ACU
AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

Research Bank
Phd Thesis

Negotiating Imperial Unity: Colonial Australian Contributions to British Wars, 1885–1902.

Little, Alex

Little, Alex (2023) Negotiating Imperial Unity: Colonial Australian Contributions to British Wars, 1885–1902 [PhD Thesis]. Australian Catholic University. DOI: https://doi.org/10.26199/acu.9018v

This work © 2023, Alex Little, is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International.
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/deed.en

Negotiating Imperial Unity:

Colonial Australian Contributions to British Wars, 1885–1902

Submitted by Alex Little

A thesis submitted in total fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy (History)

School of Arts

Australian Catholic University

2023

This thesis contains no material that has been extracted in whole or in part from a thesis that I have submitted towards the award of any other degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis.

All research procedures reported in the thesis received the approval of the relevant Ethics/Safety Committees (where required)

Signed:

Alex Little

19th June 2023

With thanks to my supervision team; Dr. Benjamin Mountford, Dr. Margaret Hutchison, Dr. Thomas Rogers, and Professor Noah Riseman.

I would also like to thank my Candidature Milestone panel, Associate Professor Nell Musgrove, Associate Professor Mark Chou, and Professor Keir Reeves.

Finally, I would also like to thank Emily Clinch, friends, and family for their support throughout.

Table of Contents

List of Figures:

Thesis Abstract

This thesis examines the Australian colonies' relationship with British imperial defence through their participation in British wars in the late nineteenth to early twentieth century. It looks at the evolving Australian responsibility to further share the burden of defending Britain's empire. The Australian colonies' undefined role within this imperial system was the subject of continual negotiation between the colonial and British governments throughout this crucial period in the Anglo-Australian relationship. This thesis examines these developments through the lens of three critical case studies, each offering crucial insights into how the colonies could more actively contribute to defending British interests: the Sudan crisis of 1885, the South African War (1899–1902), and the Boxer Rebellion in China (1900–1901). Each of these conflicts represented a commitment by one or more Australian colonies in response to overseas imperial crises through the raising, equipping and despatch of colonial contingents.

Historians have traditionally treated these conflicts as preludes to the more substantial Australian commitment to the First World War, or as individualised and novel experiences for Australia's developing military and navy. This thesis shifts this perception by situating these conflicts within the distinct period of 1870–1902, defined by the Age of High Imperialism and Britain's need to bring its empire into order in the face of increasing imperial competition. As such, it identifies these conflicts as not simply showing the linear progression towards greater Australian involvement in British wars, but rather as key windows into the negotiation of the Australian position on wider imperial affairs. This thesis unpacks the contemporary debates surrounding Australian responsibility towards defending Britain's empire, and how this position was often defined by the Australian colonies' own emerging nationalist interests.

As such, this thesis brings these conflicts into the one comprehensive study to draw out the underlying themes underpinning Australian approaches to British crises. It examines these conflicts in chronological order, assessing how the Australian colonial leaders perceived their evolving responsibility to imperial defence, and how they interpreted the emerging pattern that they appeared to be establishing with the increasing commitment to imperial wars. By employing a comparative and empirical methodology, while drawing upon a wealth of archival material in Australian and British archives, this thesis reshapes our

understanding of Australia's position in broader developments of imperial defence in the late Victorian and early Edwardian British Empire.

What emerges from this study of the Sudan, China, and South Africa conflicts is a host of nationalist interests that informed the Australian colonies negotiations with the British Official Mind. The major contestation at the centre of this relationship was Britain's need for the Australian colonies to further buy in to Britain's defensive network, while the Australian colonies were wary of any commitments that would tread upon their independence. However, there was much for the Australian colonies to gain from a defence defined by these colonial contributions. In addition to the invaluable experience of colonial forces fighting alongside seasoned British troops, these contributions placed imperial sentiment at the forefront of their relationship with Britain's defence, one that Australian leaders hoped would result in Britain coming to their own defence should Australia be threatened. This thesis examines this crucial period in the Anglo-Australian relationship where the Australian colonies sought to reshape how they fit within British imperial defence.

Note Regarding Text

This thesis uses modernised names for places throughout, however, it retains the original spellings of place names when quoted within primary documents in order to stay true to the author's original intentions. The main examples include:

'Suakin' is used in place of 'Suakim'.

'Sudan' is used in place of 'Soudan'.

'Shandong' is used in place of 'Shantung'.

'Tianjin' is used in place of 'Tientsin'.

'Beijing' is used in place of 'Peking'.

Acronyms are expanded in the text of this thesis. The three most commonly used in referencing are:

AWM = Australian War Memorial.

SLV = State Library of Victoria.

AJCP = Australian Joint Copying Project.

When available, page numbers available within archival resources have been referenced in order to help subsequent scholars access specific quotes and ideas.

Introduction

As New South Wales troops stood upon Australian soil again following their stint in Sudan, they were 'glad that the business [was] over'.[1] Their muted reception upon returning to the colony on 23 June 1885 was just the latest disappointment. Having enthusiastically enlisted to fight in a British campaign in early 1885, the contingent went on to endure searing Sudanese heat, monotonous guard duty, and a typhoid epidemic during their short stint in Africa. To make matters worse, they were forced into quarantine aboard the vessel *Arab* once they had finally made it home. Only a few months before, they had proudly marched through Sydney's streets among fervent crowds, carrying with them seemingly infinite possibilities of heroic service for the British Empire. Now, as they stood in pouring rain which drowned out the abbreviated speeches, they could truly appreciate how quickly the whole affair had soured. Their return, the *Bulletin* summarised, was 'funereal in the extreme'.[2]

The Sudan affair had felt like a whirlwind to those involved in the campaign. On 12 February 1885, acting New South Wales Premier, William Dalley, enthusiastically offered a contingent of 750 troops to assist the British response to Mahdist territorial expansion in Sudan. It was an offer driven by passion, rather than pragmatism. The public and rival governments alike celebrated Dalley's proactiveness throughout the Australian colonies, stirring an imperialist fervour that Dalley defined as an 'enthusiasm of sacrifice — of heroism'.[3] However, during their short campaign, the New South Wales contingent seldom even met their Mahdist adversaries. The contingent was construed as a symbolic gesture of solidarity with Britain. But the 'The great hopes which the good citizens of New South Wales had placed in their contingent', as military historian Jeffrey Grey has put it, 'had not been realised'.[4] However, many throughout the Australian colonies framed the Sudan campaign as a symbolic milestone in their history. The contingent represented what could potentially be an epochal shift in these colonies becoming more active participants within Britain's imperial project.

---

[1] 'The Contingent. Reception of the New South Wales Contingent to the Soudan'. *Sydney Morning Herald.* 24 June 1885, 7.
[2] 'The Contingents March-Past'. *Bulletin*. 27 June 1885, 12.
[3] 'Mr Dalley's Defence'. *The Daily Telegraph.* 13 March 1885, 4.
[4] Jeffrey Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, 3rd ed. (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 49.

The idea of Australians engaging in foreign military service soured in the immediate years following 1885 but was never truly extinguished. At the 1897 Colonial Conference in London, New South Wales Premier, George Reid, and his fellow Australian leaders proved irritatingly non-committal when it came to progressing matters of defence. Instead, Reid assured British Secretary of State for the Colonies, Joseph Chamberlain, that: 'The great test of our relations, I submit, will be the next war in which England is engaged. She is not likely ever to be engaged in an unrighteous war or in an aggressive war. If engaged in a defensive war you would find that sentiment would determine everything'.[5] In only a few short years, that sentiment gripped the Australian colonies once again. Colonial leaders responded to imperial crises in South Africa and China by pledging contingents that they hoped might provide invaluable assistance to the empire, or at least alleviate some of its burden. Reid's words depicted the Australian colonies as willing to make this sacrifice at the sign of any threat to British paramountcy. But when it came to the practical reality of committing to an ongoing, consistent framework for imperial defence, Australian leaders were wary of anything that might impinge on colonial self-government.

During the late Victorian and early Edwardian era, Australian responsibility for imperial defence was subject to continual negotiation between the Australian colonies and the British government. This thesis examines that relationship and considers its implications for Anglo-Australian relations and how contemporaries understood Australia's place within an evolving British Empire. In contrast to previous scholarship, it takes the years between 1870 and 1902 as a distinct, underexamined era in the history of imperial defence and Australia's imperial relationship. Across this period, this thesis investigates three critical case studies which together provide fresh insights into contemporary debates over how the colonies might take a more active role in defending British interests: the Sudan crisis (1885), the South African War (1899–1902), and the Boxer Rebellion in China (1900–1901). Each of these conflicts represented a commitment by one or more of the Australian colonies in response to overseas imperial crises, characterised by the raising, equipping and deployment of colonial contingents. Rather than approach these wars as stepping stones towards the more pronounced military contribution of Australian troops in the First World War, this thesis examines these conflicts in the context of the increasing imperial competition faced by

[5] Report of a Conference Between the Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain, M.P. and the Premiers of the Self-Governing Colonies of the Empire, Colonial Office Document, Miscellaneous No. 111, 1897, 107.

Britain during the Age of High Imperialism in the late Victorian and early Edwardian era. It interrogates the determination by a range of actors with differing interests in Britain, Australia, and beyond to find new ways for the empire's prospering independent settler colonies to further contribute to its security.

By looking at these three conflicts from this vantage point, this thesis brings to the fore two crucial themes that defined the Anglo-Australian relationship in this period. First, Australian colonial leaders sought to influence imperial affairs more substantially than previously had been granted to them through local independence, particularly on aspects of foreign policy that directly impacted them. But second, these same leaders sought to protect colonial independence and were wary of being imposed upon by British governments seeking to draw them into a more binding military, economic, and political commitment to imperial defence. These ideas involved collaboration with British governments that aimed to further incorporate these settler colonies into a grander vision of the imperial project. To do so involved the reform of empire. Britain needed to transform the settler colonies from burdens that required exorbitant amounts of defensive funding, into assets that contributed to alleviating the costs of running the empire.[6] If the British Empire was to survive in a world filled with increasingly ambitious imperial rivals, policymakers needed to ensure the efficient deployment of resources between the colonies and the imperial centre. By drawing these two themes together, this thesis examines the difficult evolution of how the Australian colonies contributed to imperial defence.

This thesis argues that underlying these conflicts was a sense of uncertainty, primarily regarding the possibility that Australian colonial contributions might establish a precedent for how these colonies should contribute to the defence of the empire. At the core of this idea was the potential for Australian soldiers being deployed to supplement the British Army in both a practical and symbolic manner. The following chapters trace the evolution of this concept through the first despatch of an Australian contingent for imperial service in Sudan in 1885, to the contributions to both the South African and Boxer wars at the turn of the century and finally to the demise of the concept of an imperial reserve at the 1902 Colonial

[6] John Darwin, 'A Third British Empire? The Dominion Idea in Imperial Politics', in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, ed. Judith Brown, vol. IV: The Twentieth Century (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 64–5; Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* (London: Penguin Books, 1976), 178–80.

Conference. Colonial governments approached each conflict upon their own merits, but these contributions also sat within the wider discourse surrounding Australian responsibility to the British Empire. Underlining these contributions was the possibility that they might indicate the future of how the settler colonies could further contribute to its defence. By examining these three conflicts as critical junctures in a distinct period in the Anglo-Australian relationship, this thesis affords an insight into the tensions between the Australian and British governments as they sought to better define how these colonies fit within the transforming empire.

These three conflicts on which this thesis focuses provide windows into the wider evolution of Australian perceptions of local and imperial defence responsibilities. The Sudan expedition of 1885 saw a New South Wales contingent, numbering roughly 750, participate in the British campaign against Mahdist forces following the execution of imperial hero, General Charles Gordon, in Khartoum. In 1899, each of the Australian colonies sent multiple contingents to assist the British in their war against the Boers in South Africa in what became a prolonged and difficult conflict. Finally, international outrage over the Boxer Rebellion that flared up in China during 1900 led to the emergence of an Eight-Nation Alliance; here a small naval force of Australian men from New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia participated. Each of these conflicts represented no direct immediate threat to Australian security, yet their challenge to British economic and imperial interests was significant enough for the Australian colonies to commit a portion of their limited defensive resources to these overseas wars. This thesis unpacks and analyses the reasons why the Australian colonies became involved in these imperial conflicts and investigates the contemporary debates that surrounded and underpinned these commitments.

