

‘WE SHOULD DO THIS THING QUIETLY’

Japan and the great deception in Australian defence policy 1911–1914

John Mordike



‘I think it much better ***we should do this thing quietly*** without any paper on the subject, because I am sure in some of the Dominions it might be better not to say anything about preparations.’

General Sir William Nicholson, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, speaking to Dominion representatives about the preparation of expeditionary forces for World War I, 17 June 1911.

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Foreword

This work is an analysis and evaluation of events surrounding Australia's commitment of forces to the European and Middle Eastern Theatre in World War I.

It might seem peculiar that the Aerospace Centre has produced such a work, but there are a number of important reasons. The first is that—as Mark Twain used to say—history does not repeat itself, but it rhymes. At the turn of the 20th Century the British were anxious to ensure that the military forces they could muster would be sufficient to meet any German challenge. There were not enough trained men in Britain and many British statesmen saw the Empire as the ideal and appropriate source. The problem was to convince the members that it was in their interests to participate.

Dr John Mordike has produced a work that documents the British attitudes to the dominions and charts the methods they used to convince their reluctant allies to participate. Much of Dr Mordike's work flies in the face of accepted wisdom on the subject, but it is important to ensure that his analysis is seen as a vital contribution to the debate. His work relies on primary source documents held in a number of archives in London. Some of those documents had not been seen by the public until his research unearthed them.

The work does not set out to criticise the participants in the debate almost a century ago. The British were doing what any responsible government would do; that is, protecting their national interests. The Australians who fought in World War I did so with a tenacity that has since become the hallmark of Australian combat skills. What the work does do is remind people that—in this time of international coalition operations—it is important to be very clear about the reasons why their nation is becoming involved in dangerous affairs centred at some distance from the country's shores.

In the first decade of the 20th Century Australian policy was diverted away from the main problem and its national interests were harmed simply to satisfy another country's long-term policy. This work is a valuable reappraisal of what happened.

Ian MacFarling
Group Captain
Director
Aerospace Centre

Acknowledgments

I thank Group Captain Ian MacFarling for the support he has given to my work. It is a sad reflection, but in my experience it is rare to find men of principle who are prepared to support work that questions the prevailing order of things. It was my good fortune to work under Ian when he was Director of the Aerospace Centre.

While writing this monograph, I have had countless hours of discussion with Dr Greg Lockhart. This time was stimulating and proved particularly helpful in developing an understanding of the fundamental relationship between 'White' Australia and defence. I thank Greg for this assistance.

I thank The Trustees of the Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College London, for permission to publish quotations from letters held in their collection, namely the Hamilton Papers.

Thanks also to Ms Roz Bourke for her patience and skill in preparing the manuscript for publication.

John Mordike

Introduction

This monograph builds on work published in 1992 in my book *An Army for a Nation: A history of Australian military developments 1880–1914*. It was a study which analysed and explained military developments from the perspective of national and imperial defence priorities. Taking this view was not a convenient academic exercise. The evidence from the past reveals a deep tension in Australian defence developments. Australia was a nation-state intent on ensuring its own security within its unique geo-strategic setting, but also a nation-state that was a member of a formally structured empire with its attendant legal and cultural attachments.

In the introduction to *An Army for a Nation*, I argued that there has been a tendency 'to emphasise the imperial aspects of our early defence history while the independent, national aspects remain largely unrecognised and unreported'. Accordingly, my book—and now this monograph—call for a more balanced understanding of Australia's defence history. This means that the issues of 'White' Australia and the related fear of Japanese action against Australia must be dealt with if we are to achieve an understanding of the primary motivation for Australian defence developments. The Prussian menace, to which some historians attribute primacy, is only an issue of secondary, indeed minor, relevance. Germany was not perceived by British defence analysts or Australians to pose a direct threat to Australian security. Australian historian Neville Meaney summed it up in one eloquent passage in the concluding chapter of his seminal work *The Search for Security in the Pacific, 1901-14*:

The Australians well knew that the defeat of Britain in Europe would have adverse consequences for the Commonwealth. They were agreed that if the Mother Country were in peril, they would go to its assistance; but they were unwilling to base their own policies on such contingencies. What they were primarily concerned with was the defence of Australia, and it was in the light of this concern that they ordered their naval, military and diplomatic efforts. They would not accept as a general operating principle that they should be left defenceless in the Pacific so that Britain could be more certainly secure in Europe. And so Australia introduced compulsory military training and established a navy, specifically for its own defence. As the *Hobart Mercury* put it [in April 1914] ... there was in Australia 'a very large number of people ... who pay little attention to the German menace but are seriously disturbed because of what is called the "Yellow Peril"'. This 'deep-rooted opinion that, some day or another, danger will threaten from the Far East' was 'chiefly responsible for the popularity of the scheme for establishing an Australian Navy.'¹

¹ N.K. Meaney, *The Search for Security in the Pacific, 1901-14*, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1976, pp. 257-8.

No one ever seriously challenged the claim that there were many Australians who would be prepared to fight in a war that threatened Britain's security, as Meaney has acknowledged. However, the issue that worried British strategists was the question of adequate preparation. Would an Australian force be properly trained and equipped to fight a modern army in Europe? Would the force be strong enough? Were mobilisation plans complete so that the response would be speedy? And, most importantly, how could an Australian government be induced to make timely military preparations for a war in Europe if they were primarily concerned with the defence of Australia?

This monograph incorporates the results of recent research on documents held in the United Kingdom. It argues that, in the years leading up to World War I, British imperialists exploited Australia's perception of Japan as the prime threat to its security with the object of ensuring that Australia made timely military preparations, not for its own national defence but for an imperial war in Europe. Fearing Japanese action against Australia, senior members of the Fisher Labor government commenced the preparations and also agreed to undertake mobilisation planning to dispatch an expeditionary force to an overseas theatre. If Australia did not demonstrate support for Britain in Europe, how could Australia expect British support when Japan turned against Australia? But the preparations for the expeditionary force were done 'quietly', as British Chief of the Imperial General Staff Sir William Nicholson suggested to Senator George Foster Pearce, the Australian Minister for Defence. Nicholson and Pearce were concerned that public knowledge of preparations for an expeditionary force would attract opposition in Australia.

The monograph is comprised of four parts. Part I deals with the period from the late 19th century to 1911. It is a general overview of the work included in *An Army for a Nation* and introduces the competing national and imperial priorities that influenced the development of the Australian defence policy and the military forces.

Part II incorporates the results of new research undertaken on sources in Britain in November 2001. The discourse builds on the foundations established in earlier work by revealing the way in which Australia's fear of Japan became the catalyst in promoting extensive defence developments which would eventually be deployed on imperial operations in Europe.

Australia's extensive military preparations in the years 1911 to 1914 are the subject of Part III. These developments were given special urgency after the Imperial Defence Conference of 1911 because Prime Minister Andrew Fisher and Minister for Defence Senator George Foster Pearce believed that Japan would eventually take action against 'White' Australia. Australia needed to strengthen its defence capabilities as quickly as possible. British support, especially naval support, could be assured if Australia provided military support for Britain in Europe.

The basis of the argument in Parts II and III is that Australia's commitment to World War I was determined primarily by national rather than imperial considerations. It was a commitment that was based initially on Australia's

fear of Japan not Germany. This interpretation runs counter to the conventional wisdom, and, as radical as it might seem, meshes with work published by L.F. Fitzhardinge in 1979. In Volume II of his political biography of William Morris Hughes, Fitzhardinge produced evidence that the World War I conscription referenda were inspired by the belief that Japan would challenge 'White' Australia after the war. Britain's assistance at that time would depend on whether Australia had provided full support for the war in Europe.²

Part IV deals with a critique of my original book by Craig Wilcox. It is important to defend my work from Wilcox's attack, but I also take issue with Wilcox's interpretation of the history of Australian military developments before World War I. Australia's response to World War I is a vital element of Australia's national lore, but I would argue that an analysis of the available evidence calls for a revision of the generally accepted account of what happened.

John Mordike
Aerospace Centre

² L.F. Fitzhardinge, 'The Little Digger 1914-195', *William Morris Hughes: A Political Biography*, Volume II, Angus & Robertson, Australia, 1979, pp. 147-170.

PART I

Australia and Imperial Defence Developments: The Chamberlain Period

Proposals for an Imperial Force and National Reactions

The idea of creating an imperial military force comprised of dominion components was a persistent aspect of British strategic thought. Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain proposed just such a development as a part of ambitious plans for consolidating imperial power in the late 19th century. Chamberlain raised the subject at the 1897 Colonial Conference, but, to his disappointment, found that the colonial representatives avoided making a commitment.¹ The subject was raised again at the 1902 Colonial Conference, after the Australian colonies had federated. At this conference, Joseph Chamberlain put forward a proposal originally submitted by New Zealand for the colonies to establish and maintain elements of their colonial forces as imperial reserves. The reserve forces were to be organised for deployment on imperial operations under British control. Despite Chamberlain's enthusiasm for the scheme, South Africa alone agreed. Australia and Canada rejected the proposal without qualification.²

While Chamberlain had been developing his proposals to establish an imperial military force, he had also taken action aimed at providing Britain with a legal basis to control the Australian defence forces. The constitution for the Commonwealth of Australia was drafted in Australia, but it was ultimately to be enacted by the British Parliament. After he had seen the first draft in 1897, Chamberlain had attempted quietly to have it amended in such a way that it would have provided the British Parliament with the constitutional basis to command the Australian defence forces. Section 68 of the draft constitution provided that the Commander-in-Chief of the Australian military and naval forces would be 'the Governor-General as the Queen's Representative'. Chamberlain had wanted the reference to the Governor-General to be deleted and instead the Queen to be designated as the Commander-in-Chief, thereby

¹ Proceedings of a Conference between the Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Premiers of the Self-Governing Colonies, At the Colonial Office, London, June and July 1897, Memorandum 31 July 1897, pp. 7, 18, ANL; Colonial Defence - Précis of Important Events connected with the Question of the Employment of Colonial Military Forces on Imperial Service, Colonial Defence Committee, 29 June 1909, para. 6, p. 2, Cab 11/125, PRO; Report of a Conference between the Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain MP, and the Premiers of the Self-Governing Colonies of the Empire, June and July 1897, p. 107, AA, CP 103/12, Bundle 1; J.L. Mordike, *An Army for a Nation: A history of Australian military developments 1880-1914*, Allen & Unwin, North Sydney, 1992, pp. 48-9.

² Papers Relating to a Conference Between the Secretary of State for the Colonies and The Prime Ministers of the Self-Governing Colonies, June to August 1902, pp. 26-31, ANL; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 113.

establishing a constitutional basis for British control of the imperial force that he was planning.

Chamberlain had reasoned that his proposed amendments would be accepted more readily if they came from an Australian, so he took George Reid, the premier of the colony of New South Wales, into his confidence. The Colonial Secretary asked Reid to introduce the amendments at the next National Australian Convention to be held in Sydney later that year. Chamberlain urged Reid to give the matter his personal attention as he was 'anxious to avoid the possibility of friction hereafter'. Reid at first agreed to cooperate but, when the opportunity subsequently arose at the convention, the colonial leader failed to introduce the proposed amendment on the control of the forces. Reid would have known only too well what the reaction would have been on this sensitive issue. The Australian politicians who drafted the constitution would have rejected Chamberlain's amendment without question; they were firmly resolved that Australia's defence forces would be under the control of the Australian Parliament at all times. Section 68 remained as it had been originally drafted.³

There were other legal matters that frustrated British designs for an imperial force. Self-government had bestowed on dominions the power to deploy their military forces as they thought appropriate. Accordingly, dominion defence legislation placed restrictions on the deployment of their troops. Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa had each determined that their military forces were maintained for local defence and could not be sent outside the boundaries of their respective dominions.⁴ In the case of Australia, the Australian *Defence Act 1903* denied an Australian Government the power to dispatch Australian soldiers outside Australian territory. This restriction had been inserted in the Defence Bill by concerned members of all political persuasions during its passage through parliament. It was specifically designed to limit the options available to an Australian Government for future involvement in imperial military operations. If Australians wanted to serve on imperial operations they had to volunteer for such service. There was a provision for compulsory service for Australian men—conscription—but this was for service in Australian territory only; it was a measure designed to provide the means of reacting to an invasion. The prevailing view of Australia's political leaders was that, in the first instance, the Australian

³ B.K. de Garis, 'The Colonial Office and the Commonwealth Constitution Bill', in A.W. Martin (ed), *Essays in Australian Federation*, Melbourne, 1969, pp. 94-8, 121; C. Cuneen, 'The Role of Governor-General In Australia, 1901-27', August 1973, Ph.D. thesis, Australian National University, pp. 53-5; Comments on the draft constitution by John Anderson, Chief Clerk Australian Section, 19 June 1897, with minutes by John Bramston, Assistant Under Secretary of Australasian Affairs, &, Minute by Joseph Chamberlain, 29 June 1897; Chamberlain to Reid, July 1897; Memorandum B, Australian Constitution Bill - Notes on Suggested Amendments, p. 3; Draft of Federal Constitution 1897, Section 68, South Australia No. 12012, 7 June 1897, Colonial Office 13/152(1), microfilm copy, ANL; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, pp. 50-3.

⁴ C.E.W. Bean, 'The Story of ANZAC', *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-18*, Vol. I, Angus & Robertson Ltd., Sydney, 1933, p. 8.

military forces were raised and maintained for the defence of Australia, a view that echoed the pre-Federation policies of the Australian colonial governments.⁵

The failure of Chamberlain's imperial reserve proposal to receive the full support of the colonies at the Colonial Conference in 1902 was a setback for imperial strategists. But it was only one dimension of Chamberlain's plans to prepare colonial forces for imperial operations. While Chamberlain had been developing his proposal to put to the Colonial Conference, a senior British Army officer was already at work in Australia attempting to use his influence to establish an Australian force for deployment on imperial operations. This action was being taken contrary to the express wishes of the Australian Government.

The opportunity to exercise British influence in Australian military developments came when, soon after Federation, the Australian Government recruited an experienced British Army officer to command its newly created Commonwealth military forces. The officer selected for the position was Major-General Edward Hutton, a professional military officer with command experience in Canada and New South Wales. He was appointed General Officer Commanding the Australian military forces, or GOC, on 29 January 1902.

Hutton's earlier command experience in Australia had been acquired when he had been appointed as commandant of the military forces of New South Wales for the period 1893 to 1896. Before leaving Britain to take up the appointment, he had been instructed by the British authorities to reform the military forces for imperial operations. He was to prepare an Australian expeditionary force to be ready to attack the French in New Caledonia or elsewhere, but he had been told not to reveal these imperial instructions while he was in the colony because it would attract opposition. He had attempted to follow these instructions, but his efforts had been frustrated by political and public determination to maintain the local forces for colonial defence requirements.⁶

On Hutton's second appointment early in 1902, he was also given instructions to fulfil imperial requirements while in Australia. Before leaving London, the senior British officer was interviewed by Chamberlain, who told him that while he was in Australia 'it must never appear that he was acting as the Agent of the Imperial Government'. He responded by telling Chamberlain that he would shape the Australian forces 'in accordance generally with Mr Chamberlain's views'. He would establish an Australian citizen force not only for local defence but also for 'offensive operations outside the local area', in other words imperial operations. Hutton told Chamberlain he would use his influence to ensure that Australian defence legislation empowered the federal

⁵ *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. XV, 5 August 1903, pp. 3124-26; *Commonwealth Acts*, Vol. II, No. 20 of 1903, Defence, Part III, Division 3, Clause 49, p. 116; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, pp. 126-7.

⁶ Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, pp. 21-43.

government to deploy the military forces on overseas service. Hutton did not discuss specific military force organisations with Chamberlain, but this was not the case two days later when he met with King Edward, the Secretary of State for War, Mr St John Brodrick, and the Commander-in-Chief of the British Army, Lord Roberts, for briefing on his Australian appointment. At this meeting with the men at the very pinnacle of command and control of Britain's military forces, Hutton gave an undertaking that, while in Australia, he would organise a force of 20,000 mounted troops for imperial operations.⁷ These British authorities well knew that this was a sensitive issue in Australia, but Hutton was determined. He came to Australia with the primary intent of serving his imperial masters, not the Australian Government. Hutton recorded that he was determined that, even in the absence of support for his proposals from the Australian Government or the Minister for Defence, 'I would initiate a Defence Policy of my own and carry it into effect at any cost to myself'.⁸

In April 1902, Hutton submitted a report to the Australian Government on the subject of Australian defence. In it he proposed a dual organisation for Australia's military forces: a garrison force for local defence and a field force which could be deployed into a theatre of operations. It was the field force that

⁷ Secret - Notes an Interview between the Rt. Hon. Joseph Chamberlain - Secretary of State for the Colonies and Major General Sir Edward Hutton - Comg. (Elect) Military Forces of Australia, Colonial Office, 1.30pm, 19 December 1901, *Hutton Papers*, Vol. I, Add. Ms. 50078, ff. 236-41, note on f. 241, British Library; Note: There is no comprehensive record of the discussion at the meeting. A list of points raised by each participant is in Memo of Interview, 11.30am, 21 December 1901, *Hutton Papers*, Vol. V, Add. Ms. 50082, ff. 3-6. The memo is in manuscript and not easily read. The following is legible:

HM The King

Pleased to make my acquaintance
difficulty of position

aust. ego

Mounted Troops

Jealousy Imp. Officers

A.D.C.

Mr Brodrick

from King great difficulty of position

State of flux

Reserve

Sir E. [Hutton]

Defence Bill large powers

Mounted Troops

Exchange units impossible

Mr Brodrick

Mounted Troops in Aust.

Defence Bill

Mil. Officers

Note: Hutton subsequently referred to the undertaking given at this meeting to raise 20,000 Australian mounted troops for imperial service in correspondence with Brodrick and Nicholson: Hutton to Brodrick, 18 August 1903, *Hutton Papers*, Vol. VIII, Add. Ms. 50085, ff. 41-3, British Library; Hutton to Nicholson, 23 July 1902, *Hutton Papers*, Vol. IX, Add. Ms. 50086, ff. 251-7, British Library; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, pp. 90-1.

⁸ Narrative of Lieutenant-General Sir Edward Hutton's Command in Australia 1901-04, Period VIII, *Hutton Papers*, Vol. XXXVI, Add. Ms. 50113, f. 208, British Library; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 92.

Hutton planned would fulfil his undertaking to provide Britain with an expeditionary force, but he never explained this to the Australian Government because of its strong feelings on the subject. These feelings were made clear to Hutton when news reached Australia that Chamberlain had put his proposal to the Colonial Conference that the colonies establish military reserves for imperial operations. Hutton was instructed by Sir William Lyne, the Acting Minister for Defence, that the Australian military forces would not be sent overseas for operations. However, the Australian Government recognised that a volunteer force might be sent to fight in the event of war, as had recently happened with the Boer War. But no force was to be established for such purposes in peacetime.⁹ Despite this formal instruction, Hutton proceeded to mislead the Government about the purpose of his field force. Accepting Hutton's advice that the field force was designed for local defence, the Australian Government approved Hutton's dual organisation for the military forces on 25 July 1903.¹⁰

But Hutton was still frustrated. He had managed to introduce an organisation for what he intended to be an expeditionary force under the nose of the Australian Government. Yet, under the terms of the *Defence Act 1903*, the Government did not have the power to deploy it outside Australia. Nor did it have this intention. Only in one respect had Hutton achieved some limited success. He had convinced the Minister for Defence, Sir John Forrest, that the Australian military forces should be subject to the British *Army Act* while on active service, when it was not inconsistent with the other provisions of the Australian *Defence Act* or the regulations. Hutton had argued that this was a convenient method of adopting an extensive disciplinary code that encapsulated British military experience. In effect, however, it helped to prepare the way for Hutton's expeditionary force to combine with British forces for operations under a common disciplinary code. The provision attracted criticism during its passage through parliament, but members accepted Forrest's assurance that the clause adopted the *Army Act* as a disciplinary code only and left its application in Australian hands.¹¹

⁹ *Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Papers*, 1901-2 Session, Vol. II, No. A36, 'Minute Upon the Defence of Australia, by Major-General Hutton, Commandant', 7 April 1902; *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. XII, 24 September 1902, Sir William Lyne, p. 16020; Secretary, Department of Defence, to General Officer Commanding, 6 August 1902, CRS B 168, file no. 02/2688 [folder 2], Australian Archives.

Note: Barton kept Cabinet informed of developments at the Colonial Conference, especially his rejection of overseas service for colonial forces as part of an imperial reserve. See Sir Edmund Barton's London Telegrams (24 June - 16 August 1902), CP 103/12, Bundle 5, Australian Archives; & Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, pp. 116-7.

¹⁰ *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette No. 35*, 25 July 1903, pp. 387-402; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 124.

¹¹ *Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Papers*, 1903 Session, Vol. II, No. 37, 'Annual Report Upon the Military Forces of the Commonwealth for the Period January, 1902, -30th April, 1903,' Part III, p. 85; Draft Defence Bill by E.T.H. [Hutton], 25 February 1903, Section 4 - Interpretation Clause and explanatory note, Clause 35, Clause 44, Explanatory notes for Clause 44, *Military Board Papers of Historical Interest*, Vol. I, CRS A2657/T1, Australian Archives; *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. XIV, 16 July 1903, Sir John Forrest, pp. 2265-72; General Officer Commanding to Minister for Defence, 6 July 1903, para.

The legacy of Hutton's three years of command in Australia reflected the tensions between imperial and national priorities for military developments. The formal military organisation for the Australian forces divided them into two distinct forces: a garrison force and a field force—in reality, the latter was an expeditionary force, but the Australian Government believed that this organisation was required for national defence. The duality of purpose and design was also reflected in the *Defence Act* which provided that Australian forces on active service would be subject to the British *Army Act*. Once again, the government was not aware of the primary purpose of this provision. But Hutton's command was punctuated by controversy. Competing imperial and national priorities inevitably collided at the interface between political control and military command producing an object lesson in civil-military relations. Put simply, Hutton's determination to serve his imperial masters led him into conflict with Australian politicians on several occasions.

Hutton left Australia at the end of 1904 and was not replaced, either by a British or an Australian officer. Instead the government decided to abolish the position of GOC. Hutton's imperial bias and his obvious difficulty in serving Australia's political leadership—at times he was openly defiant—had prompted the government to look for other ways of controlling the military forces. Perhaps his most provocative act was his confrontation with the Minister for Defence over the coded cablegram incident, when Australian defence officials discovered that Hutton had sent a coded message to the War Office in London. The minister asked Hutton whether the cablegram concerned military business. Hutton confirmed that it did, but, when the minister asked for decoded copy, Hutton refused to comply.¹² The citizen forces had also been seriously disrupted when Hutton tried to fulfil his undertaking to King Edward, Lord Roberts and Mr St John Brodrick to establish a mounted force of 20,000 men. It was a radical restructure that threw the forces into turmoil. As a direct result of Hutton's provocative actions

III, p. 2-4, AWM3, file no. 03/341, Australian War Memorial; for original copy, *Military Board Papers of Historical Interest*, Vol. I, CRS A2657/T1, Australian Archives; General Officer Commanding to Minister for Defence, 25 May 1903, *Military Board Papers of Historical Interest*, Vol. I, CRS A2657/T1, Australian Archives; *Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Papers*, 1903 Session, Vol. II, No. 37, Part III, pp. 85-6; *Commonwealth Acts*, Vol. II, No. 20 of 1903, Defence, Clause 4, p. 110, Defence Division 2, Clause 33, p. 114, and Part IV, Clauses 59-60, p. 117, Part III, Division 1, Clause 31(2), p. 113, Part III, Division 3, Clause 49, Clause 53, p. 116, Part X, Clause 117, p. 128; *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. XV, 5 August 1903, pp. 3086-92, 3124-26; *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. XV, 6 August 1903, pp. 3221-24.

Note: Australian forces remained subject to the provision of the British *Army Act*, 1881, while on active service until 1985, 30 years after Britain repealed the Act. See: S.G. Thompson, 'An Officer and a Gentleman', *Law Society Journal*, May 1985, pp. 306-7; & Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, pp. 124-7.

¹² Copy of Telegram, 19 February, with minute by Collins, 20 April 1904; Minute by Hutton, 21 April 1904, on Copy of Telegram; Minute by Chapman, 22 April 1904, on Copy of Telegram; Hutton to Secretary of Defence, 6 May 1904; Confidential minute by Dawson, 12 May 1904, CRS B168, file no. 04/2278, Australian Archives; Mordike, *An Army for Nation*, p. 160.

as GOC, the government chose to establish the Military Board rather than rely on a single senior officer to command and administer the forces.

When the Military Board was established by James McCay, Minister for Defence in the Reid-McLean government, McCay explained that the changes were a deliberate step towards adopting the Swiss military model for Australia because 'the Australian ideal is that our defence should be carried out by citizen forces'. Cabinet would be brought into 'more direct touch with the defence policy of Australia', and the implementation of the policy would be more sympathetic to parliament and the people. McCay stated that he was committed to the introduction of 'Australian feeling' to defence policy and dropping the practice of importing 'large numbers of officers from the Imperial Army'. The Military Board was introduced in Australia to strengthen national control of the Australian military forces.¹³

While Australians were determined to maintain national control of their military forces, they also developed perceptions of the threat to their own national security because of their unique geo-strategic circumstances. This also influenced Australian defence policy and the ways in which Australian forces might, or might not, be deployed. This became another obstacle to Britain's imperial defence plans.

In February 1902, without any prior discussion with the Australian Government, Britain ratified a treaty of alliance with Japan, a move designed to protect Britain's imperial interests in the Far East from a growing Russian threat.¹⁴ Britain's strategy was aimed at containing Russian advances in the Far East, so protecting British interests in China and Korea. It was no secret that Russia had designs on Northern China, Manchuria and Korea as well as the ice-free Port Arthur on the Liaotung Peninsula.

The Anglo-Japanese Alliance alarmed many Australians, serving as a potential point of divergence between imperial and Australian policy. Australians harboured a deep fear of Asians, an outcome of entrenched racist thinking and geographic reality. Defending Australia meant defending 'White' Australia. Indeed defence policy and immigration policy were two sides of the same coin.¹⁵ One of the first legislative steps of the first Australian parliament was the *Immigration Restriction Act* of 1901 which included the requirement for prospective immigrants to submit to a written test in any prescribed

¹³ *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. XXIII, 2 November 1904, Mr McCay, pp. 6383-96; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 163.

¹⁴ *Age*, 13 February 1902, Melbourne, p. 5; *Age*, 14 February 1902, Melbourne, p. 5; Barton to Hopetoun, 18 February 1902, *Hopetoun House Manuscript*, mfm M936, Reel No. 1, Australian National Library; &, Hopetoun to Barton, 14 February 1902, *Barton Papers*, Ms 51/1/918-920, Australian National Library; J.-P. Lehmann, *The Image of Japan: From Feudal Isolation to World Power 1850-1905*, London, 1978, p. 147; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, pp. 94, 128-30.

¹⁵ Greg Lockhart, "'We're So Alone': Two Versions of the Void in Australian Military History", *Australian Historical Studies*, No. 120, October 2002, pp. 389-97.

European language. It was a means of effectively excluding people who were not wanted in Australia: specifically Asians but also all coloured people.

The Japanese were deeply offended by their exclusion from Australia as a result of the *Immigration Restriction Act* with its unashamedly racist aim of building a 'White' Australia. It struck a sour note, threatening the harmonious relations on which Britain was erecting its imperial strategy for the region.

In mid-1903, while Hutton was still in Australia, there was a possibility of conflict between Japan and Russia over Manchuria. 'The shadow of the great struggle in the East between Russia and our Ally [Japan] for the supremacy of the Northern Pacific loomed large,' Hutton noted in his unpublished memoirs, '[therefore] the value and importance to Japan and ourselves, with this war in sight, ... of consolidating our alliance was never greater.' Hutton was concerned that Australia's antipathy to Japan might become an impediment to imperial strategy. The GOC colluded with the British ambassador in Tokyo, Colonel Sir Claude Macdonald, and the Governor-General of Australia, Lord Tennyson, in an attempt to allay tensions between Australia and Japan by organising the visit to Australia of a Japanese naval squadron. The imperial officers foresaw a situation in which Australia might be called on to give military assistance to Japan. But, while the Barton government was finally persuaded by Tennyson to arrange reviews for the Japanese sailors in Melbourne and Sydney, such gestures had no hope of changing Australian perceptions of Japan.¹⁶

When Lieutenant-General Sir Ian Hamilton, Quartermaster General at the War Office, wrote confidentially to Hutton in December 1903 asking whether 3000 to 4000 mounted troops were available in Australia to fight with the Japanese forces against the Russians, he received a disappointing answer. Although Hutton could assure Hamilton that, despite some deficiencies of saddles and personal equipment, he was 'prepared with all detailed arrangements for placing in the field from one to three Brigades composed of all three arms', there was little prospect that the force would be mobilised. This expeditionary force, Hutton explained, could be counted on only in the event of war which threatened the 'general interests of the Empire'. Such a war would enjoy popular support in Australia but a military undertaking in cooperation with Japan was a different matter. Therefore, while the GOC believed that sufficient men 'would be induced by high rates of pay to form an Australian Contingent fighting under a Japanese Government and Flag', he was convinced that the federal government 'would be bound to take steps to prevent such a Force being raised or dispatched from Australian soil'.¹⁷

¹⁶ Narrative of Lieutenant-General Sir Edward Hutton's Command in Australia, 1901-1904, Period VIII, *Hutton Papers*, Vol. XXXVI, Add. Ms. 50113, ff. 217-20; Tennyson to Hutton, 6 May 1903, and Fanshawe to Tennyson, 5 May 1903, *Hutton Papers*, Vol. V, Add. Ms. 50082, ff. 93-6; Forrest to Hutton, 11 May 1903, *Hutton Papers*, Vol. VII, Ad. Ms. 50086, ff. 395-6, British Library; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, pp. 128-9.

¹⁷ Hamilton to Hutton, 25 December 1903, *Hutton Papers*, Vol. IX, Add. Ms. 50086, ff. 388-9; Hutton to Hamilton, 2 February 1904, *Hutton Papers*, Vol. IX, Add. Ms. 50086, ff. 395-6, British Library; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, pp. 129-30.

The war that erupted between Japan and Russia helped confirm Australian fears that Japan was a potential threat to Australian security. As historian Neville Meaney has argued,¹⁸ the eventual destruction of the Russian navy by the Japanese in the Battle of Tsushima in May 1905 provided the incentive for Australian Prime Minister Alfred Deakin to begin the development of a uniquely national defence strategy as well as a self-defence capability. Deakin's national initiatives gathered momentum as the Royal Navy was gradually withdrawn from Eastern seas for deployment in the North Sea to meet European contingencies. Whether a formal ally of Britain or not, from that time on Japan was treated seriously by Australians as a potential threat to their security. Effectively, actions taken by Britain to protect its imperial interests in the East had prompted Australians to contemplate development of an independent national defence capability.

Chamberlain would not have been too upset with such a development in Australia. Early in 1905, before the outcome of the war between Japan and Russia had been decided, Chamberlain expressed the belief that a Japanese victory might produce more determined military developments in Australia. He was not alone in thinking like this. Imperialists were interested in promoting the establishment of military forces in Australia because they might yet be deployed on imperial operations. Australia's fear of Japan might be a catalyst for this process. In August 1904, Sir Montague Ommanney, the Permanent Undersecretary at the Colonial Office, had written to Sir George Clarke, a former secretary of the Colonial Defence Committee and Governor of Victoria, expressing such ideas. Ommanney informed Clarke that Britain's best hope in getting 'effective aid' from Australians was to encourage them 'to train, arm and equip their local forces so as to secure some small measure of efficiency and some sense of discipline'. 'We are a long way off even this modest standard and it will probably require a Jap invasion or some such salutary lesson to teach Australia that joining a rifle club is not all that is wanted to make a soldier,' Ommanney concluded.¹⁹ The challenge that faced the British authorities was how to influence Australian military developments while making them compatible with those of the British forces, thus preparing them for future imperial operations.

Australia and Imperial Defence Developments: The Haldane Period

The Proposal to Establish the Imperial General Staff

In the aftermath of the failure of Chamberlain's proposals for an imperial military reserve, the British authorities resigned themselves to the fact that, if a direct approach were made to the dominions to establish an imperial force, it

¹⁸ N.K. Meaney, *The Search for Security in the Pacific, 1901-14*, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1976.

¹⁹ Ommanney to Clarke, 1 August 1904, Cab 17/77, Public Record Office; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 164.

would almost certainly be rejected. The new approach was to attempt to influence military developments in the dominions along imperial lines. There would be no more open calls for an actual contribution to an imperial force. The introduction of standard British doctrine, procedures, organisations and equipment to dominion forces was to set the stage for future imperial operations. The establishment of the Imperial General Staff was to be the first step towards this objective.

At the 1907 Colonial Conference, the Secretary of State for War, Richard Haldane, introduced four papers to the colonial and dominion representatives participating in the conference.²⁰ They had been written by the newly-created British General Staff. The first paper discussed the imperial aspects of military strategy. The pre-eminent role of the Royal Navy was acknowledged, but something more was considered necessary 'to bring a great war to a successful conclusion'. The General Staff envisaged a situation where combined military action would be necessary and therefore indicated the advantage in having 'a system of military organization [sic] capable of being readily assimilated to that of the many other contingents which would compose the Imperial army'. Recognising that most of the military forces throughout the empire were confined to their local areas, the General Staff counted on men volunteering for imperial military service when the crisis arose. Such an arrangement introduced an element of uncertainty into planning, but it was considered that the existence of the General Staff provided the means of resolving the problem. It was the body which would eventually 'embrace officers from all parts of the Empire', forming 'a bond of union in regard to military thought throughout its length and breadth'.²¹

The second paper prepared by the General Staff therefore addressed the question of assimilating war organisations throughout the empire. Uniform organisations, standard nomenclature and common administration and supply systems operating on British methods were considered desirable.²² The third paper emphasised the need to adopt standard equipment. It was considered essential that small arms, machine guns and ammunition were of a common pattern.²³ With this in mind, the fourth paper urged that the self-governing

²⁰ *British Parliamentary Papers*, Vol. LIV, 1907, Cd. 3523, 'Minutes of Proceedings of the Colonial Conference, 1907', pp. 94-9; the same minutes in *Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Papers*, 1907-8 Session, Vol. III, No. 11, p. 817; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 180.

²¹ Colonial Conference, 1907, Subject No. 1 proposed for discussion by the Army Council, 'The Strategical Conditions of the Empire from the Military Point of View' (Paper prepared by the General Staff), 14 March 1907, Cab 17/77, a copy of the same paper, Cab 11/118, Public Record Office; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, pp. 180-1.

²² *ibid.*, Subject No. 2, 'Possibility of Assimilating War Organization Throughout the Empire', 14 March 1907, Cab 17/77, Public Record Office; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 181.

²³ *ibid.*, Subject No. 3, 'Patterns and Provision of Equipment and Stores for Colonial Forces', 21 March 1907, Cab 17/77, Public Record Office; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 181.

dominions should order their ordnance stores, particularly arms and ammunition, through the War Office.²⁴

At the conference, Haldane took up the suggestion that the General Staff should become the means of integrating the military forces of the empire and become the Imperial General Staff. 'My main purpose in addressing the Conference,' Haldane explained, 'is to suggest for your acceptance the opinion that the General Staff which we have created at home and which is in its infancy should receive as far as possible an Imperial character.' By accepting colonial officers as members and sending imperial officers in exchange to fulfil similar functions in the colonies and dominions, a unifying influence could be imposed on imperial military efforts. The object, Haldane thought, was to inspire a school of imperial thought in which members shared similar traditions, viewed the problems of strategy from the same perspective and operated according to standard principles and theories.²⁵

Participants at the conference were enthusiastic about Haldane's proposal to give an imperial dimension to the General Staff. Australian Prime Minister Alfred Deakin, for example, asserted that '[a]ny proposition which would extend its activities or permit us to share them, would be heartily welcomed in the Commonwealth'. But it became clear, when Haldane put a resolution to the conference to establish the Imperial General Staff, that support was not unqualified. Participants were quick to circumscribe its role. 'We have no Imperial Army,' Sir Frederick Borden, Minister of Militia and Defence in Canada, stated bluntly. Therefore, while there was agreement among participants on a conceptual basis, Borden was worried that some Canadians 'may be somewhat sensitive about being committed ... to something like an obligation'. Attempting to relieve Borden's anxiety, Haldane explained that the 'General Staff is a purely advisory body'. Despite Haldane's words of assurance, other participants, including Deakin, shared Borden's concern. The dominions were determined to insulate their military forces from imperial control. The Australian Prime Minister successfully amended Haldane's resolution to ensure that the Imperial General Staff could offer advice on military training, education and organisation *only at the request of a dominion government*. The dominion and colonial participants did not want the Imperial General Staff to be in a position to exert control over their military forces. Clearly, Deakin perceived the staff organisation solely as a body of informed military advice.²⁶

Before these matters were discussed at the Colonial Conference, Haldane had considered a proposal by Sir George Clarke, a former secretary of the

²⁴ *ibid.*, Subject No. 4, 'The Desirability that the Colonial Government should Give Their Orders for Ordnance Stores, Particularly Arms and Ammunition, Through the War Office', Cab 17/77, Public Record Office; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 181.

²⁵ *British Parliamentary Papers*, Vol. LIV, 1907, Cd. 3523, pp. 96-7; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, pp. 180-1.

²⁶ *British Parliamentary Papers*, Vol. LIV, 1907, Cd. 3523, p. 117; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 181.

Colonial Defence Committee. Clarke wanted to extract an acknowledgment from the self-governing dominions that they were obliged to give military assistance to the empire in addition to defending their own territories. But Clarke's proposal was turned down. While Haldane was 'thoroughly' sympathetic to the proposal, he thought 'on the whole it will be best *in the first instance* to put one resolution only, and that relating to a General Staff system for the Empire as a whole'.²⁷ In his subsequent address to the conference, Haldane therefore only suggested that dominion military forces should incorporate a force for local defence and a separate expeditionary force for imperial service.²⁸ Of course, this was what he wanted, but probably thought that such a proposal had more chance of success if it were not made by a British minister. Haldane knew that Dr Smartt, representing the Cape Colony, had already put forward a proposal for consideration by the conference that each colony should establish a military force for imperial service when required by Britain.²⁹

Deakin, like the other participants, had been advised of Smartt's proposal before he had left Australia to attend the conference. The Australian Minister for Defence, Thomas Ewing, had told Deakin that '[t]he Military board considers that the proposal to form an Imperial Guard for service outside Australia does not appear to come within the scope of what is generally understood as the policy of Australia on defence matters'.³⁰ When the proposal was eventually put to the conference, Deakin remained silent while other participants rejected it. Smartt's proposal failed to get any support.³¹ In the face of such resistance to the establishment of an imperial force, the proposal for an Imperial General Staff was the only real alternative left for the British authorities to pursue.

Deakin's Proposal for a National Defence Strategy

Deakin had come to the 1907 conference with a conviction that he had to take positive steps to develop Australia's national defence capability. British strategic advice to Australia had consistently emphasised that Australia was

²⁷ G.A. Ellison to Clarke, 19 April 1907, with two enclosed draft resolutions, Cab 17/77, Public Record Office; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 182. Note: Emphasis added.

²⁸ *British Parliamentary Papers*, Vol. LIV, 1907, Cd. 3523, pp. 95-6; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 182.

²⁹ *British Parliamentary Papers*, Vol. LIV, 1907, Cd. 3337, 'Despatch from the Secretary of State for the Colonies, with Enclosures Respecting the Agenda of the Colonial Conference, 1907', Sub-enclosure in Enclosure No. 3, Resolutions of Government of Cape Colony for submission to Colonial Conference, p. 11; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 182.

³⁰ Ewing to Prime Minister, 28 February 1907, MP 84/1, file no. 1856/1/10, Australian Archives; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 182.

³¹ *British Parliamentary Papers*, Vol. LIV, 1907, Cd. 3523, pp. 111-6; Colonial Defence - Précis of Important Events connected with Question of the Employment of Colonial Military Forces on Imperial Service, 29 June 1909, paras. 14-6, pp. 5-6, Cab 11/125, Public Record Office; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 182.

free from the threat of invasion because the Royal Navy would protect it. At worst, likely hostile action against Australia would be limited in size to a raid, the imperial advisers concluded. But, in the light of the gradual withdrawal of the Royal Navy to the North Sea, Deakin believed that Australia was exposed to a threat from Japan, a country with military and naval capabilities far in excess of those possessed by Australia.

When Lord Tweedmouth, First Lord of the Admiralty, addressed the Colonial Conference, he called for a consolidation of the Royal Navy with contributions from the dominions and colonies. 'There is one sea, there is one Empire and there is one Navy,' Tweedmouth announced, 'and I want to claim in the first place your help, and in the second place authority for the Admiralty to manage this great service without restraint.' Naval strategy, naval command and the distribution of ships were to be determined by the Admiralty alone, Tweedmouth informed the conference. However, the colonies were encouraged to maintain small craft such as submarines and torpedo boats for coastal protection. While these vessels would provide some defence against sudden, unpredictable raids, it is clear that Tweedmouth believed that, in the event of prolonged hostilities, they would be incorporated within imperial squadrons and would be subject to British control.

In Deakin's opinion, therefore, there was only one acceptable conclusion and that was the cancellation of the Naval Agreement with Britain where the Australian Government made a financial contribution towards the maintenance of a Royal Navy squadron intended for the defence of Australia. Since 1902, the annual contribution had been £200,000 and the Australian Government had no control over the deployment of the squadron. Instead of this arrangement, Deakin proposed that an Australian flotilla of destroyers and submarines would be established, but it would not be subject to British control as Tweedmouth had recommended.³² The Australian Prime Minister made this clear when he discussed the issue with Admiralty officials. 'I went on to insist that these submarines and destroyers, built, manned and maintained at the sole expense of the Commonwealth, must remain under the control of the [Australian] Government,' Deakin informed the House of Representatives after his return to Australia. 'Their distribution would be entirely subject to that Government at all times.'³³

The Australian Prime Minister also intended to take innovative steps with the development of the Australian military forces. In response to Haldane's call for uniformity under the guidance of the Imperial General Staff, Deakin took the opportunity to inform the conference that he believed there were limits to the application of British military doctrine throughout the empire. Australian defence, for example, presented unique military problems not encountered in Britain and Europe. Therefore, British military practices and training had to be

³² *British Parliamentary Papers*, Vol. LIV, 1907, Cd. 3523, pp. 107, 129-130, 474-5, 482; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 183.

