of Parliament and its sectarian communities were equipped and prepared to shoot one another over it. The only thing certain was the impossibility of status quo.

Lloyd George's government began seriously to consider conscription in Ireland over the winter of 1917-18. The Allied manpower situation on the Western Front began deteriorating in the face of Erich Ludendorff's Spring Offensive, and Gough's Fifth Army seemed on the brink of losing its operational capacity, so depleted were its units. The severity of the situation was sufficient to convince Lloyd George to ignore most of the advice he was getting about Ireland: Henry Duke, the Irish Chief Secretary (the ranking Cabinet member for Irish affairs), told his Prime Minister that he "might as well try and recruit Germans," and Edward Carson, leading Ulster unionist and First Lord of the Admiralty, also advised that conscripting Irish would be lunacy.⁶¹¹ The "Welsh Wizard" forged ahead anyway: he put a bill to enforce the Military Service Act in Ireland through the Commons, and it received Royal Assent on 18 April 1918. Lord French, the sacked commander of the original BEF and newly-created Lord Lieutenant (Viceroy) of Ireland, immediately took the rather perplexing step of informing the British government that he would need more troops, because the Irish conscription effort would assuredly require martial law. French, whose own biographer described him as "politically naïve," proved to be much more politically prescient here than his famously savvy Prime

⁶¹¹ Alan J. Ward. "Lloyd George and 1918 Irish Conscription Crisis" *The Historical Journal*, XVII, I (1974). p.110-111.

Minister.⁶¹² Within days, mass resistance to conscription erupted across Ireland, uniting hitherto divided elements of society in unprecedented opposition to British rule. The government ultimately abandoned its plans altogether, helped by changing battlefield fortunes as American troops helped turn the last German offensive into a rout that culminated in Armistice some months later. But not before it had irretrievably radicalized the Irish population. This section will show that Irish Conscription Crisis of 1918 drove thousands of military-aged males into the Irish Volunteers (the precursor of the IRA), forged an anti-conscription consensus from disparate political factions, and forced many, often for the first time, to consider the nature and meaning of sovereignty in a crisis-wracked Empire. It will do so by using detailed witness statements from the Irish Bureau of Military History, which invited nearly two thousand participants in and observers of Ireland's revolutionary conflict period to reflect on their experiences.⁶¹³ These statements provide a useful way of understanding how people outside the circles of government understood complicated questions of security and sovereignty.

Ireland's political strife affected the course of politics in the other Dominions and India. Its ethno-religious fissures replicated themselves in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, pitting Catholic Irish migrants against Ulster Protestants, replete with local

⁶¹² Ian F. W. Beckett, 'French, John Denton Pinkstone, first earl of Ypres (1852–1925)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, May 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/33272, accessed 9 April 2009]

⁶¹³ The Bureau of Military History is a joint operation run between Óglaigh na hÉireann/Defence Forces Ireland and the Irish National Archives. Beginning in the late 1940s, the organization conducted in-depth interviews with survivors of the period, including a broad spectrum of society encompassing IRA members, soldiers, police, clergy, and ordinary civilians. Though they were discouraged from discussing the Civil War (1922–24), which was considered too divisive at the time, the respondents were asked to reflect on their upbringings, their relationship to political organizations and political questions, and their memories of specific events from the period 1913–1921. 1,773 witness statements were taken, and they remained classified until 2003. The statements provide a unique snapshot of historical memory and an excellent example of people trying to make sense of their place in momentous events that shaped the future of their states (the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, the UK, Australia, and others).

branches of Sinn Féin and the Orange Order, respectively. As in the case of Archbishop Mannix, the Irish Question can even be said to have dominated the conscription question in Australia nearly as much as it did in Ireland. Earl Grey, who arrived in New Zealand for a tour just before the war began in 1914, was forced upon arrival to give newspaper interviews on the Home Rule question and its future. He hoped the original bill would be scrapped in favor of a federal solution that might incorporate the other Dominions in a newly-constituted upper chamber, and opined that Ulster ought to fight a civil war rather than accept its current terms.⁶¹⁴ When William Massey took the opposite journey to the United Kingdom to participate in the Imperial War Cabinet, he was pressed, on account of his Irish extraction, to comment on the conscription question in Ireland. “There are still many natives of Ireland who have not yet risen to a sense of their duties and responsibilities,” he told the *Irish Times*, who should “remember that Irish men have always been on the side of liberty and freedom... Let them remember that Germany, by her record in this war, stands for the crushing of small nations. He who refuses to assist the Allies, by doing so assists Germany.”⁶¹⁵ At home in New Zealand, the local pro-conscription consensus and the incendiary nature of the debate in Australia provoked a strong anti-Catholic backlash among Protestant New Zealanders, and helped drive the Dominion’s marginalized Irish community and labor movement together in mutual opposition to the measures.⁶¹⁶ The sense of crisis produced by Ireland’s Home Rule

⁶¹⁴ “Earl Grey in Dunedin,” *Evening Star*, Dunedin, NZ, 3 March 1914, Visit of Earl Grey to New Zealand, 1914, ADBQ 16145 ALLEN1/13 R22319711, NANZ.

⁶¹⁵ “Recruiting in Ireland – Appeal from New Zealand’s Irish Premier,” *Irish Times*, 1 July 1918, Dublin, UK, Press Cuttings, vol. 2, Massey Papers MSY-0890, NANZ.

⁶¹⁶ See “New Zealand Labour and Irish Self-Determination” in Davis, *Irish Issues in New Zealand Politics, 1868-1922*, 193–5.

situation intensified the feeling of crisis across the whole Empire, and its polarizing effects forced people to speculate about, and comment on, constitutional matters. Albert Dryer, the Secretary of the Australian League for an Undivided Ireland, told his members that recruitment pitches like Massey's, based on the dignity of small nations, rang hollow with the memory of the Boer War.⁶¹⁷ Ireland served as the spiritual focal point for opposition to conscription across the Empire; as one Irish republican recalled, it drove his comrades to "[join] with our fellow countrymen at home and in foreign lands in proclaiming once more that Ireland is a distinct nation with a just right to Sovereign Independence."⁶¹⁸ Irish disquiet also further implicated Germany in the Empire's domestic security fears. Berlin-based Indian nationalists and persecuted German New Zealanders are two examples already noted, but the links would prove even stronger in the Irish case. Days before the 1916 Rising, the ignominious arrest of disgraced former journalist and British Foreign Office official Roger Casement revealed that he had been negotiating directly with the Germans about importing arms into Ireland ahead of the Rising, and had in fact been returned to his home country by a German U-boat lurking off the Kerry coast. Casement was executed not long after the leaders of the Rising.⁶¹⁹

Within Ireland, conscription came as a major boost to the somewhat dilapidated units of Irish Volunteers who had refused to join the First World War and remained at home to focus on their original mission of securing Irish independence – for this crowd, independence of the more hardline sort: republicanism, not Home Rule. While the large contingents of Irish on the Western Front represented the majority opinion, at least at the

⁶¹⁷ Albert Dryer, BMH.WS 1526, NAI, 23.

⁶¹⁸ Liam Brady, BMH.WS 676, NAI, 28.