These conflicts took place within a crucial thirty-year period in Anglo-Australian relations. After considerable discussion regarding the costs of maintaining British troops in Australia, their slow removal from Australian shores left the colonies responsible for their own defences by 1870.[7] While the Royal Navy was intended to remain the ultimate guarantor of security, colonial authorities still experimented with channelling their zeal for imperialism into more direct means of protecting their isolated continent. The British government shared their fears. The accelerating imperial aggression demonstrated by Britain's traditional rivals

[7] Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, 41.

(France and Russia, soon to be joined by Germany under the policy of *Weltpolitik*) in the late nineteenth century disrupted the *Pax Britannica*, but also brought into sharper focus the vulnerabilities of Australia in the Pacific region.[8] The story of these three conflicts is entwined with the re-imagining of Britain's Empire and its place within the world around the turn of the twentieth century and, particularly, the evolving role of the white settler colonies in shaping the imperial future.

The primary contention emerging between colonial governments and the British imperial mind (British policy makers whose ideas and intelligence impacted British imperial policy) during the Age of High Imperialism, was how Britain could further gain economic and military support from the colonies without encroaching upon their willingness to shape their own future.[9] John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson in their pivotal article, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade' speak to British imperialism's adaptability. 'Imperialism', they proposed, 'may be defined as a sufficient political function of integrating new regions into the expanding economy; its character is largely decided by the various and changing relationships between the political and economic elements of expansion in any particular region and time'.[10] Historian John Darwin claims the imperial system had two fundamental requirements. One was collaboration at home, which provided the political and economic consensus needed to meet the costs of empire, but the other was an effective means of imperial defence with the co-operation of political allies in all colonial and semi-colonial hinterlands.[11] Facing the need to ensure that the empire was able to sustain itself into an unknowable and increasingly precarious future, the Colonial Office's need for its settler colonies to buy into the empire's defence appeared not only desirable, but increasingly urgent.

The Australian colonial leaders were equally anxious regarding their own place in a reformed empire but were resistant when it came to conceding any ground to London on issues that might impact their own interests. By the end of the 1850s, most of the Australian

[8] *Pax Britannica*, or the 'British Peace' refers to the period following the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 where British hegemony was relatively unchallenged throughout much of the world. John Darwin, *Unfinished Empire: The Global Expansion of Britain* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2014), 328; Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire: 1875–1914* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 56–7.
[9] Ronald Robinson, John Gallagher, and Alice Denny, *Africa and the Victorians* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1961), 19.
[10] John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade', *The Economic History Review* 6, no. 1 (1953): 5–6
[11] Darwin, 'A Third British Empire?', 64.

colonies (Western Australia being the exception until 1890) had been granted local political autonomy, with foreign policy left largely to the machinery of the British Foreign Office.[12] The potential opening up of imperial matters afforded Australian statesmen the opportunity to assert their own positions on foreign affairs, though crucially, this often revealed the stark divisions between the metropole and the colonies. In the face of such tensions, the maintenance of a form of imperial sentiment binding the empire together remained of utmost importance. When justifying their contributions to British wars, Australian colonial leaders presented them as a form of insurance for when Australia might require direct British protection. This was what Reid defined as defence based upon 'sentimentality' rather than binding agreement.[13] Future Australian Prime Minister Edmund Barton best expressed this idea of 'insurance' in a speech in 1885 when the Sudan contingent was being prepared. 'I want to know whether we want to consider ourselves English or not?' Barton stated, 'When the time of trouble comes and we do not stand shoulder to shoulder with our fellow-subjects of Great Britain can we expect them to do so for us?'[14]

Analysing these conflicts affords key insights into the broader Anglo-Australian relationship. The primary justification by colonial governments for their involvement in these wars was to demonstrate the united strength of the British Empire, a vision which British leaders were eager to cultivate and exhibit during these moments of crisis. In reality, however, these situation proved more complicated. They often meant negotiation between the Australian colonies who were far from united amongst themselves. Colonial governments were prone to their own anxieties over their place within the empire, and the Colonial Office. But the colonies also stood to gain much by sending troops to these wars. These conflicts provided the opportunity for the colonies' own, often under-utilised, forces to develop experience in warfare. At the same time, they provided a chance to test the colonies' military capability and revealed some of the fears both governments and troops felt in measuring up to the more seasoned British forces. Yet, most significantly, these conflicts presented colonial leaders with challenging questions of precedent. Were the Australian colonies setting a standard they would be held to through their multiple contributions to British conflicts? What were the potential ramifications for future

[12] Ann Curthoys and Jessie Mitchell, 'The Advent of Self-Government, 1840s–90', in *The Cambridge History of Australia*, ed. Alison Bashford and Stuart Macintyre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 149.
[13] Report of a Conference, 1897, 107.
[14] 'The Patriotic Fund'. *Sydney Morning Herald.* 21 February 1885, 11.

contributions? Were they, in effect, committing to fighting all of Britain's wars whenever they arose?

This thesis explores these complex inter-colonial and intra-imperial dynamics. However, New Zealand, arguably the most comparable of the other white settler colonies, because it shared many similarities in imperial outlook to the Australian colonies, is not included as a focus of this study. New Zealand only participated in the South African War, and any analysis of New Zealand's contributions and ideas about imperial defence requires a broader consideration of that colony's relationship with Britain, including, of course, the New Zealand Wars (1845–1872).[15] By excluding New Zealand, this thesis can home in on the nuances of the Australian inter-colonial relationship. The Australian colonies' responses to the Sudan, China, and South African conflicts required a degree of co-ordination between the colonial governments, but also revealed pre-existing rivalries and hierarchies in their relationship with Britain and each other, which caused these colonies to interpret their responsibility towards imperial defence in different ways. The historians Rachel Bright and Andrew Dilley have lamented that that in most studies of the British Empire: 'there is almost a complete absence of recognition that colonies had relationships with each other'.[16] Recognising this omission, this thesis seeks to discuss where New Zealand's (and to a lesser extent, Canada's) position on imperial defence intersected with contemporaneous debates in the Australian colonies. In doing so, it hopes to open pathways for future research by imperial historians concerned with inter-dominion relations.

This thesis re-frames our understanding of how the Australian colonies were positioned within broader developments of British imperial defence in the late nineteenth century. Within this Anglo-Australian relationship, discussions surrounding the Australian colonies' use of local defensive resources were not just indicative of their nascent military trajectory, but also critical in understanding broader contemporary debates surrounding how settler colonies could defend Britain's empire. The Sudan, China, and South African conflicts have traditionally been undervalued as moments pointing towards a changing global outlook within the Australian colonies. In examining them together, this thesis situates these

[15] Damien Fenton, 'Australians in the New Zealand Wars', in *Before the Anzac Dawn: A Military History of Australia before 1915*, ed. Craig Stockings and John Connor (Sydney: NewSouth, 2013), 118–47. Also see, James Belich, *The New Zealand Wars and the Victorian Interpretation of Racial Conflict*, 2nd ed. (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2015).
[16] Rachel Bright and Andrew Dilley, 'After the British World', *The Historical Journal* 60, no. 2 (2017): 564.

conflicts not as a linear progression towards greater Australian involvement in British wars, but rather as key windows into the negotiation of the Australian position on wider imperial affairs, defined by the balancing of imperial sentiment and Australian nationalist interests. This thesis examines the way contemporaries understood and managed the Australian colonies' role in defence, and how they fit into a changing system of imperial defence.

Historiography

Several traditions of historical scholarship inform this thesis, but it is largely grounded in Australian military and British imperial schools of history. It builds on Australian military history by focusing on three conflicts that have attracted less attention when compared to the major wars of the twentieth century, but which provide unique insight into the development of the Anglo-Australian relationship in the late Victorian and early Edwardian era. While the three case studies — the Sudan crisis, the South African War, and the Boxer Rebellion — have often been studied individually, they have rarely been examined together. Doing so, as this thesis demonstrates, is revealing, as it enables us to understand how the Australian colonies negotiated their role in Britain's imperial defence network. In turn, this shifts our understanding of these wars away from being seen as simply precursors to the more significant Australian military contribution seen in the First World War. Instead, this thesis places them within the wider re-assessment of Britain's empire in the face of increasing imperial competition. In doing so, it explores what these conflicts reveal about the changing nature of the Australian colonies' place in the wider scheme of imperial defence.

When examining the Victorian era, broader histories of Australia have mostly overlooked these conflicts to focus on the substantial economic, cultural, and political developments that marked the late nineteenth century, and Australia's path to federation. Manning Clark's *A History of Australia*, published between 1962 and 1987, *The Oxford History of Australia*, published between 1986 and 1992, and *The Cambridge History of Australia,* all reflect this treatment. Clark only gives passing mention to the Sudan contingent, while the South

African War sits in the background of his more detailed discussion of Australian federation.[17] *The Cambridge History of Australia* also pays little attention to these conflicts beyond Melissa Bellanta's chapter that briefly connects the South African War to the wider idea of Australian national identity that, she argues, existed alongside a 'passionate commitment to British culture and imperial might'.[18] *The Oxford History of Australia* gives the most attention to these campaigns, predominantly in Beverley Kingston's third volume, *Glad, Confident Morning: 1860–1900*, though it only touches on how these conflicts related to imperial defence.[19] All three influential works demonstrate the relatively small place these wars have granted in broad surveys of Australian history.[20] As the following chapters illustrate, this thesis argues that when taken together these conflicts are central to understanding Australian development in the late nineteenth century and are deserving of more serious consideration within surveys of Australian history than they have traditionally been given.

Naturally, these conflicts have been given greater attention by scholars of Australian military history. The contingents deployed to Sudan, China and South Africa have garnered only a fraction of the studies that have been published on the major wars of the twentieth century, while they are also given minimal representation in Australia's foremost institutional recognition of its armed forces, the Australian War Memorial. This is understandable given the scope of Australian involvement in twentieth century conflicts and the wealth and depth of material available. Historians have traditionally treated the Sudan crisis, South African War and Boxer Rebellion in one of two ways. The first approach is to position these wars, particularly the Sudan crisis and the South African War, within the broader context of Australian military development. The most successful of these works is Jeffrey Grey's *A Military History of Australia*, which brings these conflicts into the longer narrative of how

[17] C. M. H. Clark, *A History of Australia*, vol. IV: The Earth Abideth For Ever, 1851–1888 (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1978); C. M. H. Clark, *A History of Australia*, vol. V: The People Make Laws, 1888–1915 (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1981).
[18] Melissa Bellanta, 'Rethinking the 1890s', in *The Cambridge History of Australia*, vol. I: Indigenous and Colonial Australia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 236–7.
[19] Beverley Kingston, *The Oxford History of Australia*, vol. III: Glad, Confident Morning, 1860–1900 (Melbourne: Oxford University Press Australia, 1988). The South African War is only briefly mentioned in Stuart Macintyre, *The Oxford History of Australia*, vol. IV: The Succeeding Age, 1901–1942 (Melbourne: Oxford University Press Australia, 1988).
[20] All three conflicts are only briefly mentioned in Mark Peel and Christina Twomey, as well as Stuart Macintyre's histories of Australia. Both books frame these contributions as demonstrating Australian willingness to participate in British conflicts. See Mark Peel and Christina Twomey, *A History of Australia*, 2nd ed. (United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 146–7; Stuart Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia*, 4th ed. (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 144.