³³ *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. XLII, 13 December 1907, Mr. Deakin, p. 751; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, pp. 182-3.

modified for Australian requirements. Australian officers were also chosen from all social classes and most of them, like the soldiers, worked for their living at other occupations. 'They devote their spare hours to defence purposes and that earnestly, as well as most generously,' Deakin asserted, 'becoming more effective in fact than they might appear to be, judging them merely by the tests of military parades.' Australians were beginning to realise that they had been too slavish in following the British military model and had concentrated too much on getting the soldiers 'upon parade, in exact line, at the exact angle, with the proper cap and belt'.³⁴

Deakin's determination to serve the interests of national defence was also demonstrated when he skilfully rejected the General Staff's proposal for the War Office to organise the supply of war *matériel*. 'Our position at the other side of the globe, surrounded by alien races of whom we cannot look for aid or assistance in this matter,' Deakin argued, 'and far from any sources of supply of arms and material of war is very different [from other members of the empire, such as Canada] and we feel its urgency.' When Deakin proceeded to point out that the War Office had failed to provide a satisfactory supply of small arms in the past, Haldane was offended. The reason for the failure, the Secretary of State for War interjected, was probably the excessive demand for small arms during the Boer War. 'Exactly,' was Deakin's immediate response, 'you are always ready to execute orders when neither of us is under pressure.' The War Office 'looks after itself before it looks after us', the Australian Prime Minister charged. Consideration was therefore being given to the building or leasing of an ammunition factory in Australia 'to make us *independent*' for 'any of the reasonable requirements of war'.³⁵ Alfred Deakin left the Colonial Conference of 1907 determined to develop Australian defence along national lines.³⁶

Deakin announced his government's national defence proposals to the Australian people in December 1907. 'There was a time, not long since, when it was confidently maintained that Australia was outside the area of the world's conflicts, and might regard in comparative quietude any hostile movements in other parts of the globe,' Deakin began. 'That comfortable outlook has long since passed away.' The Prime Minister then proceeded to spell out a comprehensive proposal for the defence of Australia. Having already told the British authorities that his government would be cancelling the Naval Agreement with Britain, an agreement that made Australia dependent on the Royal Navy for maritime defence, Deakin said that Australia would establish its own navy. Furthermore, Australian youth would be subject to compulsory military training under the terms of a universal military training scheme. An Australian defence industry would also be established to make Australia as

³⁴ *British Parliamentary Papers*, Vol. LIV, 1907, Cd. 3523, pp. 102-4; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, pp. 183-4.

³⁵ *British Parliamentary Papers*, Vol. LIV, 1907, Cd. 3523, pp. 105-6; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 184. Note: Emphasis added.

³⁶ Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 184.

self-sufficient as possible for its defence *matériel* requirements. Deakin left no doubt that the defence of Australia was the primary object of these developments. Japan, a formal ally of Britain, was perceived to be the major threat to Australian security. 'We are at the very beginning of a period of development which I trust will be as thorough and complete as that of Japan,' Deakin announced. And, emphasising why these developments held little appeal for the British authorities, Deakin stated that his government was '*not preparing for any expeditionary adventures outside Australia*'.³⁷

The Imperial Reaction

Deakin's proposal to introduce universal training was a radical step for the Australian nation. It required solid support from the electorate. Yet the federal election of 1906 had not given a majority to any of the three main political groups, or parties. Deakin's Protectionist government retained office only with the support of the Labor Party and this was withdrawn on 6 November 1908. The Labor members formed a government under the leadership of Andrew Fisher.

One month after Fisher's government came to office, the War Office released a paper that had been drawn up as a result of the decision taken at the Colonial Conference of 1907 to establish the Imperial General Staff. The chief author of this paper was Major-General Sir Douglas Haig, the War Office's Director of Staff Duties. The original decision of the Colonial Conference had been to establish the Imperial General Staff as an informed consultative body of military opinion for the empire, but Haig's paper went further. It was, in reality, a blueprint for the development of the imperial military force which Britain had long desired.³⁸

The defence of the empire was to be considered on two levels, Haig's paper postulated. First, there was a need to establish the capability for local defence. As Haig put it, each part of the empire had to be able 'to secure itself against reasonable initial contingencies'. But, in addition to defending localities, there was also a need to be able to undertake offensive operations. Therefore, there was a second requirement of imperial defence which would enable the various military forces throughout the empire to combine for concerted offensive operations. 'The ideal to be arrived at,' Haig concluded in his introductory comments, 'is that all divisions of a military force should be

³⁷ *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. XLII, Mr. Deakin, 13 December 1907, pp. 7509-33; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, pp. 186-8. Note: Emphasis added.

³⁸ J. Gooch, *The Plans of War*, London, 1974, pp. 137-8; *Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Papers*, 1909 Session, Vol. II, No. 33, 'Defence: Imperial General Staff - Correspondence Relating to Proposed Formation; including Major-General Hoad's Proposal with Regard to Australian Section, Etc.', 'The Imperial General Staff', W.G. Nicholson, December 1908, Part I - General Principles Affecting National Defence, pp. 429-30; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 202.

capable of acting in war as parts of a whole.' The Imperial General Staff would provide the means of achieving this end.³⁹

Haig's paper was motivated by a sense of urgency because, as he noted in its introduction, in the near future there would be 'a great development in the potential military resources of the Empire'. The British General Staff obviously had one eye trained on the progress towards the introduction of universal military training in Australia. Similar developments were imminent in New Zealand. Accordingly, the Director of Staff Duties urged that the Imperial General Staff had to be inaugurated 'without any avoidable delay' because there were 'cases where the oversea[s] Dominions are contemplating a considerable expansion of their military forces on new principles'. It was of paramount importance, Haig concluded, that 'the military forces of the Empire should not be allowed to develop on divergent and independent lines, but on common and approved principles as regards organization [sic] and training'.⁴⁰

Haig's paper left the War Office with a covering letter by the Army Council, the British equivalent of the Australian Military Board. The two documents subsequently came to Australia. In its covering letter, the Army Council stated more succinctly what the War Office planned. It was recognised, the Army Council observed, that the self-governing status of the dominions permitted no guarantees or commitments for the supply of contingents of specified strength or composition in the event of war, but, as happened in the case of the Boer War, they felt assured that such support would be forthcoming. Therefore, the Army Council suggested that, in organising for their local defence, the dominions should consider the preparations required in circumstances where they 'desired to give effective military service in association with the troops of the Mother Country'. The council advocated the development of two separate elements in dominion military forces, one for local defence and the other 'designed for the service of the Empire as a whole'. 'Such a contingency has been kept in view in the accompanying paper,' the council concluded, referring to Haig's paper.⁴¹

The Australian Quartermaster General on the Military Board, Lieutenant Colonel James Legge, was worried when, in February 1909, he read Haig's paper, which had been issued under the signature of the British Chief of the General Staff, General Sir William Nicholson. 'Carefully worded though it is,'

³⁹ *Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Papers*, 1909 Session, Vol. II, No. 33, 'Defence: Imperial General Staff - Correspondence Relating to Proposed Formation; including Major-General Hoad's Proposal with Regard to Australian Section, Etc.', 'The Imperial General Staff', W.G. Nicholson, December 1908, Part I - General Principles Affecting National Defence, pp. 429-30; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, pp. 202-3.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, Part IV - Present Means, And How to Utilize Them, For the Creation of an Imperial General Staff, p. 433; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, pp. 203-4.

⁴¹ E.D. Ward, War Office, to Colonial Office, 15 December 1908, MP 84/1, file no. 1894/5/4, AA; and, *British Parliamentary Papers*, Vol. 51, 1909, Cd 4475, 'Correspondence Relating to the Proposed Formation of an Imperial General Staff', Enclosure in No. 1, p. 3; *Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Papers*, 1909 Session, Vol. II, No. 33, p. 425; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 204.

Legge noted, 'an analysis of the memorandum shows that, interleaved in the recommendation of the C.G.S. is much that was not asked for by the resolution of the Imperial Conference.' To start with, Legge questioned the compatibility of the proposed imperial organisation with the practice of democratic self-government. The Imperial General Staff was an imperial instrument with the capability of influencing the development of local military forces but without responsibility to the electorate. The British CGS had also been vague in his choice of words in certain areas. For example, Legge continued, the development of 'general principles' on which the military forces should be built might 'be taken by the War Office to cover discussion of and advice on larger matters, such as whether the organisation and training of the troops should be for Imperial Service abroad, or primarily, for Australian Defence'. Furthermore, the British CGS had clearly assumed that the forces of the empire would be combined into one imperial force, but the Australian people had not been consulted on the issue, Legge continued. Britain had developed a force of 500,000 men for its home defence, Legge also observed, but 300,000 of them—the militia—were not liable to serve outside Britain. Therefore, he asked, 'why should the Citizen Forces of Australia be liable to serve abroad when those of Great Britain are not?' When examined in conjunction with the comments by the Army Council, the British CGS's intention was clear, Legge concluded. 'By all means let us have an Imperial General Staff, to attain uniformity of military methods,' he recommended, 'but the ideas of Imperial Co-operation, so plainly suggested for acceptance in the letter of the Army Council [and Haig's paper] need to be understood and accepted advisedly, or expressly reserved for further consideration.'⁴²

Legge's comments on the Imperial General Staff made Fisher's Minister for Defence, Senator George Foster Pearce, pause to reflect. Pearce initially accepted the British General Staff's proposal, but soon changed his mind. Another British proposal that he had seen a month earlier in January was also influencing his thinking. Britain's Colonial Defence Committee had put forward a proposal designed to give Britain full control of dominion troops in time of war. The British authorities wanted the Australian *Defence Act* amended because, while it placed Australian soldiers under the British *Army Act*, it did so only in so far as it was 'not inconsistent with the local law'. If this qualification were removed, the British authorities argued, they would have control of Australian troops as if they 'belonged to the regular forces [of Britain]'.⁴³

When this proposal was placed before the Military Board for its consideration in January 1909, Pearce, the board's chairperson, balked, deferring a decision. At the end of February, after Pearce had seen the comments made

⁴² The Imperial General Staff - Notes on the Proposal, J.G. Legge, Quarter-Master General, 24 February 1909, *Military Board Paper of Historical Interest*, Vol. II, CRS A2657/T1, Australian Archives; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, pp. 204-5.

⁴³ Application of *Army Act* to Colonial Troops when Employed on Active service with Imperial Troops, Colonial Defence Committee Minute No. 402M, 16 July 1908, Cab 8/4, Public Record Office; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 205.

by Legge on Haig's paper and the Army Council letter, he realised the full implications of the proposal to amend the *Defence Act* and the purpose behind the Imperial General Staff proposal. Not only was the *Defence Act* not amended, but Pearce withdrew his initial uncritical acceptance of Haig's paper, voicing his concern at the suggestion that the dominions should commit themselves to military developments with the object of undertaking imperial operations. He was worried that participation in the Imperial General Staff scheme, as Haig had proposed,

might be construed into a willingness on our part to assist in the formation and provision of *expeditionary forces* not designed for local defence, but possibly and conceivably for the carrying into effect of some Imperial policy, in the shaping and deciding of which Australia and other Colonial Dominions had been given no voice.⁴⁴

Prime Minister Andrew Fisher agreed with Pearce and informed the British authorities that participation in the Imperial General Staff scheme was not to be considered as a binding commitment by Australia to develop any special forces for service either outside, or indeed within, Australia.⁴⁵

The Advent of the Fusion Government in Australia: A New Emphasis on the Imperial Connection

In mid-1909, the three separate non-Labor factions in Australian federal politics united to form the Fusion ministry, so removing the Fisher government from power. On 2 June 1909, Alfred Deakin was again Prime Minister. Yet the factions that were now aligned with Deakin included political conservatives more inclined to embrace imperial, rather than national, defence strategies. Deakin wrote to his sister informing her that 'behind me sit the whole of my opponents since Federation'.⁴⁶

Since Deakin had last been in office, the imperial dimension of Australian defence considerations had received new emphasis. On 19 March 1909, the *Age* had revealed that, according to statements by Britain's Prime Minister Asquith and the First Lord of the Admiralty, Reginald McKenna, Germany's battleship building program threatened the supremacy of the Royal Navy. It was believed possible that Germany might possess more heavy battleships

⁴⁴ Military Board Minute Book, 1908-11, Meeting of 18 and 19 January 1909, item (5), p. 29; Meeting of 25 January 1909, item (3), p. 33, CRS A2653, Australian Archives; Comments By the Minister for Defence on Memo of War Office, Dated 15th December 1908, On the Subject of Imperial General Staff, no date, Military Board Papers of Historical Interest, Vol. II, CRS A2657/T1, Australian Archives; Note: The document is annotated: 'The previous memorandum on the undermentioned subject submitted by the Minister is withdrawn'; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, pp. 205-6. Note: Emphasis added.

⁴⁵ Andrew Fisher to Earl of Dudley, Governor-General, 26 March 1909, Military Board Papers of Historical Interest, Vol. II, CRS A2657/T1, Australian Archives; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 206.

⁴⁶ J.A. La Nauze, *Alfred Deakin*, Angus & Robertson, Melbourne, 1979, p. 573; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 214.

than Britain by 1912. Australia was caught up in the empire-wide panic of the dreadnought crisis: 'that period of temporary hysteria', as Labor politician William Morris Hughes referred to it a few months later. The impulsive response by New Zealand was to offer Britain the gift of a dreadnought. Australia's Prime Minister Fisher resisted pressure to do likewise but the state governments of New South Wales and Victoria, spurred on by imperial fervour, offered to share the cost on a *per capita* basis if the Commonwealth failed to do so.⁴⁷

The proposal to donate a dreadnought had found support among conservative politicians in Australia. Deakin, whose attention had been occupied by the problem of uniting the three non-Labor groups in federal parliament, was not prepared to oppose the suggestion. He had decided to play the part of a political opportunist. Perhaps without conviction, he therefore had declared his agreement with the dreadnought proposal, hoping to win the approval of conservative politicians. But his decision had disappointed at least one of his liberal supporters. 'I was rather sorry to get your wire yesterday saying that you are keen on the Dreadnought offer,' friend and confidant Arthur Jose had written to Deakin from Sydney at the beginning of April. Jose, a journalist and historian, seems to have sensed that Deakin's decision was politically expedient, but tried tactfully to inform Deakin that he had erred.⁴⁸

There were many Australians who, like Jose, supported the development of Australian defence within the imperial framework, but not by paying tribute to Britain. It was their belief that the 'best help the colonies can give is the strengthening of their own defences', as Jose, a founder of the Sydney branch of the Australian National Defence League, had assured Deakin. But the offer of a dreadnought, he had argued, was 'irrelevant to local defence', 'fostered by people who are against local defence', and, furthermore, was 'a positive harm to local defence, because it withdrew funds which are needed for that purpose'.⁴⁹

While Jose had argued for a national defence strategy, others had opposed this view. The dreadnought crisis was a catalyst in mobilising a conservative political reaction in Australia to embrace imperial defence policy. In finding common ground to unite the three non-Labor factions, Deakin had to contend with these divergent views. Negotiations with the political faction led by Joseph Cook proved most demanding. At a final meeting between the leaders of the three factions on the morning of 25 May it was noted that the liberal

⁴⁷ *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. LII, Mr. W.M. Hughes, 13 October 1909, p. 4462; *British Parliamentary Papers*, Vol. 59, 1909, Cd. 4948, 'Correspondence and Papers Relating to a Conference With Representatives of The Self-Governing Dominions on the Naval and Military Defence of The Empire', I-Correspondence Relating To The Summoning of The Conference, No. 7 New South Wales, p. 3; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 210.

⁴⁸ Jose to Deakin, 2 April [1909], *Deakin Papers*, Ms.1540/16/601, Australian National Library; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 211.

⁴⁹ Jose to Deakin, 2 April [1909], *Deakin Papers*, Ms. 1540/16/601, Australian National Library; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 211.

defence plank—Deakin's faction—would 'stand almost untouched'. But there was an ominous addendum: on matters of defence Australia was 'to be put in touch with British Naval and Military authorities'.⁵⁰

The tension in the Fusion government was demonstrated immediately after it assumed office when Deakin decided that he was unable to attend the Imperial Conference of 1909. More pressing problems confronted Deakin in Australia, not the least being the consolidation of his own position as Prime Minister. Justin Foxton, the federal member for Brisbane, was the candidate selected to represent the government.

It was a remarkable choice, and one influenced by the new political order, an order in which Joseph Cook had become Minister for Defence. Foxton was an avowed imperialist and an outspoken opponent of compulsory military training. His personal views on Australian defence diverged markedly from those of Deakin. Speaking to the press after his selection was announced, Foxton said that Australia should have a navy, but 'we must be, for very many years, dependent on Great Britain'. He held similar views for the Australian military forces. 'Whatever the nature of our organization [sic] on land, and the extent to which we carry compulsory training, or set it aside,' Foxton told the press, 'the idea should be, in my opinion, to enable our troops, with the least amount of friction, to take to the field side by side with the British troops.' There should be 'complete and harmonious relations between the land forces of the mother country and of Australia', Foxton concluded.

Foxton's statement to the press alarmed some of Deakin's traditional liberal supporters. What, Deakin was asked by fellow Victorian liberal Charles Carty Salmon, 'has become of the Defence policy we have been advocating, fighting for and getting our friends to subscribe to?' Salmon believed that Foxton was obviously the wrong man to represent Australia at the conference because 'Australia is entitled to play a leading part and to define rather than merely acquiesce'. How could Foxton play such a role, Salmon wondered. 'That the position you gave the Commonwealth at the Imperial Conference [of 1907] can be maintained by a man with Foxton's political past and recent declarations cannot for a moment be even suggested,' he concluded in disappointed resignation.⁵¹

Salmon's indignation at Foxton's selection was echoed in the *Age*. The newspaper noted that Foxton had told the press 'very frankly and candidly more than enough to show that his personal opinions are quite unrepresentative of public opinion in the Commonwealth'. Foxton obviously believed that the military forces should be 'trained wholly and solely for foreign

⁵⁰ The History of the Movement, 25 May 1909, pp. 17-8, *Hume Cook Papers*, Ms. 601/3/63, Australian National Library; Note: Hume Cook recorded proceedings at the meeting and noted in parenthesis: 'This would have been done in any case'; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 212.

⁵¹ C. Carty Salmon to Deakin, 10 June 1909, 12 June 1909, *Deakin Papers*, Ms.1540/16/590, Australian National Library; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 215.

service', a proposal the *Age* believed to be 'absolutely repugnant to Australian sentiment'. In sending a 'declared opponent of the national policy' to the Imperial Conference, it was 'quite inevitable' that 'his personal views will color [sic] his representations'. Therefore, the *Age* stated that it was 'essential that Mr Deakin should reconsider his position'.⁵²

On the day that Foxton's comments appeared in the newspaper, Foxton was summoned to attend a meeting of cabinet where he was instructed on the government's defence policy. 'The upshot,' Deakin remarked to the press, 'is that Mr Foxton is now fully informed of the views of the government as a *whole*.' Foxton also spoke to the press, claiming that he had been misreported. He now said that an Australian navy would cooperate 'with the British fleet *on this coast*'. In relation to the military forces, Foxton asserted, the 'co-operation of the land forces with those of the Empire' to which he had referred entailed nothing more than Australia's participation in the Imperial General Staff scheme. The Australian military forces would be trained from 'first to last for the effective defence of this country'.⁵³

At the Imperial Conference, Foxton and Captain Creswell, a representative of Australian naval forces, agreed that an Australian unit should be considered a part of a planned British Pacific fleet. In peace the unit would be controlled by the Commonwealth government but, the Admiralty noted, the dominion governments recognised that in war their naval units should be placed at the disposal of the Admiralty to be controlled by Britain. This was distinct change from the conference of 1907 when Deakin had told Admiralty officials that Australia's naval forces would remain under Australian control at all times.

Military questions were discussed separately at the War Office where the British Chief of the General Staff, General Sir William Nicholson, presented papers which had been written by the general staff under his direction. In preparing for the conference, Nicholson had decided that Britain's best hope for the future lay in continuing the policy of encouraging the dominions to establish common military organisations and procedures. Suggestions to provide military units with the object of establishing imperial forces were no longer considered practical because they aroused suspicion and invited opposition. Nicholson came to the discussions believing that Britain had gone 'as far as we prudently can do by inviting the Dominions to assimilate their military organizations [sic] and General Staff system to ours, and by offering facilities for the training and interchange of General Staff officers'. Therefore, he decided to continue with this approach. His proposals included the introduction of standard British military organisations and training, standard transport arrangements and standard patterns of weapons and equipment, as well as a commitment to the continuing development of the Imperial General Staff. Colonel William Throsby Bridges, the first Australian appointment to an Imperial General Staff position in the War Office, and Creswell, who both

⁵² *Age*, 11 June 1909, Melbourne, p. 6; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 215.

⁵³ *Age*, 12 June 1909, Melbourne, p. 14; Note: Emphasis added; Mordike, *An Army for Nation*, pp. 216-5.

represented Australia at the War Office meeting, and the representatives from Canada, New Zealand and South Africa agreed. Furthermore, they took the unprecedented step of agreeing that should a dominion provide an expeditionary force for imperial operations then it would include its own logistic support elements, making it a complete combat force.⁵⁴

The results of the War Office discussions were subsequently endorsed by the main conference and the Committee of Imperial Defence. Encouraged by this outcome, the British authorities were now more confident and openly discussed their objective. While acknowledging that each dominion was autonomous in such matters, it was concluded that 'should the Dominions desire to assist in the defence of the Empire in a real emergency, their forces could be rapidly combined into one homogeneous Imperial Army'. Of course this depended on the implementation of the agreed measures well before the crisis broke and, realistically, Prime Minister Asquith sounded a note of caution. The resolutions, he informed the Commons after the conference, had 'no binding force until submitted to their various Parliaments'.⁵⁵

Asquith's challenge to dominion parliaments to demonstrate the strength of their commitment to imperial defence objectives held special relevance for Australia. The most significant result of the conference was that logistic support would be provided if an expeditionary force were raised by a dominion. But it was not clear where the Fusion government stood on the matter of an expeditionary force. Deakin's attempt to pull Foxton into line before his departure for London was an indication of the underlying tension within the ranks of the government on the defence question. The defence policy of the last Deakin government had been motivated primarily by the defence of Australia as its first priority. It had not been prepared to give a firm commitment to imperial defence beyond limited participation in the Imperial General Staff. Significantly, Deakin had deliberately ruled out any preparations for an expeditionary force and had left to Australians, as individuals, the option of volunteering for imperial military service. Now that Deakin's tenure of office depended on men more attuned to imperial aspirations, there were clear signs of a shift towards involvement in imperial defence strategies, but it was not yet certain which line the government would finally take and whether a more substantial undertaking would be given to Britain.⁵⁶

The direction in which the Fusion government was heading on this question was illustrated more clearly in the month following the Imperial Conference

⁵⁴ Colonial Forces - Interchange of Military Units Between the Self - Governing Colonies and the Mother Country - Minute by the Chief of the General Staff, 10 May 1909, Cab 11/124, Public Record Office; *British Parliamentary Papers*, Vol. 59, 1909, Cd. 4948, 'Imperial Conference - Naval and Military Defence of the Empire', II - Proceedings of the Conference, pp. 18-9, C - Military Defence, pp. 28-52; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 216-7.

⁵⁵ *British Parliamentary Papers*, Vol. 59, 1909, Cd. 4948, 'Imperial Conference - Naval and Military Defence of the Empire', II - Proceedings of the Conference, pp. 18, 30; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 217.

⁵⁶ Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 218.

when Joseph Cook rose in the House of Representatives to introduce a Defence Bill incorporating the defence reforms that Deakin had foreshadowed at the end of 1907.

Cook said that Germany was a cause for concern for Britain, but the United States and Japan were more likely threats to Australian security. As both these nations had significant naval forces operating in the Pacific, he believed the Pacific had become as important as the Mediterranean and the Atlantic in terms of naval defence. Cook therefore endorsed the agreement reached at the Imperial Conference for Australia to participate in the planned British Pacific fleet. Turning to the military forces, Cook announced that the government would proceed with the introduction of compulsory military training for young Australian males of 12 to 20 years of age. Nowhere in his address did Cook specifically mention the agreements reached at the Imperial Conference for dominion military forces, but he did intend fulfilling them. In his introductory remarks on the military forces, he explained that Britain was 'most anxious' that the dominion forces

should be co-ordinated as far as possible, that we should have the same standards of arms, ammunition, education, and equipment, and that there should be one Imperial General Staff shaping our war preparations upon a common basis, so that they may be at once available should the Empire as a whole be challenged.

He also said that it was 'our paramount duty' to be adequately prepared and to recognise 'all the contingencies consequent upon our being part of a world-wide Empire'. 'This Bill aims at providing, as far as we may possibly do, for all those contingencies,' he explained.⁵⁷

It was not until late in his address that Cook raised the subject of an expeditionary force. With a hesitancy induced by the controversial nature of the subject, he explained:

The bill will provide us also, if necessary—I hope we may never have to do it—[with] an expeditionary force for immediate despatch overseas or elsewhere whenever the Government of the day feel themselves under an obligation to send the force.

This statement perplexed Andrew Fisher, the leader of the opposition. One constant feature of the ongoing defence debate in Australia was that overseas service would be undertaken only on a voluntary basis. It was well known that the *Defence Act* denied a government the power to deploy troops outside Australia. Raising the subject of an expeditionary force in conjunction with compulsory military training therefore confused Fisher, and he sought immediate clarification by interjecting:

'Would that mean reswearing the men?'

⁵⁷ *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, 21 September 1909, Mr Joseph Cook, Vol. LI, pp. 3613-24; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, pp. 218-9.

'I am going to get the men ready,' Cook responded dismissively. 'All these special matters can be considered afterwards.'

Jumping to the Minister's assistance, James Fowler volunteered: 'An expeditionary force would be required even for some parts of Australia.'

'Exactly,' Cook agreed, evidently hoping the matter was settled.

However, the opposition leader was not to be fobbed-off so easily. 'But the Minister spoke of a force to be sent outside Australia,' Fisher persisted.

'An expeditionary force in every sense of the term would be required if we had to send troops *up North*,' an unsettled Cook answered evasively, trying to divert attention from overseas service. 'Our scheme in this respect is capable of systematic expansion.'

Fisher was not happy with this answer. He persisted. 'Does the honourable gentleman mean that the men could be sent abroad without being resworn?,' he asked.

'I tell the honourable member candidly that if these men are wanted for overseas service, in the defence of Empire, no Government of the Commonwealth worthy of the name would hesitate to send them,' was Cook's final retort.⁵⁸

Despite Fisher's probing, it seems that the opposition never fully understood Cook's plans for the field force. A few weeks later William Morris Hughes referred to the exchange between the Minister and leader of the opposition because he, too, was puzzled about Cook's intentions. The confusion in the mind of the opposition probably had deepened because by this time they had examined Cook's bill and they could see that he had not included a provision which would empower a government to order troops overseas.⁵⁹ Yet, as Hughes pointed out, Cook's original statement to the House implied that he was contemplating a departure from the 'basic principle' that compulsory training was for 'home defence only'. Explaining his own reservations about such a development, Hughes said he was happy for Australians to defend the empire but not as 'pressed men'.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, 21 September 1909, Mr Joseph Cook, Vol. LI, p. 3624. Note: Emphasis added; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, pp. 220-1.

⁵⁹ A Bill for An Act Relating to Naval and Military Defence, House of Representatives, Brought in by the Minister for Defence, the Honourable Joseph Cook, Read 21 September 1909, Library of the Attorney General's Department, Canberra; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, pp. 220-1.

⁶⁰ *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. LII, 13 October 1909, pp. 4472-3; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 221.

Responding to Hughes, Cook again evaded the issue and failed to state clearly what he had in mind.⁶¹ Yet, despite his reticence, it seems that the Minister for Defence was attempting to ensure that the government could mobilise an expeditionary force. Cook was confident that men would volunteer for overseas service when the time came and therefore no increase to government power was required. But it is probable that he had no alternative—Deakin would have been unlikely to give his blessing to compulsory overseas service. And even if Cook had achieved Deakin's agreement, there was no urgent need to take the politically risky course of legislating for such power at this time.

Cook's bill was well received. Before returning to Australia, Foxton told newspaper reporters in London that he thought this would be the case 'for the public think we have a possible danger in the future. One cannot say what danger, but the feeling exists'.⁶² An editorial in the *Age* echoed similar fears when it commented that the additional defence expenditure associated with Cook's bill 'cannot be considered an extravagance in a world that is going mad in preparation for a mammoth war'. The newspaper was satisfied that the bill had at last presented Australia with a scheme of 'National defence'.

Yet, in what appears to be the only adverse comment by a major Australian newspaper, the *Age* took exception to one of Cook's statements that Australia had been a burden on the empire. 'We are a part of the Empire and must take our share of the responsibility of Imperial wars,' the *Age* believed. But it then revealed what it thought Australia's contribution to such a war should be when it supported the establishment of an Australian navy. What was needed was 'a navy strong enough, in conjunction with our land forces, *to make our coasts secure* against the one danger which must confront us on the outbreak of any war between Great Britain and a naval Power'. The *Age* was therefore upset by Cook's declaration that from the outbreak of war the Australian naval unit would be subject to British control. This indicated that the government did not have a policy of its own, the newspaper continued, 'but that it is waiting to adopt the scheme which may have been framed in London'. Certainly, the *Age* conceded, 'from an Australian point of view' it might be necessary 'to fight an enemy with Australian ships at a distance'. In such a case it might be expedient to place the local force under British control, but only on a temporary basis. To give control of Australian naval forces to Britain automatically and without question on the outbreak of war was not acceptable, but, the newspaper noted, this had 'always been a part of the policy of the anti-Australian party'. Notwithstanding the possibility of granting temporary control to the Admiralty, the *Age* concluded that 'the first, last and middle of the Defence policy we are now entering on must be Australian defence, not Imperial defence. It is Australian defence as a part of the Empire.'⁶³

⁶¹ *ibid.*

⁶² *Age*, 27 September 1909, Melbourne, p. 7; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 221.

⁶³ *Age*, 28 September 1909, Melbourne, p. 6. Note: Emphasis added; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, pp. 221-2.

Although Cook's bill was enacted on 13 December 1909,⁶⁴ it was not proclaimed until 1 January 1911 and then only after being the subject of certain amendments which had been suggested by Field Marshal Lord Kitchener. The eminent British military authority had been invited to inspect and comment on Australian defence preparations by the Fusion government within days of its assumption of power.⁶⁵ The Fusion government therefore decided to await Kitchener's comments before proceeding with the scheme which it had devised.

Kitchener's Report on Australian Defence: February 1910

Cook claimed credit for Kitchener's visit to Australia. 'For two years I sought on every suitable occasion to get the Government of the day to invite Lord Kitchener to Australia,' the Minister for Defence announced publicly. 'And when I discussed the matter with the Prime Minister he at once fell in with the idea.'⁶⁶ Deakin undoubtedly perceived the immediate benefit of gaining the public blessing of the popular Kitchener for compulsory military training. It was a splendid opportunity for an astute politician to convince the electorate that the government's defence initiatives were soundly based. Indeed, this was undoubtedly a paramount consideration in Deakin's mind because 8 December 1909 was the last day of the closing session of the third parliament of the Commonwealth. A federal election was due in the new year. Of lesser importance, Kitchener could also have a positive influence on conservative waverers within the ranks of his own government who were not whole-hearted in their support for compulsory service. In this regard, the *Age* noted sarcastically that conservatives 'enthusiastically supported the proposal to invite Lord Kitchener ... for no doubt they expected that his counsel would follow the lines of their old fashioned Tory prejudices'.⁶⁷

Deakin's official invitation to Kitchener was carefully worded; he was requested to inspect 'our forces and fixed defences in order to advise this Government upon the best means of developing and perfecting the land defence of the country'.⁶⁸ It is easy, therefore, to assume that Kitchener came to Australia simply to review and report on the local defence capability. More than anyone Deakin would have wished to avoid any suggestion that

⁶⁴ *Commonwealth Acts*, Vol. 8, 1909, No. 15, pp. 201-33; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, pp. 222-3.

⁶⁵ Note: Deakin queried Kitchener's availability on 12 June 1909: Atlee Hunt to Governor-General, 12 June 1909, MP 84/1, file no. 1901/13/16, Australian Archives. Kitchener accepted Deakin's formal invitation of 9 July 1909: Kitchener to Prime Minister, 10 July 1909, MP 84/1, file no. 1901/13/16, Australian Archives; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 223.

⁶⁶ *Daily Telegraph*, 24 February 1910, Sydney, p. 7; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 223.

⁶⁷ *Age*, 22 February 1910, Melbourne p. 6; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 223.

⁶⁸ Cablegram from the Prime Minister (Mr. Alfred Deakin) to Viscount Kitchener (Commander-in-Chief in India), 9 July 1909, in Greenwood & Grimshaw (eds.), *Documents on Australian International Affairs 1901-1918*, Melbourne, 1977, p. 246; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 223.

Kitchener was working to an imperial design because it could easily offend his traditional supporters, producing a backlash on election day. Significantly, however, the British authorities harboured no doubts about the prime purpose of Kitchener's visit. Richard Haldane, Secretary of State for War, announced in Bradford that 'we are within sight—and, indeed something more than within sight—of common plans, which will unify the forces of the Crown throughout the whole of the Empire'. '[W]herever the theatre of war may be ... ,' Haldane continued, 'we should have the forces of the Empire so organised that they can be concentrated wherever the field may be, and that plans for our mutual defence may be worked out by one Empire, one whole.' Kitchener was going to Australia and then to New Zealand 'to work out the details', Haldane concluded.⁶⁹

If Kitchener came to Australia with plans for developing the military forces for imperial operations it was not stated publicly by himself or the government. Yet when his visit was in its final days and his report was being prepared for submission to the government, the *Age* published an article which, while not nominating its source, claimed that it was 'now admitted' that Kitchener's mission in Australia was concerned as much with the development of an imperial field force as it was with giving advice to the local defence authorities. The article commented that Kitchener needed more time to complete his report because he was developing a

plan by which he proposes to fit in the compulsorily-trained Australian citizen "defence" army of the near future into the great scheme which aims at the creation of an "Imperial Field Force" which shall be available for "offence" as well as "defence".

He intended to provide a 'great reserve of Australian soldiers', the article continued, 'which can be fitted easily and swiftly into the secret plans of the War Office'. According to an unofficial source, who was described as a 'well known British military writer', the War Office planned to establish an imperial force of 19 divisions and 19 mounted brigades. The combined contribution to this force from Australia and New Zealand would be one division and two mounted brigades.⁷⁰

Deakin and Cook wasted no time in responding to the article in the *Age*. The very next day the newspaper reported that the Prime Minister and the Minister for Defence refuted its claims and denied 'that Lord Kitchener's mission has anything to do with any suggested Imperial field force'. They expected him 'to deal mainly with Australian forces formed strictly for the purposes of Commonwealth defence'.⁷¹ The stated expectations of the Australian authorities were quite different from those of Haldane.

⁶⁹ R. B. Haldane, quoted by *Age*, 25 September 1909, Melbourne, p. 10; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, pp. 223-4.

⁷⁰ *Age*, 11 February 1910, Melbourne, p. 5; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 226.

⁷¹ *Age*, 12 February 1910, Melbourne, p. 11; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 226.

As might be expected, Kitchener's report, which supported Deakin's proposal to introduce compulsory military training, was well received in Australia. He had been accepted as the supreme authority on military matters; his word was beyond dispute. Even the *Age* was content, commenting that 'no patriotic Liberal will cavil at the scheme'. The reason was that the newspaper believed it was 'essentially an Australian scheme. It has been based on our requirements.' Kitchener's proposal would enable Australians to defend themselves from attack. Furthermore, he had 'taken it for granted' that Australians could implement and operate the scheme 'without external aid'. It was especially pleasing for the Melbourne newspaper to find that the report contained not even 'the slightest hint of an opinion that we should revert to the discredited old custom of importing general or other officers'.⁷²

But was the *Age* correct in believing that Kitchener's report was concerned with local defence? Was the newspaper also correct in assuming that Kitchener had intended that Australians would develop their defence forces without influence from outside? An analysis of the report and the implications reveals that the *Age* was wrong on both these vital issues. The newspaper, and presumably many Australians, failed to understand Kitchener's aims and also underestimated his ability to influence politicians.

It was easy to conclude, as the *Age* had done, that Kitchener's scheme was concerned primarily with local defence. Not only was his report entitled 'Defence of Australia' but Deakin and Cook had assured the public that Kitchener's mission had nothing to do with developing an imperial field force. And, if that was not enough, readers of Kitchener's report could see that, for the first time since 1889, an imperial representative had admitted that an invasion of Australia was possible. In the strategic assessment at the beginning of his report, Kitchener claimed that, because of Australia's remote location, it was quite possible that an enemy could launch a major operation against Australia before the Royal Navy could concentrate its forces and assert control. This was a significant reversal of imperial strategic advice. The Colonial Defence Committee and the Committee of Imperial Defence had told Australian governments over a number of years that their country faced only the threat of a raid by a belligerent nation. The British strategists argued that a potential enemy would not have the time to mount a large action against Australia before the Royal Navy intervened. Only a raid of limited size was possible. In overturning this advice, it appeared that Kitchener had confirmed Deakin's earlier conclusion that Australia needed to develop a self-reliant defence strategy. Kitchener recommended that the Australian military forces should have the strength and organisation to combat an invasion. This was the cornerstone of Kitchener's recommendations on Australian defence.⁷³ It

⁷² *Age*, 19 February 1910, Melbourne, p. 12; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, pp. 226-7.

⁷³ *Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Papers*, 1910 Session, Vol. II, No. 8, 'Defence of Australia - Memorandum By Field Marshal Viscount Kitchener of Khartoum', Part I, para. 2, p. 87; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 228.

was undoubtedly the principal reason for the Age's glowing report on Kitchener's recommendations.

In his report, Kitchener approved of compulsory military training but, where the government had originally planned that trainees in the Commonwealth Army would cease their compulsory service at the age of 20, Kitchener recommended lifting the upper age limit to 25 years. This proposal would produce a substantial increase in the number of trained men of prime service age in the military force. He estimated that 80,000 men aged 19 to 25 years would be formally organised as fighting units in the Commonwealth Army. Kitchener's scheme divided Australia into 215 training areas, each providing a proportion of a fighting unit and each being supervised by a training and administration officer who would be trained at a proposed Australian military college. He calculated that two training areas from the cities, or three from the country districts, would combine to produce one battalion with supporting arms organised on the basis of Imperial Army establishments. By identifying fighting units with districts, he believed that healthy rivalry would be easy to encourage so enhancing *esprit de corps* and enlisting community support. The result would be a more efficient body of troops. In total he estimated that the scheme would produce a force of 84 battalions of infantry—the equivalent of 21 brigades, 28 regiments of light horse, 49 four-gun field batteries, 7 four-gun heavy and howitzer batteries, 7 communication companies and 14 field engineer companies.

As Deakin had planned initially, Kitchener also supported the concept of preliminary training for boys as cadets and for youths as recruits. School cadets aged 12 to 13 years would undergo 120 hours of training each year, calculated on the basis of half an hour of drill for each school day. Senior cadets aged 14 to 17 years would have an annual training requirement of 16 days. On reaching the age of 18, the young men would receive recruit training for 16 days annually with half this time being spent in camp.

Kitchener's report was ostensibly focused on the defence of Australia, but, as a defence scheme, it was sadly lacking. Certainly, he had laid down an outline for establishing and training combat units comprised of citizen soldiers but he had provided practically no information on the development and composition of logistics units. Other vital issues also had not been addressed. He had failed to establish a concept of operations for the military force. He had simply claimed that Australia should have military forces strong enough to meet an invading force, but he had not suggested who the invaders might be, how the invading force might be constituted or where it might land. His training areas had been determined by relating population distribution to the requirements of standard Imperial establishments, primarily the infantry battalion; he had made no attempt to determine whether unique tactical organisations should be developed to defend strategic points of importance. Apart from some criticism of the lack of a standard railway gauge between the States, he had also ignored important questions concerning the local infrastructure, especially the ability to support military operations from local resources. Furthermore, while he had mentioned the requirement for military district headquarters in each State, they were only to fulfil administrative functions for

units in those districts. Significantly, he had failed to mention the fundamental necessity to establish operational headquarters, either at the brigade or divisional level. Nowhere did he state the composition of these important bodies. His failure to deal with this issue provides an insight into what Kitchener intended for the Australian forces, and it was not the defence of Australia. This became clearer when the senior command aspects of his proposals are considered. Kitchener had mentioned in his report that a citizen officer might rise to command a brigade but this was the limit in Kitchener's mind because elsewhere in the report he stipulated that the highest rank for a citizen officer would be colonel, the rank worn by a brigade commander. Likewise, he recommended that the highest rank for a permanent officer would also be colonel. According to Kitchener, there would be seven permanent colonels, one being allocated to the permanent force, three to military district headquarters, two to Army headquarters and one to a proposed military college. Therefore, if his recommendations were followed, there would be no Australian generals and, consequently, no Australian divisional commanders. Yet he did not explain where the commanders and staff of higher operational formations, such as divisions, would come from in case of war.⁷⁴

Overall, Kitchener's recommendations would not produce a defence scheme. They would not even produce a viable military force, only a collection of units or, with the addition of appropriately staffed headquarters, a collection of independent brigades. Kitchener's scheme was, in the first instance, a means of organising and training the young men of Australia on a compulsory basis in combat units established on the Imperial pattern. Significantly, the only justification he had offered for introducing Imperial standards of organisation and equipment was to comment enigmatically that the best defence was achieved 'generally by taking the offensive'. This was a euphemism that British officers had often used instead of stating their real objective of imperial service in an overseas theatre. And there are other clues which indicate what Kitchener had in mind. Kitchener had also recommended a reduction in the daily rate of pay for private soldiers from 8 shillings to 4 shillings. The citizen soldier 'must remember that he is discharging a duty to his country, and that the pay he receives is not a wage but an allowance to assist him in the discharge of his duty', he had written.⁷⁵ Yet these patriotic sentiments were not the real reason for Kitchener's recommendation. There can be little doubt that this was the latest attempt by an Imperial officer to remove what the War Office perceived as a possible source of friction when Australians served alongside more lowly paid troops from Britain. Therefore, when his recommendations and comments are considered in conjunction with Haldane's earlier statement in Bradford about the purpose of Kitchener's visit, it is clear that the object of Kitchener's report was the organisation of a number of Australian units which would combine as brigades under the

⁷⁴ *Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Papers*, 1910 Session, Vol. II, No. 8, paras. 39, 42 & 43, p. 93, para. 62, p. 95, para. 65, p. 96; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 229.