⁶¹⁹ Townshend, *Easter 1916*, 278.

war's outset, the deployments also had the critical effect of shipping every moderate nationalist with military inclinations out of the country, leaving behind only committed radicals. The threat of conscription allowed these Volunteers, the protean group that would become the Irish Republican Army, to begin harnessing the public discontent generated by the 1916 Rising and to legitimize armed resistance among ordinary and hitherto politically aloof swathes of the public.⁶²⁰ Nearly every existing Volunteer unit in southern Ireland that had maintained an organizational presence after the Rising immediately experienced a surge of new recruits who were eager to resist conscription by any means necessary. The Conscription Crisis also coincided with the end of the policy of British internment for captured participants in the Rising, most of whom had been in Frongoch prison camp in Wales since spring 1916, but who now returned to a country aroused by the aftermath of their deeds and the possibility of conscription.⁶²¹ Richard Walsh, Volunteer Adjutant of Co. Mayo and the Connaught provincial representative on the Volunteer Executive, explained in his statement that a squad of Volunteers under Cathal Brugha were sent to London to await the imposition of conscription, whereupon they would attempt to assassinate members of the British Cabinet. Walsh added that the Executive took this decision because of their "belief that the enforcement of conscription

⁶²⁰ Michael O'Kelly, Sinn Féin President in Co. Kildare and organizer for the Irish Volunteers, said that the focus of rebuilding after the Rising was to "join branches of the Sinn Féin organization and with the rest of the country present a united front to claim sovereign independence for Ireland at the Peace Conference." Michael O'Kelly, BMH.WS 1155, NAI.

⁶²¹ See for example the case of Seán Boylan, commandant of Volunteer operations in Co. Meath, who spent time interned in Wales but returned to a public "more favorable" to his cause than when he'd left. The local residents of his own Meath had even set up a Volunteers' Dependents Fund to look after the families of interned men in his absence. See Seán Boylan, BMH.WS 212, National Archives of Ireland (NAI), 9; Seán Boylan, BMH.WS 1715, NAI, 1.

by the British government was nothing short of a direct attempt by them to destroy the Irish race.”⁶²²

Young men seeking employment in the public sector already found themselves shut out by Ireland’s official establishment, who resented their lack of service in the war effort. Michael McGovern recalled applying for a job vacated by his father in the county’s municipal water service, only to be told that his “place was in France.” The “upsetting” rejection led him to an alternative job: Quartermaster of the Kells Battalion, Irish Volunteers.⁶²³ Seamus Finn, Brigade Adjutant for Co. Meath, noted a conspicuous feature of some of the new recruits to his paramilitary force: they were Royal Irish Constabulary officers who had abandoned their posts. As Lord French observed, conscription would likely require martial law conditions to enforce, and the local police force itself was suffering defections to the Irish Volunteers. Finn recalled that his Brigade received a welcome boost in operational training from an ex-RIC sergeant named T.J. McKliggot.⁶²⁴ In that county alone, 94 men joined as a direct result of the conscription scare, roughly doubling the original size of the whole Brigade.⁶²⁵ Significant cash influx from public anti-conscription donations also gave Volunteer units the resources to fund drill instructors, propaganda, and bomb-making materials, which they used to prepare for the expected war.⁶²⁶ All this activity served a less-obvious but more important purpose –

⁶²² Richard Walsh, BMH.WS 400, NAI, 68.

⁶²³ Michael McGovern, BMH.WS 1625, NAI, 1.

⁶²⁴ Seamus Finn reported that McKliggot had “earlier resigned from the police force as a protest against Britain’s Conscription plans for Ireland during World War I”, Seamus Finn, BMH.WS 857, NAI, 2.

⁶²⁵ See Seamus Finn, BMH.WS 901, NAI, 1; Michael McGovern, BMH.WS 1625, NAI, 2; David Hall BMH.WS 1539, NAI, 1.

⁶²⁶ See Seán Farrelly, BMH.WS 1734, NAI, 6; Seamus Finn, BMH.WS 901, NAI, 2.

through public visibility, it put the lie to British-dominated law and order in Ireland, and demonstrated to the general public that their security was contingent on the protection of the Volunteers, rather than the state.⁶²⁷ Liam Brady, the Co. Derry organizer for the republican Boy Scout analog Fianna Éireann in 1918, remembered that organizing resistance to conscription felt like the “people, by their unity, had scored another smashing blow against the British Government's plot to Anglicise the Irish.”⁶²⁸

Conscription also forged a unity of organizational purpose between groups that had thus far refused to cooperate over doctrinal differences. The Irish Republican Brotherhood, a secret society dedicated to revolutionary republican vanguardism that operated by infiltrating Irish society and institutions, drew closer to Sinn Féin, the more extreme Irish nationalist party; this cooperation was not a foregone conclusion since Arthur Griffith, Sinn Féin’s founder, was a monarchist who thought republicanism inimical to Irish traditions and culture.⁶²⁹ The question of republicanism proved thorny, as Irish nationalism gained momentum – it pointed directly to the larger questions of how to conceptualize Ireland’s national sovereignty, and how to constitute a future Irish state.⁶³⁰ Monsignor Michael Curran, then Secretary to the Archbishop of Dublin and

⁶²⁷ For more on this phenomenon, see Joost Augusteijn, *From Public Defiance to Guerilla Warfare: The Experience of Ordinary Volunteers in the Irish War of Independence, 1916-1921* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1996), 78; David Fitzpatrick, “The Geography of Irish Nationalism, 1910-1921,” *Past and Present* 78, no. February (1978); Erhard Rumpf, *Nationalismus Und Sozialismus in Irlandhistorischsoziologischer Versuch Über Die Irische Revolution Seit 1918* (Meisenheim am Glan: A. Hain, 1959).

⁶²⁸ Liam Brady, BMH.WS 676, NAI, 30.

⁶²⁹ Finn recalled that the IRB kept the local branches of Sinn Féin and other organizations “national-minded and sound,” while Boylan reported that when the British government ordered all civil servants to take an Oath of Allegiance to the Crown in late 1918, the IRB compelled the GAA to purge all its members who complied. See Seamus Finn, BMH.WS 1060, NAI, 68; Seán Boylan, BMH.WS 1715, NAI, 11.

⁶³⁰ At a 1915 Ard Fheis (party conference), IRB man John Southwell recalled controversy over a motion to assert “the sovereign independence of Ireland” that was revised to “the national independence” to assuage the anti-republican faction. John Southwell, BMH.WS 230, NAI, 4.

future Rector of Irish College in the Vatican, recalled how Griffith and the Church initially opposed republicanism, but that events like conscription eventually polarized the debate such that moderate positions seemed untenable. Redmond's Irish Parliamentary Party, Msgr. Curran said, imagined independence as a "glorified county council sitting in College Green, and this forced Sinn Féin to adopt republic as an unmistakable definition of a sovereign state."⁶³¹ Kevin O'Shiel, a jurist who acted as a Land Commissioner for Dáil Éireann when Sinn Féin created it as Ireland's separatist legislature, wrote that moderate solutions like Home Rule or an Irish monarchy would only give Britain "a hand with which to confuse the world on our sovereignty issue."⁶³² A number of disparate organizations eventually coalesced to back Sinn Féin's full separatist solution to Ireland's constitutional crisis. The Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) helped propagandize large numbers of ordinary Irish. Somewhat more surprisingly, the separatist fold also welcomed the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH), a cultural but fairly conservative society frequented by establishment figures. One Volunteer remembered that the local AOH branded Sinn Féin and its membership "paid German agents" and "Bolshies," but after the Conscription Crisis, the Order requested protection from the Volunteers and leant them their Assembly Hall to hold fundraising dances.⁶³³ The rhetorical shift here from the Order's reactionary slanders to its active collusion in resisting British law and order demonstrates the transformative power of the conscription issue.

⁶³¹ College Green was the Dublin location of Ireland's former Parliament, dissolved with the Act of Union in 1800. Right Reverend Monsignor Michael J. Curran, BMH.WS 687, NAI, 278.