Australia's defence developed from European settlement onwards while also placing them within the broader context of the Anglo-Australian relationship.[21] Other more specialised studies of Australian military history have also considered these conflicts as an important starting point for following social and cultural elements of war into the twentieth century. Fay Anderson and Richard Trembath's *Witnesses to War: The History of Australian Conflict Reporting* discusses these conflicts by focusing on the war correspondents attached to the contingents, while Ken Inglis' *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape* also uses these conflicts as a starting point while focusing on commemoration of war through memorials across Australia.[22] Other accounts elect to use Australian federation as a starting point, such as Grey's *The Australian Army: A History*, and so consequentially the colonial period is dealt with only sparingly.[23] The sheer scope of these studies means they often move quickly on from the colonial period and conflicts of that era.

There are a few key works in which historians have explored the military context of the colonial period in Australian history. Craig Stockings and John Connor's *Before the Anzac Dawn,* focuses on Australia's military battles prior to the Dardanelles campaign in the First World War, though treats these conflicts as individual incidents and situates them within established narratives of wars of the twentieth century.[24] Other historians have sought to understand colonial conflicts in different ways. Henry Reynolds' books, *Forgotten War* and *Unnecessary Wars* released in 2013 and 2016 respectively, contextualises these wars in relation to the ongoing frontier wars waged alongside them. Reynolds argues that these overseas conflicts, specifically Sudan and the South African War, have been assimilated into traditions of Australian military history, while the frontier wars have not.[25] Samuel Hutchison's *Settlers, War, and Empire in the Press* examines the Sudan and South African conflicts, alongside the New Zealand Wars using newspapers and 'the narratives that

[21] Grey, *A Military History of Australia*.
[22] Fay Anderson and Richard Trembath, *Witnesses to War: The History of Australian Conflict Reporting* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2011); K. S. Inglis, *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1998).
[23] Jeffrey Grey, *The Australian Army: A History* (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2001). Other examples include a history endorsed by the Australian Defence Force which is sparing of the wars fought by Australians at the turn of the twentieth century, see George Odgers, *100 Years of Australians at War*, 2nd ed. (Sydney: Lansdowne Publishing, 2003), 15–37.
[24] Craig Stockings and John Connor, eds., *Before the Anzac Dawn: A Military History of Australia before 1915* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2013). Also see Kit Denton, *For Queen and Commonwealth* (Sydney: Time-Life Books, 1987).
[25] Henry Reynolds, *Forgotten War* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2013); Henry Reynolds, *Unnecessary Wars* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2016).

attended this involvement' to analyse these conflicts from a socio-cultural perspective.[26] The most thorough study of Australia's defence during this period is Craig Stockings' *Britannia's Shield: Lieutenant-General Sir Edward Hutton and Late-Victorian Imperial Defence*, which examines the development of Australia's imperial defence largely through a biography of the key figure of Lieutenant-General Edward Hutton, the British officer who played a critical role in the organisation of the Australian army.[27] Due to its subject matter, Stockings' work leans further towards the South African War, and the Canadian experience. This thesis builds upon the traditions of these studies, but brings together and contextualises Australia's contribution to these conflicts as a means to understand Australia's relationship with Britain's Empire and the potential for Australia to use military contingents as the means to further defend imperial interests.

The second approach military historians take is to study each conflict in isolation.[28] Such specialist works have typically focused on the experience of the campaign, both on the home front in Australia and with the troops overseas. Driven by a desire to document these conflicts and bring them to wider attention (often referring to them as 'forgotten wars' or 'rehearsals'), historians rarely extend their discussions to include the wider implications of these conflicts.[29] This thesis draws upon these studies but extends beyond their boundaries to understand their significance within the broader period of the Age of High Imperialism, defined by Britain facing escalating imperial challenges while Australia was undergoing its own economic, political, and cultural transformations. By focusing on Australia's

[26] Samuel Hutchinson, *Settlers, War, and Empire in the Press: Unsettling News in Australia and Britain, 1863–1902.* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 3.

[27] Craig Stockings, *Britannia's Shield: Lieutenant-General Sir Edward Hutton and Late-Victorian Imperial Defence* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2015). Other books on Australia and imperialism in the late nineteenth to early twentieth century includes Neville Meaney, *The Search for Security in the Pacific*, Vol. I: A History of Australian Defence and Foreign Policy, 1901–1923 (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1976); Roger Thompson, *Australian Imperialism in the Pacific: The Expansionist Era, 1820–1920* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1980); Greg Kennedy, ed., *Imperial Defence: The Old World Order 1856–1956* (London: Routledge, 2008).

[28] Some examples that will be discussed further include L. M. Field, *The Forgotten War: Australian Involvement in the South African Conflict of 1899–1902* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1979); Malcolm Saunders, *Britain, The Australian Colonies, and the Sudan Campaigns of 1884–85*, University of New England History Series 5 (Sydney: University of New England, 1985); Bob Nicholls, *Bluejackets and Boxers: Australia's Naval Expedition to the Boxer Uprising* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1986).

[29] This treatment is best exemplified by two earlier works on the South African War by L. M. Field and R. L. Wallace who effectively end their coverage with the signing of the Treaty of Vereeniging on 31 May 1902. See Field, *The Forgotten War*; R. L. Wallace, *The Australians at the Boer War* (Sydney: National Boer War Memorial Association, 1976). This is later addressed by Craig Wilcox's history of the war at the beginning of the twenty-first century, see Craig Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War: The War in South Africa, 1899–1902* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2002). In addition to Field's 'Forgotten War' above, see K. S. Inglis, *The Rehearsal: Australians at War in the Sudan, 1885* (Sydney: Kevin Weldon & Associates, 1985).

contribution to colonial wars in this period, this thesis seeks to free these conflicts from individualised studies. In doing so, it allows for further focus on how they each represent critical moments in a broader historical narrative and the transformation of the settler colonies' position in an increasingly challenged imperial system.

This research intersects with two of the dominant approaches to Australian military history: first, 'traditional military histories' that focus upon command, operations and leadership largely through empirical research; and second, 'war and society' which examines the impact of war on societies, politics and economics.[30] Drawing on both approaches, this thesis unpacks the conflicts themselves, but also examines their wider impact on Australian society and the Australian relationship with the British Empire. What is revealed is the story of military engagements that were intended to show solidarity with the British Empire, but also intertwined with a host of local Australian interests in security and external affairs.

Australian involvement in all three conflicts often goes unmentioned in wider international studies. The Mahdist uprising in Sudan has been the subject of much scholarship. Studies that generally focus on the wider campaign, of which the New South Wales contingent played a small part, are Fergus Nicoll's *The Sword and the Prophet* and Daniel Allen Butler's *The First Jihad*.[31] Within these works, Australian contributions are often bound up in the wider narrative of Britain's turbulent occupation of Egypt where their few months guarding railway lines is, understandably, not heavily considered.[32] The Boxer Rebellion has been the

[30] Joan Beaumont, 'ANZAC Day to VP Day: Arguments and Interpretations', *Journal of the Australian War Memorial*, no. 40 (2007): 2–3. Beaumont's third approach, 'memory studies', has defined much of the Australian approach to war history since the 1970s and remains for the most part outside the aims of this thesis. There continues to be a great deal of room for more exploration of how these conflicts affected its participants in the years that followed, an approach that has seen some movement by historians such as Effie Karageorgos regarding the South African War, but has not yielded quite the same attention as studies of the First World War, see Effie Karageorgos, 'Mental Illness, Masculinity, and the Australian Soldier: Military Psychiatry from South Africa to the First World War', *Health and History* 20, no. 2 (2018): 10–29; Effie Karageorgos, '"An Act of Grace": Reading Gender and Nationalism Within Australian South African War Pension Provisions', *Australian Historical Studies* 53, no. 1 (2022): 75–96.

[31] Fergus Nicoll, *The Sword of the Prophet: The Mahdi of Sudan and the Death of General Gordon* (United Kingdom: Sutton Publishing, 2004); Daniel Allen Butler, *The First Jihad: The Battle for Khartoum and the Dawn of Militant Islam* (Philadelphia: Casemate, 2007).

[32] Other works on the conflict include P. M. Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan, 1881–1898: A Study of Its Origins, Development and Overthrow* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970); Colonel Mike Snook, *Beyond the Reach of Empire: Wolseley's Failed Campaign to Save Gordon and Khartoum* (United Kingdom: Frontline Books, 2013). For context of the British occupation of Egypt, see M. W. Daly, 'The British Occupation, 1882–1922', in *The Cambridge History of Egypt: Volume Two, Modern Egypt, from 1517 to the End of the Twentieth Century*, ed. M. W. Daly, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 239–51. For the wider context of the Mahdist War also serves as an important moment in the making of Modern Sudan, see P. M. Holt, *A Modern History of Sudan, from the Funj Sultanate to the Present Day* (London: Weidenfeld and

subject of wider historical inquiry, both due to international resonance of the crisis and its place within a period of geo-political turmoil within China, dubbed the 'century of humiliation'. Most notable of these are Lanxin Xiang, *The Origins of the Boxer War*, Robert Bickers and R. G. Tiedemann's edited book, *The Boxers, China, and the World* and Diana Preston's *The Boxer Rebellion*, all showcasing the multinational approach taken to the conflict.[33] Like broader Sudan studies, these too rarely mention participation by Australian naval forces, who are generally considered to be indistinct from Britain's own response to the conflict.

Historians in both Britain and South Africa have produced broader appraisals of the South African War, bringing together both perspectives of the conflict. On the British side, James Barbary, Thomas Pakenham, Dennis Judd and Keith Surridge have all penned books published in the 1970s, 1990s and 2000s respectively, all titled *The Boer War*, providing comprehensive detail of the conflict while considering the political and economic dimensions that led to war breaking out in South Africa. On the South African side, Bill Nasson's two works, *The South African War: 1899–1902* and *The War for South Africa: The Anglo-Boer War, 1899–1902* as well as Owen Coetzer's *Fire in the Sky: The Destruction of the Orange Free State, 1899–1902* seek to do the same.[34] These studies provide greater detail of Australian involvement in the South African War than the Sudan or Boxer books, but their role is generally bound up in the broader context of British command over the war, and these works are primarily focused on the role of the senior British figures who led these contingents.[35]

Nicholson, 1961). For a more recent work on the subject, see Robert O. Collins, *A History of Modern Sudan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 21–32.

[33] Lanxin Xiang, *The Origins of the Boxer War: A Multinational Study* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003); Robert Bickers and R. G. Tiedemann, eds., *The Boxers, China, and the World* (USA: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007); Diana Preston, *The Boxer Rebellion: The Dramatic Story of China's War on Foreigners That Shook the World in the Summer of 1900* (New York: Walker & Company, 2000). The first comprehensive study of the Boxer movement using Chinese sources can be found in Chester Tan, *The Boxer Catastrophe*, 2nd ed. (New York: Octagon Books, 1975). First-hand accounts of the conflict are collected in Frederick Sharf and Peter Harrington, *China, 1900: The Eyewitnesses Speak: The Experience of Westerners in China during the Boxer Rebellion, as Described by Participants in Letters, Diaries and Photographs* (London: Greenhill Books, 2000).

[34] James Barbary, *The Boer War* (London: Victor Golliancz, 1971); Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War* (London: Abacus, 1992); Denis Judd and Keith Surridge, *The Boer War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Bill Nasson, *The South African War: 1899–1902* (London: Hodder Headline Group, 1999); Bill Nasson, *The War for South Africa: The Anglo-Boer War, 1899–1902* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2010); Owen Coetzer, *Fire in the Sky: The Destruction of the Orange Free State, 1899–1902* (South Africa: Covos-Day Books, 2000).