⁷⁵ *Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Papers*, 1910 Session, Vol. II, No. 8, para. 68, p. 93; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, pp. 229-30.

command of British generals and staff for imperial operations.⁷⁶ What Kitchener's recommendations amounted to mirrored Britain's own arrangements for its Territorial Force.

With Andrew Fisher's Labor Party triumphant, it fell to Senator George Pearce as incoming Minister for Defence to implement Kitchener's recommendations. It was an outcome which Kitchener had anticipated. While he was in Australia during his visit he had requested the Governor of Western Australia, Sir Gerald Strickland, to arrange a meeting with Pearce.⁷⁷ 'I received a summons to attend at State Government House at 11 a.m. on a given date,' Pearce recalled in later life, 'At 10:55 a.m. I reported there and was shown into a room. Punctually at 11 a.m. the door opened and in strode Kitchener, who shook hands with me and said, "Sit down, please".' Confessing no interest in politics, Kitchener then said he had been advised that should there be a change of government after the elections then Pearce would be the new Minister for Defence. 'There are some things that I am telling [Mr. Cook] which I will not put in my report,' he told Pearce, 'I have the minister's permission to tell them to you. Would you like to hear them?' With Pearce's concurrence, Kitchener then told the Labor senator how to manage the transition from the old voluntary militia system to the new scheme of compulsory military training. Having done this, he then proceeded to give Pearce his assessment—good and bad—of the capabilities of certain Australian officers. Indeed, Kitchener also submitted a formal report to the government about some officers—'the misfits and the inefficient', as Pearce recalled. Bringing the meeting to a close, Kitchener had given Pearce the chance to clarify any doubts still in his mind. 'Then he rose abruptly,' Pearce recalled, 'held out his hand, said good-bye and our interview was over.'⁷⁸

As Minister for Defence, Pearce, undoubtedly following Kitchener's advice, had decided to retain the existing militia force for the time being. He had also reached an important conclusion on future developments. The military force developed as a result of Kitchener's recommendation, Pearce contended, would have the responsibility of local defence but '[w]e also have to bear in mind that we are part of the British Empire [and] may be called upon, willy nilly, to bear the consequences of our Imperial connexion [sic]'.⁷⁹ Yet Pearce did not mention a fundamental difficulty: the *Defence Act* still denied an Australian Government the power to send troops overseas. Without amendment of the legislation the new conscript units would be limited to service in Australia. The voluntarily enlisted militia force provided an

⁷⁶ *Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Papers*, 1910 Session, Vol. II, No. 8, pp. 83-104; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 230.

⁷⁷ Strickland to Pearce, 19 January 1910, AWM 3/2222, file no. 419/80/2, Bundle 3, Item 20, *Pearce Papers*, Australian War Memorial; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, pp. 233-4.

⁷⁸ G.F. Pearce, *Carpenter to Cabinet*, Hutchison, London, 1951, pp. 71-72; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, pp. 233-4.

⁷⁹ *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. LVI, 18 August 1910, Senator Pearce, pp. 1670-1; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 234.

immediate solution to this problem; questions of its metamorphosis into an expeditionary force were perhaps best left until an actual imperial crisis sparked imperial fervour in Australia. Yet in the long term the voluntary militia would disappear due to natural attrition and the units raised under the compulsory scheme would have to provide the overseas force. At this stage Pearce was not sure how to resolve this issue. Fisher's Labor government stood on the brink of some important decisions on Australian defence policy.

Kitchener's report established the blueprint for the development of the Australian military forces that would be implemented from mid-1911. He had designed this scheme to provide brigades for deployment on imperial operations, but one question remains. In view of his imperial focus, why did Kitchener inform the Australian Government that it needed to prepare its forces to meet an invasion of Australia? The answer lies in an analysis of the proceedings of the 1911 Imperial Conference.

PART II

The Imperial Conference of 1911

Britain Prepares for the Imperial Conference of 1911

Imperial defence was to be one of the major topics for discussion at the Imperial Conference of 1911. The major forum for these discussions was to be the Committee of Imperial Defence, which was comprised of the political and professional heads of the Admiralty, the War Office, the Foreign Office, the Treasury, the Colonial Office and the India Office. Certain other members participated as required. This committee was chaired by the Prime Minister of Britain. There were two permanent sub-committees, namely the Colonial Defence Committee—it was renamed the Overseas Defence Committee in 1911—and the Home Ports Defence Committee. In general, the Committee of Imperial Defence laid down general principles for defence, while the Overseas Defence Committee and the Home Ports Defence Committee made recommendations regarding the application of these principles to the defence of the dominions, India and the Crown Colonies, as well as the United Kingdom.

In preparation for the Imperial Conference of 1911, the Committee of Imperial Defence prepared a paper on the subject of the general principles of imperial defence. These principles were to be the foundation stone on which the committee planned to erect an imperial defence structure with assistance from the dominions.

The superiority of British sea power was the central plank of the general principles of imperial defence. 'The maintenance of our superiority at sea over the naval forces of any combination of Powers likely to be arrayed against us remains and must always remain the basis of the system of Imperial defence,' the paper began, 'for by no other means can the security of British territory and trade in war be ensured.' Therefore, the two-power standard for the Royal Navy would be retained: Britain's naval power would be maintained at a level superior to the combined strength of the next two ranking naval powers. Despite this positive declaration at the outset, later in the paper some limitations in the Royal Navy's ability to defend the empire from seaborne attacks were discussed. It was admitted that, in peacetime, the Royal Navy might not be deployed to all seas where an enemy could have ships. There had been some important developments in recent years with the growth of Germany, the United States and Japan as naval powers. Accordingly, with the outbreak of hostilities, the Royal Navy would not necessarily be able to deal simultaneously 'with the fleets of two first-class naval Powers in different quarters of the globe, as well as to provide for all other naval requirements'. One major power would have to be dealt with first, because, if Britain's naval assets were spread, the navy risked being defeated in detail. Clearly, defence priorities had to be considered.

The strength of 'foreign squadrons' deployed 'within striking distance' of the United Kingdom—that is, the German navy—meant that the Royal Navy had to be deployed in home waters. Understandably, the defence of Britain was its first priority. Therefore, in the event of war in Europe, Britain would not be in a position 'immediately' to assert its naval superiority 'over a hostile combination which included a Power based on the Pacific or Western Atlantic'—that is, Japan or the United States. The outcome could be that 'the command of seas remote from our centres of naval strength might rest with the enemy'. In this event, enemy action—both naval and military—could be directed against naval bases or perhaps commercial ports throughout the empire. Despite the possibility of such aggression, it was argued that the strength of the force that an enemy could deploy in such actions would be limited because of the ultimate supremacy of Britain's naval forces. Why? To launch a large seaborne military operation an enemy required many ships for transport and logistic support. To sustain the force over a period of time, the enemy would have to continue with extensive seaborne operations, giving the Royal Navy time to react. Thus, the prospect of large operations was ruled out, but a quick raid was another matter.

The paper then turned to the issue that was to be one of the major objectives of the Imperial Conference of 1911: enlisting military contributions from the dominions for imperial operations. But the committee well knew that it had to take great care in achieving this objective, because it ran the risk of offending dominion sensibilities with the result that military assistance might not be forthcoming. The dominions had to be drawn gently into a commitment to imperial defence. And there was another important consideration. While it was realised that men from the dominions would volunteer for imperial military service in the event of war, an early commitment was required from dominion governments so that they would implement comprehensive military planning and preparation in a timely fashion. This was a key point. Therefore, after suggesting the possibility of limited enemy action against the dominions, the committee's paper raised the issue of dominion military forces. They had to be strong enough to give confidence to the people and to deal effectively with the scale of probable attack against the dominion, the committee advised. In addition, the paper continued, there was the important question of 'co-operation in Imperial defence'. The paper stated that it was 'certain' that there 'will be a general desire amongst the self-governing Dominions to contribute to the common defence of the empire in any war which seriously threatens its integrity'. Preparations for 'modern warfare' had to be made in advance; there would be no time for 'hasty improvisation' after the outbreak of war. 'If ... organisations have to be improvised, staffs created, transport and equipment provided, and plans matured, after the outbreak of war,' the committee concluded, 'the value of any assistance given would be greatly lessened, even if not altogether belated.'¹

This was the essence of the advice that was sent to the dominions to prepare them for discussions at the Imperial Conference. While acknowledging that

¹ Committee of Imperial Defence, Secret Paper No. 62 C, Principles of Imperial Defence, July 8, 1910, Cab 5/2, Public Record Office.

the Royal Navy had been withdrawn to home waters to enable it to deal first with any threat to Britain's security, the committee still promoted the idea that the dominions were dependent on the navy for their ultimate security. To do otherwise would have jeopardised the goal of drawing the dominions into an imperial defence arrangement. Recent developments in Australia had provided an object lesson in this regard.

The Royal Navy's deployment to home waters, which had started with the ratification of the Anglo-Japanese alliance in 1902, had been the catalyst which had promoted the development of a national defence capability in Australia. Prime Minister Alfred Deakin had believed that the subsequent withdrawal of the Royal Navy from the Pacific exposed Australia to the threat of aggression from Japan. As a result, at the Imperial Conference of 1907, Deakin had indicated that his government was taking a more independent approach to developing Australia's defence. He had signalled the end of the Naval Agreement with Britain and the establishment of an Australian navy, which would remain under the control of the Australian Government at all times. After he had returned to Australia from the 1907 conference, Deakin had announced that his government would introduce compulsory military training and establish a local defence industry to make Australia as self-sufficient as possible for its defence *matériel* requirements. Furthermore, Deakin had stated that his government was '*not preparing for any expeditionary adventures outside Australia*'.² However, in preparing for the Imperial Conference of 1911, the British authorities had the 'expeditionary adventures' firmly in mind. So, while the comprehensive defence developments that Deakin had initiated were just what the British authorities were trying to encourage, the challenge facing them in 1911 was to ensure that they were directed towards imperial, rather than national, ends. Indeed, Kitchener had prepared the way for achievement of this goal in his recommendations to the Australian Government at the beginning of 1910.

Therefore, in laying out the general principles of imperial defence, the Committee of Imperial Defence emphasised that British sea power ultimately ensured the security of the dominions—whether this was so or not—because it placed the dominions in a position of dependency, laying the groundwork for them to cooperate in imperial defence. And the mere suggestion that Japan or the United States might be a potential threat was sure to be treated seriously in Canada and, especially, Australia and New Zealand. It was all designed to draw the dominions into participation in imperial defence developments, especially cooperative military operations which, in modern warfare, required early preparations. The paper on the general principles of imperial defence was completed in July 1910 and sent to the dominions as an official memorandum of the Committee of Imperial Defence.

The memorandum could only have been read with concern in Australia. The advice was similar to that provided by Kitchener earlier in the year. Like

² *British Parliamentary Papers*, Vol. LIV, 1907, Cd. 3523, pp. 474-5; *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. XLII, Mr. Deakin, 13 December 1907, pp. 7527-33; J.L. Mordike, *An Army for a Nation: A history of Australian military developments 1880-1914*, Allen & Unwin, North Sydney, pp. 183, 186-8. Note: Emphasis added.

Kitchener's report, it admitted that the Royal Navy—the force that Britain consistently promoted as the ultimate protector of dominion security—could not be expected to have command of the seas in all regions simultaneously. But where the committee's paper suggested that, in the short run, this left naval bases and commercial ports open to attack of a limited size, in his report to the Australian Government earlier in the year, Kitchener had gone further and advised that the Australian Government should prepare its military forces to combat an invasion. While there might be questions about the size of a potential threat, there was an unmistakable trend in British advice to Australia. This point would not have escaped the Australian Government.

The Fisher Labor government, which had assumed office in late April 1910, was motivated to develop Australian defence. As would subsequently become apparent at the Imperial Conference in mid-1911, its senior members believed that Japan was planning to take military action against Australia. This was their most intense defence concern. In view of advice from both Kitchener and the Committee of Imperial Defence paper that indicated that enemy action against Australia had to be planned for, it is little wonder that the Fisher government looked to the possibility of mutual support in the event of war. In late December 1910, the Australian Government notified the British authorities that it wished to discuss '[c]o-operation and mutual relations between the naval and military forces of the United Kingdom and those of the Dominions and the status of Dominion navies' at the coming Imperial Conference.³ News of this development was received with great anticipation in the War Office. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff, General Sir William Nicholson, requested Brigadier Henry Wilson, Director of Military Operations and architect of the British expeditionary force for operations in Europe, to begin preparation of the War Office position on mutual support for the forthcoming Imperial Conference.⁴

With the completion of the paper on the principles of imperial defence in July 1910, the Committee of Imperial Defence appointed a sub-committee to formulate specific issues relating to the naval and military defence of the empire for discussion at the Imperial Conference. It was chaired by the Colonial Secretary, Mr Harcourt, and included War Secretary, Mr Haldane, Lord of the Admiralty, Mr McKenna, the First Sea Lord, Sir Arthur Wilson, and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, General Sir William Nicholson.

In its subsequent report in March 1911, the sub-committee commented that discussions at previous conferences on imperial defence policy and the involvement of dominion naval and military forces in imperial defence had been 'of a somewhat academic character'. These conferences had

³ Committee of Imperial Defence, Secret Paper 67-C, Report of a Sub-committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence assembled to formulate Questions connected with the Naval and Military Defence of the Empire to be discussed at the Imperial Conference, 1911, March 11, 1911, II – Discussions of General Defence Policy, para. 9 & Appendix VI. – Subjects for Discussion Proposed by the Commonwealth of Australia No. 1 & Enclosure, Cab 5/2, Public Record Office.

⁴ L. Kiggell, Director of Staff Duties, to Director of Military Operations, 6 February 1911, WO 106/43, Public Record Office.

demonstrated the difficulty in getting the dominion representatives to focus their attention on 'any concrete problem of defence policy'. 'Resolutions expressing in general terms the acceptance of the principles that the naval and military forces of the Dominions should be available for the defence of the Empire as a whole in time of emergency have been put forward on several occasions,' the sub-committee noted, 'and have invariably failed to secure the unanimous assent of the representatives of the Dominions.' The sub-committee considered that dominion reluctance to participate in imperial defence could, in the first instance, be attributed to their wish to maintain control over their own affairs. In one sense the sub-committee was right, but it seems that it failed to recognise that the primary interest a dominion had in its own affairs was the defence of the dominion itself. Another reason for not participating in imperial defence, according to the sub-committee, was the lack of development of dominion naval and military forces. But it was understood that developments were in progress throughout the empire. In relation to Australia and New Zealand, for example, it was noted that the local military forces were being established 'on a Territorial basis' as a result of the recent visit of Lord Kitchener. In view of these developments, the sub-committee advised that the Imperial Conference provided the opportunity to ascertain whether the dominions 'would now be prepared to undertake certain definite responsibilities in connection with the defence of the empire as a whole'. If this were so, then the requirement was to determine 'the nature and strength of the forces they might make available for such a purpose'.⁵ This, along with the related need for early preparation for combined military operations, became the primary defence objective of the Imperial Conference.

The sub-committee proposed that certain papers aimed at achieving dominion participation in imperial defence should be prepared for consideration at the coming conference. One suggestion was a paper to be written by the General Staff at the War Office 'indicating the nature of the oversea[s] services that the military forces of the Dominions might render in certain eventualities'. In addition to the General Staff paper, the sub-committee also proposed that another paper should discuss the general strategic position of the empire indicating how this affected the dominions. For example, it was suggested that, 'from an educative point of view', it was 'desirable' that dominion governments should be made to understand 'to what extent the comparative immunity from the danger of attack at present enjoyed by them is due to the existence of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and to our close relations with United States'.⁶ All of these subjects were to find their way into the papers that

⁵ Committee of Imperial Defence, Secret Paper 67-C, Report of a Sub-committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence assembled to formulate Questions connected with the Naval and Military Defence of the Empire to be discussed at the Imperial Conference, 1911, March 11, 1911, II – Discussions of General Defence Policy, paras. 5-7, IV. – Co-operation of Military Forces, para. 17, Cab 5/2, Public Record Office.

⁶ Committee of Imperial Defence, Secret Paper 67-C, Report of a Sub-committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence assembled to formulate Questions connected with the Naval and Military Defence of the empire to be discussed at the Imperial Conference, 1911, March 11, 1911, II – Discussions of General Defence Policy, paras. 8 - 9 & Appendix VI – Subjects for Discussion Proposed by the Commonwealth of Australia No. 1 & Enclosure, Cab 5/2, Public Record Office.

were finally prepared for the conference. In the case of Australia, one of the key papers was developed on the basis of a strategic review that the Australian Government itself had requested from the British authorities.

Three months before Kitchener had arrived in Australia to undertake his review of the Australian military forces, the Deakin government had contacted the British Colonial Office with a request for a review of Australia's strategic position. Specifically, the government had sought advice on 'the scale of probable attack on Australia'. The last advice on this matter had been provided by the Committee of Imperial Defence in 1906. Three years had since passed and the Australian Government wondered if this advice required modification due to 'alterations ... in the balance of naval power and recent naval developments'.⁷ One recent naval development that the Australian Government would have had in mind was almost certainly Germany's battleship building program. In March 1909, Prime Minister Asquith and the First Lord of the Admiralty, Reginald McKenna, had announced that it was possible that Germany might possess more heavy battleships than Britain by 1912, thus threatening the supremacy of the Royal Navy. But another area of acute interest in Australia was the growing naval and military capability of Japan. Of less concern, but still something to be considered, was the large size of the United States' navy.⁸

The review of Australia's strategic situation was undertaken by the Colonial Defence Committee, which was a permanent sub-committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence. It was not completed until December 1910.⁹

In the strategic review, the Colonial Defence Committee determined that Sydney was the only Australian port that faced a threat from foreign armoured vessels because of its strategic significance as a developing naval base. This possibility dictated the type of fixed defences required in the harbour city. The other Australian cities had little strategic importance, so the scale of threat they faced was considerably less. The committee believed that an enemy would not be able to justify the use of armoured vessels in attacking these cities, 'for such operations, even if successful, would exercise no decisive effect on the result of a maritime war'. But could a foreign power with possessions in the Pacific take action against Australia with a military landing force? The committee listed the only possible aggressors as France, Germany, Russia, the United States and Japan. France and Germany were quickly dismissed by the committee due to 'the comparative weakness of their naval and military forces in the Pacific and to the remoteness of their bases from Australian territory'. For example, Germany's military capability in the Pacific was a garrison force of 2240 men in the Chinese port of Qingdao,

⁷ 'Australia: Scale of Attack', Committee of Imperial Defence Secret Paper No. 64-C, I – Note by the Secretary, C.L.O. (C.L. Ottley), 9 January 1911, para. 1, Cab 5/2, Public Record Office.

⁸ Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 210.

⁹ 'Australia: Scale of Attack', Committee of Imperial Defence Secret Paper No. 64-C, II 'Australia: Scale of Attack', Colonial Defence Committee Memorandum No. 429M, 22 December 1910, Cab 5/2, Public Record Office.

some 8000 kilometres from Sydney. There were also 'about 400 reservists, who [could] be called out when required'. Accordingly, the committee believed that it was 'to the last degree improbable that either France or Germany could bring against Australia any military landing force more formidable than the present defences are calculated to meet' and that was 'a maximum landing force of 1000 men'. However, where France and Germany were weak, Russia had 'great military resources in Eastern Asia'. But Russia's 'naval weakness' prevented it 'from undertaking serious operations oversea[s]'. The United States had a 'limited military force available in the Philippines', but the prospect of war with the United States was remote and, therefore, did not warrant further consideration.

As a result of this analysis, the committee dismissed France, Germany, Russia and the United States as threats to Australian security due to a lack of capability or motive. But the committee considered Japan to be a different case. Here another factor was introduced into the analysis. Despite any military capabilities that Japan might possess, the existence of the Anglo-Japanese alliance had to be considered. In the first instance, the alliance meant that the risk of attack by Japan was not a 'reasonable' probability. It also assisted Britain's overall distribution of sea power, because, as it stood, Japan's naval assets would combine with Britain's in the event of war with a third power or combination of powers. The committee considered that the combined naval forces of Britain and Japan 'in the Eastern seas' would be considered adequate if they were 'superior to the forces of any probable combination of two naval Powers'. However, striking a negative note, the committee commented that the existence of the alliance was not a permanent arrangement and should it come to an end it could not be assumed that Japanese naval forces would 'act in concert with the British navy in time of war'. Indeed, consideration had to be given to the possibility that Japan might be 'ranged against us, either alone or in combination with some other naval Power'.¹⁰

In the event that the Anglo-Japanese alliance was terminated, the Colonial Defence Committee believed that, at the outbreak of hostilities, it 'must be assumed' that the 'local command of the Pacific might for a brief period rest with Japan'. This 'brief period' would be terminated by the arrival of British naval reinforcements 'from European waters'; apparently this was a certain outcome, but, in the interim, 'it would no doubt be possible for Japan to convey oversea[s] to Australia a military force of considerable size'. The nearest Japanese base was Nagasaki, some 6600 kilometres from Sydney, and Japan had a standing army of 19 divisions 'complete and fit for service in every detail', the committee noted. But, realistically, what was the scale of attack that Japan could bring against Australia while it 'had temporary possession of the local command of the Pacific'? Here it was necessary to draw the distinction between 'large operations' which depended on the ability of the Japanese fleet 'to keep open oversea[s] communication with its bases for an indefinite period' and 'hasty raids' which depended on speed and

¹⁰ 'Australia: Scale of Attack', Committee of Imperial Defence Secret Paper No. 64-C, II - 'Australia: Scale of Attack', Colonial Defence Committee Memorandum No. 429M, 22 December 1910, paras. 7-12, Cab 5/2, Public Record Office.

surprise rather than the number of troops involved. While it had been admitted that it would be possible for Japan to transport a force of considerable size to Australia, the deployment of a force large enough for 'prolonged or permanent occupation of any considerable area', and the sustenance of that force with 'munitions of war', could only be achieved by 'a Power which was mistress of the seas'. Japan might be able to establish command of the seas in the Pacific for a limited time, but there was only one 'mistress of the seas': the Royal Navy. This factor limited the scale of likely attacks against Australia, because 'there must be a reasonable probability that any enterprise undertaken could be brought to a successful conclusion before a British fleet could intervene'. In other words, the period of Japanese command of the Pacific would be too short to permit 'large operations' against Australia. This left the 'hasty raid' as the only probability. Therefore, in its strategic review, the Colonial Defence Committee concluded that the probable scale of attack against Australia was 'substantially the same' as that determined by the Committee of Imperial Defence in 1906. That was that, 'so long as the British fleet remains capable of acting on the offensive', it was 'not reasonably probable that any military attack on Australia more formidable than a raid by a small landing force will be undertaken'.¹¹

Although it would have been reassuring to Australian ears, this conclusion by the Colonial Defence Committee would only have provoked more questions from the Australian Government had it ever had the chance to examine it. The Committee of Imperial Defence's earlier paper on the principles of imperial defence had dealt with the general situation facing the empire and concluded that enemy aggression would be limited in size. It had only hinted that Japan was a potential aggressor. But this paper was aimed specifically at Australia and raised the distinct possibility of a raid by Japan. Obviously it would be taken more seriously. And some British strategists saw an immediate problem. The strategic review contradicted the report that Kitchener had submitted to the Australian Government just one year earlier. In that report on the defence of Australia, Kitchener had recommended that the Australian military forces should have the strength and organisation to combat an invasion of Australia.¹²

The discrepancy between Kitchener's opinion and the opinion of the Colonial Defence Committee—and its implications—did not go unnoticed by staff officers at the War Office. This became apparent when the Colonial Defence Committee's strategic review was submitted to the Committee of Imperial Defence for its approval before being released as an official memorandum to the Australian Government.

¹¹ 'Australia: Scale of Attack', Committee of Imperial Defence Secret Paper No. 64-C, I – Note by the Secretary, C.L.O. (C.L. Ottley), 9 January 1911, para. 3; & II - 'Australia: Scale of Attack', Colonial Defence Committee Memorandum No. 429M, 22 December 1910, paras. 7-12, Cab 5/2, Public Record Office.

¹² Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 228.

Prime Minister Asquith introduced the strategic review to the Committee of Imperial Defence at its 108th meeting on 26 January 1911 and immediately drew attention to its conclusion. It was the same as that reached by the Committee of Imperial Defence in 1906, Asquith observed. A military attack against Australia would probably be limited in size to a raid. However, General Sir William Nicholson, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, immediately criticised this conclusion. The minutes of the meeting record that he

deprecatd the issue of the Memorandum to the Commonwealth Government in its present form as being likely to discourage them in the measures they were now taking to develop their military forces.

Nicholson continued his criticism by pointing out that, at the Imperial Conference of 1909, 'the necessity for the reorganisation of their military forces [along imperial lines] had been urged upon the Dominions' and that,

as the consequence of Lord Kitchener's visit to Australia the Commonwealth Government were now taking steps to raise large military forces based upon universal liability to military service.

'If, as stated in the Memorandum, Australia could in no circumstances be exposed to the danger of attack more formidable than could be delivered by a small raiding force,' Nicholson argued, 'it could not be maintained that a large military force was essential to the security of Australia.'¹³

In my earlier work on this subject—*An Army for a Nation*—and in the previous section of this monograph, I argued that Kitchener's recommendations were focused on imperial military requirements not Australian defence. In *An Army for a Nation*, I wrote:

Yet, if Kitchener was not primarily concerned with the defence of Australia, as the title of his report suggests, why did he overturn imperial policy and base his recommendations on a strategic assessment that Australia had to prepare for a possible invasion? The answer to this question, it seems, was that it provided a powerful stimulus for Australians to establish a strong military capability, a capability which Kitchener undoubtedly intended for use on imperial operations.¹⁴

Indeed, the British Secretary of State for War, Mr Richard Haldane, would make comments at the subsequent Imperial Conference—they are revealed later in this monograph—which confirm that Kitchener's recommendations for the Australian military forces certainly did have an imperial design. And this was the reason why Nicholson now criticised the Colonial Defence Committee's assessment that Australia only faced the threat of a military raid. Motivated by the same imperial objective as Kitchener, Nicholson wanted the

¹³ Committee of Imperial Defence, Minutes of the 108th Meeting, January 26, 1911, 3. Australia: Scale of Attack. (C.I.D. Paper 64-C.), p. 3, Cab 2/2, Public Record Office.

¹⁴ Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, pp. 230-1.

Australian Government to believe that Australia faced a substantial threat so that it would proceed with the introduction of compulsory military training and the establishment of defence industries.

In Nicholson's mind, the threat of a raid did not put the Australian Government under sufficient pressure to continue with the implementation of the Kitchener recommendations. It was to be a costly exercise and, therefore, would inevitably attract opposition within Australia. Fear of an invasion would motivate an Australian Government and give it the courage to proceed as Kitchener had recommended. But Nicholson was not primarily motivated by the desire to enhance Australia's ability to defend itself. As would soon become clear, Nicholson did not really believe that Australia faced the threat of attack. He was simply attempting to construct a threat to Australian security because he believed it would benefit Britain's imperial strategy. Nicholson, like Kitchener, planned that Australia's military preparations were vital preparations for the timely deployment of a trained and equipped expeditionary force to fight on imperial operations.

In making his case against the strategic review at the 108th meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence, Nicholson was attempting to achieve the same objective that the committee also wanted: a dominion commitment to imperial operations and early preparation, but he faced one important obstacle in the approach he was taking. In constructing a serious threat to Australian security, he ran the risk of offending the Admiralty and inviting its opposition. It will be remembered, too, that the Committee of Imperial Defence had already released its paper on the general principles of imperial defence which argued that the predominant strength of the Royal Navy was the first plank in imperial defence and this limited the size of enemy action against the dominions. If Nicholson were to have his way, some careful manoeuvring was required.

Nicholson went on to argue that the Colonial Defence Committee's strategic assessment of Australia's security was 'based upon a naval situation which no longer existed'. There had been significant changes in recent years and the British fleet was 'no longer supreme in all waters'. It had already been admitted that, in the Western Atlantic, Britain 'might not be able to assert its naval supremacy over the United States ... for an indefinite period after an outbreak of war'. It seemed to Nicholson that this was also the case in the Pacific. 'If we should find ourselves in a war with Japan,' Nicholson argued,

the attitude of Germany being uncertain or hostile, we might be forced to maintain a fleet in European waters so strong that it was *very doubtful* if we should be in a position immediately to dispatch naval reinforcements to Far Eastern waters sufficient to enable us to assert our superiority over the fleet of Japan.

On the basis of this argument, Nicholson thought it 'highly desirable' that the Australian Government 'should be encouraged to develop their military organisation as a second line of defence to meet the contingency of the

command of the Pacific resting *for a time* with the enemy'.¹⁵ And this is where Nicholson's argument differed with that put forward in the Colonial Defence Committee's strategic assessment. He argued that Japan could have local command of the sea 'for a time' rather than 'a brief period', as the committee had argued, thus providing Japan with the time to execute something more substantial than 'a raid by a small landing force'. Nicholson wished to follow Kitchener's example by putting greater pressure on the Australian Government to develop a substantial defence capability.

The Secretary of State for War, Mr Haldane, probably not wanting to inflame inter-service rivalry by accepting Nicholson's argument, took a different line. Of course, Haldane would also be mindful of the argument already put to the dominions in the paper on the principles of imperial defence. From Haldane's perspective, it was undesirable to create doubts about Britain's naval dominance because it could have adverse repercussions for the imperial defence proposals to be put to the Imperial Conference. Responding to Nicholson's comments on the strategic assessment, Haldane said that he considered that so far there had been 'no material change' requiring a modification of Australia's strategic situation. Haldane's comment amount to a rejection of Nicholson's argument. However, Haldane continued, the Colonial Defence Committee had raised the possibility of the termination of the Anglo-Japanese alliance in its strategic review, and he agreed that such an outcome would have 'far-reaching effects'. There could be changes in the strategic situation that developed more rapidly than military forces could be organised or defence works constructed, he explained. Therefore, Haldane supported Nicholson's objective, but for the reason that 'the Commonwealth Government should be encouraged to proceed with measures required to meet a situation which might arise in a few years' time'; Haldane was referring to the expiry of the existing alliance in 1915 and the need to renegotiate its terms at that time.

Other members concurred. Not surprisingly, only Sir Arthur Wilson, the First Sea Lord, claimed that 'the situation would *not* be seriously changed' with the passing of the alliance. If this happened, the navy would strengthen the fleet in the Far East, making it 'impossible' for 'the Japanese to undertake oversea[s] operations on a large scale', Wilson claimed. This was precisely the opinion that Nicholson was attempting to suppress. No one spoke up to support the First Sea Lord, but Sir Edward Grey, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, while sympathetic to Nicholson's aim, followed the lead that Haldane had given. Grey said that he did not like the discussion in the Colonial Defence Committee's strategic review 'as to the situation which might arise if the Anglo-Japanese Alliance were determined'. He thought it might give the impression that this was Britain's intention, but this, according to the Foreign Secretary, was not the case. Therefore, Grey suggested the deletion of the paragraphs which discussed a hypothetical situation that could arise if the alliance were terminated. The review should then conclude that the threat against Australia would still be limited to raids, but a paragraph should be added pointing out that Australia's 'comparative immunity ... from oversea[s]

¹⁵ Committee of Imperial Defence, Minutes of the 108th Meeting, January 26, 1911, 3. Australia: Scale of Attack. (C.I.D. Paper 64-C.), p. 3, Cab 2/2, Public Record Office. Note: Emphasis added.

attack' was a result of the existence of the alliance. But, in addition, Grey thought that the review should include a statement to the effect that, if the alliance were terminated, then 'a new strategic situation in the Pacific would arise which would profoundly modify the circumstances of Australia'. This outcome would necessitate a reconsideration of the scale of attack to which Australia might be liable, Grey concluded. Settling the matter, Prime Minister Asquith agreed with Grey that the review should be redrafted in the way that the Foreign Secretary had recommended before it was sent to Australia as an official memorandum.¹⁶

The strategic review was rewritten in accordance with the decisions taken at the meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence. The assessment that Germany, France, Russia and the United States posed no threat to Australian security remained the same. The only paragraphs that were removed were those that discussed the possibility of Japan taking offensive action against Australia by itself or in cooperation with another power if the alliance were terminated. Accordingly, the concluding paragraphs pointed out that Japan had a considerable military capability, but this would not be deployed against Australia because of the alliance. It was also reasoned that any ambitions by a third power would be kept in check because it would need sufficient naval capability to overcome the combined British and Japanese fleets deployed in the region. While the amended review still noted that the threat to Australia was limited to a raid, it stated that this was due not to the supremacy of British sea power, as it had been argued originally, but to the existence of the Anglo-Japanese alliance. The strategic assessment concluded with the observation that:

Should the Anglo-Japanese Alliance be determined, changes in the strategic situation would ensue which might have far-reaching effects upon the position of Australia and necessitate a reconsideration of the scale of probable attack.¹⁷

Therefore, while the amended strategic review did not state explicitly that Australia faced the threat of invasion, like Kitchener had claimed and Nicholson wanted the committee to substantiate, the review implied that this might be the case if the alliance were terminated.

The implication that Australia might face a serious threat went some way towards satisfying Nicholson's requirements, but, when the amended strategic review was returned to the Committee of Imperial Defence for its final approval, it met with still more criticism from the Chief of the Imperial General Staff. Nicholson now focused his attack on three paragraphs in the review

¹⁶ Committee of Imperial Defence, Minutes of the 108th Meeting, January 26, 1911, 3. Australia: Scale of Attack. (C.I.D. Paper 64-C.), pp. 3-4, Cab 2/2, Public Record Office.

¹⁷ 'Australia: Scale of Attack', Committee of Imperial Defence Secret Paper No. 69-C, 27 February 1911, Cab 5/2, Public Record Office. Note: Paper No. 69-C is the same as Paper No. 64-C for the first eleven paragraphs. Paragraphs numbered 12 to 19 of Paper No. 64-C were removed and replaced by three new paragraphs numbered 12 to 14 in Paper No. 69-C.

which quoted from Colonial Defence Committee memorandums of 2 August 1905, 15 May 1906 and 7 July 1910. Various, these earlier opinions of the Colonial Defence Committee promoted the idea that the Royal Navy either protected the dominions from attack or, at least, limited the scale of attack that might be ranged against them. The thrust of Nicholson's objection was the same. The minutes of the meeting recorded his general observation about the objectionable paragraphs. He argued that '[t]here was a danger of the dogma therein ... hindering the satisfactory development of local defence forces'. Accordingly, Nicholson suggested that the three paragraphs be deleted from the strategic review. But there was not immediate agreement from the rest of the committee. It seems that the First Lord of the Admiralty, Reginald McKenna, thought that Nicholson was going too far because he commented that the paragraphs were 'historical, and dealt with the scale of attack *hitherto* regarded as reasonably probable'. Haldane was in a similar frame of mind, commenting that 'these paragraphs were intended to show the evolution of our defence policy', but he felt also that they could be made more clear or even omitted. The rest of the review which dealt with the 'existing conditions' would not be affected if the historical paragraphs were deleted, Haldane observed. Asquith decided the outcome. He thought that 'it perhaps would be as well to omit the paragraphs if exception was taken to them', and they were deleted. But the Prime Minister added that further discussion on the probable threat facing Australia could await the imminent Imperial Conference when the Australian Minister for Defence would be attending a series of special meetings of the Committee of Imperial Defence.¹⁸

Nicholson's objections were inspired by the simple goal of promoting military developments in Australia by constructing a threat of invasion. He wanted to remove the idea that Britain had promoted over a period of years that Australia's security would be decided ultimately by the supremacy of the Royal Navy. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff worked relentlessly to remove this idea from the Committee of Imperial Defence memorandum. Furthermore, it probably had not escaped his attention that one of the Colonial Defence Committee quotes that he had had deleted from the strategic assessment—that of 7 July 1910—post-dated Kitchener's report to the Australian Government by some six months. The deleted quote had stated that British naval mastery 'would impose strict limitations ... upon the nature and strength of the oversea[s] attacks ... on British Territory abroad'. Perhaps Nicholson thought this comment might help undermine Kitchener's earlier advice to the Australian Government.

¹⁸ Committee of Imperial Defence, Minutes of 109th Meeting, March 24, 1911, 3. Australia: Scale of Attack. (C.I.D. Papers 69-C and 71-C.), Cab 2/2, Public Record Office; &, Committee of Imperial Defence, Secret Paper 72-C, 'Memorandum on the Strategic Relations between the United Kingdom and the Oversea Dominions and India', I. – Note by the Secretary to the Committee of Imperial Defence, '... The paragraphs to which the Chief of the Imperial General Staff took exception were deleted from C.I.D. Papers 68-C (Scale of attack on Prince Rupert) and 69-C (Scale of attack on Australia) by the Committee of Imperial Defence at its 109th Meeting. C.L.O. [Ottley] 21 April 1911', Cab 5/2, Public Record Office. Note: Emphasis added. The amended version of Paper 69-C became Paper 76-C, Australia: Scale of Attack Under Existing Conditions, Colonial Defence Committee Memorandum No. 429 M, Cab 8/5, Public Record Office.

Although Nicholson had argued successfully for the strategic review to be amended he did not let the matter rest. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff continued in his attempt to lay the groundwork for pressure to be applied to the dominions so that they would build large military forces, hopefully for deployment on imperial operations. At the end of March, he submitted a memorandum to the Committee of Imperial Defence that he himself had written with the object of achieving a unified position by the committee on strategic policy for the approaching Imperial Conference. The subject of his submission was 'the Strategic Relations existing between the United Kingdom and the Oversea[s] Dominions and India'. Speaking on his submission at the next meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence, Nicholson explained that 'at the last meeting some differences of opinion on the main principles of Imperial Defence had been expressed'. Nicholson 'had drawn up this paper with the object of trying to find a formula which would reconcile these differences'.¹⁹ It was an attempt by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff to gain Admiralty support for the War Office plan to apply strong pressure to the dominions to encourage them to undertake military developments.

In his memorandum, Nicholson stated that while Britain's 'superiority at sea remained unchallenged', the dominions were free of the fear of attack from the sea. The Royal Navy 'protected' the dominions 'at the cost of the British taxpayer'. Yet in recent years certain foreign powers had developed their own navies, especially Germany and Japan and, of less concern, the United States. Such development had, in Nicholson's opinion, 'brought home to the Dominions the necessity for a concerted scheme of Imperial defence', especially since Britain's reaction had been to withdraw its naval forces from outlying stations and to deploy them in its home waters. 'The rapid growth of Japan as a naval and military Power [had] caused special anxiety in Australia and New Zealand,' Nicholson noted. Yet, revealing the extent of his intended duplicity, Nicholson observed that the prospect of the dominions or India being subject to attack from the sea seemed 'at present remote'. One reason was the large distance that separated the dominions 'from the conceivable bases of such attack'. Another reason, according to Nicholson, was that, as the dominions developed their military forces, they would effectively deter invasion from the sea. Furthermore, risks had been minimised by the existence of the Anglo-Japanese alliance and good relations with the United States.

Striking an appealing note for the Admiralty, Nicholson went on to argue that, by encouraging the dominions to develop their military forces, they would deter attack from a foreign power. Thus, the burden placed on the Royal Navy of defending the dominions would be reduced. In addition, because they would feel more secure, the dominions would be more likely 'to place their navies at the disposal of the Admiralty for combined operations' beyond their local waters. This play for Admiralty support was the idea that Nicholson went on to develop. Yet Nicholson realised that, in constructing threat scenarios for the dominions, there was a risk. On one hand, the threat construction might

¹⁹ Committee of Imperial Defence, Minutes of the 110th Meeting, May 4, 1911, 3. The Strategic Relations Existing Between the United Kingdom and the Oversea Dominions and India (C.I.D. paper 72-C.), Cab 2/2, Public Record Office.

go too far. If a dominion were 'nervous about its own safety from sea or land attack', Nicholson explained, then it was 'improbable' that its government would

spare any of its troops for expeditionary action in support of the Regular Army, or any of its ships for co-operation with the British Navy.

On the other hand it would be a mistake to make the dominions feel too secure. 'If to prevent them from being nervous about their own safety we too confidently assure Australia and New Zealand that they are not open to serious attack from the sea,' Nicholson explained, 'we shall discourage them from taking measures for self-defence on land and from contributing in ships or money to the British Navy.' This brought Nicholson back to his earlier argument against the Colonial Defence Committee's strategic assessment of the threat facing Australia. He explained again that this was the reason why he had deprecated some recent statements by the Colonial Defence Committee 'to the effect that the responsibility for protecting all British territory from organized [sic] invasion from the sea rests solely with the Admiralty'. 'Whether strictly correct or not,' Nicholson argued,

the statement seems inopportune, because its acceptance by the Dominions will tend to check the instinct of self-defence which renders young and growing nations virile and vigorous, *as well as the patriotism which ought to induce every part of the empire to take its due share in the obligation of Imperial defence.*

Nicholson then thought it helpful to review the function of the Royal Navy as he saw it. As its first priority, he considered that command of the sea was 'vitally essential' for home defence of the United Kingdom and for 'free access to our home ports of our seaborne trade'. Command of the sea was also 'hardly less essential' for 'free communication' between the United Kingdom, India and the dominions. 'Moreover,' Nicholson wrote, 'without it expeditionary action could not be taken or reinforcements detached to any threatened point, and the defence of our naval bases abroad could not be adequately maintained.' But Nicholson thought that 'less urgent or immediate importance attaches to the defence by the Navy of India and the Dominions against organized [sic] attack from the sea'. His reasons were threefold. First, repeating his earlier comment, he said that he thought 'the danger [was] somewhat remote'. Second, the existence of local military forces could guard against the danger 'to a great extent' and, third, the dominions and India were self-supporting for their food supply.