⁶³² O'Shiel narrates how Griffith resisted republicanism at successive Ardfeiseanna and eventually had the matter tabled as a future referendum topic for after independence was secured. Commissioner Kevin O'Shiel, BMH.WS 1770, Section 5, 682.

⁶³³ Seán Farrelly, BMH.WS, 1734 NAI, 5.

The Catholic hierarchy, meanwhile, had a fraught relationship with Irish republicanism; the latter's egalitarian ethos posed troubling questions for the Church, while official doctrine forbade the swearing of secret oaths of the kind demanded by the IRB and other revolutionary groups. Richard Walsh, the Archbishop of Dublin, signaled a shift in position in a speech of 9 May 1918, shortly after the Conscription Bill passed. The Archbishop said that some had misguided ideas about republicanism, "associating it with the excesses of the French Revolution and forgetting all about the United States."⁶³⁴ The temporary alliance between these groups forged by conscription, which the Catholic Church consistently and effectively opposed across the British world, created a powerful social consensus in Ireland that carried significant political, and shortly, electoral consequences. Anti-conscription committees were set up "in every parish" and were "usually presided over by a priest or curate," one Volunteer recalled, while another remembered his own parish priest collecting hundreds of pounds in post-Mass meetings.⁶³⁵ A Tyrone IRB operative recalled his joy at the anti-conscription meetings that occurred "after every mass."⁶³⁶ Seán Farrelly remembered how clergy often spoke at anti-conscription rallies, at which he and members of his Company served as security guards and conducted anti-surveillance operations.⁶³⁷ Much as it had in New Zealand, Msgr. Curran recalled how the Irish labor movement also received a boost from the anti-conscription consensus, proclaiming in September 1918 that "We mean thereby that

⁶³⁴ Right Reverend Monsignor Michael J. Curran, BMH.WS 687, NAI, 278.

⁶³⁵ See Seamus Finn, BMH.WS 901, NAI, 1; Michael McGovern, BMH.WS, 1625, NAI, 1-2.

⁶³⁶ Patrick McKenna, BMH.WS 911, NAI, 3.

⁶³⁷ Farrelly: "[present were] several hundred Volunteers and thousands of civilians. It was one of the biggest meetings I ever saw. Father O'Flanagan was a great speaker and could address his audience easily for an hour," Seán Farrelly, BMH.WS, 1734 NAI, 5.

Ireland, no less than Belgium or Serbia, Poland or Finland, Bohemia or Esthonia, shall have the right to decide its own form of government, to choose its sovereignty,” and professed their “opposition to conscription, even to conscription in an Irish republic.”⁶³⁸ The left-right coalition conscription brought together created unprecedented political unity and marginalized pro-British voices in southern Ireland. Peter Hart has called the cooperation of the Catholic Church with Irish radical elements on the conscription issue “the loss of a counter-revolutionary bulwark.”⁶³⁹

The threat of conscription in Ireland also played a significant role in Sinn Féin’s resounding victory in the general election of 1918, in which they seized 73 of Ireland’s 105 seats in the House of Commons, nearly annihilating the moderate, constitutionalist Irish Parliamentary Party in the process. Campaigners were able to sustain the pace of the large public rallies provoked by conscription into the election, and many of the election rallies were organized (and “guarded”) by the Irish Volunteers. During July 1918 by-elections, Volunteer units helped secure early electoral victories, such as when most of the Meath Brigade traveled to neighboring Co. Cavan to police rallies for Arthur Griffith, the party’s founder and candidate.⁶⁴⁰ In the general election the following December, David Hall recalled that there was little or no existing Sinn Féin organization in his county, so his local Irish Volunteers simply carried out the election campaign themselves,

⁶³⁸ Right Reverend Monsignor Michael J. Curran, BMH.WS 687, NAI, 299-300.

⁶³⁹ Peter Hart, *The IRA at War, 1916-1923* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 14.

⁶⁴⁰ Seán Boylan notes that these rallies were harassed by members of the Orange Order and Ulster Volunteer Force who were attempting to break up or prohibit Sinn Féin’s meetings, see Seán Boylan, BMH.WS 1715, NAI, 4; Seán Farrelly also discusses the necessity of these policing duties at one particular event where his unit stood guard at a speech by Eamon de Valera, future leader of the Dáil, Irish Free State and later, Republic of Ireland, who was in Cavan in support of Griffith, see Seán Farrelly, BMH.WS 1734, NAI, 6.

canvassing, fund-raising, transporting voters to polling stations, and “guarding” the latter.⁶⁴¹ Both constituencies in the county returned Sinn Féin MPs and ousted moderate nationalists. Meath’s Fifth Battalion OC Seán Keogh remembered how his unit marked this occasion by directly challenging the authority of the local RIC: they marched to the station and hoisted a Sinn Féin flag up its flagpole in defiant celebration.⁶⁴² 1918 marked a shift towards full separatism in Irish politics, and it occurred because conscription discredited moderates and empowered the paramilitary Irish Volunteers to influence (and intimidate) voters.⁶⁴³ Sinn Féin’s messaging worked hard to link Redmond’s Irish Parliamentary Party with conscription during the election campaign, an effective move given his support for the war effort.⁶⁴⁴ Redmond died in March of that year, having failed a final time at securing support for a Home Rule solution and suffering heart failure during an operation.

Though the course of the First World War gave the British government some respite from imposing conscription in Ireland, they found themselves trying to negotiate peace among great powers at Versailles while fully at war at home, with Ireland, until 1921. When the Volunteers (now constituted as the Irish Republican Army) began attacking RIC and Army barracks across Ireland, the British government first tried to scramble de-mobilized and veteran auxiliary soldiers to shore up the security forces, but

⁶⁴¹ “The main brunt of the work fell to us” during the election; we held “meetings galore,” recalled Hall. David Hall, BMH.WS 1539, NAI, 2. Seán Boylan commented that “all Volunteers in the county took an active part in the campaign.” Seán Boylan, BMH.WS 1715, NAI, 4.

⁶⁴² Seán Keogh, BMH.WS 1615, NAI, 2.

⁶⁴³ Richard P. Davis, *Arthur Griffith and Non-Violent Sinn Féin* (Dublin: Anvil, 1974).

⁶⁴⁴ Sinn Féin also avoided the issue of violent struggle in their election manifesto; see Marie Coleman, “Mobilisation: The South Longford By-Election and Its Impact on Political Mobilisation,” in *The Irish Revolution, 1913-1923*, ed. Joost Augusteijn (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 60.

this solution produced messy results: failed operations, bloody reprisals, and a deepening rift between state and society. Knowing that the mechanized warfare of the Western Front could not solve a problem like domestic insurrection, Lloyd George was forced to negotiate with the leadership of Dáil Éireann on Irish independence, a matter complicated by irreconcilably unionist Ulster, which by 1919 was calling for partition of Ireland and its own state that could remain within the United Kingdom. “Sovereignty,” as ever, proved a point of contention in these negotiations. Cathal Brugha, the Dáil’s first President (excepting Pearse), said angrily while presiding over a constitutional debate, “These are the people who, we are told, are out for the freedom of small nationalities. And, though having made that statement, he [Lloyd George] now comes forward and says that the sovereign independence of Ireland cannot be tolerated. Are you going to allow a gentleman who has been referred to as a Welsh adventurer to suggest that we are to remain a slave nation for all time?”⁶⁴⁵ Several members of the Irish delegation that went to London to negotiate with Lloyd George recalled how the Prime Minister seemed willing to work with them at first, until he read an official letter from Eamon de Valera, the new Dáil President (Brugha stepped aside to run military affairs). A single phrase, apparently, sent Lloyd George into hysterics.