[35] Other notable studies include Keith Surridge, *Managing the South African War, 1899–1902* (United Kingdom: Boydell Press, 1998); Rodney Atwood, *Roberts & Kitchener in South Africa, 1900–1902* (United Kingdom: Pen & Sword Military, 2011); Albert Grundlingh, *The Dynamics of Treason: Boer Collaboration*

The earliest production of Australian histories of these conflicts came in their immediate aftermath. Frank Hutchison and Francis Myers, commemorated the Sudan contingent's exploits in *The Australian Contingent*, an account deemed necessary by a review in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 'before the enthusiasm of the time had cooled down'.[36] The book was printed at the behest of the Stuart Ministry in New South Wales, with its partisan account of those who sent the contingent receiving a great deal of criticism from its opponents in the Legislative Assembly.[37] The South African War, meanwhile, benefitted from having notable war correspondents returning to write their accounts of the conflict, often even before the end of the war. One such journalist, Frank Wilkinson, wrote two works from his time in South Africa, *Australia at the Front: A Colonial View of the Boer War* and *Australian Cavalry: The N.S.W. Lancer Regiment and the First Australian Horse*, both published in 1901.[38] Other writers, such as John Bufton, sought to immortalise the actions of the one specific state, his work titled *Tasmanians in the Transvaal War*, capitalising on that colony's successes in the recent war only a few years after its end.[39] These early accounts tended to wrestle with early forms of Australian exceptionalism that figures like Charles Bean, Australia's first official war correspondent and historian, would later cultivate following the First World War. These works often presented the Australian experience as indicative of a unique set of qualities that distinguished them from their British counterparts.[40] There appeared no similar drive to record the exploits of the Boxer contingents, likely due to the contemporary perception that this did not share the symbolic importance of either Sudan or South Africa.

---

in the South African War of 1899–1902, trans. Bridget Theron (Pretoria: Protea Book House, 2006); Field Marshal Lord Carver, *The National Army Museum Book of The Boer War* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1999).

[36] Originally published in 1885, this book received a second edition the following year to incorporate the presentation of the Sudan Medals in February 1886, see Frank Hutchinson and Francis Myers, *The Australian Contingent: A History of the Patriotic Movement in New South Wales, and an Account of the Despatch of Troops to the Assistance of Imperial Forces in the Soudan*, 2nd ed. (Sydney: Government Printer, 1886); 'Review'. *Sydney Morning Herald.* 23 December 1885, 7.

[37] New South Wales*, Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 11 May 1886, 1826–7 (Robert Wisdom).

[38] Frank Wilkinson, *Australia at the Front: A Colonial View of the Boer War* (London: John Long, 1901); Frank Wilkinson, *Australian Cavalry: The N.S.W. Lancer Regiment and the First Australian Horse* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1901).

[39] John Bufton, *Tasmanians in the Transvaal War* (Hobart: S. G. Loone, 1905). A statistical record of the South African War was compiled in 1911 for the Department of Defence by Lieutenant-Colonel P. L. Murray. The Preface outright states it was not a 'history of the war. It is a statistical register and reference'. See P. L. Murray, *Official Records of the Australian Military Contingents to the War in South Africa* (Melbourne: Government Printer, 1911).

[40] Joan Beaumont, 'Australian Military Historiography', *War & Society* 42, no. 1 (2023): 100.

Following the seismic impact of the First World War on Australian national consciousness, the idea of Australian nationhood born from a greater military involvement eclipsed these colonial conflicts. Some historians still sought to find a place for these conflicts within this new historical landscape. Stanley Brogden wrote an account of the 1885 Sudan expedition in 1943, titled *The Sudan Contingent*.[41] Though criticised by later Sudan historian Malcolm Saunders as being 'frequently inaccurate', Brogden attempted to place this conflict within the concurrent campaign in Northern Africa during the Second World War, while also invoking the Anzac mythology by claiming the contingent as the very first diggers.[42] Less work was published in the decades that followed the Second World War, though some articles of note appeared seeking to understand these conflicts in a broader context. Richard Wilde's 1957 article titled 'The Boxer Affair and Australian Responsibility for Imperial Defence' remains one of the few accounts considering the conflict as a singular study, and linking it to broader debates surrounding imperial defence.[43] In the late 1960s and into the 1970s, likely inspired by social history movements of the time, Barbara Penny wrote articles exploring the impact of the South African War on the Australian public, and what this said about the Australian connection to British identity.[44]

By the time interest in these conflicts began to be re-discovered in the 1970s, more shifts had occurred in Australian studies of military history. Histories like Bill Gammage's *The Broken Years: Australian Soldiers in the Great War*, moved away from Anzac ideas based upon British racial supremacy. Instead, works like Gammage's emphasised the voices of soldiers, drawing upon sources such as diaries and soldiers' letters to bring their experiences to life.[45] Beginning in the mid 1960s, Australian leaders and commentators reconsidered the country's national identity in the wake of Britain's crumbling empire.[46] It was within this context that figures such as Breaker Morant, the court-martialled lieutenant executed during

[41] Stanley Brogden, *The Sudan Contingent* (Melbourne: The Hawthorn Press, 1943).
[42] Saunders, *Britain, The Australian Colonies, and the Sudan Campaigns of 1884–85*, 3; Brogden, *The Sudan Contingent*.
[43] Richard Wilde, 'The Boxer Affair and Australian Responsibility for Imperial Defense', *Pacific Historical Review* 26, no. 1 (1957): 51–65.
[44] Barbara Penny, 'Australia's Reactions to the Boer War: A Study in Colonial Imperialism', *The Journal of British Studies* 7, no. 1 (1967): 97–130; Barbara Penny, 'The Australian Debate on the Boer War', *Historical Studies* 14, no. 56 (1971): 526–45; C. N. Connolly, 'Class, Birthplace, Loyalty: Australian Attitudes to the Boer War', *Historical Studies* 18, no. 71 (1978): 210–32.
[45] Bill Gammage, *The Broken Years: Australian Soldiers in the Boer War* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1974); Carolyn Holbrook, *Anzac: The Unauthorised Biography* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2014), 116; Beaumont, 'Australian Military Historiography': 102.
[46] James Curran and Stuart Ward, *The Unknown Nation: Australia After Empire* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2010), 5.

the South African War, could be constructed as a distinct national character. The 1970s saw a wave of media depicting Morant as betrayed by British command, beginning with Kit Denton's *The Breaker* in 1973 and continuing into Frank Shields' 1974 documentary (later turned into a book), a 1978 stage play and most well-known, the 1980 feature film *Breaker Morant,* directed by Bruce Beresford.[47] The figure of Morant is one that still drives a great deal of Australian interest in the South African War, even as recently as Peter Fitzsimons' 2020 book, *Breaker Morant,* designed to appeal to a popular audience beyond academia, showing that this story continues to stir the public's imagination.[48]

Running parallel to the public's embracing of Breaker Morant, two key works were written on the Australian involvement in the South African War during the 1970s. First is R. L. Wallace's *The Australians at the Boer* published in 1976, followed by L. M. Field's *The Forgotten War: Australian Involvement in the South African Conflict of 1899–1902* published in 1979.[49] Both seek to incorporate soldiers' voices in their works but direct more focus towards detailing the campaigns of the conflict, together with some consideration of the war's impact on Australia. Both books bring together the Australian involvement in the conflict, while giving special attention to the characteristics of Australian soldiers, particularly the mythical status afforded to the Australian 'bushman'. Portrayals of the archetypal Australian soldier continue to drive contemporary debates surrounding Australian involvement in war today and face little challenge within these works.[50]

However, the strongest drive for histories of these conflicts has often coincided with their centennial anniversaries. The 1985 centenary of the Sudan expedition saw no less than three works published on the subject: K. S. Inglis' *The Rehearsal: Australians at War in the Sudan 1885*, Malcolm Saunders' *Britain, The Australian Colonies, and the Sudan Campaigns of 1884–85*, and Ralph Sutton's *Soldiers of the Queen.*[51] All three volumes aim to recover the

[47] Kit Denton, *The Breaker: A Novel* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1973); Frank Shields. *The Breaker*. Frontier Films, 1974; *Breaker Morant: A Play in Two Acts,* script by Kenneth G. Ross, Atheneum Theatre, Melbourne, 1978; Margaret Carnegie and Frank Shields, *In Search of Breaker Morant: Balladist and Bushveldt Carbineer* (Melbourne: H. H. Stephenson, 1979); *Breaker Morant,* Directed by Bruce Beresford (Roadshow Film Distributors, 1980).
[48] Peter FitzSimons, *Breaker Morant: The Epic Story of the Boer War and Harry 'Breaker' Morant: Drover, Horseman, Bush Poet, Murderer or Hero?* (Sydney: Hatchette Australia, 2020).
[49] Wallace, *The Australians at the Boer War*; Field, *The Forgotten War*.
[50] Martin Crotty and Craig Stockings, 'The Minefield of Australian Military History', *The Australian Journal of Politics and History* 60, no. 4 (2014): 583.
[51] Inglis, *The Rehearsal*; Saunders, *Britain, The Australian Colonies, and the Sudan Campaigns of 1884–85*; Ralph Sutton, *Soldiers of the Queen: War in the Soudan* (Alexandra, N.S.W.: M. S. Simpson & Sons, 1985).

Sudan campaign that had been largely forgotten in the years following its occurrence, correcting some of the common misconceptions of the conflict. Craig Wilcox marked the centenary of Australian involvement in the South African War by producing its most comprehensive history to date, titled *Australia's Boer War: The War in South Africa, 1899–1902*, written in conjunction with the Australian War Memorial.[52] Wilcox's book builds upon the work of Field and Wallace with more extensive research, marrying the on-field soldier experience with the broader Australian debates surrounding the conflict itself.[53] However, there remains space to build upon his study with a further geo-political analysis of how the war developed in relation to the changing nature of Australia's role in the British Empire.

Studies of the Australian contribution to the Boxer Rebellion leave a lot to be desired, especially compared to the other two conflicts. Bob Nicholls' *Bluejackets and Boxers: Australia's Naval Expedition to the Boxer Uprising* remains the most comprehensive study of the conflict, and as such, is an invaluable resource for this thesis, though it lacks an analysis of some of the wider implications of the conflict (and footnotes).[54] Smaller works, such as Nicholls' own *Handy Men Up Top* and Neil Smith's *Carving up the Melon: Australians in the Boxer Rebellion, China 1900–1901*, also detail the Australian campaign in China, but have mostly been superseded by Nicholls' more detailed *Bluejackets & Boxers*.[55] However, in the three decades since Nicholls' work the Boxer conflict has rarely been the singular subject of any Australian study. This thesis provides a close analysis of the Boxer Rebellion in conjunction with the Sudan and South African wars, but there remains an opportunity to compile a definitive account of the Australians at the Boxer Rebellion as a stand-alone topic of historical inquiry.

The South African War has undoubtedly had the greatest coverage of the three conflicts, and it has also been given the greatest diversity in analysis. The most significant of these in terms

---

Peter Stanley also edited a collection of essays published by the Military Historical Society of Australia in 1985, see Peter Stanley, *But Little Glory: The New South Wales Contingent to the Sudan, 1885* (Canberra: Military Historical Society of Australia, 1985).

[52] Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War*.

[53] Craig Wilcox's 'Appendix 3: Australian Contingents in South Africa', has been a tremendously valuable resource in cross referencing the departure and return of all Australian contingents and this thesis is greatly indebted to his exceptional work. See, Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War*, 389–413.

[54] Nicholls, *Bluejackets and Boxers*.

[55] Bob Nicholls, *Handy Men Up Top* (Sydney: Ditty Press, 1990); Neil Smith, *Carving up the Melon: Australians in the Boxer Rebellion, China 1900–1901* (Melbourne: Mostly Unsung Military History Research and Publications, 2000).

of aligning with the aims of this thesis is Luke Trainor's chapter in *The Impact of the South African War*, which examines the war in the context of Australia and New Zealand's relationship with the British Empire.[56] Other works have looked at the war through a different lens of inquiry. Keith Jeffery and Donal Lowry's chapter in *The South African War Reappraised* goes into detail on the wider impact of the South African War both geopolitically, and on Britain's imperial defence.[57] Effie Karageorgos has produced a body of work examining the South African War, analysing letters and diaries of soldiers, the impact of the war on ideas of gender and nationalism, and Australian perceptions of both the Boers and wider ideas of race on the battlefield.[58] John McQuilton looks at the impact of the South African War on Australian communities in his book, *Australia's Communities and the Boer War*, and even as recently as 2022, Alexander Lee has examined how perceptions of the Boers have impacted discussions surrounding the defence policies of Australia.[59] It is a conflict that continues to yield new perspectives in understanding how Australia's participation in it also shaped a transformative period in the nation's history.