Nicholson's submission reveals clearly what he had in mind. Like Kitchener, he wanted the Australian Government to develop its military forces on the basis of a threat of an attack, but, in reality, he thought the threat was 'somewhat remote'. His real interest lay in the development of expeditionary forces for imperial operations. In presenting his argument to the members of the Committee of Imperial Defence, Nicholson reasoned that it was a mistake to tell the dominions that they were protected from invasion by the Royal Navy. This would make them feel so secure that they would not develop their

own defence forces. However, it was also a mistake to go too far in constructing a threat because this would make the dominions keep their military forces at home and not contribute to expeditionary undertakings. Furthermore, they would withhold their contributions of ships or finance to the Royal Navy. 'In this matter a middle course seems best,' he advised.

The strategic policy that Nicholson wanted the Admiralty to approve as a basis for discussion with the dominion representatives at the Imperial Conference began with the statement that:

It is *the aim* of the Admiralty not only to keep open and safe the lines of sea communication throughout the Empire, but also to protect the United Kingdom, the oversea[s] Dominions, India, and other possessions of the Crown against organized [sic] invasion from the sea.

So, instead of a declaration of certainty about the ability of the Royal Navy to protect the dominions from invasion, Nicholson wanted this objective to be expressed as an aim. His proposed statement of strategic policy then went on to explain that achievement of this aim was a task made more difficult by the recent, rapid growth in foreign naval forces. But the Admiralty's task would be more easily accomplished if the dominions trained and organised land forces of such strength that they could not only defend themselves from a raid but also force 'an enemy contemplating the invasion of a Dominion to come in such force that there would be no chance of his transports evading our fleets'. In this way Nicholson planned that the dominions could be encouraged to develop their military forces, not to protect themselves from invasion—the likelihood of which Nicholson had described as 'somewhat remote'—but, in reality, to provide expeditionary forces to fight with the British Regular Army. In his concluding comment to the Committee of Imperial Defence, Nicholson explained that, in his proposed strategic policy, he had made no reference 'to the military co-operation of the land forces of the Dominions with the Regular Army outside their respective territories'. This was the real object of all his scheming, but its omission probably had a specific purpose. As Nicholson well knew, it was a controversial subject and he probably had second thoughts about raising it in the statement of strategic policy which he intended to give to the dominions. There was a real risk that the dominions might simply reject it, before discussions were conducted.²⁰

The Committee of Imperial Defence discussed Nicholson's memorandum on 4 May at its 110th meeting, just a few days before the arrival of the dominion representatives for the Imperial Conference. Admiral of the Fleet, Sir Arthur Wilson, said that the Admiralty could not accept Nicholson's paper without modification. Mr Harcourt, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, was concerned at the potential for confusing the dominion representatives by introducing a new strategic policy at this late stage. The committee had

²⁰ Committee of Imperial Defence Paper No. 72-C, Secret, 'Memorandum on the Strategic Relations Existing between the United Kingdom and the Oversea Dominions and India', II. – Memorandum by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, 21 April 1911, Cab 5/2, Public Record Office. Note: Emphasis added.

approved the paper on the principles of imperial defence in July of the previous year as the starting point for discussions and it had 'been issued already to the representatives of the Dominions who will attend the approaching Imperial Conference'. Prime Minister Asquith agreed with Harcourt. He said that it was 'most undesirable to confuse the minds' of dominion governments by 'frequent modification of the principles on which we think their defence measures should be based'. 'Perhaps Lord Kitchener, who had recently returned from Australia, would give the Committee his opinion,' Asquith suggested. Tactfully, Kitchener agreed with the Prime Minister's comments, but he also provided some subtle support for Nicholson's case by adding that he thought the dominions should improve the defence of their sea ports, such as Newcastle, Sydney and Auckland. 'These places at present were not adequately defended,' Kitchener concluded.

Faced with the rejection of his proposed strategic policy, Nicholson took the opening provided by Kitchener to make a point that would play the central role in attempting to draw Australia into the imperial defence network. He informed the committee that he had gathered from

the [Australian] agent-general and other representatives of the Dominions that the possibility of a Japanese invasion of the northern territories of Australia with a view to settlement was viewed with much anxiety.

Asquith finished the discussion by stating that 'there was no need at present to revise the general statement of principles laid down in Paper 62-C [on the principles of imperial defence]'. However, the British Prime Minister made the point that, while this paper stated the general principles, other papers to be presented to dominion representatives attending the Imperial Conference applied these principles to the particular cases of each dominion. These other papers, Asquith observed, already embodied the 'necessary modifications of the general principles'. In other words, Asquith thought that the additional papers would satisfy the imperial objectives set for the conference, objectives that Nicholson also wanted to achieve, but by slightly different means.²¹ Indeed, one key paper to be presented to the Australian and New Zealand representatives—a paper that was to lay the groundwork for a significant outcome from the Imperial Conference—was given final approval of the committee at the same meeting that rejected Nicholson's strategic policy statement.²²

The Committee of Imperial Defence paper was written largely by the War Office and the Admiralty. At its commissioning, Haldane had said it 'should embody an authoritative expression of the views of the Board of Admiralty and

²¹ Committee of Imperial Defence, Minutes of the 110th Meeting, May 4, 1911, 3. The Strategic Relations Existing Between the United Kingdom and the Oversea Dominions and India (C.I.D. Paper 72-C.), Cab 2/2, Public Record Office.

²² Committee of Imperial Defence, Minutes of the 110th Meeting, May 4, 1911, 7. Imperial Conference. (C.I.D. Papers 77, 78, 79-C.), Cab 2/2, Public Record Office.

of the General Staff.²³ The resulting paper played on Australian and New Zealand fears of an invasion by Japan, a prospect for which Australians especially held an abiding dread. The Committee of Imperial Defence's memorandum was given the compelling title of Paper No. 78-C: 'Australia and New Zealand: Strategic Situation in the event of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance being Determined'. In its opening paragraph, the committee stated that

should the Anglo-Japanese Alliance be determined, changes in the strategic conditions would ensue which might have far-reaching effects on the position of Australia and New Zealand, and necessitate a reconsideration of the scale of probable attack on these Dominions.

In future, the advice continued, 'the possibility of Japan being ranged against us, either alone or in combination with some other naval Power, could not be prudently disregarded'. Expanding this point, the paper explained that there were 'foreign squadrons' of 'great strength' now 'normally stationed within striking distance of the shores of the United Kingdom'. In the event of war, Britain's naval forces would be deployed in such a way that they would not be in a position 'immediately to assert their superiority over a hostile combination which included a naval Power based upon the Pacific Ocean'. Naval action in the Pacific would have to await the clearing of Britain's home waters. So, if war were to break out with Japan at the same time 'when our relations with a European naval Power or combination of European Naval Powers were strained or hostile' it was

conceivable that the local command of the Pacific might for a period rest with Japan until such time as British naval reinforcements could arrive from European waters. During that period it would no doubt be possible for Japan to convey oversea[s] to Australia or New Zealand a military force of considerable size.

Of course, as Nicholson had earlier informed the committee, there was a risk in offering advice like this. It might well be so unsettling to the southern dominions that they might choose to strengthen their home defences and not send any forces overseas at all. Such an outcome would not serve imperial interests. It probably explains why the committee then proceeded to advise that, in its opinion, a 'large scale' invasion of Australia or New Zealand was 'highly improbable' unless permanent command of the sea was achieved by 'the fleets of Japan and her allies'. Therefore such an invasion was unlikely, but there was a real possibility of a raid. The committee warned that:

In view of the fact that Japan has at her disposal an army of over 1,000,000 men *available for service oversea[s]*, it is conceivable that she might take advantage of the temporary possession of the local command of the sea to dispatch a raiding force against Australia or

²³ Committee of Imperial Defence, Minutes of 109th Meeting, March 24, 1911, 1. Report of the Sub-committee Assembled to Formulate Questions Connected with the Naval and Military Defence of the Empire to be Discussed at the Imperial Conference, 1911. (C.I.D. Paper 67-C.), Cab 2/2, Public Record Office.

New Zealand with the view to creating a diversion and effecting the maximum amount of damage within a brief space of time.

Should there be a war with Japan in alliance with a European power, Japan might launch a raid against Australia and New Zealand in the knowledge that Britain, while engaged in hostilities in Europe, might have to dispatch 'naval and military reinforcements for the protection of these Dominions, thereby disorganising our war plans and possibly jeopardising the success of operations in the main theatre of war'.

However, the committee advised that the probability that Japan might launch a raid against Australia and New Zealand could be reduced by developing strong and efficient naval and military forces. '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,' the committee warned. And, apart from naval action, 'the most effective deterrent to raids would be an adequate and efficient military force so organised as to be capable of dealing with such raiding attacks with the least possible delay'. This brought the committee to the conclusion that

Lord Kitchener's schemes for the reorganisation of the military forces of Australia and New Zealand would, it is considered, provide these Dominions with military forces capable of dealing with raids on any scale likely to be attempted.

The committee then delivered a final warning that, although the Anglo-Japanese alliance gave Australia and New Zealand a considerable measure of security, 'it must be remembered that changes in the political and strategic situation may occur more rapidly than naval and military forces can be organised and brought to a state of efficiency'. Therefore, 'the reorganisation of the military forces of Australia and New Zealand *on the lines laid down by Lord Kitchener in 1910 should be completed without delay*.'²⁴

The paper, which discussed the probable outcome of the termination of the Anglo-Japanese alliance, was an attempt to achieve what Kitchener had in mind when he made his recommendations to the Australian Government. But it did so by maintaining the approved imperial position on the primacy of the British naval capability in imperial defence. Accordingly, the paper argued that the size of likely Japanese aggression against Australia was limited, not overwhelming. In this sense, the paper effectively took the 'middle course' that Nicholson had advocated. It both frightened and reassured the southern dominions. In what was undoubtedly a calculated move, the paper emphasised Japan's considerable military capabilities. This could only have

²⁴ Colonial Defence Committee Memorandum No. 442 M, approved by the Committee of Imperial Defence at their 110th Meeting on the 4th May, 1911, and issued as C.I.D. Paper 78-C, Cab 8/5; & Committee of Imperial Defence, Minutes of the 110th Meeting, May 4, 1911, 7. Imperial Conference (C.I.D. Papers 77, 78, 79-C.) Cab 2/2, Public Record Office. Note: Emphasis added.

unsettled the Australians who received the paper. However, whether Japan had 'an army of over 1,000,000 men available for service oversea[s]' or not, there was simply no way a force of anything like that size could be transported some 7000 kilometres across the sea in a timely fashion. No nation possessed the naval capability to undertake such an exercise, even if there were no opposition. On this basis, the paper that had been written by the War Office and Admiralty and approved by the Committee of Imperial Defence adopted a strategy designed to produce the desired result within the dominions by playing on irrational fear rather than presenting a reasoned strategic analysis. And that is the way in which it would be used during the imminent conference.

But the paper went further than this. It linked the possibility of hostile action by Japan in the South-West Pacific with hostilities in Europe. Why? Because it transported national security concerns into the imperial domain. It set the scene for proposals that would be put to the conference for mutual military support between Britain, Australia and New Zealand. At that time, Australia and New Zealand had no navies to speak of and were totally dependent on Britain for naval assistance. But it would inevitably be asked whether this assistance would be forthcoming if the southern dominions had not contributed—or demonstrated a willingness to contribute—military forces to assist Britain in Europe.

This was the issue that was designed to confront the dominions and force them to make a commitment that they had never made before. The vehicle was another critical paper that had been drawn up by British staff officers in the War Office. It was ultimately registered as a Committee of Imperial Defence Paper No. 80-C Revised. The paper had the lengthy title of 'The Desirability of Such a General Uniformity of Organisation Throughout the Military Forces of the Empire as May Facilitate Their Rendering Mutual Support and Assistance'.²⁵ This paper was to be discussed by the British Chief of the Imperial General Staff and his senior staff officers and dominion representatives, not in the forum of the Committee of Imperial Defence, as were the other defence papers, but behind closed doors in the War Office. The records of these proceedings were never included in the records of the Imperial Conference, but hidden in a War Office file.

Before discussing the development of the paper on mutual support and the subsequent dominion reaction, this monograph now turns to the actual conference itself and the discussions that occurred in the forum of the Committee of Imperial Defence with dominion representatives present. In relation to Australia, these discussions were conducted on the basis of the three papers that were analysed in this section of this monograph. They dealt with the general principles of imperial defence, the strategic review of

²⁵ Committee of Imperial Defence Paper No. 80-C Revised, 12 May 1911, 'The Desirability of Such a General Uniformity of Organisation Throughout the Military Forces of The Empire as May Facilitate Their Rendering Mutual Support and Assistance', Memorandum by the General Staff, Cab 5/2, Public Record Office.

Australia and the probable outcome for Australia and New Zealand if the Anglo-Japanese alliance were terminated.

The Imperial Conference of 1911: Defence Issues

When Australian Prime Minister Andrew Fisher, Minister for Defence George Foster Pearce and Minister for External Affairs Egerton Batchelor attended the 1911 Imperial Conference, it was the first time that ministers of an Australian Labor government had been in London. The British authorities did not know quite what to expect and Pearce noted that 'there was a great curiosity and I sensed some trepidation as to what our attitude on Imperial questions would be'. However, there was no need for concern by the British authorities. While the position of the Labor cabinet, determined before the Australian representatives left Melbourne, made no specific commitments, it was not a radical departure from previous Australian policy. The Australian naval force would be developed with advice and assistance from the Admiralty in peace, and in war the dominions should be 'trusted in the exercise of their judgment to give full weight to the claims such a contingency would make for general assistance and co-operation'. Cabinet supported Australian participation in the Imperial General Staff, the training of Australian officers at the imperial staff colleges at Camberley and Quetta and the continued exchange of military officers. Essentially, this was the position taken by all Australian governments in the past—colonial or federal. And, when Pearce told reporters from the *Times* on his arrival in London 'that Australia must first be able to defend herself before she could consider her share in a general Imperial defence scheme', he was simply doing likewise.²⁶

Ten days after their arrival in London, the Australians, along with the representatives of Canada, New Zealand, New Foundland and South Africa attended the first of three meetings of the Committee of Imperial Defence. This was the central forum in which defence matters were to be discussed. Two other critical meetings on military matters would subsequently be convened in the War Office.

Prime Minister Asquith opened the meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence—the committee's 111th. It was Friday 26 May 1911. He welcomed the visitors and explained the constitution and functions of the committee. Asquith then gave an address on progress in imperial defence matters since the last Imperial Conference in 1909. His comments on Australia were concerned primarily with Kitchener's recommendations for the complete reorganisation of the military forces and he noted that arrangements were 'energetically being pushed forward to give effect to them'. A start had also been made on the development of defence schemes for Australia, marking 'an important stage in the development of the organisation of the defences of the Commonwealth'. Similar comments were made about the other dominions. According to Asquith, it all demonstrated that 'good progress' had been made 'towards the attainment of that uniformity of military organisation, which the

²⁶ Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 238; G.F. Pearce, *Carpenter to Cabinet*, Hutchison, London, 1951, pp. 83-5.

General Staff has urged upon the representatives of the dominions at recent conferences'. He described progress towards the establishment of the Imperial General Staff 'for the service of the Empire as a whole' as satisfactory. The British Prime Minister then turned to Paper 62-C which dealt with the general principles of imperial defence. 'It will be seen that in the Memorandum emphasis is laid upon the fact that the maintenance of our naval supremacy over the naval forces of any combination of powers likely to be arrayed against us is the basis of the system of Imperial Defence,' Asquith said, 'for by no other means can the security of British territory and maritime trade in war be insured.' He explained that the strategic situations and particular threats facing the dominions had been dealt with in other papers that had been developed by the committee. There was also another important paper. Australia and New Zealand enjoyed 'a large measure of security from the danger of oversea[s] attack through the existence of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance'. Accordingly, a further paper had been written, Asquith continued, 'explaining the strategic situation of these Dominions and the nature of the oversea[s] attack to which they might be exposed in the event of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance being determined'. Asquith concluded his address with some brief comments on the dominion military forces. Developments now in progress in the dominions should produce forces adequate to deal with attacks 'as are considered to be reasonably probable in war', he said. 'The question of co-operation of the military forces of the dominions in Imperial Defence outside their own territories,' Asquith explained, 'will be dealt with on the day allotted to the discussion of military matters.' The Prime Minister then called on the Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, to address the meeting on the subject of the 'international situation'.²⁷

Grey commenced his address by emphasising, like Asquith, the primacy of sea power and the need for unity in naval matters. 'It is the naval question which underlies the whole of our European Foreign Policy,' he said, 'and more than the European Policy' Grey then gave a brief overview of European developments since the early 1890s. On the question of British relations with Germany, Grey advised that '[a]t the present moment the German and British Governments are not having difficulties with each other'. Grey believed that Germany was 'also genuinely anxious to be on good terms with us, and we smooth over the matters which arise between us without difficulty'. However, there was one possible development which could lead to problems. While Grey said that there was 'no danger, no appreciable danger, of our being involved in any considerable trouble in Europe', this could all change if there was 'some Power, or group of Powers, in Europe which has the ambition of achieving what I would call the Napoleonic policy'. By this Grey meant that a strong European power might overcome its neighbours one by one and establish a powerful bloc, effectively confronting Britain as a combination of five powers. 'Now, that is the situation,' Grey continued,

and that is why I say, though I do not think there is any prospect that one can reasonably see at the present moment of our being involved in

²⁷ Committee of Imperial Defence, Minutes of the 111th Meeting, May 26, 1911, pp. 5-9, Cab 2/2, Public Record Office.

serious troubles in Europe, it is possible that under such extreme conditions as I have named the question might arise as to whether we ought to take part by force in European affairs, and if we did it would be solely because Sea Power, and the necessity of keeping command of the sea, was the underlying cause and motive of our action.

How did this affect the dominions? British naval superiority was the central plank of the imperial defence strategy and the means of drawing the dominions into an imperial commitment. Grey drove the point home. 'So long as the maintenance of Sea Power and the maintenance and control of sea communication is the underlying motive of our policy in Europe,' Grey now told the dominion representatives, '*it is obvious how that is a common interest between us here at home and all the Dominions.*' Each of the dominions could work out the implications for themselves if Britain lost command of the sea, Grey continued. He said that he did 'not wish to be an alarmist' but the consequences for Australia and New Zealand would be as bad as any European power wanted to make it. Leaving the dominion representatives to dwell on their particular situations, Grey then delicately touched on the sensitive issue of dominion participation with Britain in hostilities. 'If there is any trouble in Europe in which we are engaged *and in which we have to appeal to the Dominions,*' Grey said, 'it will be solely because, if we do not take part in it, we shall see that the combination against us in Europe may be such that the command of the sea may be lost.' The implication was, of course, a mutual obligation: the dominions provide help for Britain in Europe while, in return, they benefit from the protection provided by the Royal Navy.

In the case of Australia and New Zealand, this would be protection against any Japanese aggression. The likely circumstances in which this might happen were not spelt out, but there was a hint. British public opinion was anxious about German naval expenditure, which was 'very considerable' and which 'may be increased'. If this were the case, it 'will produce an impression on the world at large' that Germany will have a bigger fleet than Britain 'with the object of eventually taking the command of the sea from us'. And, because Germany had a 'powerful army', with a bigger fleet Germany 'obviously could not only defeat us at sea, but could be in London in a very short time with her army'. Grey then delivered the line that was at the top of the imperial defence agenda at the 1911 Imperial Conference: 'But however much our fleet is superior to the German fleet, however much we defeat the German fleet, with the army which we have, we could never commit a serious aggression *by ourselves* upon German territory.' The only question was whether Germany would use its military strength for conquest in Europe. 'If she was to use that strength, which I do not for a moment suppose she would, to obtain the dominating Napoleonic position in Europe,' Grey said, concluding his assessment of the European situation, 'then I think there would be trouble.'²⁸

²⁸ Committee of Imperial Defence, Minutes of the 111th Meeting, May 26, 1911, pp. 9-13, Cab 2/2, Public Record Office. Note: Emphasis added.

Grey did not emphasise a specific German threat to British security; it was only mentioned as a possible outcome. He had obviously adopted the strategy of not confronting the dominions too directly with the possibility of a war in Europe; it could well scare them off. However, this was not the case when Grey eventually turned to possible threats to dominion security.

'Now I come to the last point to which I should like to ask your attention,' said Grey, 'the alliance with Japan.' Grey explained that the alliance had been struck originally with Japan because of 'the fear of Russian designs in the Far East'; it was 'in the first instance for security against Russia'. Since then, the Japanese had demonstrated that they were 'good allies'. They had never 'strained that alliance' and they had never 'asked for anything of any kind which was not well within the terms of the alliance'.

The Foreign Secretary went on to explain that the present alliance 'must last until 1915'. 'It will only come to an end if it is denounced, or if notice is given either by ourselves or by Japan a year before 1915,' he said. This, according to Grey, ushered in a period requiring some careful consideration. If Britain announced in 1914 that it wished to terminate the alliance in 1915, 'the alliance having worked so well', it would signal to the Japanese 'some reversal of our policy'. Japan 'at once would look, and be bound to look, at what other arrangement she could make with other Powers to secure her position ...'. Similarly, if Japan announced that it wanted the alliance to terminate in 1915, 'we should at once be disquieted, because we should feel she was going to make some other arrangement to which we should not be a party, and it might be an arrangement which would be unpleasant to us later on'. Grey then referred to the memorandum that dealt with the subject of the strategic situation that would arise if the Anglo-Japanese alliance were terminated.

He claimed that if the alliance were terminated by Britain '*it cannot be doubted*' that not only would there be an immediate change in the strategic assessment requiring Britain '*to count the Japanese fleet as it now exists as possible enemies*', but 'Japan would at once set to work to build a fleet more powerful than she would have if the alliance did not exist'. In view of this strategic assessment, Grey said that he was 'convinced' that 'in the interests of strategy', in the interest of naval expenditure', and 'in the interests of stability', it was 'essential that the Japanese Alliance be extended' in duration.

But what did the Japanese think about this? From the Japanese perspective, Grey thought there was one contentious issue. Japan might raise objections about dominion restrictions on Japanese immigration, which, of course, was one of the objectives of Australia's *Immigration Restriction Act* of 1901. The Australian Government remained implacably opposed to any retreat from this position. Grey explained that, although he personally never thought Japan 'would raise it when 1914 came', the British government, 'as a matter of fact', anticipated that it would. He did not explain why this was the case, but he announced that Britain intended to seek an early renewal of the alliance from the current year for another ten years. The reason for wanting to renew the alliance was that Britain was negotiating an arbitration treaty with the United

States and the prior treaty with Japan was a stumbling block. Britain wanted the treaty renegotiated to include an article stating 'definitely that the alliance shall not entail upon us or upon Japan any obligation to go to war with a Power with which either of us has a General Arbitration Treaty'.²⁹

Concluding his presentation, Grey wondered whether his talk had raised some questions in the minds of the dominion representatives, and, if so, there would be opportunity to provide more information in the days ahead.³⁰ The meeting was then opened to discussion.

The dominion representatives asked no questions about the general European situation. They asked no questions about Germany. The first question was asked by the Australian Minister for Defence and it concerned Japan. Pearce wanted to know whether the Foreign Office had 'any information as to what is being done in New Caledonia with regard to Japanese immigration'.

In response, Grey said that he had not heard of anything but did Pearce have any information himself?

'Yes', said Pearce. In the past, Japanese 'of the coolie class' had been going to New Caledonia but now, 'systematically', it was 'large numbers of engineers *who have served in the army*, and are of a superior class', Pearce explained. Already there were about '3000 of them in New Caledonia'.

Australian Prime Minister Andrew Fisher added that he thought the French government had been encouraging the Japanese migration. Fisher said also that there were 'a number of Japanese going down to the smaller islands in the Pacific'.

Asquith queried Pearce's use of the word 'systematic'. It seemed 'rather to imply that the Japanese Government were organising it'.

'Our information, if correct.' Pearce responded, 'is that the coolies, who were formerly brought to work in the mines, are being displaced systematically by a superior class of Japanese, men who have served in the Japanese army, and many of whom are civil engineers and men of higher education.'

'You think that these civil engineers come there for some other purpose than mining?' asked Asquith.

'Yes,' said Pearce.

²⁹ Committee of Imperial Defence, Minutes of the 111th Meeting, May 26, 1911, pp. 16-8, Cab 2/2, Public Record Office. Note: Emphasis added.

³⁰ Committee of Imperial Defence, Minutes of the 111th Meeting, May 26, 1911, pp. 16-8, Cab 2/2, Public Record Office.

Fisher then took up the subject of the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese alliance, saying that he thought it 'would meet with very favourable views from Australia'. Australians hoped, 'of course, to live at peace with all these peoples', and, if renewal of the alliance 'leaves unimpaired our self-governing powers regarding immigration', it would bring 'great satisfaction' to Australians, '*because undoubtedly we are somewhat apprehensive of the immediate future*'.³¹

The other dominion representatives added their views on the alliance with the Japanese, and when they had finished Pearce again took up the subject. 'We in Australia are undoubtedly nervous as regards the Japanese,' Pearce explained, 'because perhaps we are nearer [to Japan] than any of the other Dominions, with the exception of Canada ...'. He went on to say that people in Australia were very concerned about the alliance and any extension of it, so the reasons for extending it would need to be carefully explained to them. 'Perhaps people living in other parts of the Dominions do not quite know the feeling there is in Australia towards the Asiatic peoples and cannot appreciate it,' Pearce continued, 'but I think I am only right in telling you what is the feeling there towards this Treaty.'

After some brief comments by Grey, Asquith and Fisher, Pearce asked Grey whether the Foreign Office had any information on Japan's naval building program. The Australian Minister for Defence wanted to know 'whether the Japanese are making any serious additions to their fleet, or whether their building operations [were] simply normal at the present time?'

In reply, Grey said that he had no knowledge of the subject, so Asquith directed the question to Reginald McKenna, First Lord of the Admiralty.

McKenna's answer could only have unsettled the Australians, adding to their anxiety about Japanese intentions. Where Grey had gently massaged Australia's fear of Japan, McKenna gave a direct prod. He informed the Australians that the Japanese were in the process of having one 'very large cruiser' built at the Vickers shipyards in England. They also proposed to build two more 'Dreadnought cruisers of the largest size' in their own yards in Japan. McKenna explained that it was his 'own anticipation and belief' that these cruisers were being built '*in view of the alliance coming to an end in 1915*', because these ships were due for completion in the period 1914-1916. 'No doubt,' he said, 'they are intended to be an answer to our own squadrons, our own units.' Britain planned to have three Dreadnought cruisers in 'those Eastern seas', but the Japanese 'propose to build and have ready three Dreadnought cruisers of a larger size'. McKenna then said that, if the Anglo-Japanese alliance were renewed now, it was 'quite possible' that 'we shall hear no more of the two cruisers which they are going to build in Japan, *but of course it [was] impossible to say that they will not go on with them*'.³²

³¹ Committee of Imperial Defence, Minutes of the 111th Meeting, May 26, 1911, pp. 18-20, Cab 2/2, Public Record Office. Note: Emphasis added.

³² Committee of Imperial Defence, Minutes of the 111th Meeting, May 26, 1911, pp. 23-4, Cab 2/2, Public Record Office. Note: Emphasis added.

Asquith abruptly put an end to further discussion on the Japanese issue by asking Lord Crewe whether he had anything to say on India. An adjournment followed and, on resumption of the meeting, the review of imperial matters was completed with a discussion on the subjects of Egypt and the Suez Canal. Asquith then turned to the papers that had been prepared for discussion with the dominions. 'We might proceed to such consideration as is necessary of the various Papers which you find on the Agenda which have been circulated and which have been in the hands of Members for some days,' Asquith said. Giving a brief account of the papers, Asquith explained that Paper 62-C was a general statement of imperial principles for defence. As far as Australia was concerned there was also the strategic review which the Australian Government had requested two years earlier; this review assessed the 'scale of attack under existing conditions'. The third paper that concerned Australia and New Zealand was 'the strategical situation in the event of Anglo-Japanese Alliance being determined'. Asquith described it as being 'a more or less hypothetic paper'. The British Prime Minister then explained that, as it had already been revealed in discussions earlier that day, 'we do not desire to see that contingency, but on the contrary we desire the renewal of the Treaty', so it was not necessary to consider the 'hypothetic questions'.³³

Pearce immediately jumped in. Hypothetical or not, he wanted to know more about the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese alliance. His underlying concern was that, although Britain planned to seek renewal of the treaty, this might not be the Japanese intention. In response, Grey explained that if the treaty were renewed that year for a period of ten years, as Britain intended, then it would be under the terms of the existing agreement. That would mean that the renewed treaty would expire in 1921 with notice being given by either party in 1920 that that was what they desired.

The Australian Minister for Defence pursued the matter. He wanted more information from the British authorities about what they intended to do in the long run. Australia could not wait until 1920 to find out whether Britain would seek to renew the treaty again in 1921. It 'would not be possible' for the dominions 'to commence *then* to make any provision' in the event that the treaty would terminate, Pearce observed.

'In the way of ships you mean?' asked Grey.

'And land forces also,' answered Pearce.³⁴

Pearce went on to explain that Britain already had a navy, so building its strength 'was not a very difficult proposition'. 'We have none in Australia and none in New Zealand,' a worried Pearce said. It would take 'a number of years

³³ Committee of Imperial Defence, Minutes of the 111th Meeting, May 26, 1911, pp. 28-9, Cab 2/2, Public Record Office.

³⁴ Committee of Imperial Defence, Minutes of the 111th Meeting, May 26, 1911, p. 20, Cab 2/2, Public Record Office. Note: Emphasis added.

before we shall be in a position to add ships and soldiers'. If it were assumed that the treaty would terminate in 1921, Australia now had to consider the scale of attack it might have to meet in 1921, the Australian Minister for Defence reasoned. 'If that is a possible attack,' Pearce said, 'you have to conform to it, and commence now to make preparations.'

Asquith then reminded Pearce that the paper that had promoted this discussion—the 'more or less hypothetic paper'—was 'prepared on the assumption that *we must deal with the determination of the Treaty in 1915 as a possibility*'. Fear drove the Australian Minister for Defence to the inevitable conclusion. It seemed to Pearce that Australia should commence immediately to build a navy.

'What do you say, Mr McKenna?' Asquith asked.

'I think there is considerable force in Mr Pearce's point,' McKenna answered. 'Undoubtedly if Australia is to develop a navy which is in any way competent to hold the Japanese navy in check in 1921, she would have to begin her work at once.'

'Ten years in advance,' affirmed Asquith.³⁵

The extent of Australia's fear of Japan was a revelation to the Canadian Prime Minister, Sir Wilfrid Laurier. He commented that: 'I knew before, but now more than ever it is evident that in the Dominions in the Southern Pacific Ocean there is the impression that Japan has some ulterior motives of conquest.' But Laurier explained that he did not share this view.

Responding to Laurier's comments, Egerton Batchelor, the Australian Minister for External Affairs, said: 'I do not think that Sir Wilfrid quite realises the apprehension that is felt in Australia, right round the whole of our northern coast from Cairns round to Broome.'

Fisher joined in, adding that Canada could feel secure from a Japanese threat in view of its position adjacent to the United States. 'You have 100,000,000 of white people there and are in quite close touch with Europe.' 'Where are we?' the Australian Prime Minister asked. 'We are close to them with a great country and a good country not populated very much, and which we want to keep for people of European descent if we can.' Fisher said that he did not believe that the Japanese were 'at the present moment aiming at attacking us'. 'But I do say that no person can foresee circumstances three, five or ten years hence,' he said, '*and that is the reason why we as a people desiring peace at all costs are preparing in our own way for the defence of the country.*'³⁶

³⁵ Committee of Imperial Defence, Minutes of the 111th Meeting, May 26, 1911, pp. 29-30, Cab 2/2, Public Record Office. Note: Emphasis added.

³⁶ Committee of Imperial Defence, Minutes of the 111th Meeting, May 26, 1911, pp. 32-4, Cab 2/2, Public Record Office. Note: Emphasis added.

The meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence concluded by giving approval to the opening of negotiations with the Japanese government for the prolongation of the existing alliance for a period of ten years, subject to the condition that it was consistent with any future treaty of arbitration.

The first day's discussions in the meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence had revealed the extent of Australia's concern about a perceived Japanese threat to Australian security. By contrast, Germany had attracted no interest. There was not one word of discussion by any dominion representative on this country, or the European situation in general. The proceedings confirmed the approach taken by Kitchener and Nicholson on threat construction. The fear of Japanese aggression against Australia was a most effective means of promoting an interest in both military and naval developments by the Fisher government. The Australian prime minister left no doubt about this when he stated that the threat of a Japanese attack on Australia within the foreseeable future was the reason why 'we ... are preparing in our own way for the defence of the country'. The question that remained unanswered at this stage was whether Australia would go one step further and commit itself to mutual defence proposals. An indication of the likely answer to this question arose at the next meeting.

The committee met again on the following Monday to discuss naval matters. The first issue to be discussed was the status of dominion fleets. During these discussions, Laurier made it clear that he did not agree with the thrust of imperial policy. The point under discussion was a statement in one of the committee's papers on naval defence which assumed that the dominion navies would effectively be under the control of the Admiralty during war. The paper also recognised that the self-governing status of the dominions gave them the power to withdraw their dominion fleets 'before joining in hostilities'. This is what upset Laurier. The form of words implied that 'the Canadian Fleet ... in time of peace is part of the Imperial Navy'. But Canada saw it quite differently. Laurier explained that in peace 'our navy is under our own control, but in time of war we may place it at the disposal of His Majesty the King'. As Laurier put it, the paper brought up 'the whole question of the co-operation of the Dominions beyond the seas on the military armament of the United Kingdom'. The Canadian was concerned about the one-sided nature of British defence proposals. He explained that it could not be assumed that Canada would be involved in every war Britain prosecuted. Laurier said that if Britain were at war with Germany 'probably our duty would be to go to war at once, but I can conceive there are many smaller nations who might be at war with Great Britain in which war we should take no part whatever'.

Fisher agreed with Laurier's comments about the form of words in the committee's paper, but he added that, while Australia wanted to strengthen its own defences, 'if Great Britain is in difficulties we shall, I think, in every circumstance feel that we are in difficulties too; and there need hardly be any argument on that point'. The Australian Prime Minister then asked Pearce to explain the Australian position on the issue raised by Laurier.

In his statement, Pearce exposed one of the concerns that Nicholson himself had brought to the attention of the committee when arguing for his proposed imperial defence policy. The dominions might withhold their contributions to imperial defence if they themselves felt a direct threat. Pearce explained that there was a fear in Australia that if the whole Australian navy were handed over to the Admiralty then it might be withdrawn to distant seas leaving local trading vessels open to threat. The Australian fleet would be paid for by the Australian taxpayer and Pearce said that 'we feel that we might need some assurance from the Admiralty that those trade routes and those vital points in our Dominion should not be left unprotected'.³⁷

The Australian prime minister had held out the possibility of Australian assistance if Britain were at war, but then Pearce had effectively asked what Britain might do in return in terms of maritime defence. McKenna responded immediately, effectively setting out the broad conditions of the defence contract that would be struck at the Imperial Conference. McKenna said that while Australians might place limits on the use of their fleet, there was no such feeling in the Admiralty. 'We shall never limit the utility of our own [fleet],' McKenna announced, 'and if a far greater fleet is requisite than Australia can give in order to protect the commerce in Australian waters, *we shall send the ships*.'³⁸

The subject of military forces was not raised until the third day of discussions. Haldane, Secretary of State for War, addressed the meeting with an overview of British military developments. He explained that Britain's military forces were comprised of several components. There was a force for the defence of India, one for Africa and others for the Egyptian and Mediterranean garrisons. In addition to these forces, Haldane explained, 'we have concentrated now on producing an expeditionary army which is in this country ready for mobilisation and which we can send *to any part of the Dominions of the Crown to your assistance as you may need*'. In fact, the planned primary role for this expeditionary army was active service in Europe, but Haldane made no mention of this. His underlying aim was to have the dominions prepare for participation in such an operation. It was planned that this objective would be achieved under the banner of cooperative military defence, so Haldane took the opportunity to promote the idea that there might be reciprocal benefits in participating in imperial defence developments.³⁹

Haldane went on to say that, unlike the large armies of European nations which were largely confined to massed operations on the continent, Britain had developed smaller military organisations that could be transported by sea. As a result, Haldane said that Britain had some 300,000 people available for

³⁷ Committee of Imperial Defence, Minutes of the 112th Meeting, May 29, 1911, pp. 12-8, Cab 2/2, Public Record Office.

³⁸ Committee of Imperial Defence, Minutes of the 112th Meeting, May 29, 1911, pp. 23-4, Cab 2/2, Public Record Office. Note: Emphasis added.

³⁹ Committee of Imperial Defence, Minutes of the 113th Meeting, May 30, 1911, pp. 20-3, Cab 2/2, Public Record Office. Note: Emphasis added.

overseas deployment but Germany had only 2,850. Explaining this further, the Secretary for War said:

Armies that are designed, as our home armies are, to go abroad must be armies which are adapted to be sea borne, that is to be transported great distances, and we must always have in view naval considerations in our organisations.

As Haldane explained it, the expeditionary force concept had inspired a functional military organisation, an organisation that featured smaller elements that could be transported by sea. This was the divisional organisation which included 'mixed arms, infantry, artillery, and cavalry, and with them all those auxiliary services, transport, medical, and so on, which are absolutely essential for rapid mobilisation, which is, in these days, the essence of everything to be worked up to'.⁴⁰

Britain's expeditionary force was comprised of professional soldiers. Describing it as a first line army, Haldane explained that it had a strength of six infantry divisions and one cavalry division. But Britain had also established a citizen army, or territorial force, for local defence. The territorial force was organised 'exactly on the same pattern as our first line army', that is an organisation inspired by the expeditionary force concept. Haldane described this force as a second line army and said that it also contained 'a section, which is now considerable, of those who are willing to volunteer to go abroad for active service if occasion should require it'. And, while he did not spell it out, this was the development that Haldane had in mind for the dominions: adapting their citizen military forces for the provision of expeditionary forces. Accordingly, Haldane then raised the subject of the organisation that Kitchener had recommended for the Australian military forces, saying that it was similar to Britain's territorial army in one important respect. It was, he said,

essentially a second line organisation designed for home defence and not for oversea[s] work, but with the possibilities in it of a section to volunteer for oversea[s] work and to be sent by the Government for the purpose of co-operating in mutual defence of whatever part of the Empire might most need assistance.

According to Haldane, the same comments could be made about Kitchener's organisation for New Zealand's military forces.⁴¹

While Haldane emphasised that the Australian organisation was designed primarily for local defence, he was simply taking care not to inflame national sensibilities. Kitchener's recommendations for the Australian military forces were motivated, in the first instance, by perceived imperial requirements for

⁴⁰ Committee of Imperial Defence, Minutes of the 113th Meeting, May 30, 1911, p. 22, Cab 2/2, Public Record Office.

⁴¹ Committee of Imperial Defence, Minutes of the 113th Meeting, May 30, 1911, p. 24, Cab 2/2, Public Record Office.

developing an expeditionary force, and Haldane knew it. Recall the comments he made in Bradford before Kitchener arrived in Australia to undertake his review. Haldane had said that 'we are within sight—and, indeed something more than within sight—of common plans, which will unify the forces of the Crown throughout the whole of the Empire'. '[W]herever the theatre of war may be ...', Haldane had continued, 'we should have the forces of the Empire so organised that they can be concentrated wherever the field may be, and that plans for our mutual defence may be worked out by one Empire, one whole.' Kitchener was going to Australia and then to New Zealand 'to work out the details', Haldane had concluded.⁴² Yet, when the *Age* newspaper published the article that claimed that Kitchener was developing a plan to incorporate Australia's citizen forces into an 'Imperial Field Force' and that he intended to provide a 'great reserve of Australian soldiers which can be fitted easily and swiftly into the secret plans of the War Office', it had been refuted immediately by Prime Minister Deakin and Defence Minister Cook. The *Age* reported that both Deakin and Cook had denied 'that Lord Kitchener's mission [had] anything to do with any suggested Imperial field force'. They had said that they expected him 'to deal mainly with Australian forces formed strictly for the purposes of Commonwealth defence'.⁴³

Were Deakin and Cook misleading the Australian public at that time? Cook was almost certainly aware of Kitchener's intentions. It will be recalled that just a few months before Kitchener arrived in Australia, Cook had made comments in the House of Representatives about the need for military uniformity with Britain. He also had said that it was 'our paramount duty' to be adequately prepared and to recognise 'all the contingencies consequent upon our being part of a world-wide Empire'. Cook had gone on to say—however hesitantly—that his proposed defence legislation would provide 'an expeditionary force for immediate despatch overseas or elsewhere whenever the Government of the day feel themselves under an obligation to send the force'. And, despite Deakin's claim in December 1907 that his defence initiatives were not preparation 'for any expeditionary adventures outside Australia', it is hardly likely that he too was unaware of Kitchener's imperial design. But it is also apparent that this knowledge was not confined to Deakin and Cook. It will be recalled that Kitchener had met with Pearce while he was on his Australian tour. Pearce recorded that Kitchener had told him 'some things' that he had also told Cook and that these comments would not be included in his report. A few months after becoming the next Minister for Defence, Pearce also had said publicly that, while the military force developed as a result of Kitchener's recommendations would have the responsibility of local defence, '[w]e also have to bear in mind that we are part of the British Empire [and] may be called upon, willy nilly, to bear the consequences of our Imperial connexion [sic]'.

When Haldane exposed Kitchener's underlying imperial design to Fisher, Pearce and Batchelor at the meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence in 1911, it is unlikely that he was telling the Australians anything that they did not already know, or at least suspect. But, although there were occasional hints,

⁴² R. B. Haldane, quoted by *Age*, 25 September 1909, Melbourne, p. 10.

⁴³ *Age*, 12 February 1910, p. 11.

no Australian Government ever told the Australian people what lay behind Kitchener's organisation for the Australian military forces.