I could have given de Valera all the realities he wanted, an Ireland with its own Gaelic system of education, its own army and police force, its own flag, its own anthem, the wherewithal to work out its own destiny as a free

⁶⁴⁵ J.J. “Sceilig” O’Kelly, Speaker, Dáil Éireann 1919, BMH.WS 384, NAI, 10.

and independent Gaelic nation, and this man spurns it all for a phrase. I asked him not to use that phrase – ‘a sovereign nation’.⁶⁴⁶

He told the visitors he would pretend he had not read the letter if they could persuade De Valera to revise it. The Dáil had already met by the time they were able to converse with Dublin on the phone.

The Dáil’s case was also helped by the tone of discussions at Versailles, especially Woodrow Wilson’s emphasis on self-determination as the singular principle of the new international system. The American Cardinal James Gibbons quoted Wilson in a speech on Ireland’s future: “President Wilson cannot leave Ireland out of his reckoning. He had asked for self-determination and gained his point in practically every demand for nations outside the British Empire. He surely will not refuse to lift his voice on behalf of Ireland.”⁶⁴⁷ Patrick McCartan, member of the IRB’s Supreme Council, OC of forces in Co. Tyrone since the Rising, and Dáil envoy to the United States and Russia, was implicated in a plot for the Soviet government to recognize the Irish Republic in 1921. Commenting on the possible exposure of his mission, he wrote “Instead of doing Ireland harm the publication will do us good...If there is no denial, explanation or apology the majority of the people of Ireland and our friends everywhere will be convinced that we have a secret agreement with Russia. The documents themselves show that we are thinking and acting as a sovereign nation and hence will be useful in helping to refute or kill the charges of anxiety to compromise on the basis of Dominion Home Rule.”⁶⁴⁸

⁶⁴⁶ Robert Brennan, Publicity Department, Dáil Éireann, BMH.WS 779, NAI, 670.

⁶⁴⁷ Right Reverend Monsignor Michael J. Curran, BMH.WS 687, NAI, 357.

⁶⁴⁸ Patrick McCartan, BMH.WS 766, NAI, 16.

The outcome of the Irish War of Independence ultimately satisfied no party fully. The island was partitioned; six of its counties became an independent Northern Ireland, with its own Assembly, and remained within the United Kingdom. The rest of the island became the Irish Free State, an independent Dominion under the British Sovereign and a member of the Commonwealth. These terms, the substance of the Treaty signed to cease hostilities with Britain, plunged Ireland anew into civil war between those who accepted the terms and those who refused to accept full republican sovereignty – among them Eamon de Valera. Dan Breen, an anti-Treaty IRA commander who was also elected to represent Co. Tipperary in the Dáil, reflected that “to the Army Officers who opposed the Treaty the all-important issue was the issue of Republic versus Free State, or, to put it another way, of Dominion status versus Sovereign Independence.”⁶⁴⁹ Breen was incensed when the Catholic hierarchy in Ireland recognized the Free State government, and wrote a letter to the Vatican, accusing it of abetting “the partition of the ancient territory of our nation, the loss of its sovereignty and independence.”⁶⁵⁰ His witness statement concludes with bitterness, since he was famous for his uncompromising role in the Civil War but was not encouraged to discuss it. He said he hoped “some competent historian [would] undertake the task which still remains to be done...For the struggle of centuries is not over. An alien army of occupation still remains on Irish soil, and Irish freedom and sovereignty have still to be achieved.”⁶⁵¹

⁶⁴⁹ Daniel Breen, BMH.WS 1763, NAI, 14.

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid., 102.

⁶⁵¹ Ibid., 185.

5.6 CONCLUSION

The First World War did not disrupt and reshape the constitutional structure of the British Empire because colonial subjects paid a price in blood (in the Empire's name, as the Anzacs, or against it, as Pearse and the IRA) that earned them new prizes. The war changed the Empire because it drastically increased the powers of the state in every Dominion and colony, confronting British subjects with the bare meaning of sovereignty and forcing them to reckon with it. The Crown needed, and in some cases would take if not offered, their money, their crops, their manufactures, and their bodies. It did all this in the name of security – of saving the Mother Country from invasion, of securing the future for decency and for “small countries.” The war did not touch all parts of the Empire equally, but it made it much more difficult for most people to ignore questions of sovereignty. It made the abstract real. It also sharpened sovereignty's international dimension – as Pearse put it, “of the nation as against all other nations” by embroiling colonies and Dominions as actors within a global drama, a drama only heightened by Woodrow Wilson's sweeping rhetoric of self-determination. The British government and the international community by now acknowledged the Dominions and India as discrete international actors in their own rights, but the matter of sovereignty still proved to be a delicate balance between the ability to seize and control territory, and the recognition and acceptance of peers. During the Paris Peace Conference, Bal Ganghadar Tilak wrote a letter to Wilson and to French President Clemenceau, urging them to recognize India's right to self-determination, and enclosed a pamphlet outlying a fifteen-year plan for transitioning British India into a democratic United States of India within the British

Commonwealth. Clemenceau ignored it; Wilson replied that India was a matter for another time.⁶⁵²

If the war focused questions of sovereignty, the issue of conscription distilled its essence. It created a direct link between individual and state, and subordinated the individual will to the collective security of the Empire. In one way, by bringing the British Empire's constitutional confusions to a point of crisis, or at minimum testing the true limits of constitutional status quo, conscription clarified new realities. That the British government acknowledged the rights of Dominion governments to implement it or not, that it avoided imposing it on Ireland despite the legal right to do so, and even on Dominion subjects living in Britain, as Dicey suggested was also its legal right, attests that the realities of sovereignty within the Empire had already changed when World War I began. Instead, a real entity called "The Dominion of Canada" and an imagined one called "the Canadian nation," could compel people to die. The Dominion of New Zealand could compel people to die. Yet, despite clarifying some dimensions of new Dominion sovereignty, conscription also raised new, highly vexing ones. The real or perceived inability of imperial governments to conscript Māori, Quebecois, or Irish attests the disconnect between nation and state; the incomplete process of fully "securing" territorial space and dominating, as Pearse explained it, "over all its parts, over all men and things within the nation."⁶⁵³ Nations may have been spiritual, nebulous creatures, but they could

⁶⁵² Tilak had been sent to France by the Delhi Congress to represent Indian interests. See Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anti-Colonial Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 161–166.

⁶⁵³ Pearse, *The Sovereign People*, 335.

still influence the material realities of conscription and security for colonies and Dominions.

This problem was as true for Dáil Éireann and the Irish Republican Army as it was for the British or colonial governments. Kevin O'Shiel, the Dáil's Land Commissioner, (in the context of revolutionary Ireland, its most crucial judicial position), described in his witness recollection the case that would make or break his court's legitimacy: *Prendergast and Others vs. Hyland and Murphy*. He ruled against a group of farmers in a land dispute, and they flouted the court's decision by continuing to work the land. The IRA arrested and imprisoned them, but their wives took up their places and carried on. Unsure of what to do and unwilling to harm women, O'Shiel resolved to wait them out. After a few days, the women relented and requested the release of their husbands, who agreed the IRA's demands to hand over the fields to the rightful claimant. "This case," he remembered, "was the test case of Dáil sovereignty, and, in the numerous cases that followed, there was never so much as a suggestion to flaunt the decisions of our courts."⁶⁵⁴ Just as with conscription – in protest of which thousands of Irishmen had joined the Irish Volunteers just months before – the incipient Irish state could not call itself sovereign until the IRA could take control over the bodies of its citizens.

⁶⁵⁴ Commissioner Kevin O'Shiel, BMH.WS 1770, NAI, Section 7, 966.