The works discussed here, in their own ways and to varying degrees, have contributed to illuminating an often-underrepresented period in Australia's military history, and this thesis is greatly indebted to the work they have accomplished. However, they tend to have left similar gaps. First, these studies often have little reference to Australia's involvement in other colonial wars beyond their point of inquiry. Even the more comprehensive studies of

---

[56] Luke Trainor 'Building Nations: Australia and New Zealand' in *The Impact of the South African War,* eds. David Omissi and Andrew Thompson (United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 251–67.

[57] Keith Jeffery, 'Kruger's Farmers, Strathcona's Horse, Sir George Clarke's Camels and the Kaiser's Battleships: The Impact of the South African War on Imperial Defence' in *The South African War Reappraised*, ed. Donal Lowry (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 188–202; Donal Lowry '"The Boers were the Beginning of the End"?: The Wider Impact of the South Africa War' in *The South African War Reappraised*, ed. Donal Lowry (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 203–46.

[58] Effie Karageorgos, *Australian Soldiers in South Africa and Vietnam: Words from the Battlefield* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016); Effie Karageorgos, '"Educated, Tolerant and Kindly": Australian Attitudes Towards British and Boers in South Africa, 1899–1902', *Historia* 59, no. 2 (2014): 120–35; Effie Karageorgos, 'Mental Illness, Masculinity, and the Australian Soldier: Military Psychiatry from South Africa to the First World War', *Health and History* 20, no. 2 (2018): 10–29; Effie Karageorgos, 'War in a "White Man's Country": Australian Perceptions of Blackness on the South African Battlefield, 1899–1902', *History Australia* 15, no. 2 (2018): 323–38; Effie Karageorgos, 'The Bushmen at War: Gendered Medical Responses to Combat Breakdown in South Africa, 1899–1902', *Journal of Australian Studies* 44, no. 1 (2020): 18–32; Effie Karageorgos, '"An Act of Grace": Reading Gender and Nationalism Within Australian South African War Pension Provisions', *Australian Historical Studies* 53, no. 1 (2022): 75–96. Also see, Tandee Wang and Thomas J Rogers, 'Bushman or Boer — Australian Identity in a "White Man's War", 1899–1902', *British Journal for Military History* 7, no. 1 (2021): 64–86.

[59] John McQuilton, *Australia's Communities and the Boer War*, 1st ed. (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); Alexander Lee, '"What the Boers Did Australia Can Do, and Do Ten Times Better": The Impact of the Boers on Australian Defence Policy', *The International History Review* 44, no. 3 (2022): 478–96.

the South African War, such as those by Field and Wilcox, do not take a great deal of time to consider the implications of the previous contingent to Sudan in 1885, or the concurrent naval engagement in China. Second, these studies do not always consider the wider connotations of these conflicts on defence policy, imperial obligations, and nascent Australian identity. These gaps are addressed by this thesis which takes a comparative approach to the study of these three conflicts. As Joan Beaumont argues in her 2023 article 'Australian Military Historiography', the future of Australian military history lies within its engagement with a transnational context that understands wider ideas of Australian history as part of global developments, challenging aspects of Australian exceptionalism.[60] This thesis seeks to do just that, by exploring how Australia's contribution to these three conflicts was part of a broader reconfiguring of empire in the late Victorian era, and how the Australian colonies operated within an environment increasingly defined by imperial competition.

This thesis also sits within the scholarship of British imperialism, specifically the ongoing study of the white settler colonies and their place within the structure of the empire. The study of empire has undergone several revisions in recent years, driven by the need to find new ways of uncovering the underlying structures that facilitated its growth while avoiding the dangers of retelling antiquated imperialistic narratives. Prior to the 1950s, and while the British Empire was a present force throughout much of the world, British imperial history often privileged the white settler world.[61] As the British Empire declined and Britain relinquished control over many of its former colonies, the rise of post-colonial approaches to imperial history shifted the focus towards the experience and legacies of empire in Africa and Asia. Inspired by the emerging Subaltern Studies school and the movement of 'history from below', these approaches sought to expand beyond the highly selective reading of sources to engage with sensitive issues and minority rights, focusing on 'lived experiences' under British rule.[62] Consequently, more traditional approaches to British imperial history, focused on the settler empire, experienced a decline in popularity. Likewise, imperial history faded from view in many former parts of the empire. Favoured instead in ex-Dominions such as Australia were nationalist histories that reflected the decline in the British Empire as

[60] Beaumont, 'Australian Military Historiography', 99–121.
[61] Best exemplified by the treatment of the British Empire in J. Holland Rose, A. P. Newton, and E. A. Benians, *The Cambridge History of the British Empire* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1929).
[62] A. G. Hopkins, 'Back to the Future: From National History to Imperial History', *Past & Present* 164, no. 1 (1999): 200.

a global power and concentrated on the emergence of the Australian nation and people.[63] James Curran and Stuart Ward use the term 'new nationalism' to describe this transition towards nationalist history that became increasingly prominent in the 1960s and 1970s.[64]

'British World' models developed in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century sought to reconnect the histories of the settler colonies with the British Empire. The recognition that the British Empire was a 'world system' has been most powerfully articulated by John Darwin, but of course has a longer history.[65] Robinson and Gallagher's seminal article 'The Imperialism of Free Trade', sought to understand how the British Empire functioned across the globe by viewing its 'formal empire' of colonies, and 'informal empire' where economic interests were secured with as little cost as possible.[66] These ideas were further built upon by British World historians, taking the conceptualisation of the empire as a 'world system' and re-integrating colonies such as Australia's into the history of the British Empire.[67] According to Rachel Bright and Andrew Dilley, the British World model had two primary objectives, to 'restore the British colonies of settlement to a prominent place in the study of empire, with national historians of those former colonies seeking to restore consideration of the imperial connection'.[68] Differentiating itself from earlier forms of British imperial history, British World historians investigated globalisation from below through migration and identity, moving away from older forms that viewed the British world through top down political structures.[69] These developments were part of a wider re-evaluation of the empire in Britain, while Australian historians were encouraged to re-examine some of Australia's connections to the British Empire.[70]

---

[63] Phillip Buckner and R. Douglas Francis, 'Introduction', in *Rediscovering the British World*, ed. Phillip Buckner and R. Douglas Francis (Alberta: University of Calgary Press, 2005), 12. Also see Stuart Macintyre, 'Australia and the Empire', in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, ed. Robin Winks, vol. V: Historiography (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 163–81.
[64] This term is used and explored in Curran and Ward, *The Unknown Nation*.
[65] John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830–1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
[66] John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade': 1–15. Also explored further in their book Robinson, Gallagher, and Denny, *Africa and the Victorians*.
[67] Carl Bridge and Kent Fedorowich, *The British World: Diaspora, Culture and Identity* (London: Frank Cass, 2003).
[68] Bright and Dilley, 'After the British World': 549.
[69] Bridge and Fedorowich, *The British World*, 6.
[70] A re-evaluation of the British Empire is present in Andrew Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back? The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (United Kingdom: Pearson Education, 2005). Australian examples of British World models applied include Andrew Hassam, *Through Australian Eyes: Colonial Perceptions of Imperial Britain* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2000); Deryck Schreuder and Stuart Ward, eds., *Australia's Empire*, Oxford History of the British Empire Companion Series (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

At its best, British World history has sought to refine our understanding of the place of the settler colonies within Britain's rapidly evolving imperial system. John Darwin is one such historian who has led the way in shedding fresh light on the British Empire. Darwin presents the British Empire as a world system, one with continually changing and evolving components over which London had limited control.[71] This system of empire was not entirely encompassed by a strong political centre but rather the growth of local structures which helped to preserve British power and influence.[72] The three conflicts discussed in this thesis illustrate how these local structures responded to British crises, as well as how this relationship evolved over time. Central to understanding the British World is examining the sense of identity that tied it together, often encapsulated by historians through the term 'Britishness'.[73] This connection to British identity is crucial in how the settler colonies related to the empire. Carl Bridge and Kent Fedorowich describe this identity as the 'cultural glue' that held the British World together.[74] It was a connection, John Mitcham identifies, that was steeped in the sharing of a common language, allegiance to the British Crown, and a racial affiliation that was often vague and contested.[75] Duncan Bell also emphasises this idea of connection to British identity as a critical aspect in the discussions over how the settler colonies would be incorporated more efficiently into the empire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[76] It is at this juncture that this thesis interrogates these ideas of identity and how it was reflected in the commitment of the Australian colonies to British interests during the Sudan, China, and South African conflicts.

One of the defining publications in the study of British World history shows both its value as well as its critical shortcomings. The *Oxford History of the British Empire* published in 1999 drove renewed interest in studies of the British Empire, inspiring fresh discussions

[71] Mountford, "Colonial Australia, The 1887 Colonial Conference, and the Struggle for Imperial Unity", 913.
[72] Darwin, *The Empire Project*; also seen in other Darwin works such as Darwin, *Unfinished Empire*; Darwin, 'A Third British Empire?: 64–86. Also see Peter Burroughs, 'Defence and Imperial Disunity', in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, ed. Andrew Porter, vol. III: The Nineteenth Century (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 320–44; James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783–1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
[73] Explored by Darwin in his article John Darwin, 'Empire and Ethnicity', *Nations and Nationalism* 16, no. 3 (2010): 383–401.
[74] Bridge and Fedorowich, *The British World*, 6. Also see Buckner and Francis, *Rediscovering the British World*.
[75] John C. Mitcham, *Race and Imperial Defence in the British World, 1870–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 1.
[76] Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860–1900* (USA: Princeton University Press, 2007).

about the aims and ends of these histories.[77] However, according to Dane Kennedy's recent book *The Imperial History Wars: Debating the British Empire*, this publication also neglects many of the key subjects of post-colonial studies such as race, gender, and culture.[78] One of the potential dangers of a British World model lies in returning to a pre-1950s approach to the history of the British Empire, neglecting many of the advances made in the expansion of post-colonial histories and returning to predominantly 'white' histories.[79] Tony Ballantyne specifically identifies the term 'Britishness' as a 'reductive model' that 'marks the return to C. W. Dilke's celebration of British supremacy and empire'.[80] The practicalities of the British World model moving forward primarily lie in what we might take from these approaches as useful tools of analysis, while avoiding returning to a simple (or worse, nostalgic) retelling of the narratives associated with the imperial era.

Historians continue to contend with the limitations of British World approaches, and which aspects of this model can be usefully applied to build upon our understanding of British imperial history. Many of the difficulties pointed out by historians originate both in the ambiguity of the central characteristic of 'Britishness', and what Bright and Dilley identify as the main issue, that 'the British world lacks definition'.[81] Tamson Pietsch, through her use of a 'British Worlds' model, seeks to define British space by viewing it as more complex than previously considered, 'both shaped by the routes of long-distance networks and those fashioned by the internal worlds of imagination'.[82] Most recently, Iain Johnston-White and Jatinder Mann have emphasised how the expansion of subjects examined through British World approaches can help it 'rebound with top-down outcomes' that historians are wary of replicating.[83] Most importantly, the understanding of Britain's relationship with the Australian colonies and then the Commonwealth cannot be solely understood through shared culture and networks, but also by how the Australians' determination to further their own

[77] William Roger Louis et al., eds., *The Oxford History of the British Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).
[78] Dane Kennedy, *The Imperial History Wars: Debating the British Empire* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018).
[79] Kennedy notes the implications that promoting the virtues of the 'British Empire' has in modern foreign policy. See Kennedy, *The Imperial History Wars*, 139.
[80] Tony Ballantyne, *Orientalism and Race: Aryanism in the British Empire* (United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 3.
[81] Bright and Dilley, 'After the British World', 549, 554.
[82] Tamson Pietsch, 'Rethinking the British World', *Journal of British Studies* 52, no. 2 (2013): 463.
[83] Iain Johnston-White and Jatinder Mann, 'Conclusion: Why Revisit the British World?', in *Revisiting the British World: New Voices and Perspectives*, ed. Jatinder Mann and Iain Johnston-White (New York: Peter Lang, 2022), 254.

political interests challenged this connection. Australia's history during this period was defined not just by the parts of the British Empire it identified with, but also the aspects of British imperialism it rejected.