Haldane's comments recorded in the minutes of the Committee of Imperial Defence confirm my original analysis of Kitchener's reforms as discussed in *An Army for a Nation*. Finally, and most importantly for this current analysis, they also explain why the Committee of Imperial Defence, in constructing a potential Japanese threat to Australia and New Zealand, concluded its advice by stating that 'the reorganisation of the military forces of Australia and New Zealand on the lines laid down by Lord Kitchener in 1910 should be completed without delay'.⁴⁴

After explaining the expeditionary basis for British military organisations at the Imperial Conference of 1911, Haldane went on to outline the function of the Imperial General Staff to the dominion representatives. He explained this development in the context of the previous Imperial conferences of 1907 and 1909. It was the means of producing unification throughout the empire. As Haldane put it, '[t]he General Staff says:

We have thought out all sorts of plans; we have worked out a great deal in consultation with your officers; we have had our Inspectors-General out, and we have a great deal of general information, and we have got common plans which will make the armies of the Empire, if the Empire chooses to agree upon something like common plans, similar in pattern, similar in weapons, similar in formation, and similar in all sorts of things, and that can be carried out without the slightest interference with the complete autonomy of each Government that has a part of this army under its control.

The Secretary for War went on to refer to the Imperial General Staff as 'a permeating organisation' which had 'relieved us from the necessity of asking you to subject your local troops to any manner of control or centralised command *in order to attain unity*'.⁴⁵

While these comments effectively concluded Haldane's address on military matters, it was not the end of the subject. His address had, in fact, only been preparation for the consideration of a paper that had been under preparation in the War Office for some ten months. This was the paper that was designed to achieve a dominion commitment to participate in imperial military operations, a determined step forward in imperial defence developments and a step towards imperial preparations for World War I. Development of this paper will be the subject of the next section of this monograph.

⁴⁴ Colonial Defence Committee Memorandum No. 442 M, approved by the Committee of Imperial Defence at their 110th Meeting on the 4th May, 1911, and issued as C.I.D. Paper 78-C, Cab 8/5; Committee of Imperial Defence, Minutes of the 110th Meeting, May 4, 1911, 7. Imperial Conference (C.I.D. Papers 77, 78, 79-C.) Cab 2/2, Public Record Office. Note: Emphasis added.

⁴⁵ Committee of Imperial Defence, Minutes of the 113th Meeting, May 30, 1911, pp. 23, 25, Cab 2/2, Public Record Office. Note: Emphasis added.

Developing the Idea of Military Cooperation for the Imperial Conference

In August 1910, Colonel C.M. Dobell, a senior staff officer in the military operations branch at the War Office, wrote to Brigadier Henry Wilson, director of military operations and architect of the European expeditionary force, informing him that the 'time has come to speak very frankly if we have anything practical to say'. He was referring to the opportunity that would be provided by the Imperial Conference of 1911 to enlist dominion contributions for an imperial force, a force that Wilson was planning for a contingency where Britain would join with France in operations against Germany.

Dobell believed that opinion was 'probably unanimous' on what was required from the dominions 'in the way of Co-operation in Imperial Military undertakings'. The start point was a commitment that assistance would be provided in Britain's 'time of need'. Staff at the War Office also needed a '[p]revious promise of the exact strength and nature, etc., of this assistance so that peace preparations may be scientific and exact'. There was a third requirement. The dominions should give assurances, Dobell wrote, 'that any assistance rendered will conform in organization [sic] and training to the Regular Army at home which is the foundation and model of the empire's expeditionary forces'. If it were agreed that these were the essential requirements 'then the next step is to consider how they can be secured', Dobell pondered.⁴⁶

Dobell recognised that there were difficulties, 'by no means insignificant', that could hamper the War Office's achievement of its imperial defence objective. One difficulty was that the dominion forces were in a 'very imperfect and almost embryonic condition'. Another was that the forces were established on a citizen force basis which meant that 'only a proportion of the forces would ever be available for operations oversea[s]'. Finally, there was the difficulty that arose out of dominion self-government. Dobell referred to this as the 'Constitutional difficulty'. Put simply, Britain was unable to dictate to the dominions on defence matters. In terms of international law, Britain was the authority for declaring war for the empire, but the constitutional reality of dominion self-government meant the dominions were free to decide their degree of commitment to that war, a commitment that they might decide not to make at all. And, if the dominions did contribute military forces for imperial operations, there was no constitutional basis that provided Britain with absolute control of the dominion forces. As Dobell put it, there was a need to overcome the difficulty of getting the dominions 'to bind themselves to concerted action in matters over which there is not united jurisdiction'.⁴⁷

From Britain's perspective, these realities introduced a degree of uncertainty about the size of support from Australia in the event of war because volunteers could not come forward until the crisis developed and the Australian Government took action to raise a special military force for

⁴⁶ C.M. Dobell to D.M.O., 26 August 1910, WO 106/43, Public Record Office.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*

overseas service. And would there be sufficient equipment for the force? It was not a sound basis for developing military plans for war. The British authorities felt certain that many Australian men would volunteer for imperial service when war broke out, but, to be effective, mobilisation plans and military equipment had to be prepared well in advance of a crisis. The War Office staff considered the dominions to be ill-prepared. In reviewing the state of Australia's military developments, for example, Dobell noted that mobilisation planning in Australia was lacking.⁴⁸ This required an early commitment from the Australian Government so that preparations could commence immediately, especially the manufacture of equipment. Similar restrictions in the other dominions only compounded the problem for Britain's military planners. Resolution of these issues would not be easy. In his analysis, Dobell identified one important obstacle confronting dominion politicians. He noted that 'there will be difficulty in getting Governments to incur any increased expenditure in the peace preparation necessary to make approved plans workable and efficient'.⁴⁹ This obstacle was, of course, that much more difficult to negotiate in a democratic country where political opposition could be mobilised against defence expenditure proposals. The War Office staff hoped to resolve problems like these at the Imperial Conference.

The War Office solution to the problem took the form of a proposal for cooperative military action between the members of the empire for defence purposes. The proposal was developed from an idea that Wilson put to General Sir William Nicholson as the Chief of the Imperial General Staff. Wilson suggested that Britain might be able 'to define with some precision the different theatres in which, and to a certain extent the different times at which, we might require [military] assistance from the Dominions'. Developing this idea, Wilson considered that each of the dominions might have 'certain natural spheres of action peculiar to itself'. Wilson informed Nicholson that:

we might say to Australia that for the present any forces she was prepared to lend for oversea[s] operations would in all probability not be sent further west than Capetown, further to the north than Egypt, the north-west frontier of India, Singapore or Hong Kong, or employed for some minor operations such as the capture of some outlying coaling stations belonging to the enemy.

The proposal that Wilson planned to develop would include the idea of cooperative support between the dominions within their regions of interest. This, Wilson hoped, would entice the dominions into a plan for mutual support, which would lead to the development of dominion expeditionary forces. Yet this was only a ploy. Continuing his advice to Nicholson, Wilson wrote:

But *the real truth of the matter* is, that in order to get full value out of such assistance as the Dominions may elect to give us, their troops

⁴⁸ C.M. Dobell to D.M.O., 26 August 1910, Attachment: Australia, WO 106/43, Public Record Office.

⁴⁹ C.M. Dobell to D.M.O., 26 August 1910, WO 106/43, Public Record Office.

should be placed under the orders of the War Office (C.I.G.S.) and made available for service in any part of the World.⁵⁰

Wilson planned to draw the dominions into an unlimited imperial commitment.

Wilson's notion of dominion spheres of action met with approval from British strategists and was included in a paper presented to the Imperial Conference in 1911 as a proposal for 'The Co-operation of the Military Forces of the Empire'. But as Nicholson explained to Haldane, the Committee of Imperial Defence had requested the War Office 'to make it somewhat vague and we have therefore avoided details'.⁵¹ Extreme care was required if the dominions were not to be scared off. However, Haldane thought the paper was still 'a little too strong for the sentiment of some of the Dominions', and Nicholson directed Wilson to refer the paper to Rear-Admiral Sir Charles Ottley, secretary of the Committee of Imperial Defence.⁵² Ottley in turn referred the document to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Mr Lewis Harcourt. Harcourt's comments on the paper provide an insight into the caution that was considered necessary to gain dominion cooperation. Attempting not to arouse dominion fears of military deployments far from their own shores, Part I of the paper attempted to indicate some geographic limits to the likely areas of operation, as Wilson had originally proposed. In this vein, the paper reviewed by Harcourt included the comment that:

Where operations are being carried on close to the home shores [of the United Kingdom], *as for instance in North-Western Europe*, the distance to be covered would probably be too great to allow of assistance being rendered by the Dominions in time for the decisive action which might decide the war ...⁵³

Apparently Harcourt thought even this attempt to soothe dominion apprehensions could be toned down. The Colonial Secretary suggested that the words '*as for instance in North-Western Europe*' be deleted. And they were.⁵⁴ Yet operations in North-Western Europe were exactly what the whole enterprise was about.

Another amendment was also made to the paper to increase its appeal to the dominions. The introductory paragraph of the initial draft referred to mutual assistance as one of the three great principles on which the military organisation of the empire should be based; the others were sea command

⁵⁰ H. Wilson, D.M.O., to C.I.G.S., 10 April 1911, WO 106/43, Public Record Office; Mordike, *An Army for Nation*, pp. 236-7. Note: Emphasis added.

⁵¹ W.G.N. [Nicholson], C.I.G.S., to S of S, 5 May 1911, WO 106/43, Public Record Office.

⁵² W.G.N. [Nicholson], C.I.G.S. to D.M.O., 9 May 1911, WO 106/43, Public Record Office.

⁵³ Untitled draft paper, Part IV, p. 8, WO 106/43, Public Record Office. Note: Emphasis added.

⁵⁴ Ottley to Wilson, 11 May 1911, WO 106/43, Public Record Office.

and local defence. The paper then stated that the principle of mutual assistance:

which involves active co-operation between the Mother country and the Dominions, appears to be ripe for discussion and forms therefore the subject of the present paper.

To strike an appealing note for dominion ears, this was amended to read that the principle of mutual assistance:

which involves *a reciprocity of obligation on the part of the Dominions to render if need be, in proportion to their resources, the same assistance to the United Kingdom as they expect the United Kingdom to render to them*, appears to be ripe for discussion and forms therefore the subject of the present paper.⁵⁵

The introduction then went to explain that, if the principle of mutual assistance were to 'become operative', then 'the constitution of a part at least of these [dominion] defence forces must be so adjusted as to permit of their employment in war outside as well as within their respective Dominions, thus enabling them when necessary to fulfil an Imperial as well as a local purpose'.

While Part I of the paper introduced the principle of mutual assistance in terms of a reciprocal obligation, it was essentially the icing on a cake that was made to a different recipe. The paper was actually designed to extract a commitment from the dominions to provide expeditionary forces for imperial operations in Europe. The prospect that a British force would be sent to the dominions for defence purposes was not even contemplated by the War Office staff.

Part II of the paper mapped out the real imperial objective which lay at the heart of the whole proposal. It stated that modern operations of war could not be 'left to the chance of the moment' but demanded 'earnest consideration and careful elaboration in peace', if they were to be successful. This problem assumed special importance for the British empire because 'these operations necessitate combined movements by sea and land, involving the accurate solution of large problems of time and space'. The dispatch of 'a comparatively small expeditionary force from the United Kingdom' to deal with 'a minor campaign against a semi-civilized enemy' demanded 'care and attention'. So 'how much more essential must this care and attention be before engaging in a struggle with a Great Power or combination of Powers'. The underlying bias in the idea that had inspired the paper then briefly appeared. 'It is to meet such a contingency,' the paper continued, 'that the assistance of the Dominions will be needed.'⁵⁶ Other parts of the paper only

⁵⁵ Untitled draft paper, manuscript amendment, Part I, p. 1, WO 106/43, Public Record Office. Note: Emphasis added.

⁵⁶ Untitled draft paper, with manuscript amendments, Part II, p. 3, WO 106/43, Public Record Office.

confirmed this bias. For example, Part IV opened with the words: 'The four great Dominions *to which the Mother Country will naturally turn* in time of emergency ...'.⁵⁷ When they came to read these words, some dominion representatives quickly detected that the notion of reciprocity spelt out in the introduction had assumed a one-way application in the body of the paper. Indeed the paper was silent on the likelihood of British assistance to the dominions.

The paper attempted to obscure its underlying bias by being vague and avoiding details, as the Committee of Imperial Defence had prescribed. Some attempts were made to provide examples of the principle of mutual assistance in application, but, in the absence of any strategic context, they remained unconvincing. Members of the empire were so scattered throughout the world, the paper suggested, that they could easily provide each other with support. The result would be that 'Australian forces might not be able to reach Egypt in time to take part in a decisive action, but reinforcements from India might do so provided they started in anticipation of relief by troops coming from the Commonwealth'. It was concluded that each of the dominions had 'certain natural spheres of action', but no attempt was made to define them. Reflecting the prescription to avoid specifics, the penultimate paragraph opened with the words:

It does not seem advisable to discuss in any detail these spheres of action here and now. They will more properly form the subject of consideration by the Imperial and local General Staffs whose function it is to discuss such detailed matters.

Thus, it was proposed that Wilson's original plan be implemented by the network of the Imperial General Staff, thereby hopefully escaping close scrutiny within the dominions. It was a proposal to use Haldane's 'permeating organisation' to attain imperial unity without 'the necessity of asking [the dominions] to subject [their] local troops to any manner of control or centralised command'. The final paragraph again reflected the paper's bias:

When these spheres of action are settled, and the various contingencies in which *help from the Dominions will be forthcoming* have been laid down, it will be for the Dominion Governments to state the amount and the nature of military assistance they are prepared to offer

When this happened—'and the sooner it is reached the better'—'the details of organisation, command, armament, equipment, and training' were to be handed over to the Imperial General Staff and local General Staffs and 'definite plans of action elaborated'.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Untitled draft paper, with manuscript amendment, Part IV, p. 8, WO 106/43, Public Record Office. Note: Emphasis added.

⁵⁸ Untitled draft paper, with manuscript amendment, Part IV, pp. 8-10, WO 106/43, Public Record Office. Note: Emphasis added.

The War Office paper was registered as Committee of Imperial Defence Paper No. 80-C with the title of 'The Co-operation of the Military Forces of the Empire'. It became the basis of discussion at two secret meetings in the War Office during the Imperial Conference of 1911.

The Secret War Office Meetings: Cooperation of the Military Forces of the Empire

The first War Office meeting, which included senior British Army officers and dominion representatives, was convened at 10.30 am on Wednesday 18 June. Its proceedings were conducted in secrecy. The meeting was chaired by General Sir William Nicholson.

Opening the meeting, Nicholson explained that Pearce, who was to represent Australia, was unexpectedly absent. It was 'rather inconvenient to have questions affecting Australia discussed when the representative of Australia is not here,' Nicholson remarked. It was even more inconvenient, it seems, when the paper to be discussed was written as a result of 'a question asked by the Government of Australia and it deals with the co-operation of the military forces of the Empire'.⁵⁹

Sir Frederick Borden, the Canadian Minister of Militia and Defence, was obviously disappointed that Pearce had failed to attend the meeting and suggested that the discussion on military cooperation be postponed. Furthermore, Borden had only received his copy of the paper on the previous evening and the Canadian Prime Minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier still had not seen the paper.⁶⁰

Nicholson agreed to postpone discussion to another meeting, but other members then started to make comments about the paper. Mr Malan from South Africa said that it was vague. It seemed to him that the crux of the paper concerned the 'natural spheres of action' and 'certain possible theatres of war' relating to each of the dominions. 'Has the General Staff got something more in detail about this,' Malan asked, 'as to what the possible spheres of war or theatres of war for the different Dominions would be, because it seems to me that the whole thing hinges upon that?'⁶¹

Responding to Malan's question, Nicholson said South Africa's 'special sphere of action would be a local sphere'. But when South Africa was strong

⁵⁹ Proceedings of a Committee of the Imperial Conference convened to discuss Questions of Defence (Military) at the War Office, Proof, Confidential, Wednesday, June 14th, pp. 1-2, WO 106/43, Public Record Office.

⁶⁰ Proceedings of a Committee of the Imperial Conference convened to discuss Questions of Defence (Military) at the War Office, Proof, Confidential, Wednesday, June 14th, p. 2, WO 106/43, Public Record Office.

⁶¹ Proceedings of a Committee of the Imperial Conference convened to discuss Questions of Defence (Military) at the War Office, Proof, Confidential, Wednesday, June 14th, p. 2, WO 106/43, Public Record Office.

enough it might be able 'to offer assistance ... in the direction of Egypt and the Mediterranean, and, possibly, also it might offer assistance in the event of trouble in India ... ,' the chairman explained.⁶²

Nicholson then attempted to close the discussion for the time being, but Borden now had something to say. 'This Paper seems to me to look at the question from the point of view of the Central Government receiving assistance from the Dominions,' the Canadian commented. In other words, Borden thought the paper was biased. He went on to say that there was another point of view to be considered. Canada should develop its military forces in such a way that 'in the event of trouble in Canada where our sphere of action would be in Canadian territory ... we should be in a better position to be assisted by Imperial troops'. This was the Canadian point of view and, if it were acknowledged in the paper, it would 'impress people there more'. 'It seems to me,' Borden advised, 'that if you develop that point it would make the whole idea more acceptable, *if it is to be made public at all*, to the people of the other Dominions.'⁶³ Proposals for imperial operations for dominion troops were obviously as controversial in Canada as they were in Australia.

From the outset, Borden's criticism of the paper was aimed directly at its bias, but he argued his case in terms of making the paper more suitable for domestic consumption within the dominions. The reason why Borden took this line was undoubtedly because the Canadian representatives were under 'the shadow of an impending general election', as Pearce would subsequently comment.⁶⁴

Nicholson could hardly have misunderstood what Borden had said, but he sought clarification. Did Borden mean that 'the more efficient and the stronger the forces of Canada ... the less assistance will they need from the Imperial Government'?⁶⁵

'No,' said Borden. He then repeated the substance of his original comment. Canada should organise its forces in such a way that 'co-operation, or amalgamation if you like, could take place immediately with the British Army in the event of its being necessary to send troops from Great Britain to fight in

⁶² Proceedings of a Committee of the Imperial Conference convened to discuss Questions of Defence (Military) at the War Office, Proof, Confidential, Wednesday, June 14th, pp. 2-3, WO 106/43, Public Record Office.

⁶³ Proceedings of a Committee of the Imperial Conference convened to discuss Questions of Defence (Military) at the War Office, Proof, Confidential, Wednesday, June 14th, p. 3, WO 106/43, Public Record Office. Note: Emphasis added.

⁶⁴ Pearce, *Carpenter to Cabinet*, p. 85.

⁶⁵ Proceedings of a Committee of the Imperial Conference convened to discuss Questions of Defence (Military) at the War Office, Proof, Confidential, Wednesday, June 14th, p. 3, WO 106/43, Public Record Office.

Canada'. 'That point has not been mentioned,' said Borden, 'and I think it is important.'⁶⁶

What the Canadian had said was clear: the paper was biased. It discussed troops coming from the dominions but it did not deal with the reciprocal issue of Britain's sending military assistance to the dominions.

Nicholson attempted to side-step the thrust of Borden's argument by simply ignoring it. Instead of addressing the issue of Britain's sending military assistance to the dominions, Nicholson focused on Borden's reference to organisational unity. He said that the advantages of uniformity in organisation had long-since been accepted, so there was no need to mention them again in the paper.⁶⁷

Not to be diverted so easily, Borden pressed on. The Canadian read aloud from the paper's introduction that:

'... the constitution of a part at least of these [dominion] defence forces must be so adjusted as to permit of their employment in war outside as well as within their respective Dominions'—and this is the point of it—'thus enabling them when necessary to fulfil an Imperial as well as a local purpose'.

'I would have put in there that to do that would be to great advantage of the dominions,' said Borden, 'because it will enable them to be assisted much more readily and easily by an army from the British Isles themselves.' Revealing his concern for domestic reaction to the proposal for military cooperation, Borden then explained that he was 'looking at this matter as a politician' and he thought that 'such a statement would have some effect'.⁶⁸ 'Yes' responded Nicholson, no longer able to avoid the issue, but also realising that Borden, at least, was signalling that he accepted the proposal and only wanted it made more palatable for his Canadian constituency. Nicholson agreed to have the paper modified in accordance with the point that Borden was making, even suggesting himself how to amend the paper to satisfy Borden's concerns. Further discussion of the matter was adjourned to the next meeting when the amended paper would be discussed. The meeting then proceeded to discuss other issues.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Proceedings of a Committee of the Imperial Conference convened to discuss Questions of Defence (Military) at the War Office, Proof, Confidential, Wednesday, June 14th, p. 3, WO 106/43, Public Record Office.

⁶⁷ Proceedings of a Committee of the Imperial Conference convened to discuss Questions of Defence (Military) at the War Office, Proof, Confidential, Wednesday, June 14th, p. 3, WO 106/43, Public Record Office.

⁶⁸ Proceedings of a Committee of the Imperial Conference convened to discuss Questions of Defence (Military) at the War Office, Proof, Confidential, Wednesday, June 14th, p. 3, WO 106/43, Public Record Office.

⁶⁹ Proceedings of a Committee of the Imperial Conference convened to discuss Questions of Defence (Military) at the War Office, Proof, Confidential, Wednesday, June 14th, pp. 3-9, WO 106/43, Public Record Office.

Pearce eventually arrived at the meeting in the War Office. He had thought that the meeting was to start at 11.30 am rather than 10.30 am. The Australian took his seat at the table. When an opportunity arose towards the end of the meeting, Pearce raised the subject of 'the co-operation of the military forces of the Empire'. He had not been present when Borden had raised his objections, but, unlike Borden, Pearce initially expressed no reservations, either political or personal. The Australian indicated that the proposal for military cooperation would be endorsed by the Fisher government. 'I would like to say our force is raised entirely for local defence as this memorandum points out,' the Australian Minister for Defence started, 'but at the same time we recognise that in any considerable war a large number of our troops would volunteer for service oversea[s] if necessary' Accordingly, Pearce thought that 'we ought to have a considered view of the Imperial General Staff given to us as to what our natural sphere of operations is, and what Australia would be expected to do, so that our General Staff could mature their plans'. He pointed out that planning for certain contingencies would not commit Australia to take that action, but by doing the planning 'we would not have to commence at the last moment to improvise our schemes, but would have our schemes for mobilisation and so on ready'.⁷⁰

Borden joined in, commenting that what Pearce proposed seemed 'obvious' to him, 'in fact so obvious that [he] would hardly have thought it necessary to consider it'. 'The whole idea of the General Staff is to do that very thing,' Borden observed.⁷¹

Pearce continued to explain that he wanted to hear the views of the Imperial Staff because the 'Local General Staff' might have different views. Pearce wanted an indication of 'what might be required, so our Local Staffs could be directed to give consideration to what the Imperial Staff have said on these points as to all our local spheres'.⁷²

'I am entirely in accord with that view myself,' added Borden, 'I do not know how it is in Australia but our political conditions in Canada, perhaps, make it undesirable that such matters should be discussed openly.'⁷³

⁷⁰ Proceedings of a Committee of the Imperial Conference convened to discuss Questions of Defence (Military) at the War Office, Proof, Confidential, Wednesday, June 14th, p. 12, WO 106/43, Public Record Office.

⁷¹ Proceedings of a Committee of the Imperial Conference convened to discuss Questions of Defence (Military) at the War Office, Proof, Confidential, Wednesday, June 14th, pp. 12-3, WO 106/43, Public Record Office.

⁷² Proceedings of a Committee of the Imperial Conference convened to discuss Questions of Defence (Military) at the War Office, Proof, Confidential, Wednesday, June 14th, p. 13, WO 106/43, Public Record Office.

⁷³ Proceedings of a Committee of the Imperial Conference convened to discuss Questions of Defence (Military) at the War Office, Proof, Confidential, Wednesday, June 14th, p. 13, WO 106/43, Public Record Office.

'I do not propose that either,' said Pearce.⁷⁴

'These things get out,' Borden added. The Canadian then explained that it seemed to him that 'the very essence, the principal idea' behind the establishment of the Imperial General Staff was 'to prepare schemes not only for local defence of the different Dominions but a general scheme in which the Dominions might take part ...'. But dominion participation would not be possible, he said, 'unless some scheme were prepared in advance'. 'I supposed that was the work which the General Staff would do *quietly, carefully, and thoroughly, but about which little or nothing would be said.*'⁷⁵

Pearce understood exactly what Borden had said. When 'we sent this question forward, as Sir William Nicholson knows', Pearce explained, it was for discussion 'with the War Office', and we 'never intended them to be subjects for discussion at the General Conference'. 'We were asking them to tell us what in Australia they considered to be our sphere of action,' he explained, but he did not want it to be a subject for public discussion in Australia.⁷⁶

With Nicholson's agreement, Borden then made a brief comment for the benefit of Pearce outlining the comments he had made at the start of the meeting when Pearce had been absent. Borden said that, if Pearce read the paper carefully, he would perhaps detect its imperial bias. However, the paper should present the view that it was 'of greater importance to the different Dominions to have their forces developed and organised on lines which would enable the Imperial Central Army to assist them and enable them to co-operate', Borden explained. 'So that if there was a war on Australian or Canadian territory, we should at once, without difficulty, receive the assistance of the Imperial army and be able to co-operate or amalgamate with that army at once.' The paper that had been presented to them 'would rather indicate' that it had been written 'solely from the point of view of the Mother Country, which would not go down quite so well with the Dominions if it got out'.⁷⁷

'Yes,' said Nicholson, 'I see the point and we will have it modified.'

⁷⁴ Proceedings of a Committee of the Imperial Conference convened to discuss Questions of Defence (Military) at the War Office, Proof, Confidential, Wednesday, June 14th, p. 13, WO 106/43, Public Record Office.

⁷⁵ Proceedings of a Committee of the Imperial Conference convened to discuss Questions of Defence (Military) at the War Office, Proof, Confidential, Wednesday, June 14th, p. 13, WO 106/43, Public Record Office. Note: Emphasis added.

⁷⁶ Proceedings of a Committee of the Imperial Conference convened to discuss Questions of Defence (Military) at the War Office, Proof, Confidential, Wednesday, June 14th, p. 13, WO 106/43, Public Record Office.

⁷⁷ Proceedings of a Committee of the Imperial Conference convened to discuss Questions of Defence (Military) at the War Office, Proof, Confidential, Wednesday, June 14th, p. 13, WO 106/43, Public Record Office.

And that was the end of the matter for that day.⁷⁸

The paper was modified before the next meeting. The title was changed from 'The Co-operation of the Military Forces of the Empire' to 'The Desirability of Such a General Uniformity of Organisation Throughout the Military Forces of the Empire as May Facilitate their Rendering Mutual Support and Assistance'. The original introduction had said that the principle of mutual assistance meant that:

... the constitution of a part at least of these [dominion] defence forces must be so adjusted as to permit of their employment in war outside as well as within their respective Dominions, thus enabling them when necessary to fulfil an Imperial as well as a local purpose.

These words were deleted.

In their place, new words were inserted which explained that the principle of mutual assistance meant that:

... the organisation of these defence forces must be adjusted as to permit of their harmonious co-operation in war with the regular forces or with each other *either within or outside* their respective Dominions.

Where the original document had said that:

The four great Dominions to which the Mother Country will naturally turn in time of emergency

It now said:

The four great Dominions *which will turn to the Mother Country*, or to which the Mother Country may turn for help in time of emergency

The concluding comment in the last paragraph originally read:

When these spheres of action are settled, and the various contingencies in which help from the Dominions will be forthcoming have been laid down

⁷⁸ Proceedings of a Committee of the Imperial Conference convened to discuss Questions of Defence (Military) at the War Office, Proof, Confidential, Wednesday, June 14th, p. 14, WO 106/43, Public Record Office.

It now read:

When these spheres of action are settled, and the various contingencies in which help *to or from* the Dominions may be required are laid down⁷⁹

Therefore, the final paper was a document which incorporated the amendments required by Borden: it established a balanced agreement of mutual obligation. Yet the paper had quite a different intent, as we know from its development in the War Office. The paper was designed to bring the dominions into making a commitment to military preparation for operations in Europe. It was never intended to be a mutual support agreement. The possibility that British troops would actually be deployed on operations in the dominions was never entertained by the War Office staff officers. Why should they plan for such a contingency? Not only was the defence of the United Kingdom the first priority of British strategists, but they knew that the likelihood that the dominions would be attacked was extremely low. Such an outcome was not a realistic contingency requiring serious planning and preparation. However, when it appeared that he had Borden's and Pearce's cooperation, Nicholson amended the document without question because he realised that Pearce and Borden seemed to be about to deliver exactly what he and other British strategists wanted.

The amended paper was discussed at a meeting convened in the War Office on Saturday 17 June. Borden announced at the outset that Pearce wanted to make a statement. The Australian Minister for Defence began by explaining why the Australian Government had raised the question of military cooperation for discussion at the Imperial Conference. He said that, while Australia held 'strongly to the view' that its military forces were maintained for 'local defence' and that the Australian Government was constrained by the *Defence Act* which prevented its sending any soldiers overseas, it was known that, 'in the event of any serious war', a considerable number of men would volunteer for overseas service. 'As that is so,' he continued,

it seemed to us that our local General Staff ought to know what is in the minds of the Imperial General Staff as regards what use such forces should be put to so that they could be employed in their various Dominions in arranging schemes for mobilisation or transportation of the troops, and so that they would be guided in the preparation of such a scheme by the general idea that the Imperial Staff had as to the use to which such troops could be put.

That was the reason why the question of cooperation had been raised by the Australian Government, Pearce explained. The vague nature of the War Office paper, Pearce thought, was attributable to uncertainty in the minds of

⁷⁹ Memorandum by the General Staff, Secret, No. 80-C, 'The Co-operation of the Military Forces of the Empire', 12 May 1911, &, No. 80-C Revised, 'The Desirability of Such a General Uniformity of Organisation Throughout the Military Forces of the Empire as May Facilitate their Rendering Mutual Support and Assistance', 12 May 1911, WO 106/43, Public Record Office. Note: Emphasis added.

the British staff so he sought Nicholson's opinion on whether the paper provided sufficient basis for adequate planning by dominion staffs.⁸⁰

Borden was now more guarded than Pearce. Laurier, the Canadian Prime Minister, would have read the paper by this stage and perhaps he had counselled Borden to be cautious. Borden pointed out that at the previous conferences in 1907 and 1909 agreement had been reached on military standardisation and commitments, although unspecified, had been given on the general defence of the empire. 'Now it seems to me that that is enough, and I should very much prefer, as far as I am concerned, that we should not do anything more,' Borden emphasised. 'I think that is sufficient.' But Pearce persisted, not wanting to drop the subject. Since those conferences Australia also had taken action to standardise organisations and equipment, he said. He wanted to know if the other dominions were taking similar action. But Pearce added that now 'there is something more than that to be done'. He went on to call for 'the preparation of schemes of mobilisation by the local sections of the Imperial General Staff in order to enable that uniformity to be availed of'.⁸¹ Thus Pearce committed Australia to prepare for future imperial undertakings without question, breaking previously untouched ground in Australia's relationship with Britain. With the cooperation of the other dominion representatives Pearce wanted to secure 'a general understanding—there does not need to be any resolution—that the local section of the Imperial General Staff are to work along those lines'. This statement satisfied Borden. It gave the Canadian the opportunity to avoid giving an unconditional undertaking, leaving the initiative in dominion hands.⁸²

Whether Nicholson was forewarned of Pearce's remarkable offer is not clear, but the Chief of the Imperial General Staff was not about to let the matter die. He said that, just as Britain had a scheme for local defence and 'a scheme (without saying where they are going to) of mobilising an Expeditionary Force to be used, we do not specify where or for what purpose', he now understood that the Australian Government would do likewise. Nicholson pressed Pearce so that there could be no dispute about the nature of the agreement about to be reached. His understanding of Pearce's position was that, although the Australian forces were raised and maintained for local defence, Pearce had decided that they would in future also have an expeditionary role. Nicholson understood that the Australian Minister for Defence would therefore return to Australia and direct his general staff to 'work out a scheme so that, if the Government of Australia so desires, they will have preparations made for mobilising a certain proportion of their force to proceed to certain ports for oversea[s] action'. Where the force would be used, Nicholson noted, 'we

⁸⁰ Questions of Defence (Military) - 2nd Day, 17 June 1911, p. 20, WO 106/43, Public Record Office; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 239.

⁸¹ Questions of Defence (Military) - 2nd Day, 17 June 1911, pp. 20-1, WO 106/43, Public Record Office; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 240.

⁸² Questions of Defence (Military) - 2nd Day, 17 June 1911, p. 21, WO 106/43, Public Record Office; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 240.

cannot tell', although he had 'some idea where, it might be used'. Nicholson wanted the new development to be shrouded in secrecy, obviously because he did not want to arouse opposition in the dominions. 'It is much better to hold our tongues about it and not say anything according to the old Persian proverb "What two ears only hear, God himself does not know,"' Nicholson suggested. 'Therefore in those matters we do not say anything and nobody else knows about it.' To confirm Nicholson's understanding of the agreement, Pearce acknowledged that the Australian general staff would send the plans to the War Office when completed.⁸³ This was exactly what Nicholson wanted.

'I think it much better *we should do this thing quietly* without any paper on the subject,' Nicholson suggested, 'because I am sure in some of the Dominions it might be better not to say anything about preparations.'

'It gives mischievous people an opportunity to talk,' Borden jumped in.

'I quite recognise that,' Pearce acknowledged joining the conspiracy, 'and I suppose we have as large a proportion of that kind of people in Australia as there are anywhere else.'

Pearce agreed that information concerning the undertaking should be suppressed. Nicholson then suggested that the War Office paper on 'Mutual Support and Assistance' be withdrawn. 'Suppressed or withdrawn—I would hope so,' Borden concurred. Pearce agreed but insisted that the paper was being withdrawn '[o]n the understanding that it will be acted upon'.⁸⁴

These exchanges, indicative of the kind of clandestine imperial scheming which had gone on for decades, now heralded a new element: the dominion politicians specifically responsible for defence were participants for the first time. No report of these discussions was ever published in the proceedings of the Imperial Conference of 1911. However, proof copies of the transcript of the secret War Office meetings were printed and one copy was eventually placed on a Director of Military Operations file in the War Office. This was Nicholson's own copy. A staff officer noted on the file that 'it is rather hard to get hold of, and we have certainly received no other copy of it ...'.⁸⁵

I discovered this copy while undertaking research on records relating to War Office planning in preparation for World War I. There was no public knowledge of the War Office meetings and Pearce's undertaking until publication of my book *An Army for a Nation* in 1992.

⁸³ *ibid.*, p. 22; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 241.

⁸⁴ *ibid.* Note: Emphasis added.

⁸⁵ C.M. Maynard, Major, M.O. 1(C) to M.O. 1 (Colonel), 12 January 1912, WO 106/43, Public Record Office.

'We should do this thing quietly'

PART III

Australia Prepares for War: 1911–1914

In 1951, Pearce published his autobiography *Carpenter to Cabinet* in which he gave an account of his visit to London with Prime Minister Andrew Fisher and External Affairs Minister Egerton Batchelor to attend the Imperial Conference of 1911. Pearce wrote that not long after their arrival in London, the Australian representatives attended a special briefing on the subject of security. 'We were invited to a secret session with Ministers only present,' Pearce recalled. 'There we listened to an address by the Foreign Secretary [Sir Edward Grey] in which he gave us all the confidential information from Europe as to what was going on.' Grey's address made such an impression on those present that, according to Pearce's recollection some forty years later, the three Australians—Fisher, Batchelor and Pearce—came 'unanimously to the opinion that a European war was inevitable and that *it would probably come in 1915 when the preparations that Germany was making would be complete*'. 'We determined,' Pearce wrote, 'to push on with all possible speed our defence programme [sic].'¹

Pearce could only have been referring to the meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence that he attended with Fisher and Batchelor and the representatives from the other dominions. Yet my earlier analysis of the discussions at that meeting reveals that it was not a German threat that attracted the attention of the Australian representatives at all. The country that concerned the Australian representatives was Japan. Japan was the nation that Australians feared most because they believed that Japan posed a direct threat to their national security. This was why Deakin initiated national defence developments in 1907 and why the Fisher Labor government gave the developments new impetus in 1911. And it was this fear that British strategists exploited in their successful attempt to gain an Australian commitment to continue with their defence initiatives because they believed that, ultimately, Australian troops, organised, trained and equipped to British standards, would be deployed on imperial operations. In his address on the international situation, Grey had only hinted at the possibility of war in Europe against Germany probably because he did not want to alarm the dominion representatives, driving them away in fear. Fear of Japanese aggression—an outcome which would make the dominions look to Britain for assistance—provided the means of drawing Australia and New Zealand into an imperial commitment.

Behind closed doors in the conference room in London, Fisher had disclosed that he was preparing to defend Australia from Japanese aggression. This was the outcome that British strategists had wanted, not because they thought Japan was a threat to Australian security but because they anticipated that

¹ G.F. Pearce, *Carpenter to Cabinet*, Hutchison, London, 1951, pp. 81-2; J.L. Mordike, *An Army for a Nation: A history of Australian military developments 1880-1914*, Allen & Unwin, North Sydney, 1992, p. 239. Note: Emphasis added.

Australia's defence preparations would ultimately be directed to a European war when the time came. But Britain required something more. Any reading of Australian history for the period would acknowledge that some Australians would volunteer to fight with Britain in any war. They had done so in the Sudan Campaign and the Boer War and they would do it again. Australian politicians of all persuasions before and after Federation had stated that this would be the case. The British authorities had made the same assessment. But would there be sufficient men ready as the crisis broke? Would there be sufficient equipment? The British authorities knew that warfare against a developed industrialised nation like Germany would require a large land force equipped with *matériel* of British pattern and trained on British doctrine. Early mobilisation planning to send the force overseas was critical, and this required commitment by dominion governments. This was the step that the dominions had never been prepared to take, but, in 1911, fear of Japanese aggression against Australia pushed Fisher, Pearce and Batchelor to take that step. They gave the commitment that Australia would begin planning for the provision of an expeditionary force for an imperial operation, wherever that might be. The Australian promise of assistance in time of crisis had been transformed into a commitment which would entail comprehensive military preparations and the development of mobilisation plans. This was not for the primary reason that Germany posed a threat to Australian security but for the reason that it demonstrated that Australia was a willing participant in imperial defence. It was an act designed to give substance to Australian expectations of reciprocal support in time of need, a time when Japan would move against Australia. By demonstrating their commitment to the principle of mutual support by making preparations for an expeditionary force, Fisher, Pearce and Batchelor sought relief from their anxieties about what they believed to be an uncertain future in the South-West Pacific, but they could not share this with the Australian people. It is evident that they could not even share it with all members of their own government. They well knew that public knowledge of what they were planning would produce a heated controversy with inevitable political outcomes. As General Sir William Nicholson had suggested at the War Office meeting in June 1911, it was something that they had to do quietly.

Pearce never publicly disclosed the undertaking to make preparations for an expeditionary force, not only before the outbreak of World War I but throughout his long life. This deception permitted a distortion of the truth, a distortion that became deeply embedded in the collective consciousness of the Australian nation. A myth was created. In this way the truth became unrecognisable and lies became truth. When Pearce wrote in 1951 that, as a result of Sir Edward Grey's briefing on the situation in Europe, the Australian representatives at the Imperial Conference came to the conclusion that war with Germany was inevitable and that it would probably come in 1915, it was accepted without question. It is precisely what Australians who read Pearce's book would have expected to have happened. But it was not the truth. Fear of Japan was the primary reason for the defence preparations in Australia in the period 1911 to 1914, preparations that included the provision of an expeditionary force for operations in Europe.

On completion of the Imperial Conference, Pearce and Batchelor did not return directly to Australia by ship. Instead, they took the trans-Siberian railway from West to East. In his autobiography Pearce recorded that he and Batchelor were 'anxious to return through Russia, Siberia and the Far East'. While he did not spell it out to his readers, the purpose for the route taken on his return trip was to visit Japan. In view of what took place at the conference in London, the reason is clear. But, unaware of this, readers of his book are left with the impression that it was a private trip for which 'Mr Fisher stipulated that we must pay the extra expenses ourselves'. He wrote simply that the trip was 'most interesting and educational'. His experiences had been 'elsewhere recorded', so he saw no need to repeat them in his book.² Australians in the 1950s would not have understood his special interest in Japan at that time, but, for Australians in 1911, this was not the case.

Soon after his return to Australia, Pearce spoke at a function organised by the Brunswick Political Labor Council to raise funds for charity—a state election was drawing near. Pearce told the audience, which had gathered at the Oxford Theatre in Brunswick, that '[u]ntil he had visited Europe he had been of the opinion that Australia was an appanage of England'. But he was now convinced that 'Australia's future would be more largely affected by the nations to the north than by any group of European powers'. He spoke as a man who was well qualified in such matters for he explained that he had visited Japan during his return to Australia from the London conference. While Europe was a month's journey away, he told the audience, it took only eight days to travel from Japan to Australia. Therefore, while the aims of the Labor Party were peaceful, he believed preparations for war were urgent.³ Thus Pearce raised the possibility of a threat from Japan as a reason for war preparations but, at the same time, attempted to dispel any fears that Australian security would be threatened by events in Europe. He really did fear an attack from Japan, but did not tell Australians that he was also preparing for expeditionary operations in Europe. This was kept quiet.

A week earlier, Pearce had defended the government from a charge by the *Age* newspaper that it was not spending sufficient money to build drill halls for the compulsory military trainees who had started training on 1 July that year under the universal military training scheme. In response, Pearce said that, rather than provide buildings, the government 'was endeavouring to grapple seriously with the question of providing the war equipment necessary for our troops'. 'It is essential that those who would have to fight in case of war should have the means wherewith to take the field,' he explained. Therefore, when it came to a choice between drill halls and war equipment, the Minister for Defence claimed that 'there can be only one answer as to which is to take first place'.⁴

² Pearce, *Carpenter to Cabinet*, p. 94; Bundle 4, Item 7, AWM 3/2222, *Pearce Papers*, Australian War Memorial.

³ Mordike, *An Army for Nation*, pp. 241-2.