6 EPILOGUE: SLOUCHING TOWARDS BETHLEHEM

George V usually misses out on the historical attention lavished upon his long-reigning grandmother, his blustering, jovial father, and his scandalous, Nazi-sympathizing son. Yet, his reign was perhaps the most dynamic in the past two centuries of British history. George presided over incredible constitutional upheaval unseen since his namesake George III, and had the strange honor of personally opening myriad new parliaments throughout the British Empire. By the end of his reign he was obliged to hold all of these governments in equal esteem to the one that governed his United Kingdom. Already well-traveled by the time of his accession, George was the first reigning monarch to visit his overseas Dominions since William IV landed in the Canadian Maritimes in 1786.⁶⁵⁵ As the Duke of York, he undertook an extensive tour of the Empire in 1901, and opened the first meeting of the Australian Commonwealth Parliament on behalf of his father in May of that year. After becoming King, he embarked almost immediately for India, where he became the first British monarch to visit in person and held a resplendent royal Durbar enshrining his status as Emperor in 1911. His Majesty announced at the Durbar that the Indian Empire's capital would be relocated from Calcutta to Delhi, the

⁶⁵⁵ I am grateful to Dr. Matthew Glencross of King's College London for pointing this out.

old Mughal capital, reinforcing imperial sovereignty with historical gravitas and new monumental architecture.⁶⁵⁶ In wartime, George went on campaign with British forces in France, and watched his cousins on the thrones of Russia and Germany meet ignominious ends. Under pressure from nationalists in his own realm, he renamed his own Royal House “Windsor” from the German-sounding “Saxe Coburg and Gotha,” renounced his ancestral holdings in Germany, and instructed much of the British nobility to do the same. In 1921, he formally opened the newly-formed Parliament of Northern Ireland outside Belfast. He called Ramsay Macdonald, the first Labour politician in British history, to be his Prime Minister in 1924. Before a life of non-stop smoking destroyed his health in the mid-1930s, he presided over high-profile meetings of the Imperial Conference. He lived long enough to see the Balfour Declaration and Statute of Westminster make all his self-governing realms equal, and legal responsibility for his Succession pass from the United Kingdom to his several realms together, requiring all their assent. It was not just sovereignty but the Sovereign himself that changed in the British Empire.

This dissertation has charted the rise of militarization across the British Empire, and the extent to which matters of security shaped politics, constitutional issues, and the way political actors understood sovereignty. It argues that these trends are the key to understanding the speed and the magnitude of the changes witnessed by George V and experienced by his millions of subjects across the world. It has also shown that these trends substantively predated World War I, though the war of course intensified them. The end of the war created an atmosphere permitting radical change which,

⁶⁵⁶ See Chapter 4 for further discussion of this moment.

paradoxically, was mostly intended to foreclose on the possibility of further such change. Most of the treaties that ended formal hostilities after 1919, and Woodrow Wilson's new vision for the international system, had as their objective the prevention of further conflict – of ensuring it had been a “war to end wars.” The remainder of this epilogue will discuss some of these attempted postwar settlements and how they exemplified the changed nature of sovereignty over the ensuing decade. It will also suggest that the violent component of sovereignty as it would come to be understood in post-colonial states throughout the twentieth century is observable in the case of Ireland at war from 1918-1923. Finally, it will end with a discussion of the Statute of Westminster and the new legal and constitutional realities created by three decades of militarization.

The Imperial War Cabinets convened with the participation of representatives from the Dominions and India ensured that any grand conference on peace would include imperial representation. The form their representation would take was a less-settled question. Foreign powers, as they had before the war, tended to oppose the separate representation of the British Dominions at international meetings, arguing that this effectively gave Britain an unfairly large voting bloc in deliberative matters. The French contingent planning the 1919 Peace Conference likened the notion to the United States bringing voting delegations from each of its states individually.⁶⁵⁷ Ultimately, the Dominions and India secured a highly favorable deal: they retained separate representation on par with that of smaller nations with interests in the Conference (two delegates each for Canada, Australia, and India, and one delegate for New Zealand –

⁶⁵⁷ D.H. Miller, *My Diary at the Conference of Paris*, I, 6; in E.A. Benians et al., eds., *The Cambridge History of the British Empire*, vol. 3 (London: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 647.

China and Greece received two delegates, by comparison), as well as inclusion (as one of five members) in the British Empire delegation that would confer among the five victorious powers on the most important matters. This gave the imperial contingents the opportunity to sit on and influence the Peace Conference's 52 committee panels and to influence top-level deliberations on the fate of Germany and the shape of postwar order. Robert Borden of Canada even sat as representative of the whole Empire for a few meetings of the Council of Five at which Lloyd George and Balfour were required to be away in London. That the Dominions and India were able to secure this sort of deal stemmed from their incontrovertible role in British and Allied victory. Canada, Borden noted wryly, had kept more men in the field over the course of the war than Belgium had, while Billy Hughes famously parried Woodrow Wilson's complaint that he only represented a population of five million by pointing out that he represented "60,000 war dead" – a greater toll than that suffered by the American Expeditionary Force.⁶⁵⁸ In addition to the balance of manpower, the Empire had also stopped the British economy, and its credit, from collapsing. Canada had supplied over a billion dollars in provisions. South Africa's vast gold reserves sufficiently backed the value of Sterling to prevent its value deteriorating against the US dollar after billions more in loans. The Government of India gave perhaps the costliest gift – it assumed responsibility for funding Indian troops outside India's borders (all of which was legally billable to Britain), gifted its entire tax revenue from fiscal year 1917 (£100 million), and increased per capita tax burdens on

⁶⁵⁸ See LF. Fitzhardinge, "Hughes, William Morris," *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 9, National Library of Australia (NLA), 1983.

Indians by 65% during the war. The combined effect of these efforts on Indian public finances and crucial infrastructure and spending projects was ruinous.⁶⁵⁹

The greatest individual influence from the Empire at the Paris Conference came probably from Jan Christian Smuts, the South African general who had spent half the war pursuing a highly-romanticized campaign against his German adversary Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck up and down the African continent, and the other half sitting in the Imperial War Cabinet in London. Smuts, who demonstrated an uncanny ability to politically insinuate himself, published a pamphlet called *The League of Nations – A Practical Suggestion* in late 1918. In it, he outlined how to reconcile Wilson’s imperative for self-determination with the problem that certain peoples were “untrained politically.” He proposed that “suitable Powers may be appointed to act as mandatories of the League in the more backward people and areas.”⁶⁶⁰ Smuts’ ideas for preserving international hierarchy eventually came to fruition in the League’s Mandate system, from which the Dominions also benefited. South Africa was granted German South West Africa (later Namibia), Australia Nauru and parts of German New Guinea, and New Zealand German Samoa (renamed Western Samoa) as Class C Mandates under League authority. The formal recognition of these rights by the international community marked a momentous departure from the Dominions’ colonial past, and pointed, for them, to a colonial future.

⁶⁵⁹ See John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830-1970*, 1st ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 324–5.

⁶⁶⁰ Smuts, *The League of Nations - A Practical Suggestion*, in K.C. Wheare, “XVII - The Empire and the Peace Treaties, 1918-1921,” in *The Cambridge History of the British Empire*, ed. E.A. Benians et al., vol. 3, 4 vols. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1959); For more on the implications of Smuts’ thinking for international order, see Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), Chapter 1 – Jan Smuts and Imperial Internationalism.