This thesis draws upon aspects of the British World model, though it acknowledges the limitations to its application. Adele Perry suggests that 'the British world comes into sharpest relief when we bring together the histories of local colonial projects and metropolitan politics, cultures and discourses'.[84] The strides made in British World history have helped to recover the white settler colonies' relationship with the empire, a practice that can be furthered through the examination of the Sudan, China, and South African conflicts. This thesis also seeks to address one of the major gaps within many British World histories, the inter-colonial politics between the Australian colonies that underlay their relationship with the British imperial centre prior to federation. By considering these approaches, this thesis gives an insight into those colonial relationships that shaped Australia's own connections with the British Empire, how they manifested through these conflicts and the ways they shaped Australia's approach to imperial affairs in this crucial period.

Australian history also continues to wrestle with the dimensions and effectiveness of incorporating imperial and British World perspectives. This debate is best exemplified in a series of articles in Australian historical journals beginning with Neville Meaney's 2001 article discussing the place of nationalism in Australian historiographical studies.[85] Meaney contends that Australian identity was always defined by this attachment to Britain, making it the dominant cultural myth.[86] Marilyn Lake, in a 2013 article, criticises Meaney for deciding to 'pose the question of identity in binary terms', particularly when non-British spheres of influence such as America and Asia also contributed towards shaping national identity.[87] Christopher Waters, in another response, also emphasises how nationalist histories

[84] Adele Perry, 'Whose World Was British? Rethinking "British World" from an Edge of Empire', in *Britishness Abroad: Transnational Movements and Imperial Cultures*, ed. Kate Darian-Smith, Patricia Grimshaw, and Stuart Macintyre (Melbourne.: Melbourne University Press, 2007), 135.
[85] Neville Meaney, 'Britishness and Australian Identity: The Problem of Nationalism in Australian History and Historiography', *Australian Historical Studies* 32, no. 116 (2001): 76–90.
[86] Meaney, 'Britishness and Australian Identity': 76–90.
[87] Marilyn Lake, 'British World or New World?: Anglo-Saxonism and Australian Engagement with America', *History Australia* 10, no. 3 (2013): 40–1.

are essential to understand Australian history and should not be entirely dismissed.[88] While understanding both sides of the debate is key in how we analyse Australia's history, the connotations of applying both cannot be dismissed. This thesis engages with ideas of British imperial connections, though it also incorporates many of the key advantages that local influences have given us in understanding Australia's history. It engages not only with the question of how British identity shaped Australia during the period investigated, but also how these ideas were debated and contested.

This thesis acknowledges some of the limitations to British World models, however, there remains much to be gained from its application in re-contextualising histories of the settler colonies within the broader context of empire. John Mitcham, in his book *Race and Imperial Defence in the British World*, sought to address that 'this scholarship by diplomatic and military historians is rarely in dialogue with the broader studies of empire'.[89] British World models can be used to further re-incorporate Australia's colonial military developments within wider frameworks of British imperial defence. This thesis seeks to utilise these three conflicts in Sudan, China, and South Africa as moments in which Australia's localised military concerns collided with British imperial interests.

Methodology and Structure

By building on these bodies of scholarship, this thesis undertakes a study of the Sudan, China, and South African, conflicts to extend our understanding of Australian, British imperial, and military history. This thesis bridges the gap between their significance in the military and political development of Australia during this crucial period. It further links them to the shaping of Britain's empire during the Age of High Imperialism, and how this reflected broader Anglo-Australian relations. These military engagements encapsulated Australia's connection to the British Empire and its interest in the maintenance of British imperial power, while also intersecting with a period of profound political change in Australia.

[88] Christopher Waters, 'Nationalism, Britishness and Australian History: The Meaney Thesis Revisited', *History Australia* 10, no. 3 (2013): 12–22.
[89] Mitcham, *Race and Imperial Defence in the British World*, 5.

This thesis employs three key methodological parameters in analysing these conflicts and answering its central questions. First, it adopts a comparative approach, designed to look beyond Australian participation in the three conflicts as isolated incidents. Instead, it seeks to uncover consistent themes and underlying transformations that persisted between them. The second is a narrowing of the timeframe investigated to a critical thirty-two-year period after 1870 during which these wars occurred, a distinct transformative era in Australia's relationship with the British Empire. These wars provide rich ground to uncover the complexities of how the Australian colonies fit into the transforming empire. Since this thesis primarily seeks to understand the evolution of Australia's relationship with imperial defence through contributing towards external imperial wars, the commitment of an independent military force for the Sudan conflict in 1885 marks a logical starting point. It represented the first independently raised contingent by a settler colony in the British Empire, an unprecedented occurrence with significant implications for future Australian colonial contributions within an imperial defence framework.[90] Meanwhile, the conclusion of the South African War in 1902 and the dismissal of a potential imperial reserve in Australia at the colonial conference of the same year marks a logical ending point to this thesis. These boundaries serve to focus attention on a critical period when the Australian colonies were contributing in a military capacity to defending British interests overseas, distinct from the already heavily covered subject of the First World War. Finally, this thesis employs a chronological study of these conflicts within this three-decade period. Such a study allows for an analysis of how Australian attitudes developed and transformed over time, particularly regarding the significant shift represented by Australian federation. This methodology also allows for an insight into how earlier commitments to war (such as Sudan, the first South African contingents) influenced the latter (the Boxer contingents, the final South African contingents).

This thesis draws upon extensive archival research in both British and Australian archives.[91] Due to the comprehensive digitising of Colonial Office and other British documents through

[90] As such, earlier conflicts involving Australians, but not consisting of colonial governments raising independent contingents will be excluded. As stated above, this includes the New Zealand Wars. An overview of this event is provided in Damien Fenton, 'Australians in the New Zealand Wars', in *Before the Anzac Dawn: A Military History of Australia before 1915*, ed. Craig Stockings and John Connor (Sydney: NewSouth, 2013), 118–47.

[91] This thesis was primarily written during the Covid-19 pandemic, and restrictions enforced in Melbourne, Australia. Therefore, a good deal of this research was shaped around difficulties accessing physical archives and has benefited instead from the wealth of material available in various online archives.

the Australian Joint Copying Project, this research has benefited from access to a wealth of material in a manner that previous studies of these conflicts could not. For the purposes of this study, such archives have been analysed through engaging with each of the colonies' communications with the Colonial Office to assemble a timeline of their response to these conflicts, as well as to explore the language Australian leaders used. Similar approaches have been used for sources found through the online database of Trove, where newspapers give an insight into what information was available to the wider public, though with knowledge of the limitations in equating this with the wider public opinion of the time. This methodology is also applicable to Parliamentary Hansards which alongside the sources listed above, form a major bulk of the primary research of this thesis.[92]

In addition, this thesis utilises the wealth of sources available in key archives throughout Australia. These include military resources, such as diaries, rare books and key personnel papers held by the Australian War Memorial. Complementing these materials are some of the manuscripts relating to key political figures and defence leaders from this period that are found in the National Library of Australia, while state specific resources have been located in the State Libraries of Victoria and New South Wales. This thesis also draws together a wealth of work by other historians, utilising this empirical and comparative methodology through a selected timeframe. Through these methods, this thesis allows fresh insights into this critical period in Anglo-Australian relations.

This thesis proceeds chronologically across the three case studies. The first chapter is one of two that focuses on the assembling and despatch of the New South Wales contingent to Sudan in 1885. It begins by providing a military and imperial context to the campaign, tracing the origins of this critical period to the removal of the final British garrisons from Australian shores in 1870. As such, it argues that Dalley's decision to send troops to Sudan can be better understood by placing it within the evolving nature of the Australian colonies' relationship with imperial defence and the ambiguity surrounding their role within it. British General, Charles Gordon's death becomes a moment of imperial connection between the Australian colonies and Britain, one that was channelled into this commitment of military resources. Chapter Two examines the Australian contingents in Sudan, and the response to

[92] Parliamentary Hansard have been weighted primarily towards Victoria and New South Wales for this study both due to their prominence in these conflicts, as well as the digital availability of these sources.

the war from Australian leaders and the public alike. This chapter considers the early aspects of what an Australian contingent's service alongside the British Army might consist of, and some of the anxieties surrounding how they were being utilised from both within the ranks, and from colonial leaders back in Australia. The Sudan campaign marked an important milestone where the potential for Australian contingents to actively defend the empire overseas looked entirely possible, but as revealed through these two chapters, was riddled with complexities surrounding their role.

Chapters Three and Four explore the first phases of the South African War, concluding with the Australian involvement in Lord Roberts' march into Pretoria in June 1900. Chapter Three begins by contextualising the South African conflict within the fifteen years of Australian and British defensive planning, shaped by the acceleration of British attempts to achieve further standardisation across the empire. Contemporary debates were marked by a desire not to repeat the Sudan campaign, culminating in less enthusiastic New South Wales and Victorian governments when it came to Chamberlain's request for a contribution to the Transvaal in 1899. Within this context, imperial sentiment not only showed the united strength of the empire but was also subject to manipulation by the British Colonial Office. Following the renewed enthusiasm throughout the Australian colonies after the defeats of 'Black Week' in 1900, colonial contingents were successfully incorporated into Lord Roberts' campaign, best exemplifying how the Australian contingents could supplement Britain's Army not only symbolically, but practically as well. However, the perceived distinct qualities of the Australian troops, though wildly celebrated, raised new questions about how they could be best incorporated within Britain's imperial military structures.

Chapters Five and Six shift focus from the South African War to the Australian contingents sent to the Boxer Rebellion, illustrating the heightened nature of Australian involvement in British wars through this parallel participation. It makes for a unique and illustrative case-study, one that highlights the potential for Australia's geographical position to be of a significant advantage to a British Empire that might face confrontation from rival imperial powers on multiple fronts. Chapter Five gives further consideration of Australia's geographical position, its proximity to China and how this impacted the colonies' security fears within the Pacific region. The concurrent nature of the war with South Africa left many Australian leaders questioning what constituted an emergency worth Australian colonial involvement. Chapter Six examines the Australian contingents' service during the war in

China. Their campaign illustrated the importance of representation, where their interaction with soldiers from across the world allowed Australia a position within a moment of global convergence. But these same interactions also revealed the anxieties surrounding the complex international nature of Australian service. The Boxer Rebellion, often considered something of an afterthought in Australia's military and naval history, demonstrated the geographical advantages that Australian service might have in defending Britain's far-flung empire. This case study offers a different perspective regarding what these troops might be expected to accomplish.

The final chapter returns to the South African War that, while running concurrently with the Boxer campaign, only came to a definitive end in 1902. It examines the changing nature of the frustratingly prolonged war, resulting in the slow reduction of Australia's public enthusiasm for the conflict. The war also reveals the limitations in channelling imperial enthusiasm into Australian participation in a lengthy conflict, particularly with the limited professional resources available to the colonies and the newly federated nation. This chapter concludes with the 1902 Colonial Conference in London, a defining end point to this thesis marked by the defeat of the imperial reserve proposal. British Secretary of State for War, St John Broderick, used the conference as an opportunity to lay out the reasons for the rejection of an established imperial reserve within the colonies, an effective culmination of the key themes that underlay Australian involvement in these imperial wars.

The chapters outlined above explore the Australian colonies' participation in imperial conflicts as critical moments within a transformative period in Australian and imperial history. Australian responsibility towards imperial defence was often only vaguely defined, while their contribution was becoming increasingly important. What emerges is a critical contestation defining the Anglo-Australian relationship. On one side is binding agreement where the Australian colonies would become further incorporated into imperial structures. On the other side was the notion of imperial sentiment, the fluctuating invisible connection of the empire that ensured Australian governments would protect the empire should they be required. These three conflicts, so often dismissed as preludes to the First World War, are essential in uncovering deeper debates surrounding the structure of the British Empire, and just what role the Australian colonies were to play.