⁴ *ibid.*

Commencing in 1911, the Fisher Labor government authorised significant increases in defence expenditure by approving a special vote of £600,000 in addition to the normal budget allocation—that is £600,000 more than had been already approved in the program for the introduction of universal military training. In his autobiography, Pearce wrote that this extra funding was required for 'special war material'. For example, £200,000 was expended on the acquisition of '18-pounder field-guns and equipment', Pearce explained in his book, 'and when war came the first division was fully equipped with up-to-date artillery'.⁵ In addition, the overall defence program included the acquisition and installation of machinery in the small arms factory at Lithgow. The cordite factory at Maribyrnong was developed as a small munitions plant. Woollen mills were established at Geelong and clothing factories were brought into production at South Melbourne. A harness and saddlery factory was also established at Clifton Hill. In June, the Royal Military College, Duntroon, was opened and the training of officer cadets from Australia and New Zealand commenced.⁶ The genesis of these developments was the universal military training scheme that had been first outlined to the Australian people by Prime Minister Alfred Deakin in December 1907. At that time, Deakin had left no doubt that the defence of Australia was the object of these developments. Japan was perceived to be the major threat to Australian security. 'We are at the very beginning of a period of development which I trust will be as thorough and complete as that of Japan,' Deakin had announced. Further emphasising the national thrust of his proposals, Deakin had stated that his government was 'not preparing for any expeditionary adventures outside Australia'.⁷ Four years later in 1911, when the Fisher Labor government began to develop the defence capabilities initiated by Deakin for the purpose of the defence of Australia, it had quietly added the expeditionary option.

The production of war *matériel* had to start immediately because of the lead times involved. Professor Ernest Scott, author of the volume of the official history dealing with 'Australia During the War', quoted Pearce as saying more than once: 'You cannot make an army by merely clapping your hands.'⁸ This was the reason for the renewed emphasis on the development of government defence factories in 1911. Another important issue was mobilisation planning and a start was also made on this. In October 1912, Prime Minister Andrew Fisher and Prime Minister William Massey of New Zealand agreed with a recommendation by Pearce that a conference should be organised where the Australian Chief of the General Staff, Brigadier Joseph Gordon, and his New Zealand counterpart, Major General Alexander Godley, could discuss cooperative defence arrangements. Godley was a British Army officer whom Charles Bean, Australia's official historian for World War I, would describe as

⁵ Pearce, *Carpenter to Cabinet*, p. 98.

⁶ Mordike, *An Army for Nation*, p. 242.

⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 186-8.

⁸ E. Scott, 'Australia During the War', *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914 - 1918*, Vol. XI, Angus & Robertson Ltd., Sydney, 1936, p. 239.

being 'lent' to New Zealand 'by the British Government to inaugurate Lord Kitchener's defence scheme' in that country.⁹

The conference was conducted behind closed doors in November 1912. Pearce attended the opening meeting. In his introductory remarks, Pearce asked the two senior military officers to suggest ways of overcoming the statutory limitations in both countries that denied their governments the power to send troops overseas unless the troops had volunteered for such service. Volunteers could only be called when war broke out. This concerned Pearce because, as he explained, it made it very difficult for a government 'to promise a definite quota to augment an Imperial Expeditionary force'. He also appreciated the controversial nature of the subject, telling the senior military officers present that their recommendations 'must not do violence to the feelings of the people which had originated the restrictive clauses'. This probably was not a concession based on respect for the opinions of 'the people' concerned but a recognition of the fact that any such action would produce a deeply divisive political storm. As a further precaution, he instructed the conference secretary, Major Brudenell White, to keep notes on plans to establish an Australian force for overseas service most strictly to himself.

The major recommendation of the two-day conference was that Australia and New Zealand should prepare plans to form a composite expeditionary force enlisted on a voluntary basis. The force would be either a division of some 18,000 men, with Australia supplying about two-thirds of its strength, or a mounted force of four brigades, three being Australian. Gordon and Godley recommended that detailed planning should be undertaken by the general staffs of Australia and New Zealand on the basis of direct correspondence because they were integral elements of the Imperial General Staff. It was also recommended that New Zealand should procure its arms, ammunition and equipment from Australia's newly established munitions factories.¹⁰

The cloak of secrecy covering the preparations of the expeditionary force ensured that there was no public outcry, but there was opposition to the extent of defence activity. The significant increase in defence expenditure by the Fisher government created tensions within the Labor movement. For example, in August 1912, the Labor caucus considered a motion that 'the expenditure on defence is excessive and should be reduced next Financial Year by at least £1 million'.¹¹ The amount of money being spent on defence had become a contentious issue. In his book, Pearce commented that before the war the 'Fisher Labour [sic] government was by no means free from internal troubles'. 'There was growing up then in the party that section whose narrow and sectional outlook was eventually to destroy the party,' he wrote. Unmistakably,

⁹ C.E.W. Bean, 'The Story of ANZAC', *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-18*, Vol. I, Angus & Robertson Ltd., Sydney, 1933, p. 27.

¹⁰ Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, pp. 244-5.

¹¹ Minutes of Meeting held Aug. 22nd/1912, in P. Weller (ed.), *Caucus Minutes 1901-1949*, Vol. I 1901-1917, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1975, p. 305-6.

Pearce was referring to the subsequent Labor split over conscription during World War I which brought about the disintegration of the Hughes Labor government. 'The Defence programme [sic], and particularly Universal Military Training, was most objectionable to this small but aggressive section,' Pearce wrote.¹² Yet it was not only sections of the Labor Party that had objections. Members of the public were also becoming concerned about increased defence activity.

According to Pearce, one hotbed of opposition existed in the mining centre of Broken Hill. In January 1912, Pearce was asked 'to explain and defend' the government's defence policy at a public meeting in the Broken Hill town hall. It turned out to be a rowdy meeting and Pearce recalled that he was confronted by '[q]uite a number of the audience [who] jumped to their feet and commenced firing questions at me'. After calm was restored by the mayor, Pearce gave an address lasting half an hour. Yet, when the audience was given the opportunity to ask questions, there were further rowdy scenes. Pearce wrote that one person who took issue with him spoke in 'broken English' and another was 'a foreigner whose English was even more unintelligible than that of the first man'. 'This interest by foreigners in the defence of Australia now began to arouse the somewhat latent patriotism of this British audience,' Pearce continued. Stirred to action, 'the audience jumped to its feet and sang "God Save the King" with tremendous enthusiasm'. Following this there were loud cheers when 'a number of the foreign gentlemen were unceremoniously bundled out of the hall'.¹³

This account of the Broken Hill meeting was published in his book some forty years after the meeting took place. However, in his book Pearce provided no indication of what he had said during his address. Readers are left to draw their own conclusions. This was undoubtedly a calculated move by Pearce that was intended—even in the 1950s—to keep his tracks covered. Yet his speech was reported by the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 13 January 1912 and it reveals what Pearce had said.

'Japan to-day,' Pearce had told his Broken Hill audience,

was an arsenal from beginning to end—for what? For international arbitration? No! For something in the future. Every country in the world bar this favoured land had felt the curse of war upon its shores. What guarantee had they that peace would continue. Australians must be prepared to fight for a white Australia. That time might come when men must be trained for it. No white man worthy of that name could refrain from defending his country and his womenfolk against the Asiatic. Industrially and politically the Asiatic was far behind Australia and men who were Australians did not or should not want to be brought down to

¹² Pearce, *Carpenter to Cabinet*, pp. 104-5.

¹³ *ibid.*, pp. 105-6.

the level of the Asiatics. Australian compulsory training was a trifle compared to the autocratic conscription of European countries.¹⁴

As he had done in the Oxford Theatre in Brunswick some four months earlier, Pearce did not mention that he was also making plans and preparations for a European war, which is what readers of his book probably assumed was the subject of his address in Broken Hill. Again he played on Australia's fear of Asia to provide the cover for the government's preparations for an expeditionary force.

The amount of money being spent on defence became a national issue. 'During 1912,' Pearce wrote in his book, 'the Liberal Press began a campaign against alleged "Defence extravagance".' Pearce admitted that 'mounting Defence expenditure ... could not be denied'. 'Defence expenditure had mounted rapidly owing to the expanding of the Defence services by the adoption of a more vigorous and real Defence policy,' he continued. According to Pearce, when the election was held in May 1913, 'it was largely fought on this issue'.¹⁵ The Fisher Labor government lost the election by the narrowest possible margin of one seat. The new Liberal Party government was led by Joseph Cook.

In August 1913, the Australian general staff reviewed proof copies of secret plans which they had compiled under the title of the General Scheme of Defence. As these plans were officially classified as 'Secret', their contents were not disclosed to the public. Apart from the Minister for Defence and the most senior public servants in his department, the only people who had access to the General Scheme of Defence were the senior staff officers in Army and district headquarters. Included in the plans were the results of a considerable amount of staff work which detailed the steps and procedures for Australia to go to war. Information on internal transport arrangements, the location of telegraphic stations, climate and demography were included along with comprehensive military plans covering organisations, dispositions and staff responsibilities. The strength of the military forces required by Australia, the staff calculated in the section dealing with strategic considerations, must not be less than 100,000 men. A proportion of these men was required to secure naval bases and harbours as well as 'to maintain public confidence and national credit'. 'The remainder,' the plans continued, 'must be left free to form a field army capable of acting as a mobile expeditionary force.' A defensive attitude of 'a purely passive nature' was, according to the general staff document, 'the most ineffectual method of employing an army as an instrument of policy'. Therefore, 'the whole of the Australian Military Forces are ... being uniformly enrolled, organized [sic], and equipped in order that any subdivision thereof may be able to assume the offensive'.¹⁶ The staff considered that the term 'Expeditionary Force' could be used instead of 'Field

¹⁴ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 Jan 1912, Sydney, p. 15.

¹⁵ Pearce, *Carpenter to Cabinet*, p. 98.

¹⁶ Chapter I, 2. Strategic Considerations, p. 5, paras. VI, VII, IX, AWM 113, MH1-11 General Scheme of Defence 1913, Australian War Memorial; Mordike, *An Army for Nation*, pp. 243-4.

Army', because the defence of Australia might necessarily mean overseas service and they anticipated that the statutory restrictions on deployment of the force would be lifted. In the meantime, they were considering ways in which a 'special expeditionary force for employment in an Imperial undertaking' could be raised by voluntary enlistment.¹⁷

Britain's long-cherished imperial goals were now formally incorporated in the secret plans of the Australian general staff. Governor-General Lord Denman had already informed the British authorities of this development some six months earlier. In a dispatch of 4 March 1913, Denman had advised the Secretary of State for the Colonies that '[a] Commonwealth Defence Scheme is in an advanced state of preparation, and will be forwarded hereafter'. The scheme was aimed at the protection of districts, Denman advised, and 'in addition ... the formation of a mobile Field Army which has advisedly been termed an Expeditionary Force'. The extent of the Australian landmass and limited land transport meant that it was 'not possible to foresee either the right time or place for the concentration, in time of war, of troops allotted to the Field Army [that is, the expeditionary force]'. Therefore, in the first instance, the troops would be concentrated in their respective military districts throughout Australia. 'Additional Plans of Concentration are being prepared to facilitate the transference of Field Army troops [the expeditionary force] from their District places of concentration to alternative points on the east and south coasts of Australia,' Denman explained. These plans were to be included in the Commonwealth Defence Scheme, Denman had informed the Colonial Secretary.¹⁸

The Australian officer who played a key role in planning for the mobilisation of the expeditionary force was Brudenell White. In 1913 he wrote to the former British GOC of the Australian military forces, Major General Sir Edward Hutton, informing him of progress in the universal military training scheme which, at that time, had been operating for some two years. According to Brudenell White, the attitude of the young soldiers was 'quite good' and they had performed 'wonderfully well' at their recent camps. The training of young officers had 'greatly improved' and they had greater knowledge of tactical principles, devoting themselves to study 'much harder than would be readily believed!' Brudenell White was encouraged by what he saw. 'What has been done in this country, in a military sense, is really quite wonderful,' White enthused to Hutton. 'The Labour [sic] Party certainly deserve great credit for it. At the back of everything too there is a remarkably strong vein of Imperialism.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, Chapter II, Organization, II-War, para (V), p. 21.

¹⁸ Denman, Governor-General, to Secretary of State for Colonies, 4 March 1913, CRS B197, file no. 1856/4/214, Australian Archives; Oversea Defence Committee secret memorandum No. 637 R, 'Australia: Defence Schemes revised to July 1912', 10 October 1913, Appendix I – Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia to Secretary of State [for the Colonies], 4 March 1913, Cab 9/16, Public Record Office.

Could you see the Imperialism evident in much that we have in hand now you would be quite astonished.¹⁹

The Fisher government had set in train the key developments that prepared Australia for World War I. Yet, as the internal problems within the Labor Party had already indicated, the financial cost was a matter for concern. Defence expenditure had more than quadrupled within a period of five years. By 1913-14, defence expenditure constituted 31 per cent of the Federal budget, amounting to a *per capita* expenditure of 19s 5d. At the same time Britain was spending £1 13s 9d *per capita*. But, as Meaney pointed out:

Britain, because of its determination to maintain its naval superiority, led the world in defence expenditure. Australia spent absolutely and *per capita* more on defence than European countries of similar population and wealth, such as Sweden and Holland, and much more than any other Dominion.²⁰

When a senior British officer visited Australia in mid-1914, he quickly realised the extent of the financial burden. General Sir Ian Hamilton had been invited to inspect and report on the state of Australia's military forces, which the Australian authorities had informed him were being developed on the basis of Kitchener's report of February 1910. The implementation of Kitchener's recommendations were proceeding without delay, Hamilton had been informed, 'as urged by the Committee of Imperial Defence in their paper 78C of 4th May, 1911'. This was the paper that had recommended that Australia should implement Kitchener's recommendations expeditiously because of the possibility of Japanese aggression against Australia.²¹

After his arrival in Australia in 1914, Hamilton, who had been appointed as the Inspector General Overseas Forces, reported back to Prime Minister Asquith on the extent of defence expenditure in Australia. In a private letter, Hamilton informed Asquith that the universal training scheme and naval developments were proving to be very expensive. Hamilton explained that 'Lord Kitchener's scheme is costing just about double what that great man estimated it would cost'. 'Whether Lord K. really believed in his own figures,' Hamilton continued, 'or whether he simply meant to lure the Australians on to commit themselves to his plan, is more than I can say.'²²

¹⁹ White to Hutton, 4 March 1913, *Hutton Papers*, Vol. XII Add.Ms.50089, ff. 114-7, British Library; Mordike, *An Army for Nation*, pp. 245-7.

²⁰ N.K. Meaney, *The Search for Security in the Pacific, 1901-14*, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1976, p. 261.

²¹ Petherbridge, Secretary Department of Defence, to General Sir I.S.M. Hamilton, 30 October 1913, Hamilton 5/1/60, Hamilton Papers, Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College London. Note: Emphasis added.

²² Hamilton to Asquith, 5 April 1914, Hamilton 5/1/87, Hamilton Papers, Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College London.

Asquith could only have been pleased by what Hamilton told him. It confirmed that the strategy adopted by the Committee of Imperial Defence in 1911, while under his leadership, had achieved its objective. Fear of Japan had provided the stimulus for Australia to implement costly developments in preparation for war. Hamilton soon provided Asquith with further evidence of the effectiveness of the British strategy and, at the same time, illustrated why Nicholson, with Pearce's and Fisher's complicity, had suggested that preparation of an expeditionary force had to be done quietly. In mid-April 1914—just four months before the outbreak of war—Hamilton wrote another letter to Asquith from Australia informing him that, although he had 'been outspoken all through' his official report on the state of the Australian military forces, he had 'felt bound by some very common sense considerations to draw in [his] horns as regards one particular subject'. Hamilton proceeded to inform the British prime minister that:

I had fully meant when I came out here to urge upon the Commonwealth the importance of having some small section of their army earmarked, in peace, for expeditionary Imperial service. But I see now I could defeat my own object and weaken the effect of the whole of the rest of my report were I to touch that string. The whole vital force of the country, i.e. the rank and file of its people, are standing firm together against any such proposition. Play the tune, an Australian army for Australia, and they dance to any extent. Not otherwise. Australia—not Empire—is then the string we must harp on. That is to say, we must encourage them to do what they will do willingly and lavishly, namely, pay up for safeguarding a White Australia from the cursed Jap. Then, when the time comes, and when we are fighting for our lives in India or elsewhere, I for one am confident that the whole military force of Australia will be freely at our disposal. But tell the Australian that he must contribute to a force which may have to fight outside the areas washed by the Pacific, and he at once begins to talk of tribute.

Therefore I am acting on the principle of encouraging Australia to make her land forces as efficient and strong as possible to meet dangers threatening their hearths and homes and am talking as little about overseas Imperial needs as possible.²³

On 30 June 1914, just weeks before the outbreak of hostilities, the *Age* published an article under the heading of the 'Moloch of Militarism'. The newspaper, which had long championed the cause of a national defence strategy for Australia, complained bitterly that 'Australia has become one of the most heavily burdened nations of the earth from the point of view of military preparation'. The young nation was making the error of following the arms race between Britain, France and Germany. 'But the jealousies and mutual distrust that have turned Europe into an armed camp need not inspire Australia to similar insanity,' the report continued. The newspaper published

²³ Hamilton to Asquith, 14 April 1914, Hamilton 5/1/87, Hamilton Papers, Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College London.

figures which showed that Australia's defence expenditure per head of population had increased to the extent that it had surpassed Germany and was third in the world behind Britain and France. This was a deplorable outcome because, as the *Age* claimed, there was 'no need for the Commonwealth to enter upon hysterical measures for the repulsion of an enemy who does not exist'. The newspaper believed that there was only a 'remote chance' that Australia would be invaded and, if it were, the enemy would probably be an Asian nation and should be stopped in the sea gap that surrounded Australia. According to its assessment, Australia should be spending more on its navy, but it lamented that it was evident that the military forces were receiving the lion's share of the defence budget.²⁴

Ironically, the very edition of the *Age* which commented disapprovingly of Australia's excessive defence expenditure and its misdirection to military forces also published the news that Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife had been assassinated in Sarajevo, the capital of the province of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The kindling that would ignite the European furnace in August was alight.

On 30 July, the Australian Government received a cable from the British government warning of the danger of war. A second cable came on 2 August requesting the Australian Government to take precautionary measures at defended ports. This telegram precipitated the implementation of mobilisation plans in Australia. Next day the Australian Government cabled the British government with an offer to dispatch 'an expeditionary force of 20,000 men of any suggested composition to any destination desired by the Home Government, the force to be at the disposal of the Home Government'. Bean recorded that Brudenell White, who was then acting-Chief of the Australian General Staff and who 'was well acquainted with the British staff', 'had fears that the latter would prefer the Australian force to be organised in small formations—such as infantry brigades ...—so that each Australian unit could be separated from the others and incorporated in a British division'. According to Bean, White believed that the British staff harboured doubts about the efficiency of Australian organisation and the standard of Australian discipline. Furthermore, 'the British Staff would probably mistrust the capacity of senior Australian officers to command a large body of men in the field'.²⁵

In response to the Australian offer, the British Army Council suggested that the composition of the expeditionary force should be two infantry brigades, one light horse brigade, and one field artillery brigade. This confirmed White's fears. The senior British staff officers expected that Australia would provide separate brigades to be allocated to British divisions. It will be recalled that this was also the type of force that Kitchener had intended his scheme would provide. Bean wrote that the Chief of the Australian General Staff, Brigadier-General William Throsby Bridges who was 'actuated by pure Australian nationalism', then intervened and informed the British authorities that

²⁴ *Age*, 30 June 1914, Melbourne, p. 6.

²⁵ Bean, 'The Story of ANZAC', pp. 23-30.

Australia's offer would be organised as an infantry division and one brigade of light horse. This was accepted.²⁶

The question that remained for the Australian Government was 'whether the expeditionary force could be formed from the existing regiments and battalions of the Australian Army', as Bean put it. This was the question that had been in the background as the compulsory military training scheme had been developed and finally implemented. It was this issue that had obviously concerned Pearce in 1912 when he had convened the meeting between Gordon and Godley, directing their attention to this very issue. One difficulty was that the *Defence Act* did not empower the Australian Government to dispatch military forces out of the country. Of course, a government could simply amend this legislation, especially at the outbreak of war. Indeed the staff officers who had drawn up the General Defence Scheme in 1913 had anticipated that the legal restrictions on the deployment of military forces would be lifted, enabling the government to dispatch an element of the Australian Military Forces as an expeditionary force for service overseas.

Bean discussed the question of sending elements of the existing force overseas in his history, but he did not mention the subject of amending the legislation. He pointed out that, as the compulsory military training scheme had only commenced in 1911, it had not yet reached maturity. As a result the rank and file of the Australian forces consisted 'almost entirely of boys from 19 to 21' but was commanded by older and more experienced officers and non-commissioned officers. Bean wrote that if 'the system had reached its full development (which would not have been until 1919) the expeditionary force could more easily have been constituted upon the basis of the existing army'. 'But as Australia could not send away an army of boys, however willing,' Bean continued, 'and as large numbers were needed in a short time, it was decided to raise a separate army specially for this service.'²⁷ There is no need to doubt the truth of this comment, even though any number of youths were soon dispatched to fight if they volunteered. However, there was another factor that Bean did not mention. It was undoubtedly at the forefront of the Government's thinking when this issue was considered. Australia was in the throes of an election campaign and the Government was probably not prepared to take the decisive step of compelling the existing Australian forces to serve overseas. As the eventual saga over conscription would demonstrate, compulsory overseas service in war was—and would remain—a controversial issue in Australia. The forces that Australia sent to the war had to be constituted by volunteers.

Sufficient men came forward in the first weeks to form an infantry division and a light horse brigade. But was it an overwhelming response? In his book *The ANZAC Illusion*, Eric Andrews questioned historical accounts which describe the response to the outbreak of war as a 'rush to enlist'. He pointed out that, by the end of 1914, only 6.4% of eligible men had volunteered to fight.

²⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 30-1.

²⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 33-4.

'Historians who make much of the "rush to enlist" might therefore do better to ask why 93.6 per cent of eligibles did not enlist,' Andrews wrote.²⁸ His argument gains strength when you read in Bean's history that the 'popular idea was that the war would last for possibly five or six months, by which time the allies would be across the Rhine'. 'Indeed,' Bean wrote, 'more than one officer during the voyage studied Baedeker's guidebook to the Rhine Valley, and wondered if he would be in time to reach the scene before the war was over.'²⁹

However the response is interpreted, the fact that men volunteered, as the British strategists had long realised, was only the first step. A complex range of equipment and stores were required for a modern army. Mobilisation plans also had to be available to turn the raw recruit into a member of a military organisation ready for deployment. This is where British efforts at the Imperial Conference of 1911 to ensure that the dominions were ready for war finally paid off. The preparations, which had begun three years earlier, meant that these volunteers could be recruited, organised, equipped and ready for departure in the remarkably short time of six weeks. In the volume of the official history which dealt with 'Australia During the War', its author, Professor Ernest Scott, recorded that:

*unless forethought had been shown in regard to the provision of equipment, it would have been very difficult if not impossible in 1914 to fit out the Australian Imperial Force as efficiently as was done by means of the work of the Government factories ... An army must be clothed, armed, and provisioned. Equipment was the first necessity for making the Australian troops fit to take to the field, and the fitness secured was due very largely to the work of these factories.*³⁰

Similarly, in the first volume of the official history, Bean reported the common belief that 'no troops ever went to the front more generously equipped than this first Australian contingent'.³¹

The ships carrying components of this first Australian contingent steamed to Albany in Western Australia where they were joined by ships carrying a New Zealand contingent. On 1 November, the convoy sailed for distant lands. Included in the armed escort were ships from the Royal Navy and the Royal Australian Navy. Two days later the convoy met up with another two transport ships carrying more recruits from South Australia and Western Australia. They were accompanied by their escort, the *Ibuki* from the Japanese Navy. The Anglo-Japanese alliance had been renewed in 1911 as planned. According to its terms, Japan remained an ally of Britain throughout the war. The irony was

²⁸ Eric Andrews, *The ANZAC Illusion: Anglo-Australian Relations during World War I*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993, p. 45.

²⁹ Bean, 'The Story of ANZAC', pp. 34-5.

³⁰ Scott, 'Australia During the War', p. 239. Note: Emphasis added.

³¹ Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 247.

that it was fear of a Japanese threat to Australian security that had promoted the comprehensive military preparations in Australia, preparations that were now directed to imperial operations as British strategists had planned.

PART IV

Dealing with the Myth: Searching for the Truth about Australia's Entry to World War I

Introductory Comments

The great deception surrounding Australia's preparations for World War I were first dealt with in my 1992 book *An Army for a Nation*. The historical interpretations in that book remain relevant, but what has been added in this monograph is the important role of Australia's fear of Japan as a catalyst for Australia's preparation for, and involvement in, the subsequent war in Europe. The fulcrum for both studies is the knowledge that Australia's preparations for an expeditionary force—the Australian Imperial Force that lies at the very centre of Australia's national lore—were made under a cloak of secrecy. It is an important piece of knowledge that demands explanation and understanding. But, since publication of *An Army for a Nation*, the issue has been either ignored or, to use Greg Lockhart's expression, 'elided' by Australian military historians.¹ Such is the power of the national myth that surrounds Australia's entry to World War I that the vital secrecy issue has failed to attract interest. Yet to miss this issue is to miss the opportunity to understand the national dimension of Australia's past and also to understand the ways in which the imperial dimension has been overstated. Defence, perhaps more than any other portfolio of the new Commonwealth, provided a clear expression of national interests. To use an aphorism that has recently gained currency, on the question of the security of their nation, Australians did make decisions based on their geography rather than their history. Security is a fundamental imperative for the development and survival of the nation-state and it is directly determined by the geo-strategic circumstances of that state. Australia was no exception.

In *An Army for a Nation*, I explained the development of the Australian military forces and defence policy against the background of 'a contest between two ideologies', British imperialism and Australian nationalism. In the first instance, this was a frame of reference against which to analyse and assess evidence that remains from past defence developments; it provided a context for exposition and argument and, however simplistically, imposed a degree of analytical rigour on this area of study. Moreover, it established a basis for understanding the distortions in the work of historians who have emphasised the British imperial dimension of Australia's past at the expense of the national dimension. The targets, as I explained in the introduction to *An Army for a Nation*, were historians like Dr Charles Bean (Australia's official historian for

¹ Greg Lockhart, "'We're So Alone': Two Versions of the Void in Australian Military History', *Australian Historical Studies*, No. 120, October 2002, p. 391.

World War I), those who have dismissed the possibility of independent action inherent in nationalist thinking and 'have portrayed Australia's commitment to World War I as a coalescence of imperialism and nationalism, as an act of unified resolve'.²

In his account of Australia's entry to World War I, Bean carefully located Australian nationalism within a matrix of British imperialism, thus writing it off as an independent body of thought. As a result of my research, I took issue with this interpretation, arguing:

Australia's defence history was a contest between the two ideologies [of imperialism and nationalism], a contest which resulted in victory for imperialists after a long and tenacious campaign when Australia entered the war. But, by believing accounts like Bean's authorised version, we have failed to recognise this and have tended to emphasise the imperial aspects of our early defence history while the independent, national aspects remain largely unrecognised and unreported.³

From our vantage point today, 'the effusive display of imperial fervour at the outbreak of World War I' has acted to cloud the view and distort the interpretation of events leading up to the war. Indeed, it does seem that August 1914 provided irrefutable evidence that to be Australian was to be British, as it is sometimes stated. It appears that there was unanimity of support in Australia for participation in the war with Britain. Where was the opposition? 'Was this critical hour the time when the Australian would dream of deserting [Britain]?' Bean asked. The question required no direct answer. It seems there was no opposition and Bean wrote that 'the attitude of Australia was from the first *perfectly definite and united*'. But, as I argued in *An Army for a Nation*, national unity was constructed, in part, around misleading information—a deception—which was designed to ensure that a cloak of secrecy shrouded the Australian Government's preparations for the war from June 1911 to August 1914. And this deception had nothing to do with national security: it was a deliberate strategy designed to mislead certain sections of the Australian community. Of course, this is not to say that there was not a strong attachment to Britain in Australia. In *An Army for a Nation*, I stated the obvious fact that 'Britain was assured of substantial support from Australians'. But, in the light of evidence discovered by my research, it is equally clear that the decision was taken to thwart the development of opposition through secrecy and obfuscation, by denying people 'an issue around which an alternative view could rally'.⁴ In this way Australia's entry into World War I was made smooth and straight. But Australia's passage through the war was

² J.L. Mordike, *An Army for a Nation: A history of Australian military developments 1880-1914*, Allen & Unwin, North Sydney, 1992, p. xviii.

³ *ibid.*, p. xviii.

⁴ Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. xix; C.E.W. Bean, 'The Story of ANZAC', *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-18*, Vol. I, Angus & Robertson Ltd., Sydney, 1933, pp. 16-7. Note: Emphasis added.

anything but plain sailing, as the bitter campaigns surrounding the conscription referenda demonstrated. Indeed, the purpose of the original deception was to avoid just such an outcome in the years before the outbreak of war, effectively locking the Australian nation into Imperial defence strategies.

As I pointed out in *An Army For a Nation*, Bean's account emphasised unity and loyalty to Britain in Australia's response to the outbreak of war, but he also acknowledged the important influence of Australian nationalism on defence developments before the war. It was an influence that Bean could not ignore. Unlike today's historians, Bean's work was read by people who had actually lived through the experiences he was describing. There were certain issues that Bean had to acknowledge and nationalism was one of them. 'For at least a decade before the war ... ,' Bean wrote in the official history, '[Australians] had tended to act as a nation of themselves.' The Australian character had displayed a 'marked independence', Bean continued, but, as stated earlier, he was only prepared to go so far on this point. While acknowledging the existence of independent thought in the Australian, Bean asserted that this had been 'fostered in him by Great Britain'.⁵

Of course, Bean's comment is wrong, at least as far as defence issues are concerned. In these matters, Britain acted to ensure that Australia was anything but independent. Yet, having portrayed Australian nationalism as a subset of British imperialism, Bean was left with no alternative but to describe Australian defence developments in terms that Australians of that time believed to be true. Australia had 'provided only for the chance of an enemy raiding or invading her shores', the official historian stated. This was an emphatic statement, apparently leaving no room for prior planning and preparation of an expeditionary force. Bean was quite specific. 'In 1913 New Zealand agreed to a definite scheme for an expeditionary force,' Bean wrote. But New Zealand stood alone in this undertaking because, as Bean put it, 'in other dominions *ministers were nervous of the opposition which the mere suggestion might create among their respective people*'. Of course, this comment by Bean sits neatly with Sir Frederick Borden's and Pearce's responses to General Sir William Nicholson's suggestion in the War Office in June 1911. The exchange bears repetition. Nicholson had suggested that 'we should do this thing quietly ... because I am sure that in some of the Dominions it might be better not to say anything about preparations [for mobilising an expeditionary force]'. 'It gives mischievous people an opportunity to talk,' Borden had added. 'I quite recognise that,' Pearce had agreed, 'and I suppose we have as large a proportion of that kind of people in Australia as there are anywhere else' Prior planning for an expeditionary force was a sensitive issue, hence the need for secrecy. Bean's account simply acknowledged this reality. Indeed, Bean went further. The official historian reported that Major Brudenell White, a staff officer at Army Headquarters, 'had asked to be allowed to draw up a *provisional plan* on which such a force could at any time be quickly organised, if Parliament ever

⁵ Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. xix; Bean, 'The Story of ANZAC', p. 27. Note: Emphasis added.

so required, *but the permission was withheld*'. The official historian stated: 'A plan for meeting the enemy in the enemy's own country—or, indeed, anywhere except within Australia—officially had no existence.'⁶

Was Bean aware that there were prior preparations and plans to provide an expeditionary force? It seems that there is no irrefutable evidence to support such a charge, but, in view of his description of certain developments before the war, it is likely that he was. As I revealed in *An Army for a Nation*, if there were no plans for an expeditionary force—not even a 'provisional plan'—as Bean emphatically tells us, how did Bean explain the speed with which the first contingent for the war was raised and equipped?

When war broke out—Bean said it came with 'extreme suddenness', falling 'upon the British people out of a clear sky'—there was, according to Bean, 'one piece of forethought' which provided the basis for raising the expeditionary force for Europe. These plans, Bean explained, were not those for an expeditionary force but took the form of contingency plans that had been developed after Pearce had authorised planning for the possibility of joint military action with New Zealand. Work had commenced in 1912 when Major General Godley, New Zealand's Chief of the General Staff, in Bean's words, '*had chanced*' to visit Australia. Bean wrote that Brigadier Gordon, the Australian Chief of the General Staff, had suggested to Pearce that the visit presented an opportunity to make joint plans '*in case either were invaded*'. Pearce agreed and Major Brudenell White developed contingency plans to raise and organise a military force, but Bean claimed that it was for '*co-operation between Australia and New Zealand only*'. Yet, as discussed earlier in this monograph, the official records of this combined planning conference include Pearce's opening instructions to Gordon and Godley. The two senior officers were instructed to examine options for sending troops overseas, because restrictions in the Australian *Defence Act* made it very difficult for a government 'to promise a definite quota to augment an *Imperial Expeditionary force*'. Therefore, Bean's account of the meeting on this vital point is not only wrong but also misleading. The official historian described the results of the planning conference in the context of a military plan to defend Australia and New Zealand from invasion. As a result of this planning, Bean recorded that 'Major White could guarantee that it was possible to raise and organise for service abroad a volunteer force of some 12,000 men of all arms, and to have them ready for sailing within six weeks'. And not only were mobilisation plans ready but there was more than enough equipment and clothing for the force. But this too was more the result of good fortune than careful preparation, according to Bean. 'During the previous three years,' the official historian wrote, 'the Government had laid in large quantities of army stores *against the chance* of a sudden mobilization [sic].'⁷

⁶ Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, pp. xv-xvi, pp. 239-41; Bean, 'The Story of ANZAC', p. 27. Note: Emphasis added.

⁷ Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. xvi; Bean, 'The Story of ANZAC', p. 11, pp. 27-8, 63. Note: Emphasis added.

It is hardly possible that Bean did not know about the early planning and preparations for war and that he knew exactly what he was doing in choosing his words for his history. But did he have any real alternative?

Australian society had been traumatised by the war. The bitter conscription referenda of 1916 and 1917 had divided the country and brought about the Labor split and the destruction of the Labor government. It was here that Pearce and Prime Minister Hughes had parted company with the Labor Party along with twenty-three other pro-conscriptionist members of the government. They had joined forces with the Liberal opposition, forming the Nationalist government. Pearce had become the Minister for Defence and was still in that office when Bean's history was published. Any disclosure within Bean's official history that revealed that Pearce had deliberately misled Australians about preparations for Australia's entry to the war would not only have been embarrassing to the government and to Pearce but would have given political opponents ammunition with which to launch an attack. There were 60,000 Australians dead in foreign lands, the country was beset by war weariness and society was bitterly polarised over the conscription saga. This was a potentially volatile mixture that could have led to further social disruption and political unrest. A state-sponsored history could not ask the difficult questions.

I embarked on a study of Australian military forces from the late colonial period to the outbreak of World War I many years ago. In doing so, I became increasingly aware of the central role played in defence developments by national considerations, a reality that I had been largely unaware of at the outset. I had expected to find that Australia ordered its military forces in concert with Britain without question. This was not the case. This revelation made me wonder what had happened in August 1914. How could the strength of national influence over several decades be reconciled with total embrace of the imperial position at the outbreak of war? Bean's account did not seem completely plausible. He claimed that Australians were independent and nationalistic, but beneath all this they were simply British. And what about the speed of preparation? I came to believe that there must have been some development before World War I where an Australian Government effectively overturned its national position and entered into an agreement with the British authorities to make preparations for the war in Europe. Where would a researcher find evidence of this? I made a list of likely sources among the records held by the Public Record Office in London. The records of the Director of Military Operations and Plans at the War Office were high on the list. This led to the discovery of the transcript of the critical War Office meetings of June 1911 where Pearce revealed his intention to make plans for an expeditionary force on his return to Australia. This was the vital piece of knowledge that established the context for what took place. It also undermined the story Bean presented in the official history. As I wrote in *An Army for a Nation*, Bean's account is:

a noble story of readiness for service and sacrifice that is imbedded deeply in the Australian consciousness. It is a story which has been

revered by successive generations of Australians and, indeed, emulated by many. But it is a story in need of revision.⁸

Effectively, Bean's account of defence developments before the war was a cover-up.

My interpretation of these important events has not gone unchallenged. One response to *An Army for a Nation* was a critique by Craig Wilcox which was published by the *Australian Journal of Politics and History* with the enthusiastic support of that journal's editors.⁹ They heralded Wilcox's critique with the accolade that:

By examining the work of John Mordike, *An Army for a Nation: A history of Australian Military Developments 1880-1914*, Wilcox shows first that "political correctness" in Australian historiography produces avoidably unbalanced scholarship, and secondly that defence policy prior to 1914 was indeed rational and prudent.¹⁰

Strong words indeed. It was an indictment of my scholarship, a clear attack, at least in my judgment, on my competence as a professional historian. But were these charges justified? What conclusions would a reasonable mind reach in adjudicating between my interpretation and Wilcox's interpretation of these past events in Australian history? And it should be emphasised that these events are central elements of Australia's national identity; they are worthy of analysis and understanding. A response to Wilcox's critique is warranted, not only to defend my scholarship but, importantly, to point out where I believe Wilcox to be in error in his interpretation of the history of Australian military developments before World War I.

Wilcox's Critique

In his critique, Wilcox rejected my work. 'While admiring Mordike's research,' he wrote, 'I cannot accept his argument.' Wilcox offered what he called 'a counter-argument to the assumptions and interpretation of *An Army For a Nation*'. However, as this monograph shows, my interpretation was based on documentary evidence which was not addressed in Wilcox's critique.

To deal with Wilcox's comments on my work requires a review of the historical ground already covered in Part I of this monograph. In doing so, some key developments are dealt with in more detail, providing a better understanding of the ways in which national and imperial priorities shaped the development of the Australian military forces.

⁸ Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. xvii.

⁹ C. Wilcox, 'Relinquishing the Past: John Mordike's *An Army for a Nation*', *The Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 1993, Volume 40. No. 1, pp. 52-65.

¹⁰ See editorial comment on cover of *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. 40, No. 1, 1993.

In writing his critique of *An Army for a Nation*, Wilcox cited none of the primary source evidence that is held in repositories in the United Kingdom. By contrast my work drew extensively on these primary source records. It was a work which set out explicitly to examine imperial and national priorities for Australian defence developments, described as the imperial–national dialectic at the heart of Australian defence developments. Research on an extensive range of British and Australian primary source records was absolutely essential.

Wilcox produced no analysis derived from research on British Colonial Office files and correspondence. There was no analysis of British War Office files and correspondence. There was no analysis of the private papers of key British figures that played important roles in the development of imperial defence policy and its implementation and there was no analysis of British cabinet documents. There was no analysis even of the range of official memoranda of the Colonial Defence Committee, the Overseas Defence Committee or the Committee of Imperial Defence, nor the minutes of any of their meetings. These committees were the power-houses of advice on defence developments throughout the empire. They made the strategic assessments for Australia. They made the recommendations on organisation and training, on equipment, on disciplinary codes and on defence legislation. A comprehensive understanding of the contents of these documents is essential for historians of imperial and colonial defence developments for the period. But only once did Wilcox cite one memorandum by the Committee of Imperial Defence. This memorandum, on the subject of a defence scheme for Australia, was formulated in 1906 and sent to the Australian Government where it was published in Australian Parliamentary Papers. In the absence of sustained research on key British documents, Wilcox referred readers to *The Cambridge History of the British Empire* for '[t]he best concise account of the military system of the British empire from 1815 to 1914' and to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* of 1911 for 'the most concise account of reforms to Britain's Militia'.¹¹ No doubt these secondary sources are to some degree informative, but they are not a substitute for original primary source records.

Wilcox misrepresented *An Army for a Nation* on a number of occasions. Some of this misreporting concerned events which were key points in my argument; others were of a minor nature. Consider the way in which Wilcox reported an episode in the period 1893–1896, when the colonial government of New South Wales appointed Colonel Edward Hutton, a British Army officer, to command its military forces.

Hutton as Commandant in New South Wales: 1893–1896

As a self-governing colony, like the other Australian colonies, New South Wales raised and maintained its defence forces for its own defence under its own control. The colonial governments often appointed British officers as commandants of their forces, but, as commanders, they were responsible only

¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 62–3, f/ns 14, 28.

to their respective colonial governments. Referring to my account of Hutton's appointment, Wilcox wrote:

Mordike tells of a *conversation* between Hutton and an *imperial official* before the general left for Australia which indicates that he was instructed to work towards federating the Australian military forces and to encourage loyalty to the empire, for if war broke out Australia would be asked to occupy nearby Pacific Islands.¹²

The '*imperial official*' referred to by Wilcox was Robert Meade who, as the Permanent Undersecretary for the Colonies in the Colonial Office, was the most senior civil servant dealing with colonial matters and the '*conversation*' was Hutton's official Colonial Office briefing before taking up his appointment in New South Wales. And, as I reported in *An Army for a Nation*, Meade was not acting on his own volition. Sir George Clarke, secretary of the Colonial Defence Committee, had advised Meade before Hutton was appointed that 'the time is ripe for a manner of military federation [in Australia]—with encouragement from you it might become an accomplished fact—great results will follow'. Clarke had added: 'the Imperial government ought to be represented by a sailor and soldier who know'.¹³

In the briefing, a copy of which survives in Hutton's private papers, Meade told Hutton that he was expected to reform the military forces in the colony of New South Wales. Hutton was also to use his influence to work towards the development of a federated military force in cooperation with the other Australian colonies and to encourage imperial loyalty. Yet there was a very important issue to be dealt with in relation to an Australian federated force: who was to control it? Because Meade believed that a federated military force could be developed before the Australian colonies consummated a political federation, he told Hutton that the federal force would 'act under the direction of a Council of Federal Defence, or under the command of a chief nominated by such a Council'.¹⁴ Meade had a specific contingency in mind which was sparked by the threatened clash of British and French imperial interests in Southeast Asia. Meade told Hutton that, in the event of Britain going to war with France, 'the Australian Colonies might be called upon to take the offensive in the Pacific and to provide an Expeditionary Force for the occupation of New Caledonia or other such possessions in those seas'.

In this particular episode, Wilcox told us nothing more about what transpired when Meade briefed Hutton, even though I spelt this out in *An Army for a Nation*. Meade gave Hutton a clear warning about the difficulty he would face in implementing his instructions. The Permanent Undersecretary for the Colonies told Hutton that, although there was strong imperial sentiment in

¹² *ibid.*, pp. 55-6. Note: Emphasis added.