The acquisition of formerly German territories also validated, in a strategic sense, Dominion participation in a European war despite having few national interests there – as Borden protested before the Peace Conference began, if the Dominions were relegated to committees that only called them when their “interests” were at stake, they would simply never be called. Ultimately, each of the five Dominions and India signed the Treaty on their own lines, an act that recognized that they were individually assenting to its precepts. This created a new constitutional precedent, and there was some speculation as to whether the addition of the United Kingdom’s signature had “double signed” for them all.⁶⁶¹ Each Dominion parliament also individually ratified the Treaty and passed Orders-in-Council affirming it, a process that was not complete until the following year. The Dominion delegations also played a critical role, along with the Americans, in torpedoing the Japanese delegation’s proposed “Racial Equality Clause,” which was meant to affirm the status of Japan by declaring that the League and the Treaty would make no distinction between any members, nations, or peoples based on race. The totalizing language of the proposal raised troubling implications for both British settlers and committed colonialists, and for Woodrow Wilson’s segregationist Democrats. Billy Hughes stated unequivocally that the Australian public would not accept the principle, and that its meaning for White Australia and other Dominion migrant policies would be untenable. The United States and British Empire delegations abstained from voting on the proposal, which passed only to see Wilson, the chair, overturn it claiming the vote illegitimate.

Whatever new constitutional reality had been created in the British Empire, it came under strain almost immediately. The end of hostilities on the Western Front

⁶⁶¹ See P.J. Noel Baker, *The Present Juridical Status of the British Dominions in International Law*, 67-83.

obscured their continuation in a number of other theaters that concerned the Empire, from Ireland to Asia. The clearest demonstration of new realities would emerge from the unlikely locale of western Anatolia. The war had raged on within the decaying Ottoman Empire, and the army under Mustafa Kemal which had successfully defended Gallipoli against Anzac assault in 1915 now turned its guns on Greek forces contesting for control of Constantinople and the western shores of Anatolia. The Allied powers supported Greek forces against the Ottomans, and felt committed to backing their cause, not least because of the Anglo-French occupying force left holding the Dardanelles at the end of the war in Europe. After a meeting between Lloyd George and his Foreign Secretary Lord Curzon, the British government gave Kemal's forces an ultimatum: if they advanced any farther towards the European side of the Bosphorus, they would find themselves at war with Britain. The War Office and the Admiralty were instructed to begin planning for a second Dardanelles invasion. The problem with this ultimatum was that Lloyd George and Curzon had not yet consulted the Dominions. Incredibly, New Zealand and Australia, who had lost so many soldiers trying to take the same land seven years prior, suggested they would consider helping if conflict actually broke out, but South Africa and Canada refused to play a role in any such war. Meanwhile, Turkish troops ignored the warnings and continued their build-up across from the British position at Chanak, raising fears of another massacre like the one that had occurred at Smyrna just months prior, when Turkish troops had massacred the city's Greek and Christian population. Fortunately for the beleaguered British force, Kemal simply ignored them and carried on occupying western Thrace and the surrounding area, eventually rendering the ultimatum a farce. In the resulting fallout, Lloyd George's coalition with the

Conservatives collapsed (as did, in microcosm, his relationship with Curzon).⁶⁶² The Chanak Crisis, as it came to be called, clarified many of the Empire's new realities. First, it showed that the British government no longer controlled warfighting decisions for the whole Empire, for two of the Dominions had categorically refused to participate. Secondly, it strongly hinted (though due to the abatement of the crisis did not conclusively prove), that Britain actually lacked the military capacity to act in a unilateral capacity without imperial assistance in certain theaters. The contrast between this moment and that of 1914 or South Africa 1899, when London accepted colonial participation in foreign wars with an almost grudging attitude, was stark.

Further strategic dissonance abounded. When it came time to renew the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1921, incredibly, the Australians and New Zealanders argued aggressively in favor. Their wartime experience operating jointly with the Japanese navy had convinced them of its benefits (and the futility of opposing it). The Canadians though, ever conscious of their proximity to the United States, objected. At the 1921 Imperial Conference, dissent about the direction of the Alliance between the imperial delegations led to its dissolution. This in turn soured the environment between Britain and Japan when they met to negotiate the Washington Naval Treaty with the United States the following year. That treaty intended to foreclose on the possibility of costly naval races between great powers of the kind between Britain and Germany before the Great War, and locked Britain, the United States, and Japan into a 5:5:3 ratio of combined fleet tonnage. Borden and several other Dominion representatives attended the

⁶⁶² The best overview of these events comes from the diaries of Maurice Hankey, the original secretary to the Committee of Imperial Defence and persistent clerical adhesive for most of the new imperial institutions that arose between 1910 and 1925. See Stephen Wentworth Roskill, *Hankey: Man of Secrets*, vol. II (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1972), 283–303.

conference, and the limitation ratios were understood to include the forces of Dominion navies within Britain's share. Compliance with the agreement required Britain to scrap a significant proportion of its fleet – twenty-three capital ships in total. HMS *New Zealand* and HMAS *Australia*, once the pride of their Dominions and masterpieces of engineering, the subject of so many vexed deliberations across colonial conferences and huge expropriations of taxation, were scuttled and sold off as scrap.⁶⁶³

Their legacy remained, however, in the form of debt service, and most peculiarly in the case of the “Dreadnought Boys.” A public fundraising campaign in Australia during the 1909 naval crisis had raised some £90,000 for which there was no obvious use after the Dominion government decided to build its own ships rather than subsidize British ones. Instead, the fund was converted into a trust for sponsoring the migration of young British boys to Australia, where they would either train as naval cadets or (usually) apprentice as ranch-hands. 5,595 young men ultimately emigrated under the scheme, many of whom were veterans of the Great War looking for a new beginning. Unfortunately, most of the Dreadnought boys had difficulty finding steady work and assimilating to Australian life. Many returned to Britain during the Depression and a few even committed suicide. The Dreadnought Boys are but one small chapter in Australia's deeply tragic history of migration, and another strange intersection of the problems of security and problems of population on the island-continent.⁶⁶⁴

⁶⁶³ Correspondence on the Treaty between imperial heads of government can be found in Robert MacGregor Dawson, *The Development of Dominion Status, 1900-1936*, (London, New York [etc.] Oxford University Press, 1937), 217–229.

⁶⁶⁴ See Correspondence Files, A2, 1914/4051; A6661/950, National Archives of Australia (NAA).

6.1 THE IRISH FREE STATE: A NEW FORM OF SOVEREIGNTY?

Bloody, internecine conflict continued in Ireland for another five years after the official end of hostilities in Europe. The Irish Free State that emerged from that period had to face a counterpart government in six Ulster counties: Northern Ireland, a majority Protestant, loyalist province that resolved to remain an integral part of the United Kingdom despite the Free State's Dominion status. Somewhat ironically, Northern Ireland's parliament gave it the first set of parallel democratic institutions to Westminster's in the United Kingdom since 1800, when the Act of Union dissolved Ireland's Dublin-based parliament. The state born in mortal opposition to Home Rule had thus recreated it. Partition of the island concluded over a decade of uncertainty on the Home Rule question, and over a decade of conflict that began with the gun-runnings of the Ulster Volunteer Force and Irish Volunteer Force in 1912. But it did not foreclose on the continuation of violence, which has continued for much of the intervening century.⁶⁶⁵ Ireland's experience of the early 1920s reveals how new ideas for a popular sovereignty, manifest in both the Free State Dáil and the new Northern Irish parliament, used violence to legitimize and secure their respective territories. Patrick Pearse and Edward Carson may have imagined that they were inaugurating new eras of democratic politics (even if they disagreed about core principles of monarchy), but they both relied heavily on security as a means of establishing that sovereignty, just as had been the case elsewhere in the British Empire. In the immediate aftermath of the Boundary Commission and