Chapter One:

Grabbing the Bull by the Horns: Imperial Defence and the Origins of the Sudan Campaign of 1885

After General Charles Gordon's stand at Khartoum on 26 January 1885, delays in telegraph communication back to the Australian colonies left some doubt as to his fate. Yet, hope remained that he was alive. Even two weeks later, the *Sydney Morning Herald* editors still held onto that hope, declaring that it was 'quite possible that he has not fallen in fight. He is said to be a prisoner in the hands of the Mahdi'. The great Sudanese expanse to the south of Egypt was no longer an afterthought to the British government but now the centre of an urgent imperial emergency. 'If Gordon be alive', stated the same issue of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 'nothing will be left undone to restore him to safety. No Government could hold its own for a day that talked of abandoning him'.[1] Even prior to his martyrdom, public adoration for Gordon prevailed throughout the British World. Many held him as a symbol of Christian nobility, spreading British values in foreign lands, only to be now abandoned by Gladstone's Liberal government.[2] Three nervous days followed in the Australian colonies until the *Sydney Morning Herald* declared on 12 February: 'the brave heart is still in death'.[3]

The sense of devastation was immediate and widespread.[4] News filtered unevenly throughout the colonies and tributes varied, but all were united in sympathy for Gordon's plight. In Fremantle, a public meeting was held on 13 February at the Oddfellow's Hall (after the Literary Institute could not accommodate the swell of interest) to express the 'deep regret' for the loss of Gordon.[5] In Adelaide, *The South Australian Advertiser* laid the blame at the feet of the British government, which had 'been well abused for what they have done and what they have not done'.[6] The Melbourne public expressed its sympathy in a different manner. One individual wrote to *The Age* suggesting a statue to honour Gordon, built by 'shilling subscription', claiming that 'the glorious story of a brave and true man would be

[1] *Sydney Morning Herald*. 9 February 1885, 6.
[2] Douglas Johnson, 'The Death of Gordon: A Victorian Myth', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 10, no. 3 (1982): 301.
[3] *Sydney Morning Herald*. 12 February 1885, 7.
[4] Malcolm Saunders, *Britain, The Australian Colonies, and the Sudan Campaigns of 1884–85*, University of New England History Series 5 (Sydney: University of New England, 1985), 20.
[5] 'Death of General Gordon: Public Meeting at Fremantle'. *The West Australian.* 16 February 1885, 3.
[6] *The South Australian Advertiser.* 12 February 1885, 4.

handed down to Victorian prosperity for ever'.[7] During a time when the colonies often struggled to find common cause, the loss of Gordon was a grief they all shared.

In terms of garnering political attention, the most significant response to Gordon's death came from a letter to the editor printed in the *Sydney Morning Herald,* penned by retired Major-General, Edward Strickland. Published on the day the news was confirmed in Sydney, Strickland called for a military force to be sent by the colonies either to replenish the reserves in Britain or even to assist British campaigns in Africa, a suggestion that likely passed under the nose of New South Wales' Acting Premier, William Dalley.[8] Dalley rashly undertook the extraordinary decision to mobilise the colony's limited defensive resources for a campaign on the other side of the world, though its acceptance from Britain quickly became the envy of the other Australian colonies who found their subsequent offers rejected. The resulting contingent immediately inspired a strengthened sense of imperial kinship, grounded in the perception that the Australian colonies were entering upon a new epoch, characterised by a redefining of their place within the British Empire. However, it soon became clear to all in New South Wales just how short and uneventful the Sudan contingent's campaign would be. The Sudan campaign revealed that these contributions may not yield the straightforward successes its advocates imagined.

Placing the conflict within the context of Australia's transforming relationship with the British Empire in the late nineteenth century, this chapter argues that the Sudan expedition was also the product of a series of developments affecting the Australian colonies' relationship with Britain and the unclear definition of the colonies' responsibility when it came to imperial defence. Three significant factors laid the foundations for Dalley to make this unprecedented decision. These were the ambiguity surrounding Australia's role in imperial defence and use of its own forces, the growing interconnectedness of the British World, and the impact that it allowed an imperial emergency to have within the colonies. It was under these circumstances that Sudan represented the first meaningful attempt at reconsidering how Australia defended the empire.

[7] Cyril Haviland, 'A Statue for Gordon: To The Editor of the Age' *The Age*. 12 February 1885, 6.
[8] Edward Strickland, 'To the Editor of the Herald' *Sydney Morning Herald*. 12 February 1885, 5.

Reshaping the British World

On his election as British Prime Minister in 1868, William Gladstone immediately turned his eye to the decaying state of imperial defence. It was not just the unmanageable expenditure that came from defending the empire that was causing headaches, but the entire stagnation of Britain's army. Gladstone thrust these challenges into the hands of his Secretary of State for War, Edward Cardwell. The problems were numerous. Industrial progress and social improvement increasingly overshadowed military concerns. Reform had been slow to come in a period of relative peace.[9] Progress within the military ranks was not based upon merit, but rather a system of purchase that left many middle-class aspirants stranded, while also hampering any means of progressive reform.[10] Finally, the need to cut defence spending drove all military decisions, a situation only exacerbated by colonial affairs accounting for a third of Britain's budget.[11] The Crimean War had been the first warning, but by the time Germany was achieving decisive victories over France in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, Gladstone's government could only anxiously predict how the British Army would fare in a European conflict.[12]

The British government could justify the changing white settler colonies' position in this transforming imperial defence as simply allowing them further determination over their own affairs. The British government granted self-government to most of the Australian colonies in the 1850s, only restricting their ability to determine imperial policy, while holding a rarely used power of veto over colonial legislation.[13] Allowing the colonies to raise their own defences seemed the next logical step. The Australian colonies, unlike the more precariously positioned Canada, were also largely unperturbed by the removal of British garrisons. The question of defence had never been at the forefront of colonial governments' strategic planning. Colonial authorities relied upon the protection of the Royal Navy beyond their shores.[14] Violent dispossession in Australia, known as the frontier wars, did not involve the

[9] Albert V. Tucker, 'Army and Society in England 1870–1900: A Reassessment of Cardwell Reforms', *Journal of British Studies* 2, no. 2 (1963): 111.
[10] Tucker, 'Army and Society in England 1870–1900': 123.
[11] H. C. G. Matthew, *Gladstone: 1809–1898* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 190.
[12] Trevor Royle, *Crimea: The Great Crimean War, 1854–1856* (United Kingdom: Little, Brown and Company, 1999), 502–6.
[13] Ann Curthoys and Jessie Mitchell, 'The Advent of Self-Government, 1840s–90', in *The Cambridge History of Australia*, ed. Alison Bashford and Stuart Macintyre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 150.
[14] Craig Stockings, *Britannia's Shield: Lieutenant-General Sir Edward Hutton and Late-Victorian Imperial Defence* (Melbourne.: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 16.

newly raised colonial volunteer military forces and colonial policy makers did not consider it as falling under the umbrella of defence.[15] As the last British garrisons left in 1870, it emphasised how contemporaries viewed the colonies' future relationship with Britain — bound together not through direct British military presence, but loyalty to the crown, kinship, economic relations, and imperial sentiment.[16]

Gordon's demise in Sudan best exemplified this imperial connection through a shared sense of British identity. Historians have used the term 'Britishness' to explain this phenomenon and how it manifested throughout the colonies, with the acknowledgement that the untangling of Australian and British identity can be an imprecise process. Neville Meaney contends that Australian identity was always linked to 'Britishness', while other historians, such as Marilyn Lake and Christopher Waters, have pointed out, that this relationship was much more complex.[17] Andrew Hassam contends that the tendency to separate these two identities is to make two unhistorical assumptions, that 'there is a natural, coherent, and timeless notion of Britishness, and that being British and being Australian were mutually exclusive categories'.[18] Douglas Cole claims 'ideas of race and stock, of blood and breed, played upon Australian thought on at least three levels in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and they furnished a connection between the "nationalism", the "imperialism" and the "racialism" of the period'.[19]

Certainly, in terms of demographics, there was a strong British (and Irish) presence throughout the Australian colonies. Throughout the late nineteenth century, immigrants to the colonies largely came from Britain and Ireland. Eric Richards writes: 'it resulted in a population conventionally regarded as more British than the British. It was White and almost exclusively British'.[20] Birthplace statistics taken in 1881 show that of a total population of

---

[15] John Connor, *Australian Frontier Wars, 1788–1838* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2002), 2.
[16] John Darwin, 'Empire and Ethnicity', *Nations and Nationalism* 16, no. 3 (2010): 393–4.
[17] Neville Meaney, 'Britishness and Australian Identity: The Problem of Nationalism in Australian History and Historiography', *Australian Historical Studies* 32, no. 116 (2001): 76–90; Marilyn Lake, 'British World or New World?: Anglo-Saxonism and Australian Engagement with America', *History Australia* 10, no. 3 (2013): 40–1; Christopher Waters, 'Nationalism, Britishness and Australian History: The Meaney Thesis Revisited', *History Australia* 10, no. 3 (2013): 12–22.
[18]Andrew Hassam, *Through Australian Eyes: Colonial Perceptions of Imperial Britain* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2000), 11.
[19] Douglas Cole, 'The Crimson Thread of Kinship': Ethnic Ideas in Australia, 1870–1914', *Australian Historical Studies* 14, no. 56 (1971): 511.
[20] Eric Richards, 'Migrations: The Career of British White Australia', in *Australia's Empire*, by Deryck Schreuder and Stuart Ward (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 163.

2,250,074, 1,422,533 were Australian born while those born in Britain and Ireland numbered 696,692 — these figures eclipsing the 38,381 Chinese born who were perceived as a significant threat to Anglo-Australian hegemony.[21] Early forms of immigration restriction appeared first in the mid-nineteenth century. Anti-Chinese sentiment can be traced back to the gold rushes, but by the 1870s, the push for stronger legislative measures had gathered steam as the Chinese presence grew in major cities.[22] The subject of Chinese migration was passionately discussed during the Inter-Colonial Conference of 1881, with representatives of many colonies signing a remonstrance summarising their objections to Chinese immigration. It stated:

> the objection to the Chinese is not altogether one of prejudice of colour or race, but is founded on a rational view of the dangers to these British communities which might in time flow from a people numbering more than 40,000,000, whose language, laws, religion, and habit of life are alien to those of her Majesty's subjects in Australasia, and whose geographical position makes the danger more imminent.[23]

While the Australian governments exercised their growing independence, Britain's entire empire project was undergoing a period of re-evaluation. The British Empire featured many different components scattered across the globe, which despite their underlying differences, came to resemble a 'world system'. The historian John Darwin identifies the three likeliest causes of the empire's creation and function which he argues emerged by default, not by design.[24] First, technical advance and institutional change enabled greater integration. The rise of the telegraph, alongside steamships and railways, accelerated the flows of goods, information, and people (as well as military forces) between the imperial centre and its outlying parts.[25] Large private companies, such as the Eastern Extension, held the monopoly over telegraphic communication between Britain and Australia until 1902, charging

---

[21] Statistics taken in 1901 show how this changed across the twenty years encapsulated by this thesis. Of the 3,773,801 total, 2,913,997 were born in Australia, while 685,784 born in the British Isles and 29,907 identified as having been born in China. This shows a significant increase in the population of those born in Australia, with a slight decrease in immigration from the British Isles, and more noticeable decrease in the Chinese population. These statistics do not include Australia's Indigenous population. See Charles Price, 'Immigration and Ethnic Origin', in *Australians: Historical Statistics*, ed. Wray Vamplew (Sydney: Fairfax, Syme & Weldon, 1987), 8–9.

[22] David Walker, *Anxious Nation: Australia and the Rise of Asia 1850–1939*, 2nd ed. (Perth: UWA Publishing, 2012), 39.

[23] Colonial Secretary's Office to the Earl of Kimberly, remonstrance, 25 January 1881. Located in Sydney, *Intercolonial Conference Held at Sydney,* Houses of General Assembly, 18.

[24] John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830–1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 24.