¹³ Sir George Clarke, quoted by L. Trainor, in 'British Imperial Defence Policy', *Historical Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 54, April 1970, p. 210; Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 22.

¹⁴ Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 23.

Australia, it was also apparent that there was an increasing 'party of opposition' towards the imperial attachment in each colony. This was especially evident in what Meade called the 'rising' generation. Therefore, Meade advised Hutton 'to omit as a *question of practical imperial policy*, any reference to the possibility of Colonial Forces being necessarily expected to take part in Imperial military operations'.¹⁵

So what happened during Hutton's period of command in the Australian colony?

When Hutton arrived in New South Wales in May 1893, he found that Meade's assessment of the situation was accurate; the difficulties Hutton faced were extensively documented in *An Army for a Nation*. The *Bulletin*, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Newcastle Morning Herald* all published articles which reacted adversely to rumours that the imperial authorities were planning for the deployment of colonial forces on imperial operations. For example, the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported in August 1893 that any suggestion that:

one or the whole of the colonies might send a contingent to India or some other place where Great Britain might require assistance, was scouted by many as being of a character that would not be tolerated in the colony.¹⁶

Likewise, the Premier of the Colony of New South Wales, Sir George Dibbs, who was also the Minister for Defence, commented that Hutton 'has come here with a lot of strong Imperial opinions, and he has to learn that things in the colony have to be done in a far different style'.¹⁷

In the face of public and political opinion, all Hutton could do was to attempt to follow Meade's instructions and prepare the groundwork for an Australian military force to participate in imperial operations, while keeping this objective under cover. At Hutton's suggestion, a conference of the colonial commandants was convened in 1894 to discuss a federal defence scheme for Australia. It had been drafted by Hutton.

Hutton's draft scheme included a provision for a field force. It was really an expeditionary force but Hutton did not describe it as such. The draft scheme also included a clause which would have allowed the field force to be moved by sea to defend or seize any strategic position considered to be in Australian interests, thereby establishing a basis for fulfilling Meade's instructions for an Australian force 'to take the offensive in the Pacific' by occupying 'New Caledonia or other such possessions in those seas'. During the conference, the Victorian commandant, who would have realised that 'Australian interests'

¹⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 23-4. Note: Emphasis added.

¹⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 31-3.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 34-5.

were to be interpreted liberally, commented that the provision for service overseas was 'very far reaching in its meaning and might provoke much hostile criticism'. The provision was clearly out of step with colonial realities and, therefore, the commandants had to remove it from the proposed scheme. The depth of public and political feeling on this issue could not be disregarded. The federal agreement drawn up by the commandants as a result of their discussions on Hutton's submission restricted military service to Australia and adjacent waters.

When the Colonial Defence Committee in London examined the commandants' proposed federal defence agreement for the Australian colonies, it was concerned that it failed to satisfy imperial requirements. The secretary of the committee, Captain Nathan, wrote to Hutton complaining that 'this special point had been rather obliterated by the references to the action of the Federal Forces being confined to Australia or Tasmania'. In reply, Hutton explained to Nathan that he had kept the imperial objective in mind all the time but he had '*never dared to hint publicly*' at it. There was 'a strong, and very blatant party, who denounce the Soudan [sic] Contingent and any idea of helping the old country', Hutton explained. 'It would do more harm than good just now to court this opposition considering the condition of party politics,' he warned.¹⁸

Another colonial commandants' conference was convened in January 1896 to deal with the federal defence scheme. In the resulting proposed federal defence agreement, the clause which restricted military service to Australia remained intact. It was still a sensitive issue that could not be discussed openly. But, in an attempt to circumvent this restriction, and obviously to allay the Colonial Defence Committee's concern about the restricted area of deployment, the commandants redefined Australia—not within the body of the agreement but within the interpretation clauses—as the area within the latitudes 0° to 50°S and longitudes 110°E to 180°E. This area included not only Australia, but also New Zealand, New Caledonia, the New Hebrides and New Guinea, as well as parts of Borneo and Java. It was a desperate move that would not have survived examination within the colonies. But this indirect approach to the imperial objective was all to no avail. The draft federal defence agreement was referred to a meeting of colonial Premiers in February 1896 and was rejected. Instead, the Premiers resolved that political federation of the colonies was essential before a federal defence scheme could be completed for Australia.¹⁹

Hutton relinquished command of the New South Wales military forces in March 1896 and returned to London. As I revealed in *An Army for a Nation*, Hutton again met with Robert Meade to be debriefed on his colonial command experience. At this meeting, Hutton told the senior Colonial Office official that he had tried to fulfil his imperial instructions to the letter but he said it had been '*impossible*' to arrange for a federal force to serve outside Australian

¹⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 41-2. Note: Emphasis added.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 42.

waters because of '*public and political opinion*'. By way of consolation, however, Hutton then explained to Meade that an attempt had been made to overcome this problem by greatly expanding the geographical definition of Australia in the amended federal defence scheme of 1896.²⁰

When dealing with this episode in his critique of *An Army for a Nation*, Wilcox did not address any of the evidence that supported my argument; that is, the numerous colonial newspaper and journal articles and political statements that expressed opposition to imperial service; the correspondence between the Colonial Defence Committee and Hutton; the comments from the proceedings of the two commandants' conferences; and, Hutton's dealings with Meade before he left London and when he returned. Citing no evidence at all, Wilcox wrote: 'When in Australia, Hutton modernised the New South Wales forces and twice convened conferences among the commandants which advocated forming an *Australian army for the defence of Australian territory*'.²¹ In the light of the available evidence—evidence that Wilcox did not address—this assertion is clearly wrong, but then Wilcox went further.

Wilcox challenged my claim that the commandants were acting desperately when they quietly amended the definition of Australian territory. He wrote that: 'This definition was probably not, as Mordike says, a "desperate move", a false definition of the entire region as Australian territory designed to circumvent local opposition to forming an expeditionary force.' But, again, Wilcox produced no evidence to support his opinion. Furthermore, he did not address the crucial piece of evidence that I cited where Hutton explained to Meade on his return to London that the geographical definition of Australia *had been* greatly expanded in an attempt to overcome colonial resistance to service outside Australian territory. This alone illustrates that Wilcox's opinion was wrong. Instead, Wilcox portrayed the commandants' amended definition of Australian territory—an amendment that was not discussed openly at the conference—as a simple procedural provision to permit 'merely one condition of service expected of an Australian Militia'. So an Australian militia was 'expected' to undertake overseas service? Expected by whom? The British Government? In the case of the Australian colonies, a colonial government was the sole authority for deploying its military force. This accords with the basic fundamentals of international law and the realities of colonial self-government. Failing to deal with such issues—even though they were at the very centre of imperial defence planning for more than thirty years—Wilcox continued to comment on the condition of overseas service for an Australian militia:

Nor was that condition controversial at the time. In January 1896 the empire seemed about to go to war with both Germany and the United States, and the Australian premiers had just cabled London assuring the imperial government of their peoples' loyalty and support.²²

²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 43. Note: Emphasis added.

²¹ Wilcox, 'Relinquishing the Past', p. 56. Note: Emphasis added.

²² *ibid.*, p. 56. Note: Emphasis added.

This interpretation is also wrong.

In referring to the prospect of war between Britain and 'both Germany and the United States', Wilcox could only have been referring to the Jameson raid into the Transvaal and the Venezuela crisis. Both were resolved by diplomatic means. There was no prospect that either, or both, would have led to the Australian colonies deploying their established militia forces overseas. Australia's political leadership certainly did not contemplate such an outcome. But Wilcox implied that this was the case, citing as evidence the premiers' cable to London while not quoting its contents. So why did the Australian premiers send this cable to London and what did it say?

Wilcox did not explain the circumstances, but the cable was aimed specifically at the situation surrounding the Jameson raid. Cecil Rhodes, prime minister of Cape Colony, had hatched a plot with his close friend Dr Leander Jameson to take an armed force into the Transvaal with the aim of exciting an uprising by resident foreigners—*uitlanders*—to overthrow the government of Paul Kruger. The raid was a fiasco. Jameson and 500 men entered the Transvaal on 29 December 1895, but the uprising by the resident foreigners did not occur. Jameson and his men were forced to surrender just four days later on 2 January. Germany's involvement amounted to a letter that Kaiser William II sent to Kruger congratulating him on suppressing the rebellion 'without having to invoke the help of friendly powers'. This was interpreted as a hint that Germany might intercede. Britain was indignant at this provocative intrusion. Queen Victoria wrote a letter to her grandson William, and he replied. 'Of the contents of these two communications there can, of course, be no direct knowledge,' the correspondent for *The Times* reported from Berlin. However, it was considered that the contents of William's letter could 'at least be inferred from the very conciliatory and reassuring language concerning the political situation which he is known to have held on the following day to some of the foreign representatives in Berlin'.²³

On 10 January the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that the '[c]risis in the Transvaal is practically settled'.²⁴ By 11 January, cables out of London reported that the 'situation on the Rand is quiet, and business is being resumed'; it was reported that Jameson's men had handed in their weapons.²⁵ The incident was at an end. It was at this stage—12 January—that the Australian premiers dispatched their cable to British Prime Minister Lord Salisbury. It read:

The Governments of Australia and Tasmania view with satisfaction the prompt and fearless measures adopted by Her Majesty's Government in defence of the integrity of the Empire. We desire to convey our

²³ *The Times*, 13 January 1896, London, p. 5.

²⁴ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 January 1896, Sydney, p. 4.

²⁵ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 January 1896, Sydney, p. 5.

united assurances of loyal support. The people of Australia are in full sympathy with the determination of the mother country to resent foreign interference in matters of British and colonial concern [a reference to Kaiser William's letter to Kruger].

The cable, which was printed in full in the *London Times* and the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 13 January, did not convey a promise of, or even hint at, military support, as Wilcox implied in his account of the episode.²⁶ Two days later the *Sydney Morning Herald* summed up the cable: 'All that Mr Reid's message conveys is a *moral support*, but it would be foolish to underestimate the assistance which may be rendered in this way.'²⁷

All this transpired two weeks before the colonial commandants sat for their final conference on the proposed federal defence agreement and Wilcox, on the basis of his misconstrued account of one cable, asserted that overseas service for Australian military forces was not controversial. Putting aside the mass of evidence to the contrary, one has only to consider Hutton's advice to Meade on 1 May that it had been 'impossible' to arrange for a federal force to serve outside Australian waters because of 'public and political opinion' to realise that Wilcox's interpretation was incorrect.

Now I turn to Wilcox's reaction to my treatment of the period 1902-1904 when Edward Hutton returned to Australia to take command of the Australian military forces, after the Australian colonies had federated.

Hutton as GOC: 1902–1904

It will be recalled from my earlier treatment of Hutton's appointment in Part I that, before his departure from London, Hutton was briefed by Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain and the Permanent Undersecretary at the Colonial Office, Sir Montague Ommanney. Hutton had told Chamberlain that when in Australia he would shape the Australian forces 'in accordance generally with Mr Chamberlain's views', or, as Hutton expressed it in his record of the discussions, he would develop an Australian militia force intended not only for local defence but also for 'offensive operations outside the local area'. And here the British authorities knew that they faced a difficulty. The first attempt after Federation to enact defence legislation had resulted in the failure of the defence bill. It had been drafted by the Australian military commandants and simply attempted to make the Australian forces a subservient element of the British forces. This blatant attempt to serve imperial requirements was quite unacceptable and the bill met with widespread criticism from politicians. A new defence bill was to be drafted. Accordingly, Hutton had told Chamberlain, he intended to use his influence to

²⁶ *The Times*, 13 January 1896, London, p. 5; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 January 1896, Sydney, p. 5.

²⁷ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 January 1896, p. 6. Note: Emphasis added.

ensure that Australian defence legislation empowered the federal government to deploy the military forces on overseas service.²⁸

Documents contained in Hutton's private papers reveal also that, immediately after his interview with Chamberlain, Hutton had a meeting with King Edward, Mr St John Brodrick, who was the Secretary of State for War, and Lord Roberts, who was the Commander-in-Chief of the Imperial Army. There could be no more senior imperial authorities for a professional military officer to meet—the reigning monarch of Great Britain, the minister of state responsible for defence, and the supreme commander of the British Army. When I referred to this meeting in *An Army for a Nation*, I explained that 'Hutton gave these men an undertaking that he would organise a force of 20,000 Australian *mounted troops* for imperial operations'. While there is no detailed transcript of the discussions with King Edward and the senior officials, there is a copy of a letter in Hutton's papers where he wrote to Brodrick on 18 August 1903 referring to the undertaking. As Brodrick was a key participant in the meeting, the evidence is powerful. Adding weight to this observation, Hutton had written earlier to Major-General Sir William Nicholson, Director General of Mobilisation and Military Intelligence at the War Office, referring to the same undertaking.²⁹ And for a professional military officer of Hutton's standing this undertaking would not have been taken lightly. He was indeed resolute in attempting to bring his undertaking to fruition. Hutton recorded that he went to Australia determined that, even in the absence of support for his proposals from the Australian Government or the Minister for Defence, 'I would initiate a Defence Policy of my own and carry it into effect at any cost to myself.'³⁰ Such was Hutton's commitment to serve Britain's political leadership rather than the Australian Government.

In commenting on this aspect of my work, Wilcox wrote simply that:

Before leaving for Australia, Hutton *apparently vowed* to secure 20,000 Australian soldiers for imperial use.³¹

Vowed to whom? Wilcox made no mention of the fact that Hutton gave an undertaking to King Edward, Mr St John Brodrick and Lord Roberts. Effectively, Wilcox's version of events diminished the status of Hutton's imperial mission, thus undermining the basis for appreciating the commitment and intensity with which Hutton approached his second period of command in Australia.

Soon after his arrival in Australia in January 1902, Hutton submitted a report to the Australian Government on the subject of Australian defence. In it he

²⁸ Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 91.

²⁹ *ibid.*, p. 91. Note: Emphasis added.

³⁰ *ibid.*, p. 92.

³¹ Wilcox, 'Relinquishing the Past', p. 57. Note: Emphasis added.

proposed a dual organisation for Australia's military forces: a garrison force for local defence and a field force which could be deployed into a theatre of operations. It was the field force that Hutton planned would fulfil his undertaking to provide Britain with an expeditionary force, but he never spelt this out to the Australian Government because of its strong feelings on the subject. But this was not the case with the British authorities. He sent a copy of his defence report to Brodrick explaining: 'I have been careful to avoid any direct reference to assistance to the Empire in time of war except inferentially.' Similarly, he informed Ommanney that he had been 'careful to leave the deduction to be drawn as to what is really comprised under the head of "Australian interests"'. 'The keynote,' he continued, taking Ommanney into his confidence, 'is a "*Co-operative System of Defence*" in which all parts of the Empire shall combine with the Mother Country.'³²

While Barton and Forrest were in London at the Colonial Conference of 1902, reports about Chamberlain's proposal for imperial military reserves caused the Acting Minister for Defence Sir William Lyne to take a careful look at Hutton's report on Australian defence. He quickly deduced that, while Hutton had not mentioned imperial service, his report implied that Australian troops should be sent overseas for offensive operations. 'I at once took an opportunity,' Lyne explained to the House of Representatives, 'to remove from the mind of the General Officer Commanding the impression that the Government or Parliament, would, for a moment, consent to such a proposal.' Acting on Lyne's instructions, the Secretary of the Department of Defence, Robert Collins, wrote to Hutton informing him that '[t]he Minister does not agree with any proposal to give control over Australian Troops to any but the Commonwealth Authority'. In addition, Collins pointed out, it might happen that, as in the case of the Boer War, a volunteer force could be sent abroad, but until that time arrived no expenditure could be incurred in maintaining any troops established 'on any consideration of undertaking such external operations'.³³

The Australian Government approved the organisations Hutton had recommended in his report because it accepted his assurances that the field force—Hutton's expeditionary force—and the garrison force were intended only for the defence of Australia.

When Hutton turned to the implementation of his military organisation it became clear where his primary interest lay. 'I propose to deal later, when the Field Force has been created, with the Garrison Force,' he informed Major-General Sir William Nicholson at the War Office. 'I conceive the latter to be of less importance than the former,' he explained. His plan was that the field force would be comprised entirely of militia who received pay for their part-time service, whereas the garrison force would be formed entirely of unpaid volunteers. The difference was significant. The British authorities believed that experience in Australia revealed that paid militia were easier to recruit and

³² Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 101. Note: Emphasis added.

³³ Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, pp. 116-7.

retain, achieving a higher degree of efficiency than volunteers. Hutton agreed, and told Nicholson that he was 'absolutely certain' that the men in the volunteer ranks would be of inferior efficiency in time of war.³⁴ However, this was not what he told Australians. When Hutton recommended the use of volunteers to the Australian Government, he advised that unpaid volunteer forces were the pride of all Anglo-Saxon communities and that, in the unlikely event of Australia being attacked, it would be 'safe to accept the fact that ... a sufficient number of citizens [would] always be found ready and willing to voluntarily undertake the duty of defence'. As consoling as this reflection might have been, Hutton wanted the more efficient troops for his field force. As he had claimed in an earlier address to the Royal Colonial Institute in London, volunteer forces 'by their training, organisation or discipline' were not suitable matches for 'the trained soldiers of the Continent'.³⁵ Therefore, the organisation that Hutton introduced effectively committed Australia's scarce defence resources to the development of a force that was not intended to fulfil the role of the defence of Australia. Furthermore, the force that was intended to defend Australia would be comprised of relatively inefficient, unpaid troops.

Hutton's organisation of the field force amounted to a radical restructuring of Australia's citizen forces. Hutton proposed that the force be comprised of six brigades of light horse and three brigades of infantry, supported by field artillery and logistics services. Each brigade was designed to operate as an independent unit. Hutton never planned to combine the brigades into a higher formation. His reason was simple, but it was not stated openly. 'I have advisedly restricted the proposed organisation to that of Brigades,' Hutton confidentially informed Major-General Sir William Nicholson at the War Office. 'There are at present no Australian Officers who are fit for high command, or even high positions on the administrative Staff of so large a unit as a Division.' He might have added that such a structure was designed to enable Australian brigades to join larger imperial formations under the command of British generals, just as Kitchener would plan in 1910. But Nicholson understood this. This requirement, and not the defence of Australia, had been the determinant of force structure from the outset.

Just how inappropriate the resulting field force organisation was for local defence requirements becomes clear when the detailed organisations—published more than one year after Hutton's original defence report—are examined. The 3rd Infantry Brigade was comprised of militia regiments located in Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania. Worse still, one half of its headquarters staff was in Adelaide and the other half was in Brisbane. Similarly, the 4th Light Horse Brigade had regiments in Tasmania and Victoria with its headquarters in Adelaide.³⁶ Apart from the difficult problems surrounding the concentration and deployment of this organisation for local defence, such a wide dispersion of citizen force units made effective

³⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 102-3.

³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 103.

³⁶ *ibid.*, p. 104.

peacetime training at brigade level virtually impossible. But Hutton was not thinking in these terms when he chose such an organisation as the basis for the field force.

The internal organisation of each type of brigade would mean that a total of 18 light horse regiments and 12 infantry regiments would be raised throughout Australia. Operating on the proposed war establishment, a total of over 10,000 men would be mounted—twice the number then existing in the Australian forces—and this strength would be achieved by converting some of the existing infantry units to mounted units. ‘This change,’ Hutton explained to the Australian Government, ‘is not only consistent with the characteristics of the Australian people, but provides exactly that description of fighting man which has proved so valuable in South Africa, and which without doubt, would constitute a most powerful, if not controlling factor in any campaign in which Australian troops might be engaged.’³⁷

While the 18 light horse regiments would not provide the 20,000 mounted men he had promised the British authorities before he left London, Hutton explained to Brodrick that the infantry regiments would also be trained as mounted infantry. Hutton also explained this to Major-General Nicholson. ‘I propose that the whole of the 12 Regiments of Australian Infantry ... shall be convertible [sic] *en bloc* into Mounted Infantry when required,’ he informed Nicholson. Attempting to honour his undertaking to the British authorities, Hutton realised that he could not justify the establishment of a mounted force of 20,000 men to the Australian Government. Therefore, while maintaining the guise of a national military organisation, Hutton planned to satisfy imperial requirements without stint.³⁸

To fulfil his undertaking to the British authorities to organise the large number of mounted troops, Hutton had prescribed a grossly imbalanced force structure for the local forces, a structure that demanded that large numbers of citizen force infantry units—foot soldiers—be converted into mounted units. Apart from balanced force structure requirements, there were far more infantry units in the Australian military forces for one simple reason alone. To join a mounted unit a man had to have the means to supply and to maintain his own horse, and for most men the cost was prohibitive. Therefore, Hutton’s reorganisation, which called for a radical restructuring of the military forces, had significant social implications, especially in rural towns where impecunious townsmen had no choice but to join infantry units. His attempts to implement the organisation and the haste with which he acted became a source of considerable disruption and discontent in the forces. But this did not deter Hutton. The key to understanding both his radical methods and his ruthless haste was the imperial objective—the obsession which Hutton concealed from his Australian political masters. Motivated by the need to establish his mounted force for imperial operations, spurred on by a government intention to reduce defence expenditure and knowing that his

³⁷ *ibid.*, p. 104.

³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 104.

term of appointment would expire at the end of 1904, Hutton implemented his scheme with a haste and determination that accepted the risk of alienating a large number of Australians.³⁹

While Hutton had gained government approval to introduce his organisations, his attempts to influence Australian defence legislation to permit the Australian military forces to be deployed on overseas operations were unsuccessful. From the moment of his arrival in Australia, when he had held his first discussions with the Australian Prime Minister Edmund Barton and the Minister for Defence Sir John Forrest, Hutton had argued the case for overseas service for the Australian military forces.⁴⁰ His efforts were in vain. When Forrest eventually introduced a redrafted bill to parliament, he explained that Hutton did 'not approve of the provision that the citizen forces shall not be required to serve, in time of war, beyond the limits of the Commonwealth'. 'The General Officer Commanding thinks that power should be taken to send them wherever they may be required,' Forrest explained. Hutton had hoped for too much in attempting to achieve such a provision. 'I do not take this view,' Forrest explained. It was the overwhelming opinion of his colleagues in Parliament.⁴¹ The Australian military forces were to be established and maintained for the defence of Australia, not for imperial operations. Accordingly, the *Defence Act* of 1903 did not empower the Australian Government to dispatch forces overseas. Men had to volunteer for such service as individuals. It was a severe blow to imperial aspirations. Hutton had been successful in gaining approval to establish the field force—or expeditionary force—but the government did not have the power to deploy it overseas. This aspect of Hutton's imperial project had been a failure.⁴²

In dealing with this whole section of my work, Wilcox wrote: '*An Army For a Nation* seeks to expose a "hidden agenda" in Hutton's work ... '. But Wilcox did not refer to one piece of the considerable amount of evidence that demonstrates that Hutton was indeed working to a hidden agenda which had been prescribed at the highest levels in Britain. 'Inevitably following from Hutton's aim, again according to Mordike,' Wilcox continued,

were various sins: the preferential treatment which he accorded units which would form the field force; his decision that the bulk of the field force would be mounted infantry, so it would be useful for an imperial army of footsoldiers; his consequent attempt to convert many rural infantry units into mounted infantry; his drafting of a new defence bill which included a provision, similar to that of the rejected first bill, allowing for conscription and service overseas in Australia's interest during an emergency.⁴³

³⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 131-47.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p. 92.

⁴¹ *ibid.*, p. 126.

⁴² *ibid.*, p. 128.

⁴³ Wilcox, 'Relinquishing the Past', p. 57.

As *An Army for a Nation* shows, each of these ‘sins’ was not ‘according to Mordike’ but according to the evidence discovered in my primary research. Wilcox produced no evidence to refute my interpretation.

In addition, Wilcox misrepresented my work. Consider his comments on Hutton’s undertaking to the British authorities before he left London. The undertaking was specific: it was for the provision of ‘20,000 *mounted troops*’ but Wilcox reported this as ‘20,000 Australian *soldiers*’, citing my book as the source of this information.⁴⁴ The difference is significant. Hutton’s undertaking to organise ‘20,000 mounted troops’ was a radical step that brought considerable upheaval to the existing military forces. Hutton’s campaign to organise this large mounted force was a central part of the discussion throughout four chapters of *An Army for a Nation*.⁴⁵ Nowhere in my work did I refer to an undertaking for 20,000 soldiers. In every instance I referred to 20,000 mounted troops.

Wilcox then admonished me for going ‘too far’ when I suggested that ‘every aspect of Hutton’s reorganisation was motivated by his “hidden agenda”’. ‘For example,’ Wilcox wrote,

Hutton’s decision to train most of the field force as mounted infantry reflected an imperial thirst for citizen soldiers who could gallop as well as shoot; but it also reflected long-held views that most Australian soldiers would have to ride if they were to campaign effectively in their huge continent.⁴⁶

There can be no equivocation on this issue. The documentary evidence is irrefutable. It was not ‘Hutton’s decision’ to train most of the field force as mounted infantry for imperial operations and it was certainly not the prospect of mounted campaigns on Australian territory that motivated his proposal for mounted forces. On the contrary, it was the specific undertaking he had given to King Edward, the Secretary of State for War and the Commander-in-Chief of the British Army to establish a mounted expeditionary force for imperial operations. And this undertaking was never explained to the Australian Government for the simple reason that the Government had directed Hutton that no element of the Australian military forces was to be maintained for overseas service.⁴⁷ But Hutton was not interested in the wishes of the Australian authorities. He proceeded to work towards his imperial objective while ignoring the Australian Government’s direction. It was no accident that Lieutenant-General Sir Ian Hamilton wrote to Hutton from the War Office in

⁴⁴ Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 91.

⁴⁵ For references to the undertaking for a mounted force of 20,000 men: Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, pp. 91, 92, 93, 104, 148, 153. There are no references to 20,000 soldiers.

⁴⁶ Wilcox, ‘Relinquishing the Past’, p. 57.

⁴⁷ Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, pp. 116-7.

December 1903, asking him whether 3,000 to 4,000 *mounted* troops were available in Australia to fight with the Japanese against the Russians.⁴⁸

Civil-military relations during Hutton's period of command were volatile. Hutton had great difficulty accepting the authority of colonial ministers. His radical reorganisation of the militia also aroused a great deal of resentment in the force and the community. The General Officer Commanding provided more than one Minister for Defence with difficulties and clashed with a number of militia officers. It was a unique episode in Australian history that eventually resulted in an important decision on the structure of the Army's high command. For this reason I devoted a chapter of *An Army for a Nation* to the subject of civil-military relations.⁴⁹

One confrontation dealt with in this chapter was Hutton's clash with Senator John Cash Neild, who, in addition to his parliamentary role, was a citizen force officer under the overall command of Hutton. Problems arose when Neild began criticising Hutton's military reforms under privilege in the Senate. Hutton was furious and relieved Neild of his command.⁵⁰

In his critique of *An Army for a Nation*, Wilcox referred to my treatment of the clash between Hutton and Neild. Wilcox wrote:

Mordike especially errs when he describes Hutton's clash with one citizen colonel, Senator John Cash Neild, as a clash between an imperialist and a national representative.⁵¹

But Wilcox was wrong again. I made no such claim. It was not a clash 'between an imperialist and a national representative' but a clash between a military authority and a civil authority. It was one of many episodes during Hutton's command that demonstrated the depth of tension between the General Officer Commanding and Australian politicians.

One of the most controversial issues to arise during Hutton's period of command was the coded telegram incident. In 1904, it was discovered that Hutton had sent a coded telegram to London. Minister for Defence Austin Chapman requested a decoded copy of the telegram from Hutton in so far as it related to military business, a justifiable request because Hutton was responsible solely to the Australian minister on the subject of military business. Responding to Chapman, Hutton confirmed that the message was certainly on a military subject but, as the telegram had been sent confidentially to the British Secretary of State for War, Hutton was not prepared to provide a copy for the Australian minister. Not to be deterred, Chapman again requested a copy of the message, but before he could take the matter further

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 129-30.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, Chapter 8, 'The Civil Reaction: From GOC to Military Board', pp. 148-64.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 154-6.

⁵¹ Wilcox, 'Relinquishing the Past', p. 57.

the Deakin government fell. Hutton then informed the Secretary of the Department of Defence, Robert Collins, that he was still not prepared to provide a copy of the message because it would divulge 'the secret code' that had been given to him for 'communication direct to the War Office'.⁵²

The new Labor Minister for Defence, Senator Andrew Dawson, was not about to let the matter die. During the earlier clash between Neild and Hutton, Dawson had left no doubt about his thoughts on civil-military relations when he seconded Neild's successful motion to establish a Senate Select Committee to examine his sacking by Hutton. 'The Major-General might as well march his regiment into the Chamber and pitch us all out,' Dawson had complained at the time.⁵³ On becoming Minister for Defence, Dawson confronted Hutton over the coded telegram incident. Dawson informed Hutton in writing that his position as General Officer Commanding made him a servant of the Australian minister, in this case Dawson himself. 'The right of the Minister to insist that all official communications as regards the Defence of the Commonwealth shall be submitted to him,' Dawson wrote, 'cannot for a moment be questioned.'⁵⁴

The coded telegram issue was brought to a head when a report of the incident was leaked to the press. The *Age* called for the abolition of the position of General Officer Commanding. The newspaper observed that, from the imperial perspective, Hutton was

looked upon as a kind of military proprietor, holding authority delegated entirely by his superior officers at headquarters in London, and entrusted with the duty of keeping the Colonists in their proper places from a military standpoint.

Like almost all of the imperial officers who had come to Australia, the *Age* continued, Hutton gave his first allegiance to the War Office and felt obliged 'only in a very secondary and subordinate sense ... to consult the wishes of those who have engaged him and pay his salary'. As a result the military authority considered itself to be 'quite separate from the civil authorities in Australia'.⁵⁵

The coded telegram incident was only one of several confrontations between Dawson and Hutton. The Watson Labor government held power only for the short period of four months, but before relinquishing office, Dawson submitted a report to Parliament recommending the abolition of the position of General Officer Commanding. Instead of a single senior commander, the minister proposed the establishment of a council of defence to assist the government

⁵² Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 160.

⁵³ *ibid.*, p. 156.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p. 160.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p. 160.

in developing defence policy and a military board to control and administer the forces. In his report, Dawson cited the precedent of Britain's recent abolition of the position of Commander-in-Chief, but this was an obvious attempt to enlist conservative support for his suggestion to do likewise. Despite reference to British command arrangements, Dawson was motivated by the peculiar difficulties being experienced in Australia with the recalcitrant senior military commander.⁵⁶

Dawson was not the only threat to the survival of the position of General Officer Commanding. Discontent with Hutton was so widespread that the outcome was inevitable. Even Hutton had begun to face defeat. Significantly, in doing so he referred not to personal disagreements but to the primary policy issue of his hidden imperial agenda. 'Fostered by the Politicians, in and out of Parliament,' Hutton reflected, 'the Public and the Press were awakening to the fact that the policy upon which I was building their defence was not that of their own creation, and that no Government had ever publicly endorsed the principles laid down [in my original plans for organising the forces].'⁵⁷

Wilcox mentioned none of this. He wrote:

Hutton left Australia late in 1904, and, *copying a recent British reform*, an amendment to the *Defence Act* soon replaced the post of GOC with a Military Board of staff officers clearly subservient to the Defence Minister.⁵⁸

The Australian Government did not copy British practice in changing the command arrangements for the military forces. Australia's political leaders were well aware that councils or boards were in use in many countries throughout the world. For example, when discussing ways of controlling the military forces, Senator Higgs had told the Senate that the countries which had abolished the position of General Officer Commanding in favour of controlling boards or councils were the United States, Germany, France, Switzerland and Japan.⁵⁹

When the Military Board was finally established by James McCay, Minister for Defence in the Reid-McLean government, McCay explained that the changes were a deliberate step towards adopting the Swiss military model for Australia because 'the Australian ideal is that our defence should be carried out by citizen forces'. Cabinet would be brought into 'more direct touch with the defence policy of Australia', and the implementation of the policy would be more sympathetic to parliament and the people. McCay explained that he was committed to introducing 'Australian feeling' to defence policy and dropping the practice of importing 'large numbers of officers from the Imperial Army'.

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p. 161.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, p. 162.

⁵⁸ Wilcox, 'Relinquishing the Past', pp. 57-8. Note: Emphasis added.

⁵⁹ Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, pp. 152-3.

The conclusion is inescapable. The Military Board was established to strengthen national control of the Australian military forces. Hutton had understood this only too well and had tried to use his influence to prevent the Military Board being introduced. '[T]he control of the Military Forces if placed in the hands of a local officer, or in the hands of a Committee composed of local officers, must necessarily ... be entirely subordinated to the local political and personal influences,' he had written to Ommanney, informing him of his fears for imperial interests.⁶⁰ In a similar fashion, Hutton had written to the former Governor-General of Australia, Lord Tennyson, informing him that

there is a faction headed by Captain Collins [the Permanent Secretary of Defence] and other ignorant or malevolent people who would do away with an Imperial General and substitute a small committee controlled by and under the political party in power.

On the same day, Hutton had written another letter to Ommanney advising him that Australian officers did not possess 'the military judgements, or educational attainments' necessary to administer the Army. The local officers needed the support of 'the experienced influence and personal characteristics of an Imperial General'. The position of General Officer Commanding should be preserved, Hutton believed, for the exercise of British influence on Australian military developments.⁶¹

But Hutton had gone too far in his second period of command in Australia. He had been difficult to control and concerns had been raised about his loyalty to the Australian Government. The establishment of the Military Board was, in the first instance, a civil reaction to the command and control difficulties experienced by the Australian Government when Hutton was General Officer Commanding the Australian forces.⁶²

Haldane and the Imperial General Staff

In the aftermath of Hutton's hectic period of command in Australia and with the failure of Chamberlain's military reserve proposal of 1902, the British authorities came to the realisation that requests for direct military assistance from the colonies in peacetime were bound to be unsuccessful. Secretary of State for War, Richard Haldane, adopted another approach. At the Colonial Conference of 1907, Haldane placed a War Office proposal for establishing the Imperial General Staff before the dominion delegates. This was an important step towards the introduction of common operating procedures, standard organisations and standard equipment throughout the military forces of the empire, all vitally important developments in producing a cohesive

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p. 158.

⁶¹ *ibid.*, p. 159.

⁶² *ibid.*, p. 163.

imperial force. But Haldane believed that the establishment of the Imperial General Staff was only the first step.⁶³

When he wrote about the establishment of the Imperial General Staff, Wilcox portrayed Haldane's approach as one of a liberal administrator. What Wilcox did not emphasise was the fact that Haldane had no alternative. Apart from the reality that the British authorities were unable to dictate to the colonies on matters of defence, Haldane, as I argued in *An Army for a Nation*, also knew he could only go so far in enlisting colonial cooperation. The Secretary for War's approach was a direct reaction to colonial determination to maintain control of their own military forces. Wilcox wrote:

At the Imperial Conference of 1907 [Haldane] asked the dominions *merely* to unite their staff officers with those of Britain into a single Imperial General Staff (IGS), with its headquarters in London. The IGS would seek to make the citizen forces drill, unit structure, arms and equipment the same throughout the empire.⁶⁴

Actually Haldane wanted to go further and achieve the War Office's objective of developing an imperial military capability under British control (why else the imperial standardisation in drill, organisations, arms and equipment?), but he realised that he could not proceed directly towards its achievement without running into resistance from the colonies. As I revealed in *An Army for a Nation* and in Part I of this monograph, the day before the conference discussed defence issues, Haldane considered a proposal from Sir George Clarke, a former secretary of the Colonial Defence Committee. Clarke wanted Haldane to seek approval from the colonial representatives at the conference that the colonies *were obliged* to give military assistance to the empire in addition to defending their own territories. Clarke's proposal was rejected in the following terms:

Mr Haldane has seen the enclosed *and thoroughly sympathises with the proposal*, but he thinks on the whole that it will be best *in the first instance* to put one resolution only, and that relating to a General Staff system for the Empire as a whole.⁶⁵

And as I wrote, '[i]n his subsequent address to the conference, Haldane therefore only hinted that colonial military forces should incorporate a force for local defence and a separate expeditionary force for imperial service'.⁶⁶ Of course, as I discussed in my book and in Part I, Haldane knew that Dr Smartt, representing the Cape Colony, would put a proposal to the conference that each colony should establish a military force for imperial service when

⁶³ *ibid.*, pp. 180-2.

⁶⁴ Wilcox, 'Relinquishing the Past', p. 58. Note: Emphasis added.

⁶⁵ Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 182. Note: Emphasis added.

⁶⁶ *ibid.*, p. 182.

required by Britain. It was politically prudent for Haldane to allow such proposals to come from a colony rather than a British minister. Yet there could be no doubt what the Australian reaction would be. Australian Prime Minister Deakin had already been advised by his Defence Minister that the Australian Military Board considered that Smartt's proposal

to form an Imperial guard for service outside Australia does not appear to come within the scope of what is generally understood as the policy of Australia on defence matters.

Smartt failed to get support from any colony when he put the proposal to the conference.⁶⁷

Wilcox explained none of this, but wrote:

Haldane eschewed calls that the dominions form and train expeditionary forces in peacetime, and instead quietly suggested that, like the Territorials, dominion soldiers be allowed to volunteer for overseas service.⁶⁸

Are we to believe that Haldane's approach was determined by his own judgment without consideration for colonial attitudes? If this were Haldane's policy, why did he allow Smartt to proceed with his proposal for the colonies to establish forces for imperial service? Indeed, where is the evidence that Haldane '*eschewed* calls that the dominions form and train expeditionary forces in peacetime'? The only source cited by Wilcox for his passage on the establishment of the Imperial General Staff was the entire record of proceedings of the Colonial Conference of 1907. Perhaps I have overlooked something in this voluminous record, but my reading of the conference proceedings does not allow me to reach the conclusions that Wilcox reached on the subject of Haldane's policy. But there are other issues in *An Army for a Nation* that Wilcox did not deal with.

What about the British Chief of the General Staff's paper—it was actually written by General Douglas Haig—that was subsequently issued to the colonies on the subject of the establishment of the Imperial General Staff? As discussed in Part I, the Australian Quartermaster General, Lieutenant Colonel James Legge, recorded his thoughts on the paper for discussion by the Military Board:

Carefully worded though it is, an analysis of the memorandum shows that, interleaved in the recommendation of the C.G.S. is much that was not asked for by the resolution of the Imperial Conference [to establish the Imperial General Staff].⁶⁹

⁶⁷ *ibid.*, p. 182.

⁶⁸ Wilcox, 'Relinquishing the Past', p. 58. Note: Emphasis added.

⁶⁹ Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 204.

One major issue that concerned Legge was that the British CGS had assumed that the forces of the empire would be combined into one imperial force for service abroad. The Australian forces were comprised of part-time citizen soldiers—militia—as were Britain's Territorial Force, but the British force was not obliged to serve outside Britain. Therefore, Legge posed the compelling question:

Why should the Citizen Forces of Australia be liable to serve abroad when those of Great Britain are not?⁷⁰

Haig's approach was clearly inconsistent with Wilcox's interpretation of Haldane's policy. According to Wilcox, Haldane had 'quietly suggested' that 'like the Territorials, dominion soldiers be allowed to volunteer for overseas service'. But Haldane was far more resolute than Wilcox suggested.

Presented under a façade of cooperation, the Imperial General Staff was an imperial instrument that was really intended to promote War Office control and influence in the forces of the dominions. This is what Haldane had in mind when he decided, 'in the first instance', to put one resolution to colonial representatives to establish the Imperial General Staff. Other developments would follow; Haig's paper clearly indicated the direction. I am not alone in reaching such a conclusion. Neville Meaney, John Gooch, Donald Gordon and Brian Bond have all pointed to the imperial designs behind Haldane's proposal to adopt War Office plans for an Imperial General Staff.⁷¹ For example, Meaney wrote that:

Behind the smoke screen of words the War Office's plan would appear to be yet another form of the 1901-2 imperial reserve idea [Chamberlain's proposal]. ... [But] Laurier and Deakin [Prime Ministers of Canada and Australia] were on the alert for such traps.⁷²

As I pointed out in *An Army for a Nation*, when Haldane put his proposal to the conference he was well aware that he had to proceed with extreme caution if he were to win support for the Imperial General Staff, but even then 'participants were quick to circumscribe its role'. 'We have no Imperial Army,' Sir Frederick Borden, Minister for Militia and Defence in Canada, stated bluntly, demonstrating Canadian sensitivity to any proposal that might be construed as a commitment to participate in the establishment of an imperial force. Australian Prime Minister Alfred Deakin was in a similar frame of mind.

⁷⁰ Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 205.

⁷¹ J. Gooch, *The Plans of War*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1974, pp. 141-2; B. Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College 1854-1914*, Eyre Methuen, London, 1972, p. 238; D.C. Gordon, *The Imperial Partnership in Imperial Defense, 1870-1914*, Johns Hopkin Press, Baltimore, 1965, p. 274; J.L. Mordike, *Establishing the Royal Military College, Duntroon: A Study in British and Australian Attitudes*, Litt. B. Dissertation, University of New England, 1981, pp. 32-3.

⁷² N.K. Meaney, *The Search for Security in the Pacific, 1901-14*, Sydney University Press, Sydney, 1976, p. 149.

Such was Deakin's concern that he successfully amended Haldane's proposal 'to ensure that the Imperial General Staff could offer advice on military training, education and organisation *only at the request of respective governments*'.⁷³ Yet Wilcox did not spell this out. After writing that Haldane 'eschewed calls' for colonial expeditionary forces and that he 'quietly suggested that, like the Territorials, dominion soldiers be allowed to volunteer for overseas service', Wilcox wrote:

Alfred Deakin, now Australia's Prime Minister, and the other dominion representatives at the conference *cautiously agreed* [to the Imperial General Staff proposal], apprehensive despite Haldane's assurances that staff officers in London might try to interfere with their armies.⁷⁴

Certainly they were 'apprehensive ... that staff officers in London might try to interfere with their armies', but they did not 'cautiously agree' to Haldane's proposal. There was more to it than that. The colonial representatives took positive steps with the object of preventing the Imperial General Staff from becoming a War Office conduit into colonial military affairs, which is what Haldane and the War Office staff intended. Meaney accurately interpreted the proceedings when he wrote that the dominion representatives

would not consent to place their troops under control of an imperial general staff which was of necessity tantamount to placing them under control of the War Office. They would not allow that their troops should be available to be sent wherever the War Office should think fit in time of war. They would not, before the event, compromise their freedom of action. Australia's defence policy and planning was directed exclusively towards resisting attacks on the Commonwealth.⁷⁵

Compare Meaney's comments with Wilcox's observation that Haldane's Imperial General Staff proposal 'was a request for cooperation, not commitment, and it *left the dominions free to determine their own defence strategies*'.⁷⁶ Not only did Wilcox understate the imperial purpose of the development, but he failed again to acknowledge the reality of self-government in the colonies. From the time they acquired self-government in the mid-19th century, the colonies always were free to determine their own defence strategies, and they jealously guarded this freedom. This reality was the foundation on which the struggle between national and imperial defence priorities played itself out.