⁶⁶⁵ An excellent volume on the continuation of violence in Europe after World War I is Robert Gerwarth and John Horne, eds., *War in Peace: Paramilitary Violence in Europe after the Great War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

partition, this popular, violent sovereignty took the form of population transfer and even ethnic cleansing, as Protestant Irish moved north of the border and Catholics south, whether voluntarily or because they were threatened or burned out of their homes.⁶⁶⁶

After the civil war, in which hardliners led by Eamon De Valera rejected the Anglo-Irish Treaty in favor of pursuing full, republican sovereignty at all costs, the new Irish Free State had to reconcile its citizens to their new constitutional reality. Ordinary institutions of state power, from the police force to the court system, had been systematically drained of their legitimacy by decades of nationalist activism against British rule. The Free State now faced the challenge of reversing this trend in order to consolidate its own territorial sovereignty; no small task given the recent history of paramilitarism in Ireland. This challenge did not end with the conclusion of the civil war. The Free State Army, which had spent the first years of its existence growing rapidly in size to subdue the anti-Treaty IRA, mutinied against its own government in March 1924, demanding that prime minister (President of the Executive Council of the Dáil) W.T. Cosgrave dismiss the Army Council and meet with them to discuss their “interpretation of the Treaty,” which they had accepted only “as a means of achieving...a republican form of government in this country.”⁶⁶⁷ In response to this threat, Cosgrave actually did sack his Defence Minister and the leadership of the Free State Army, demonstrating his inability to fully resist the powers of militarism in the new Irish state. Cosgrave’s Vice President Kevin O’Higgins, who played an active role while Cosgrave recovered from

⁶⁶⁶ The best recent treatment of this phenomenon, which documents it in less-studied parts of southern Ireland, is Peter Hart, *The IRA at War, 1916-1923* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), sec. IV – “Minorities at Bay”; Peter Hart, *The IRA and Its Enemies: Violence and Community in Cork, 1916-1923* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2000).

⁶⁶⁷ Quoted in Joseph Lee, *Ireland, 1912-1985: Politics and Society* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 96.

illness, resolved to establish law and order under the Free State aegis against irreconcilable IRA forces and against “anarchy” in the countryside. He urged “executions in every county” rather than just in Dublin, as “local executions would tend considerably to shorten the struggle.”⁶⁶⁸ Richard Mulcahy, the erstwhile Defence Minister, added that “the problem is psychological rather than physical, we have to vindicate the *idea* of law and order to government, as against anarchy.”⁶⁶⁹ In fact, Mulcahy’s fraught task of demobilizing the Irish Army had led directly to the mutiny – he had culled a 60,000-strong force down to about 13,000 in a year. Mulcahy favored former British Army soldiers for retention, only increasing his unpopularity.

The problem was just as bad between the new state and the civilian population. Mulcahy observed that “as a first sign of crumbling civilization, it may be pointed out that the bailiff...has failed. There are large numbers of [court] decrees unexecuted in every county.” The problem here was not just that Free State citizens lacked confidence in civil society. The courts now regulating their lives suffered from a deeper problem – in order to embrace the new institutions of the Irish Free State, the population would have to change the way it understood sovereignty itself. Kevin O’Shiel, a friend of Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith, judge in Sinn Féin’s land courts, legal adviser to the new Free State government, and overseer of the Free State’s effort to join the League of Nations, described the problem best. In his witness statement, O’Shiel had already described the difficulty of having his rulings on land ownership respected by involved parties during the war with Britain, and the necessity of IRA enforcement of those

⁶⁶⁸ RM, P7/C/21, K. O’Higgins to chairman of Committee of Inquiry into Army mutiny, 12 May 1924, containing O’Higgins memo, 11 January 1923. Ibid., 98.

⁶⁶⁹ Ibid.

rulings.⁶⁷⁰ His remarks on the proper functioning of courts in a system of popular sovereignty is worth quoting in full:

I should, perhaps, mention that when opening a session in any county I judged it advisable, so as to inculcate respect for our proceedings and loyal support for our judgments, to give a little prefatory dissertation in the nature of a directive. Addressing those before me, I would point out that I was there, sitting on that bench, because of their sovereign will. Therefore, they must ignore me as an individual. When I gave a decision, I told them, that decision was theirs, not mine - the decision of the people through the organizations and courts that they had called into being and set up by their will. In the British judicial system, solicitors were the officers of the courts. Under our republican system, they, the people, were the officers of the court. It was, accordingly, their duty and their responsibility to see to it that every decree or order of those courts was honoured and obeyed in every respect and particular. A defiance, or a contempt of such an order or decree, was not a defiance or contempt of me, who was but a citizen like the rest of them, but it was a defiance and contempt of the sovereign will of the people whose agent for court matters I was...Mind, I would conclude, it mattered little to me as an individual whether my decisions were obeyed or not; but it mattered tremendously to them. Those dissertations were, I know, somewhat hyperbolic and not wholly

⁶⁷⁰ O'Shiel's hearing of a land case for which the IRA had to arrest some of the claimants is discussed in Chapter 5 above.

accurate. They were designed to meet the then prevailing conditions by endeavouring to give a people long divorced from a love of law and courts of justice, a good conceit of themselves where their own courts were concerned.⁶⁷¹

And so the courts continued the didactic task taken up by Pearse in *The Sovereign People* – of defining a new locus of sovereignty upon which to build the Irish state. The order side of “law and order” vexed the Northern Irish state as well – despite the most creative efforts of the Boundary Commission, the new statelet still contained a large Catholic minority, most of whom did not accept its legitimacy. Sir Edward Carson, who had done so much to promote Ulster unionism, left the scene when it became clear that partition would divide the country. His successor and first premier of Northern Ireland, James Craig, tried to solve his new state’s security problems by welcoming ex-soldiers and paramilitaries into the new Ulster Special Constabulary and its part-time wing, the “B-Specials.” When the county councils in Fermanagh and Tyrone declared their loyalty to the Dáil and not the Northern Irish parliament, he forcibly dissolved them. In 1922, there was one policeman for every two Catholic families in Northern Ireland. He also suspended *habeas corpus* and granted his Home Secretary emergency powers.⁶⁷²

Despite the great institutional changes in Ireland during the early 1920s, its congruence with the course of events elsewhere in the Empire is equally remarkable. The island’s two new governments engaged in aggressive population control measures in the

⁶⁷¹ Kevin O’Sheil, Irish Land Commission, WS 1770, Section 7, Bureau of Military History (BMH), Irish National Archives (INA), 994.

⁶⁷² Lee, *Ireland, 1912-1985*, 60.

name of security. Just as the Union of South Africa had refused to count its black population among its per capita spending on defense for the Imperial Conference, as the Commonwealth of Australia had denied voting rights to Aborigines, as the government of New Zealand had chosen not to conscript Maori during the Great War, the Irish states made judgments about which of their people served the state's security interests, and which did not. The Free State and its northern counterpart systematically armed and disarmed segments of their populations to consolidate their power, and worked to marginalize and deny rights to those who threatened their security. Whether they operated on democratic principles, such as in the self-governing colonies and the inchoately republican Free State, or authoritarian ones, as in India, imperial states tried to create order within their territories and gain acceptance to the society of other sovereign states abroad by adopting their norms. To this point, access to the international community had meant working more closely with Britain, but the League of Nations now made it possible for them to access the new international system directly.

Observing the violent, securitizing projects of these colonial states, whether through militarization, conscription, war, or policing, highlights the growing importance of racial and ethnic differences in their politics. It also speaks to the persistence of hierarchy, both within states and between them. These states located their sovereignty in authority rather than in raw coercion, and authority required willing acceptance. The Northern Irish state exercised comfortable authority over loyalist Protestants; it subjected Catholics to coercive power. The Raj made it abundantly clear that it still required coercive power to govern India when it declined to suspend the repressive Rowlatt Acts put in place during wartime to quash sedition and dissent, and most spectacularly when

British troops opened fire on an “unlawful assembly” of unarmed civilians in a public square in Amritsar, killing up to a thousand. These security problems revealed more of the peculiar gaps in sovereignty that had emerged during World War I, when the British government had declined to conscript the Irish, the Canadian government failed to conscript Quebecois, and the New Zealand government had refused to conscript Maori. Colonial states doubted their authority over these groups, and their commitment to the greater security project that *was* the state. This mirrored the relationships between the colonial states and Britain – those willing to cooperate with imperial security goals were fully welcome among the community of sovereign states, while those whose commitments were less clear would continue to endure coercive power.

6.2 THE IMPERIAL CONFERENCE SYSTEM AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE EMPIRE

Continuing the trend of pre-war conferences and the wartime Imperial War Cabinets, the Imperial Conference met in 1921, 1923, 1926, 1930, 1932, and 1937. After World War II they gave way to Commonwealth Prime Ministers’ Conferences and finally Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings (CHOGM). The 1921 meeting, as noted above, resulted in the decision to dissolve the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and paved the way for the Washington Naval Treaty. At the 1923 Conference, the Irish Free State joined India as a new member of the proceedings. Cosgrave’s government sent a delegation, though they were not entirely cooperative with the proceedings and wrote

copious complaining letters home. A memo from the delegation to its government on the matter of securing insurance for the Free State's shipping industry during times of war noted that it could probably rely on procuring insurance on the London markets, though this could be complicated if the Free State chose to remain neutral in a given imperial war.⁶⁷³ This note, which foreshadows the very conditions prevailing under Eamon De Valera during World War II, demonstrates how much the British Empire had changed in little more than a decade. What had once been an integral part of the United Kingdom, let alone a Dominion or colony, now openly discussed the likelihood of holding itself aloof from a British war. At the British Empire Exhibition that occurred the following year, the Free State government declined to participate, citing costs. They were the only part of the British Empire not present besides Gambia and North Borneo. By contrast, Australia spent £150,000 on its exhibition.⁶⁷⁴ While efforts were made to brand the 1923 meeting as an "Imperial Economic Conference," its proceedings were thoroughly overshadowed by defense and security, as it occurred in the wake of the Chanak Crisis. The Australasian Dominions, having lost the debate on the alliance with Japan, hoped to forge a common imperial foreign policy, but renewed opposition from Canada and South Africa quashed this idea. In what came to be called the King-Hertzog principle, after Canadian prime minister William Lyon Mackenzie King and South African prime minister J.B.M. Hertzog, the Dominions would henceforward be free to conduct their foreign affairs autonomously.

⁶⁷³ Imperial defence: insurance of shipping in time of war, 1924, TSCH/3/S3594, NAI.

⁶⁷⁴ British Empire Exhibition, 1924-1925, TSCH/3/S1967, NAI.

The pivotal shift in intra-imperial relations, though, occurred at the 1926 Imperial Conference meeting. A special committee chaired by former British prime minister Arthur Balfour drafted a resolution, approved by the delegations at the Conference, that the Dominions were to be recognized as “autonomous Communities within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by a common allegiance to the Crown, and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations.” The liberalization of imperial control on matters of defense and foreign policy was now complete. The Declaration acknowledged equality between all imperial governments and their individual rights to legislate for both their internal and external affairs. The only things binding them together were George V and tradition. Like the 1907 meeting, it also introduced a new concept to the constitutional ecosystem – the Commonwealth. The rhetorical shift inherent in this name was vast – the Colonial Office’s distaste for Australia adopting it in 1901 spoke to its prior stigma. Rebranding the whole Empire as a Commonwealth invoked Cromwell, radicals, regicides, and republicans. The following 1932 Conference took place in Ottawa, hearkening back to the 1894 meeting of the Colonial Conference in Canada’s magnificent, neo-gothic Centre Block parliament building. The conference system had come full circle. It was the first to meet since the British government had passed the Statute of Westminster, in which it legally forfeited the right to legislate for the Dominions: “No Act of Parliament of the United Kingdom passed after the commencement of this Act shall extend or be deemed to extend, to a Dominion as part of the law of that Dominion, unless it is expressly declared in that Act that that Dominion has requested, and consented to, the enactment thereof.” It was also

the first since the war in which India had been represented by a non-British envoy of the Viceroy – Sir Atul Chandra Chatterjee. It was the last to include the Irish Free State, which wrote itself a new constitution four years later before formally declaring itself a republic in 1948.

As with the other institutional and constitutional changes documented here, the Statute and Balfour's declaration did not so much create new conditions in the British Empire as they acknowledged what had already changed. Sovereignty, embodied by the King but truly present only when his authority was willingly accepted, had been shifting to the colonies for decades. These shifts became visible not when colonial actors resisted British coercive force, but when they replaced it with rival claims over the authority to coerce. Glimpses of this authority were present in the South African War, when colonies with no formal procedures for participating in wars voted to send contingents abroad anyway on an ad hoc basis. They were present in the Imperial Service Corps sent by Indian princes to join the Indian Army instead of paying subsidies to the British Raj, and in the assertions by the Pacific-facing Dominions that they would shoulder the responsibility for projecting force and upholding British interests in the region. They were present in Dominions' insistence that the battleships they built or funded would require a parliamentary vote before they could pass to the command of the British Admiralty. During the Great War, they were present in the British government's admission that it could not conscript Irish men into the British Army, and that it had no right to conscript British subjects resident in the United Kingdom if they had come there from one of the Dominions. The war accelerated these transfers of sovereignty, but it did not initiate them. In this sense, the distinction usually made about these colonies – that

they all, save Ireland, experienced decolonization “peacefully” – elides the inherently violent processes through which they clawed sovereignty back from the imperial center. They directed this violence against groups within their own borders who did not comport with their own local security projects, often using race and ethnicity as a heuristic. They directed it abroad against foreign enemies in international wars. That they mostly did not direct it against British forces themselves is the only thing distinguishing these cases from the “violent” decolonizations that would follow in places like Kenya.

George V saw his fair share of violence during the twenty-six years of his reign. He is rumored to have shot over a thousand pheasants in a single day of orgiastic hunting at Sandringham, and on his famous Durbar tour as Emperor of India, he offed several tigers. He is said to have been a savage philatelist. He remained hale enough to personally attend meetings of the 1926 Imperial Conference, and was thus on hand to witness the radical leveling of imperial hierarchy that occurred at that meeting. A picture taken on the occasion shows him sitting, stoically, surrounded by the seven heads of government to which the Balfour Declaration applied, suddenly made equals under his sovereign rule. Over the subsequent decade, the King’s health declined; poetically, he had never fully recovered from an injury he received when his horse threw him in France during the Great War. Still, he managed to play an unexpectedly close role, for a twentieth century monarch, in the great political and military upheavals the British Empire experienced during his reign. He remained engaged with current affairs up to the moment of his death in 1936. Stanley Baldwin, the British prime minister at the time, recalled that he continued to ask for news from aides in his final days, and that his last utterance was to ask his secretary, “How is the Empire?” “All is well, sir, with the

Empire,” the King was told, and shortly after, His Majesty slipped into eternal sleep. This scene, containing both the sentiment of bygone days and the veiled perturbations of the present, was a fitting way for a Sovereign like George V to have ended his reign. The scene is somewhat marred, however, by the diary of his doctor, who remembered instead that the King’s last words, after being given an anesthetic injection by his nurse, were a terse “God damn you.”

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