⁷³ Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 181. Note: Emphasis added.

⁷⁴ Wilcox, 'Relinquishing the Past', p. 58. Note: Emphasis added.

⁷⁵ Meaney, *The Search for Security in the Pacific, 1901-14*, p. 149.

⁷⁶ Wilcox, 'Relinquishing the Past', p. 58. Note: Emphasis added.

The Imperialist-Nationalist Schism in the Australian Officer Corps

As I discussed at length in *An Army for a Nation*, the national and imperial priorities for Australian defence developments produced a schism in the officer corps of the Australian military forces. Major General John Hoad and Lieutenant Colonel James Legge put national interests first, while Colonel William Throsby Bridges and Captain Brudenell White were imperialists.⁷⁷ Hoad and Legge had risen to influential positions largely because they supported the national defence strategy espoused by Prime Minister Alfred Deakin. These officers played important roles in working towards the implementation of Deakin's defence policy. By contrast, Bridges and Brudenell White had been protégés of Edward Hutton during his appointment as GOC of the Australian military forces and they were opposed to the national defence strategy. Bridges and Brudenell White gave primacy to imperial requirements. Meaney identified their imperial bias in his work on Australian defence history in the years leading up to World War I. Referring to Hutton's practice of serving the British Colonial Office and the War Office rather than the Australian authorities, Meaney wrote that:

[Hutton] inspired a group of junior officers, including Lieutenant—Colonel W.T. Bridges and Captain C.B. Brudenell White with the same deferential imperialism.⁷⁸

Indeed, both Bridges and Brudenell White communicated with Hutton for many years after he had departed Australia, keeping him informed of developments. Throughout 1908 both officers wrote to Hutton about Deakin's proposal for the role of the military forces in national defence. They feared that the implementation of the national defence strategy would lead to the dismantling of Hutton's field force—in reality, the expeditionary force organisation. Addressing this fear, Brudenell White informed Hutton in May 1908 that the organisation was still intact. '[A]ll Hoad's effort's have altered it very little,' Brudenell White wrote to Hutton. Furthermore, Bridges had been appointed to a position in Army headquarters that was responsible for military organisations, so Brudenell White informed Hutton that he 'need not fear any stupid alterations which are preventible'. Yet the Deakin government's Defence Bill of September 1908 posed a real threat to imperial aspirations. It will be recalled that Deakin had announced in December of the previous year that in developing a national defence strategy his government was 'not preparing for any expeditionary adventures outside Australia'. Deakin was proposing to establish a unified military force for the defence of Australia. On the day on which the Defence Bill was introduced to Parliament, Bridges wrote to Hutton telling him that their only hope lay in Parliament's rejection of the Bill. Otherwise, Bridges commented to Hutton, 'the mischief will be done and our existing force destroyed'. A dejected Bridges believed there was little

⁷⁷ Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, pp. 194-7.

⁷⁸ Meaney, *The Search for Security in the Pacific, 1901-14*, p. 74.

chance that the Government could be diverted from its goal and, he concluded pessimistically, 'it seems doubtful if they will be put out of office'.⁷⁹

Imperialists pinned their hopes on the introduction of the Imperial General Staff. Brudenell White was an enthusiastic supporter of the proposal. He wrote to Hutton from Melbourne telling him that he hoped it would be 'the first step to Imperial military consolidation'. And Brudenell White was soon in a position to play a part in the development of the proposed organisation. In mid-1908 Brudenell White received a posting order as a junior staff officer at the War Office in London. Surprisingly, Brudenell White initially expressed disappointment. He informed Hutton that he would rather remain at Army headquarters in Melbourne because he was 'very anxious to have a humble share in the working out of your plans for the Austn. Forces'. However, Brudenell White consoled himself with the thought that in London he could contribute to the development of the Imperial General Staff. 'I am glad if I am to be a humble agent for its furtherance!' he wrote to Hutton.⁸⁰

Hoad was also in London from mid-September 1908 with instructions from Deakin to hold discussions with the War Office staff on the establishment of the Imperial General Staff. But two months after Hoad arrived in London the Deakin government unexpectedly lost office in Australia when Andrew Fisher withdrew the support of Labor members. Fisher then formed the second Labor government. One month later the Australian Military Board endorsed a submission by the Adjutant General that Colonel Bridges' position on the board be redesignated Chief of the General Staff. Bridges' position was formerly designated Chief of Intelligence. The new Minister for Defence, George Foster Pearce, immediately approved the redesignation, undoubtedly thinking that he had only presided over a change in title. In this way, Bridges became Australia's first Chief of the General Staff.⁸¹ But it was more than a change in title, as Bridges and other imperialists knew. The position of Chief of the General Staff was to be the pre-eminent military position in Australia under the Imperial General Staff arrangements that were soon to be implemented. The Australian Chief of the General Staff would have a direct link to the British Chief of the Imperial General Staff, an arrangement that Haldane and Haig planned to exploit for imperial ends. Bridges, with the support of other imperialists, wanted the position for himself so that he could assist imperial developments. Like Hutton before him, Bridges looked to the War Office for direction.

Bridges had tried unsuccessfully throughout 1907 and 1908 to have himself appointed as Chief of the General Staff, but Deakin's Minister for Defence, Thomas Ewing, had opposed the move.⁸² There can be little doubt that Ewing

⁷⁹ Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, pp. 197-9.

⁸⁰ Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 197.

⁸¹ *ibid.*, pp. 199-200.

⁸² *ibid.*, pp. 192-6.

intended Hoad to have the position when the Imperial General Staff scheme was implemented. Brudenell White, who had already taken up his posting in the War Office when Hoad arrived in London for his discussions, got the impression that Hoad expected to be appointed as the first Chief of the General Staff in Australia. 'I have not the least doubt in my mind that the gentleman means to be C.G.S.,' Brudenell White wrote to Bridges before news of Bridges' appointment reached London. 'I am wondering then what is to be your fate?'⁸³

News that Bridges had become the first Chief of the General Staff in Australia was greeted with surprise in London. It could only have been an unexpected development for people indoctrinated with the values of a military culture (Clearly, Australian Minister for Defence Pearce was no such person). If for no other reason, Bridges' appointment had overturned the entrenched military observance of rank and seniority. Hoad was Australia's most senior officer holding the rank of Major General and Bridges, who held the rank of Colonel, had been appointed to what was intended to be the pre-eminent military position. Brudenell White wrote immediately to Bridges when he learnt of the appointment. 'It has caused a little consternation here as Gen. Hoad seemed quite certain, apparently, that if there was to be a General Staff, he would be chief,' Brudenell White informed Bridges. 'It will be rather interesting now to see what tactics will be employed—and I opine that they will have to be masterly to replace you.'⁸⁴ And masterly they were.

While still at the War Office, Hoad, whom Hutton had once described as that 'arch intriguer',⁸⁵ seized upon Haig's paper on the establishment of the Imperial General Staff. This was the paper (it has been referred to earlier) that caused Legge to point out that the War Office was going further than originally intended by the resolution of the Imperial Conference to establish the Imperial General Staff. Judging by Hoad's consistent stance in supporting national interests in defence developments, both before and after this episode, it would have been expected that he would have raised similar objections to Legge. But he did not. Hoad supported Haig's paper without question. Specifically, he gave his agreement to Haig's proposal that the Chiefs of the General Staff in the dominion forces be the primary military adviser and head staff officer in the local forces, ensuring the position would be held by the senior military officer. It was an arrangement that Haig intended would assist the exercise of imperial influence within the dominion forces, because, as already highlighted, the local chief was to have a direct link with the British staff. Then Hoad went further. The Australian officer proposed that military inspections of a special nature, such as those concerned with major camps and manoeuvres, should be undertaken by the Chief of the General Staff or a senior staff officer appointed by him especially for the task. The more routine inspections of military administration should be undertaken by members of the Military

⁸³ *ibid.*, pp. 201-2.

⁸⁴ *ibid.*, p. 207.

⁸⁵ *ibid.*, p. 158.

Board. Hoad did not spell out the implications, but the introduction of these recommendations in Australia would effectively abolish the position of Inspector-General, the position then occupied by Hoad himself. With such an outcome, Hoad, as the senior Australian officer with the rank of Major General, would inevitably be appointed to the senior staff appointment now occupied by Bridges, who still held the rank of Colonel.⁸⁶

Brudenell White was upset by Hoad's manoeuvring in London. At first, the young Australian officer had been resentful of the attention Hoad had received on his arrival in Britain. Indeed, he thought that the British authorities had 'erred in overdoing their part—there was no need to make such a fuss of him', he had informed Bridges.⁸⁷ Now that Hoad supported the imperial proposals, Brudenell White did not believe the senior Australian officer was genuine. 'These good folk here think they have converted him from anti-educational, anti-imperial and republican sentiments,' Brudenell White reported to Bridges from the War Office, believing that Hoad's new mood would not last. But his pessimism was not shared by the War Office staff. 'They smile at me when I say that the assumed air of conversion will only last until he crosses the 5 fathom line [after his departure from Britain],' he informed Bridges. The War Office staff apparently had more confidence than Brudenell White in retaining Hoad's cooperation. 'They have erred however with their eyes open,' Brudenell White wrote to Bridges in disgust,

and I have been quite persistent in urging the danger of lending support to any of H___'s projects. They are however so pitiably afraid of doing anything to retard the progress of the Imperial Genl. Staff that they will expose their souls to any risk!⁸⁸

The object of Hoad's scheming did not escape the attention of Bridges in Australia. He wrote immediately to Pearce pointing out that the introduction of Hoad's recommendations would mean 'by inference that the appointment of Inspector General should be abolished'. Disingenuously, Bridges also expressed opposition to the proposal that the Chief of the General Staff would be the pre-eminent military appointment, but he was grabbing at straws.⁸⁹ On his return from London, Hoad was appointed as Chief of the General Staff to replace Bridges, who had held the appointment for less than five months.⁹⁰ Hoad's tactics had indeed been masterful.

Wilcox addressed none of this in his critique of *An Army for a Nation*. Without producing any evidence himself and without discussing any of the evidence

⁸⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 207-8.

⁸⁷ *ibid.*, p. 201.

⁸⁸ *ibid.*, p. 207.

⁸⁹ *ibid.*, p. 208.

⁹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 209.

that I had produced, he simply dismissed my whole argument with the comment that:

Charles [sic] Hoad, an Australian staff officer posted to London to discuss the establishment of the IGS, urged his government late in 1908 to merge its staff officers into the IGS. Mordike condemns Hoad's plea as "apostasy" induced by personal ambition.⁹¹

So, in dismissing my interpretation of these events, how did Wilcox explain Hoad's support for the establishment of the Imperial General Staff? Without producing any evidence at all, Wilcox continued:

Yet Hoad would have shared the War office's fear of Germany, a fear which was soon to become general.⁹²

This is wrong. A 'fear of Germany' was not the reason why Hoad gave his unconditional support to establish the Imperial General Staff. Hoad was motivated primarily by his wish to remove Bridges from the prestigious position of Chief of the General Staff because he wanted the position for himself. Furthermore, he would have been well aware that, as Chief of the General Staff, Bridges would have given Australia's national defence interests second place. And when Pearce made the decision to appoint Hoad, he wrote to Prime Minister Fisher with a proposal that, as Chief of the General Staff, Hoad should not occupy a seat on the Military Board. 'I think this is wise,' Pearce informed Fisher, 'because if we were to connect that position with the Military Board we would be connecting up Imperial control with our local administration.'⁹³ Such a comment is hardly consistent with Wilcox's unsubstantiated claim that the 'fear of Germany' was the reason why Hoad was urging the Australian Government 'to merge its staff officers into the IGS'. If Hoad had been gripped by a 'fear of Germany' it does not seem that he had shared his fears with the Minister for Defence, who was still trying to keep the Australian and British staffs apart. It should also be noted that Pearce's comments to Fisher were made in May 1909, two months after the British government revealed that it believed that Germany might possess more heavy battleships than Britain within three years. This information produced the Dreadnought crisis, an episode that William Morris Hughes referred to just five months later as 'that period of temporary hysteria'.⁹⁴

But what of Wilcox's claim that the 'fear of Germany' was 'soon to become general'? It was not so general in 1910 that the Committee of Imperial Defence would advise the Australian Government that Germany was a threat to Australian security. It will be recalled from Part II of this monograph that the

⁹¹ Wilcox, 'Relinquishing the Past', p. 58-9.

⁹² *ibid.*, p. 59.

⁹³ Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 209.

⁹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 210.

committee considered that it was 'to the last degree improbable that either France or Germany could bring against Australia any military landing force more formidable than the present defences are calculated to meet'. That was 'a maximum landing force of 1,000 men'. Nor would it appear that the fear was general in 1911 when the Committee of Imperial Defence advised the Australian Government to implement Kitchener's recommendations expeditiously so that they would be able to resist an attack from Japan. Also the 'fear of Germany' was not so general in 1911 that Foreign Secretary Edward Grey would spell out the danger to dominion representatives in his secret briefing on the international situation at the Imperial Conference. It was not so general in 1911 and 1912 that Pearce would describe Germany as the threat that was driving Australian defence developments. On the contrary, Pearce told Australians that the threat was Japan. And the 'fear of Germany' was not so general in April 1914 that General Sir Ian Hamilton would tell Australians about it. According to Hamilton, Australians were only interested in defending their country from Japan.

In the first instance, national security perceptions are shaped by the unique geo-strategic circumstances of that nation. From this perspective, Britain's enemies in Europe were not seen as the primary threats to Australian security in the South-West Pacific. Meaney summed it up most eloquently in the concluding chapter of his most important work on the history of Australian defence:

The Australians well knew that the defeat of Britain in Europe would have adverse consequences for the Commonwealth. They were agreed that if the Mother Country were in peril, they would go to its assistance; but they were unwilling to base their own policies on such contingencies. *What they were primarily concerned with was the defence of Australia*, and it was in the light of this concern that they ordered their naval, military and diplomatic efforts. They would not accept as a general operating principle that they should be left defenceless in the Pacific so that Britain could be more certainly secure in Europe. And so Australia introduced compulsory military training and established a navy, specifically for its own defence. As the *Hobart Mercury* put it [in April 1914] ... there was in Australia 'a very large number of people ... who pay little attention to the German menace but are seriously disturbed because of what is called the "Yellow Peril"'. This 'deep-rooted opinion that, some day or another, danger will threaten from the Far East' was 'chiefly responsible for the popularity of the scheme for establishing an Australian Navy.'⁹⁵

The country that Australians feared most in 1914 was Japan.

⁹⁵ Meaney, *The Search for Security in the Pacific, 1901-14*, pp. 257-8. Note: Emphasis added.

Imperial and National Influence and Military Organisation

In considering these issues it is important to understand the fundamentals of a military force: how they are organised and how they operate. Military organisations are structured to fulfil politically determined strategies—they are a political tool of the state—and within the overall military organisational structure there is an array of interdependent capabilities which produce a cohesive whole. A force structured to implement a strategy of forward defence will be different from a force designed to implement a strategy of homeland defence, or a strategy of guerilla operations, for example. To understand the purpose and design of military organisation in Australia, one must deal with the political objectives of empire and nation. Yet these factors were not subject to critical analysis by Wilcox. Consider Wilcox's account of the achievements of imperial influence on the development of the Australian military forces. Wilcox asked what had it achieved, and then provided his answer:

Not a promise of an Australian expeditionary force, but merely the merging of Australian staff officers into the IGS [Imperial General Staff], which was confined to an advisory role, and an agreement that Australia's citizen forces would copy the drill, unit structure, arms and equipment of Britain's.⁹⁶

However, the drill, unit structure, arms and equipment are the essence of a military force. So, in adopting the British standard, Wilcox had concluded effectively that the Australian military forces *were a replica* of their British counterpart. Why? Why not the Swiss military forces? Or the French? Or the German? Or, most importantly, why not a unique military organisation based on the requirements of defending Australia—a national defence force, one that did not follow British military practice—as Deakin had originally proposed in 1907? Why had the Australian military forces become a replica of the British Territorial Force? The answer is simple. Because it enabled an Australian military force to operate as a part of the British military forces, and not because the force was designed to defend Australia. This had been a primary goal of imperialists since the late 19th century and they had achieved it.

Furthermore, we should also reflect on the strategy for which Britain's political leaders had designed their forces. It will be recalled that Haldane explained this to dominion representatives at the Imperial Conference in 1911. The British government wanted forces which could be deployed overseas, so, unlike their European counterparts that developed massed armies to fight in Europe, Britain had developed smaller military organisations—brigades that could combine to form divisions—which could be transported by ship.⁹⁷ And this had become the design for the Australian forces: a military organisation designed for export, a force organised on the expeditionary force concept.

⁹⁶ Wilcox, 'Relinquishing the Past', p. 59.

⁹⁷ Committee of Imperial Defence, Minutes of the 113th Meeting, May 30, 1911, p. 24, Cab 2/2, Public Record Office.

This is what Kitchener was referring to when he reported to the Australian Government that the reason why he had recommended a British organisation for the Australian forces was that the best defence was achieved 'generally by taking the offensive'.⁹⁸ In other words, Kitchener had designed the Australian force to be compatible with the British forces for combined imperial operations overseas.

Imperial requirements had influenced more than organisation and equipment. When the Australian forces were on active service—that is, when they were fulfilling the strategy for which they were raised and maintained—they were subject to the British *Army Act* in so far as it was 'not inconsistent with' the Australian *Defence Act*. Also the Australian forces operated on British doctrine. These were all significant achievements, but there had been failures in the imperial campaign. National interests had been satisfied in certain outcomes, as has been explained earlier in this monograph. The Australian Constitution left the control of Australian forces in the hands of the Australian Government. The Australian Government had established the Military Board and abolished the position of GOC, attempting to strengthen national control over the forces. The Australian forces could not be raised by conscription, sent overseas and placed under the command of British officers. The attempt by the Colonial Defence Committee to have the *Defence Act* amended to the effect that the national qualification placed on the operation of the British *Army Act* be removed was unsuccessful. And the Australian military forces were paid according to rates determined by Australian social standards; not those of Britain, as Kitchener had wanted. But Wilcox did not address these factors. He dismissed my exposition of these developments over a twenty-year period with the words that:

The 235 pages of *An Army for a Nation*—ninety-five per cent of its length—which discuss the period 1889-1910 are *merely concerned with scene-setting* ...⁹⁹

'Merely ... scene-setting' for what? A promise of an Australian expeditionary force? The fundamental point that was argued in detail in *An Army for a Nation* and also in this monograph is that an expeditionary force—a military force—is not a collection of armed men that can be cobbled together at short notice. The British authorities knew this only too well, hence the years of attempting to influence the development of the Australian military forces so that they would be prepared for imperial operations well in advance of an imperial crisis. My book is a detailed argument based on comprehensive research of British and Australian records, explaining how this happened.

The Australian military force that came into being from 1911 as a result of Kitchener's recommendations was effectively organised, trained and equipped to provide brigades for deployment with the British army. The only step that had to be taken to deploy those brigades was a decision by the Australian

⁹⁸ Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 229.

⁹⁹ Wilcox, 'Relinquishing the Past', p. 59. Note: Emphasis added.

Government along with an amendment to the *Defence Act* or the invoking of special provisions for national security during war. Yet Wilcox did not deal with the imperial design of the Australian forces, arguing that they were 'devoted to home defence'. '*An Army For a Nation*,' he wrote, 'relates that the 1909 defence bill, never passed, to introduce compulsory military training in Australia might have yielded a field force for London's use' ¹⁰⁰ Yet establishing that the 1909 Defence Bill 'might have yielded a field force for London's use' is not difficult. As recounted in *An Army for a Nation*, when the Minister for Defence Joseph Cook introduced the bill to Parliament, he announced that it was 'our paramount duty' to be adequately prepared and to recognise 'all the contingencies consequent upon our being part of a world-wide Empire'. 'This Bill aims at providing ... for all those contingencies,' Cook continued, later adding, somewhat diffidently, that:

The bill will provide us also, if necessary—I hope we may never have to do it—[with] an expeditionary force for immediate despatch overseas or elsewhere whenever the Government of the day feel themselves under an obligation to send the force. ¹⁰¹

And, contrary to Wilcox's assertion, the bill was passed. This was also spelt out in *An Army for a Nation*:

Although Cook's Bill was enacted on 13 December 1909, it was not proclaimed until 1 January 1911 and then only after being the subject of certain amendments which had been suggested by Field Marshal Lord Kitchener. ¹⁰²

The amendments that resulted from Kitchener's report were only minor, except that the number of men undergoing compulsory service was significantly increased by lifting the upper age limit of trainees from 20 to 25 years of age, thereby establishing a larger pool to draw on for imperial operations. But Wilcox wrote: 'Mordike is adamant that the "primary object" of Lord Kitchener's advice of 1910 on implementing the [defence] policy was to organise leaderless brigades of Australian men ready for imperial exploitation'. ¹⁰³ Here Wilcox failed to report accurately what I had written, and, in doing so, did not address the vital point that I was making. As discussed in *An Army for a Nation* and also earlier in this monograph, Kitchener stipulated that the highest rank for an Australian army officer—citizen force or permanent—was to be Colonel. That was an arresting recommendation that demands understanding. But the answer is not all that difficult to determine. It becomes obvious when you consider the imperial design that Kitchener was working to. The rank worn by a brigade commander at that time was Colonel.

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*, p. 60.

¹⁰¹ Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 220.

¹⁰² *ibid.*, p. 222.

¹⁰³ Wilcox, 'Relinquishing the Past', p. 60.

So the brigades would definitely have leaders as I pointed out in my book, but, according to Kitchener's plan, no Australian officer would have the rank to command a division, which constituted the next highest formation in the order of battle. Kitchener did not intend that any of the 21 Australian brigades would combine to form the fundamental fighting organisation of an Australian division. There were no divisional headquarters and there were no operational level headquarters of any description in Kitchener's recommendations. How were the Australian military forces supposed to operate in the defence of their homeland without an operational level headquarters? In this regard, Kitchener's organisation was as deficient as Hutton's so-called field force had been. As I argued in my book, Kitchener was intent on establishing Australian brigades which would join British divisions under the command of British Generals, which was essentially what Haldane told Fisher, Pearce and Batchelor at the Imperial Conference in 1911.¹⁰⁴

The Pre-War Preparations

Wilcox was also critical of my account of Australia's preparations for war. The key piece of evidence produced by Wilcox to explain Australian defence developments immediately before the outbreak of war was a document called the Commonwealth Defence Scheme. To use his words, it was 'printed in mid-1914'. This document, according to Wilcox, dealt with requirements for the defence of Australia as well as the provision of a special expeditionary force, raised by voluntary enlistment, for employment in an imperial undertaking. In addition, it was anticipated that 'at some time in the future the present statutory restriction upon employment of [a] portion of the Australian Forces overseas may be removed'.¹⁰⁵

Wilcox asserted that the Commonwealth Defence Scheme was 'not discussed in *An Army For a Nation*'.¹⁰⁶ This assertion was the basis of Wilcox's claim to dismiss my work as ill-informed on what was happening in Australia before the war. But, even on this vital issue that was a central piece of my argument, Wilcox was again not reporting what I had actually written in *An Army for a Nation*. This defence scheme was originally drawn up and printed in 1913 under the title of the General Scheme of Defence and it *was discussed* in my book.¹⁰⁷ In an earlier part of his critique, when he quoted from my work that 'Britain's long-cherished imperial goals were now formally incorporated in the plans of the Australian General Staff',¹⁰⁸ Wilcox was quoting from my discussion of the 1913 defence plan. That the 1913 General Scheme of Defence had become the 1914 Commonwealth Defence Scheme is apparent

¹⁰⁴ Committee of Imperial Defence, Minutes of 113th Meeting, May 30, 1911, p. 24, Cab 2/2, Public Record Office.

¹⁰⁵ Wilcox, 'Relinquishing the Past', p. 61. Note: Emphasis added.

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*, p. 61.

¹⁰⁷ Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 243-4.

¹⁰⁸ Wilcox, 'Relinquishing the Past', p. 59.

from my discussion of the 1913 plan. In this discussion, I emphasised the same points that Wilcox did in referring to the 1914 scheme: the disposition of troops for local defence, the anticipation of the lifting of statutory restrictions on the deployment of forces overseas, and the consideration that was being given to the 'ways in which a "special expeditionary force for employment in an Imperial undertaking" could be raised by voluntary enlistment'.¹⁰⁹

Another important aspect is that Wilcox failed to deal with vital issues that arise from the knowledge that an expeditionary force was on the drawing boards, even though I had exposed these issues in *An Army for a Nation*.

The 1913 plan demonstrates that a significant development had taken place. It provides evidence that an expeditionary force for imperial operations had found its place in Australia's official defence plans, plans which to this time had been focused on national defence. For many years, Australian colonial governments and Federal governments had resisted such developments. Now, for the first time, a new element was added to official military plans addressing the prospect of overseas service for the military forces. This is the goal that men like Chamberlain, Brodrick, Ommanney, Meade, Clarke, Asquith, Haldane, Haig, Nicholson, Kitchener, Hutton, Bridges and Brudenell White had been trying to achieve over a period of nearly two decades. But Wilcox apparently thought such a development was unremarkable and simply reported it without any explanation of its significance. Yet there is clear evidence—evidence that was discussed in *An Army for a Nation* and not dealt with by Wilcox—that demands analysis and explanation before we can let the matter rest.

When I discussed the 1913 plan in *An Army for a Nation*, I acknowledged that it was officially classified as a 'Secret' document. That meant that the plan would only have been revealed to the small number of military officers who then staffed Army Headquarters, the commandants in the military districts and their staffs, the Minister for Defence and a few key public servants. Of course, normal security precautions would have demanded that this plan should be kept secret because it included information on planned military movements in the event of war. Accordingly, the plan was never discussed openly and it was certainly never revealed to the Australian people. The 1914 version of the plan discussed by Wilcox carried the same 'Secret' classification prominently en faced on it as required by law and military security regulations, but Wilcox made no mention of this.¹¹⁰ Giving no indication of who might be aware of the plan's existence, Wilcox stated only that it was 'printed in mid-1914'. Indeed, it was printed, but it was not published. And this is the point that needs to be highlighted: Australians were not told officially that the expeditionary force was in the process of being planned and that other related preparations were in progress. It was being done quietly.

¹⁰⁹ Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 243. Note: cf Wilcox, 'Relinquishing the Past', p. 61.

¹¹⁰ See Commonwealth Defence Scheme, July 1914, MP826/1, item 3, Australian Archives, cited by Wilcox.

I used the 1913 General Scheme of Defence as a vital piece of evidence to demonstrate that formal planning was in progress to provide an expeditionary force to fight with Britain. This was the fulfilment of the undertaking that Pearce had made to Nicholson in 1911. I also referred to the 1912 meeting initiated by Pearce where the Australian Chief of the General Staff and his counterpart from New Zealand were instructed by Pearce behind closed doors to undertake joint planning for the expeditionary force. Pearce also told the secretary of this conference, Major Brudenell White, to keep the notes on plans to contribute an Australian force for overseas service most strictly to himself.¹¹¹ This meeting and its outcomes were described earlier in this monograph. In essence, it was recommended that detailed planning for the expeditionary force should be undertaken and the force should be equipped with *matériel* from Australia's munitions factories. Prime Minister Fisher agreed with these recommendations and informed Prime Minister Massey of New Zealand accordingly in January 1913, adding the reasonable qualification that these preparations were not to be construed as a binding commitment for an Australian Government to dispatch the expeditionary force. That final decision would be made when the time arrived. In the meantime, Brudenell White, as a staff officer at Army headquarters, prepared the necessary plans that would eventually be implemented in August 1914. The young Australian officer was clearly pleased with these developments. 'What has been done in this country, in a military sense, is really quite wonderful,' Brudenell White wrote to Hutton in March 1913,

The Labour [sic] Party certainly deserve great credit for it. At the back of everything too there is a remarkably strong vein of Imperialism. Could you see the Imperialism evident in much that we have in hand now you would be quite astonished.¹¹²

Wilcox referred to the same developments, while making his comment about my work:

By January 1913 a "skeleton plan" for amalgamating voluntary recruits from citizen army units *into an expeditionary force* had begun ... This plan might have been Brudenell White's; he was then busy calculating the number of men needed to form a joint division with New Zealand. ... The Commonwealth Defence Scheme printed in mid-1914—and not discussed in *An Army For a Nation*—indicates that the skeleton plan, still unfinished, was the genesis of the AIF.¹¹³

Why Wilcox referred to the plans as "skeleton" was not explained—subsequently he has referred to them as 'vague plans', also without

¹¹¹ Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 244.

¹¹² *ibid.*, pp. 244-5.

¹¹³ Wilcox, 'Relinquishing the Past', p. 61. Note: Emphasis added.

explanation.¹¹⁴ But the reality was that, if there was any planning left to be done, it could only have been minor detail concerning such issues as administration and transport, issues that were quickly resolved by staff officers at Army headquarters. The bulk of the key decisions and major planning issues required for recruiting and equipping a force had long been dealt with. Recall Pearce's often repeated comment, 'You cannot make an army by merely clapping your hands.' A military force about to take part in industrial age warfare was not simply a collection of individuals. Such forces were highly complex organisations and a number of detailed questions had to be resolved beforehand. How were they to be organised? What were the chief combat components? What supporting arms were required? Was the force to be self-contained? Where were the cooks, the supply elements, the medical support, the veterinary support, the pay clerks and the transport components to come from? What about the arms, the ammunition and the equipment? And so the issues would have been addressed, one by one until a large volume of detailed planning and preparation had been completed. It was not something that could await the outbreak of war. Kitchener's report of 1910 had prepared the groundwork and the developments surrounding the 1911 Imperial Conference had provided the incentive for the Australian Government to proceed with the necessary long-term planning and preparation. As already discussed, the British authorities were well aware of the need for this early preparation, but there were still other details that required resolution for the actual mobilisation of a force. That is why Governor-General, Lord Denman, reported to the British Secretary of State for War in March 1913 in a letter classified 'Secret' that the Commonwealth Defence Scheme was 'in an *advanced state of preparation*' and that the scheme addressed 'in addition to the complete protection of Districts, the formation of a mobile Field Army which has advisedly been termed *an Expeditionary Force*'. Furthermore, Denman reported that 'Additional Plans of Concentration are being prepared to facilitate the transference of Field Army troops [the expeditionary force] from their District places of concentration to alternative points on the east and south coasts of Australia'. 'Plans of Operation' were also being prepared.¹¹⁵ The thoroughness with which the prior planning and preparation were conducted became abundantly clear in September 1914 when, just six weeks after the declaration of war, Australia had over 10,000 men recruited, equipped and organised as complete units ready for embarkation.

¹¹⁴ C. Wilcox, 'Defending Australia 1914 1918: The Other Australian Army', in *1918 Defining Victory*, Dennis & Grey (eds.), Army History Unit, Department of Defence, Canberra, 1998, pp. 173-87. Note: Bean did comment in his history that 'the Defence Scheme' was 'still incomplete' at the outbreak of war, but, later, he claimed that the Defence Scheme did not include planning for an expeditionary force. Yet Wilcox claimed that the 'skeleton plan, still unfinished', dealt solely with forming an expeditionary force. See Bean, 'The Story of ANZAC', pp.23, 27.

¹¹⁵ Overseas Defence Committee Memorandum No. 637 R, Secret, 'Australia: Defence Schemes revised to July 1912', Appendix I, Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia to Secretary of State, Melbourne, March 4, 1913, para. 2 (iv), Cab 9/16, Public Record Office. Note: Emphasis added.

In his critique, Wilcox qualified the extent of prior planning and preparation—in his words, in mid-1914 the ‘skeleton plan’ was ‘still unfinished’, even though Lord Denman had reported to the British authorities that planning was ‘in an advanced state of preparation’ more than one year earlier. But the fact that Wilcox, citing the Commonwealth Defence Scheme as his source, concluded that from 1911 to 1914 Australia *did* develop plans¹¹⁶—whether ‘skeleton’, ‘vague’ or ‘draft’—for a ‘voluntary expeditionary force’ as ‘a contribution towards imperial defence’ still left some matters to be explained.¹¹⁷ To illustrate the problem that confronts Wilcox as a result of his historical account we only have to consider the account of Australia’s entry into World War I as presented by Charles Bean in the official history.

I recounted earlier that Bean recorded in his history that, ‘officially’, there were no plans for dealing with an enemy outside Australia. What did Bean actually write in the official history?

According to Bean, who was writing after the war had finished, so there were no security reasons why the contents of defence plans could not be disclosed:

The Defence Scheme of Australia provided only for the chance of an enemy raiding or invading her shores. A plan for meeting the enemy in the enemy’s own country—or, indeed, anywhere except within Australia—officially had no existence.¹¹⁸

And by my reading of the evidence, Bean would also have ruled out the existence of ‘skeleton plans’ and ‘vague plans’.

So Bean informed readers that the formal plans did not mention planning for an expeditionary force. Yet Wilcox wrote that the plans did deal with a “special expeditionary force for employment in an Imperial undertaking” (And on this occasion Wilcox was correct).¹¹⁹ That Bean referred to the formal plans as the ‘Defence Scheme of Australia’ and not the ‘Commonwealth Defence Scheme’ is not an issue. Perhaps he used this terminology because it sat comfortably with his claim that the plans dealt only with the defence of Australia. Elsewhere, Bean simply referred to the plans as the ‘Defence Scheme’, explaining that they had been in preparation over a period of time with considerable input by Brudenell White.¹²⁰ Indeed, as Bean described it, it was while doing his work on the Defence Scheme that Brudenell White had

¹¹⁶ Wilcox, ‘Relinquishing the Past’, p. 61. Quote: ‘From 1911 to 1914 Australia developed in compulsory military training a strategy for defence against regional threat, and at the same time, by *drafting plans* for raising a voluntary expeditionary force, made possible a contribution towards imperial defence.’ Note: Emphasis added.

¹¹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 61.

¹¹⁸ Bean, ‘The Story of ANZAC’, p. 27. Note: Emphasis added.

¹¹⁹ Wilcox, ‘Relinquishing the Past’, p. 61.

¹²⁰ Bean, ‘The Story of ANZAC’, pp. 22, 23, 27.

requested permission 'to draw up a provisional plan' on which an expeditionary force 'could at any time be quickly organised', but Bean claimed that 'permission was withheld'.¹²¹

I drew attention to the discrepancy in Bean's official history in *An Army for a Nation*. I also noted that Bean claimed in the same work that 'there was no set scheme for common action with Great Britain in case of war'.¹²² However, while Wilcox acknowledged that I had taken issue with Bean's history,¹²³ he did not address the misleading account presented by Bean, even when it was exposed in *An Army for a Nation*. The discrepancy calls out for analysis and understanding. As I wrote in the introduction to *An Army for a Nation*:

It now remains for us to understand why. Why, if Australians were so willing to serve the empire, could they not be told the truth before—or perhaps more importantly after—this significant event in Australian history?¹²⁴

It seems to me that the answer lies in understanding the power of ruling paradigms, how they are developed and whose ends they serve, and how these ruling ideas attract their acolytes and their adherents. Bean's account of Australia's entry to World War I is one of the foundation stones of a British imperialist interpretation of Australia's history. Bean effectively claimed that to be Australian was to be British. It is a perspective that many have shared, but it is a perspective that has corrupted a balanced understanding of Australia's past. Effectively, the imperial interpretation has been built and sustained on a systematic denial of the national dimension of Australia's history.¹²⁵

Some Concluding Comments

Wilcox is not the only historian who has not dealt with the secrecy issue that surrounds planning for the expeditionary force. In his recently published volume in *The Australian Centenary History of Defence, Volume 1, 'The Australian Army'*, Jeffrey Grey quoted from the very War Office records that my research unearthed some 14 years ago. Grey reproduced Nicholson's suggestion to keep quiet about expeditionary force preparations, but did not include Pearce's express intention to comply.¹²⁶ And nowhere else does Grey

¹²¹ *ibid.*, p. 27.

¹²² Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, pp. xv-xvi.

¹²³ Wilcox, 'Relinquishing the Past', p. 53.

¹²⁴ Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. xvii.

¹²⁵ Discussions with Greg Lockhart; See also Greg Lockhart, "'We're So Alone': Two Versions of the Void in Australian Military History', *Australian Historical Studies*, No. 120, October 2002, pp. 389-97.

¹²⁶ J. Grey, 'The Australian Army', Vol. 1, *The Australian Centenary History of Defence*, Vol. I, Oxford University Press, South Melbourne, 2001, p. 34.

deal with the secrecy issue. In a similar fashion, David Horner, in his 1995 book *The Gunners*, noted that:

at the Imperial Conference in London in 1911 the Minister for Defence, Senator Pearce, promised to have mobilisation plans prepared in case an expeditionary force had to be despatched overseas in time of war.

Horner did not mention Nicholson's suggestion to keep quiet about preparations and cited Wilcox's critique of *An Army for a Nation* as the source for his knowledge of Pearce's undertaking. Horner referred his readers to my work, the work which unearthed the existence of the secret War Office meeting where Pearce gave his undertaking and explained its context, for 'a more conspiratorial view'.¹²⁷ 'Conspiratorial' is not the appropriate word in my judgment, but the fact is that the Australian people were not told the truth before and after World War I. What I tried to do was explain this reality of Australia's history. In my opinion, a historian has no other option.

Wilcox and Horner are not the only historians to express reservations about my work. Consider Carl Bridge's recently published judgment. Writing in Joan Beaumont's volume of *The Australian Centenary History of Defence*, Volume VI, 'Australian Defence: Sources and Statistics', Bridge announced his verdict that *An Army for a Nation* was a 'misreading' of history, at least, it seems, in relation to the question of the expeditionary force. The issue that drew Bridge's condemnation was my argument that 'the early citizen army scheme' was

subverted by imperialists—notably Lord Kitchener and his Australian henchmen, Bridges and White, who wanted an imperial expeditionary force rather than an instrument for true national defence.

Bridge did not produce, or refer to, any work of his own to support his statement but, instead, cited Wilcox's 1998 book *For Hearths and Homes* which, according to Bridge,

shows that the citizen soldiering tradition was an Australian variation on British models and that, to the mind-set of most Australians in 1914, empire and nation were not in opposition to each other but part of a continuum.¹²⁸

It is a remarkable claim by Bridge because in his book Wilcox did not deal with the imperial-national dialectic at all and produced a tension-free account of Australia's preparations for war. Wilcox recounted that a part of Australia's preparations for the outbreak of war included plans for an expeditionary force. 'In accordance with imperial wishes,' Wilcox wrote,

¹²⁷ D. Horner, *The Gunners: A History of Australian Artillery*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1995, p. 62 and f/n 32.

¹²⁸ J. Beaumont, 'Australian Defence: Sources and Statistics', *The Australian Centenary History of Defence*, Vol. VI, Oxford University Press, South Melbourne, 2001, p. 83.

planning had begun for the swift raising of a 20,000-strong special Australian and New Zealand expeditionary force to fight in Europe once war began.¹²⁹

But why was it done quietly? And why does Bean's official history contradict Wilcox's claim on this vital issue?

These are questions which are at the very heart of Australia's early defence developments. To deal with them and their implications can lead to a better understanding of the history of the Australian military forces. Yet, in the same volume that Carl Bridge referred to my work as a 'misreading', Wilcox discussed works on the Australian military forces before World War I. 'There is no book-length history of the subject,' Wilcox announced.¹³⁰

So what was *An Army for a Nation: A history of Australian military developments 1880–1914* all about?

The history of our military forces is not simply concerned with rank and file, badges, uniforms, Easter camps, and Saturday afternoons at the drill hall. The military forces were fundamentally shaped by the politics of nation and empire. The extent and intensity of this interaction before the World War I is not well understood today. We need only to reconsider General Sir Ian Hamilton's letter to Prime Minister Asquith in April 1914 to see that the 'mind-set of most Australians in 1914' was not quite as definite as, for example, Carl Bridge seems to believe. It will be recalled that Hamilton, as Inspector General Overseas Forces, was conducting an inspection of the Australian military forces and informed Asquith in April 1914 that:

I had fully meant when I came out here to urge upon the Commonwealth the importance of having some small section of their army earmarked, in peace, for expeditionary Imperial service. But I see now I could defeat my own object and weaken the effect of the whole of the rest of my report were I to touch that string. *The whole* of the vital force of the country, i.e. *the rank and file of its people*, are standing firm together against any such proposition.¹³¹

Hamilton's comments highlight the reason why Australia's political leaders employed secrecy in making preparations for the expeditionary force. The historical context was explained in *An Army for Nation*. Indeed, without secrecy it is doubtful that there would have been sufficient political stability in Australia to implement the comprehensive military preparations in the years 1911-1914. There might not have been any Australian force ready for Gallipoli.

¹²⁹ C. Wilcox, *For Hearths and Homes: Citizen soldiering in Australia 1854-1945*, Allen & Unwin, 1995, p. 74.

¹³⁰ Beaumont, 'Australian Defence: Sources and Statistics', p. 102.

¹³¹ Hamilton to Asquith, 14 April 1914, Hamilton 5/1/87, Hamilton Papers, Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College London. Note: Emphasis added.

The secrecy issue that surrounds Australia's preparations for World War I is connected intimately with the ANZAC story that is a foundation stone of Australia's national identity. It is not something that we can put aside. The evidence indicates that Nicholson's advice that 'we should do this thing quietly' and Pearce's complicity are real events in our past; we can be as certain of this as we can be that Australian troops stormed the beaches at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915. When this evidence is considered in conjunction with Bean's account of Australia's entry into World War I another dimension—the national dimension—of Australia's past is revealed. With knowledge of this dimension Australians today and in the future might be better equipped to make appropriate judgments on how and when our forces should be deployed on active service.