[25] Darwin, *The Empire* Project, 25.

punishing rates to recoup the costs of more expansive communication.[26] This also had the effect of information being controlled and disseminated from London to its reliant colonial and semi-colonial regions, a factor that would be crucial in influencing the Australian colonies' connection to the events in Sudan. Second, how British statesmen imagined the empire by the 1870s revealed the drawing of ever sharper distinctions between the economic trajectory, social development, and political status to which different regions could aspire.[27] The debate over these distinctions was best seen by the British government's establishment of a semi-regular colonial conference at the end of the nineteenth century.

Darwin's third point states that from the 1860s onwards, the British began to think more systematically about the defence of their widely scattered possessions. In the late 1870s, the Royal Commission on Colonial Defence, spurred on by fear of Russian advance, elevated the issue of imperial defence, and the contribution the colonies should be making to their own protection.[28] This concept became increasingly important towards the end of the nineteenth century as the British Empire's unchallenged status throughout the world was subjected to serious inter-imperial competition. The British Navy had enjoyed supremacy across the world's oceans since the Napoleonic Wars (or more specifically, the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805), a defining moment which historian Anthony Webster declares 'transformed British apprehension and insecurity in imperial affairs into overweening confidence'.[29] Dominating the seas, Britain developed an extensive colonial trading network that allowed the British to build a global empire.[30] Despite this position of strength, the threat of external nations never truly dissipated after Napoleon's defeat. British suspicion of Russia was felt as far away as the Australian colonies. Darwin attributes this fear to 'Russia's vast army, its inscrutable politics, its invulnerability to sea power and the apparently unlimited scale of Tsarist ambition' leading to a form of 'Russophobia' in Britain.[31]

In the late nineteenth century, Britain also had to contend with the growing imperial ambitions of other nations, particularly those of traditional rivals such as France. Many of

[26] Simon Potter, 'Webs, Networks, and Systems: Globalization and the Mass Media in the Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century British Empire', *Journal of British Studies* 46, no. 3 (2007): 630.
[27] Darwin, *The Empire Project*, 26.
[28] Darwin, *The Empire Project*, 25–6.
[29] Anthony Webster, *The Debate on the Rise of the British Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 18.
[30] Darwin, *The Empire Project*, 27.
[31] John Darwin, *Unfinished Empire: The Global Expansion of Britain* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2014), 324.

these capitalist empires soon moved towards conquering, annexing, and administrating the world beyond Europe and the Americas.[32] This newfound ambition was most pronounced in the 'Scramble for Africa', the dividing up of the African continent by various European powers. Britain alongside a handful of other European nations had already experienced a long and troubled history on the African continent.[33] However, by the early twentieth century, Europeans had partitioned and placed most of the continent under a form of colonial rule. Historians continue to debate the reasons for the partitioning of Africa. In their influential analysis, Ronald Robinson and Jack Gallagher posit that it may have been due to the late Victorian British having a keener zest for imperialism than their forefathers, eager businessmen opening the continent for capitalist production to help relieve depression, or even heightened rivalries seeking relief in Africa from tensions closer to home.[34] But most crucially, Africa's strategic interest lay in the 'transitory importance of its shores to the enterprises flowing past them'.[35] British authority on the African continent faced constant challenge, with the empire often resorting to military subjugation to secure its political and economic position.

By the 1870s, it was clear that the Australian colonies' tradition of sporadic military volunteerism might not cut it in this more imperially ambitious world. Reforming the armed forces was imperative at home and across the empire. Two officers of the Royal Engineers, Lieutenant General Sir William Jervois and Lieutenant Colonel Peter Scratchley, painted a damning image during their visit to the colonies in 1870. Scratchley presented a series of lectures on fortifications and torpedo defences in Victoria as part of a wider tour of the British colonies alongside Jervois. Immediately, he drew up some impressions of the colonies' tendencies when approaching military defences, some that would remain persistent themes across the remaining colonial years. Jervois emphasised the interchange of military ideas between the colonies (Scratchley specifically named Victoria and New South Wales whose Commandants he had recently met). They also raised concerns about the stagnation of the colonial forces, who lacked the means of acquiring practical knowledge afforded to the imperial forces.[36] Jervois identified a pattern in the Australian colonies of raising an

[32] Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire: 1875–1914* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 57.
[33] Notably in South Africa, see Anthony Nutting, *The Scramble for Africa: The Great Trek to the Boer War.* (London: Constable & Company, 1970).
[34] Ronald Robinson, John Gallagher, and Alice Denny, *Africa and the Victorians* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1961), 18.
[35] Robinson, Gallagher, and Denny, *Africa and the Victorians*, 14.
[36] P. H. Scratchley, *Lectures on Defence Subjects* (Melbourne: John Ferres, Government Printer, 1880), 7.

alarm at the prospect of Britain entering a major war, spending inefficiently in rapidly preparing defences, only to drop all further considerations of defensive planning until said alarm would be raised again.[37] Scratchley even claimed that a small number of key figures he had conversed with were planning to submit to any enemy by buying them off and recouping the costs during peacetime as a means to offset their inactivity.[38]

These problems could not be easily resolved. The duo made such an impression in the Australian colonies that in 1876 representatives of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Queensland directly requested Jervois and Scratchley to conduct a survey of the Australian defences.[39] They conducted the first systematic survey of the colonies' defences (excluding not yet self-governing Western Australia) completed on the ground by the same team of investigators across each colony.[40] Scratchley had told Victorian audiences in 1870 that 'The true value of fortification is not understood in Australia'. 'Fortification', he opined, 'is unquestionably the most economical way of securing a place from attack'.[41] The six intervening years had not dissuaded him. Their recommendations were based on building defensive forts in key strategic positions, fully armed and supported by mobile field forces.[42] Jervois and Scratchley believed that the Royal Navy would serve as the ultimate guarantor of security in the Pacific, with the primary threat to the colonies likely to be in the form of small raids that these forts would counter. For the remainder of the century, the recommendations of this report would underpin the colonies' approach to home defence.[43]

Despite Jervois and Scratchley's belief that the main threat to the colonies lay in small raids, the fear of a Russian invasion periodically concerned Australian politicians throughout the nineteenth century. This fear was most pronounced in cities such as Melbourne, which held vast wealth and few defensive resources, and reached its peak during the Crimean War (1853–1856).[44] Some of the colonies' most thoughtful leaders considered Australia's future in imperial terms of shifting regional geopolitics. Alfred Deakin was particularly concerned with the position of India which could pose a serious threat to Australia should Russia

[37] Scratchley, *Lectures on Defence Subjects*, 10.
[38] Scratchley, *Lectures on Defence Subjects*, 11.
[39] Neville Meaney, *A History of Australian Defence and Foreign Policy, 1901–1923*, vol. I: The Search for Security in the Pacific, 1901–1914 (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1976), 24.
[40] Jeffrey Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, 3rd ed. (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 44.
[41] Scratchley, *Lectures on Defence Subjects*, 14.
[42] Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, 44–5.
[43] Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, 45.
[44] Darwin, *The Empire Project*, 49.

occupy it.[45] 'With India as a base of operations for a hostile power, this continent would be directly threatened', wrote Deakin in 1893, 'when the inevitable struggle comes, to lend any efficient aid in repelling a Muscovite attack, it would assuredly be immensely to our interest, not only as Britons, but as Australians to see that assault repelled'.[46] At the Inter-Colonial Conference of 1881, William Morgan representing South Australia put forward the motion that 'the time has arrived when joint action should be taken for a more efficient naval defence of the Australian Colonies and New Zealand'. Morgan argued that: 'united representations should be made to the Imperial Government requesting that a sufficient naval force should be maintained in Australian waters'.[47] When the question of colonial contributions to this scheme arose, Morgan and South Australia found no support from the other colonies.[48] The question of just how far the colonies should be engaged in imperial defence continued to go unanswered.

The Australian colonies did invest in some measures to defend the continent. In the late 1860s, Victoria purchased the ironclad turret coast defence ship, HMS *Cerberus,* intended to be an extension of its existing land fortifications. The vessel patrolled Port Phillip Bay for the next fifty years.[49] Politicians in Victorian parliament debated the prospect of sub-imperialism, Australia's practice of imperialism on Britain's behalf, as a solution. Victorian leaders particularly looked towards the attachment of the Fijian Islands to Victoria to prevent other imperial powers from encroaching upon Australia through the Pacific region.[50] However, such actions were bound by the requisite permission from a British government that did not wish to upset their tenuous existing relations with their imperial rivals. In 1882, a small Russian Naval squadron approached Melbourne, creating a great deal of alarm in the local newspapers. The squadron was small and never posed any danger to the colonies, but it did serve as a timely reminder of just how isolated Australia was should such an invasion

[45] Walker, *Anxious Nation*, 26.
[46] Alfred Deakin, *Irrigated India: An Australian View of India and Ceylon, Their Irrigation and Agriculture* (London: W. Thacker & Co., 1893), 12.
[47] Sydney*, Intercolonial Conference Held at Sydney,* Houses of General Assembly, 18 January 1881, 3 (William Morgan).
[48] Sydney*, Intercolonial Conference Held at Sydney,* Houses of General Assembly, 18 January 1881, 4 (William Morgan).
[49] Bob Nicholls, *Statesmen & Sailors: Australian Maritime Defence, 1870–1920* (Sydney: Self-Published, 1995), 4.
[50] Victoria*, Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 17 May 1870, 452–3 (W. M. K. Vale). Also see Roger Thompson, *Australian Imperialism in the Pacific: The Expansionist Era, 1820–1920* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1980).

take place.[51] If nothing else, it raised doubts as to just how precarious the colonies' total reliance upon the Royal Navy could be.

Gladstone's Hesitancy and the Makings of an Imperial Emergency

Britain's occupation of Egypt in 1882 was initially of little concern within the Australian colonies. Although the Australian public followed international affairs with keen interest, they remained the domain of British statesmen and the larger imperial powers. Prior to the 1880s, British leaders felt no need to directly occupy Egypt. Their fear of Russian movement towards the Mediterranean Sea, one also shared by the French, had long been a factor in considering the protection of their imperial networks. However, Britain could always potentially secure the key strategic asset of the Suez Canal (a vital connection to the Indian Ocean) through naval might. This route was also of great importance to Australia. Liberal politician Charles Dilke made mention of this fact in the House of Commons on 25 July 1882 when he argued for the protection of the Suez Canal as 'one of the roads to our Colonial Empire in Australia and New Zealand'.[52] The further step of occupying Egypt provided little strategic advantage.[53]

Historians have long debated the reasons as to why Gladstone's government decided to intervene in Egypt. Robinson and Gallagher argued that this intervention was primarily driven by the desire to secure the Suez Canal with a reluctant Britain endeavouring to promote stability in the region so close to this vital trading route.[54] In response to this analysis, historians P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins contend that the crisis in Egypt posed little threat to the Suez Canal. Instead, the intervention in Egypt was motivated by Gladstone and his government having personal stakes there. It meant the crisis was not one of security, but of gentlemanly capitalism.[55] More recent interpretations by historians Martin Thomas and Richard Toye have placed emphasis on the justification for occupying Egypt, and how it was sold to the public by a Liberal Party hoping to avoid expansionist rhetoric, while maintaining

[51] Nicholls, *Statesmen & Sailors*, 8.
[52] United Kingdom, *Parliamentary Debates,* House of Commons, 25 July 1882.
[53] Robinson, Gallagher, and Denny, *Africa and the Victorians*, 77.
[54] Robinson, Gallagher, and Denny, *Africa and the Victorians*, 77.
[55] P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: Innovation and Expansion 1688–1914* (United Kingdom: Longman Group, 1993), 368.

national esteem.[56] Regardless, there is general consensus amongst historians that the occupation of Egypt, at least, was only ever meant to be temporary.[57]

Whatever the motivation, Gladstone's government intervened to protect the Egyptian Khedive from insurrectionary forces that threatened his rule. Within the space of a month in late 1882, Britain landed and occupied Egypt. [58] However, the Gladstone government soon discovered that safe passage through the Suez Canal could only be guaranteed by extending the British presence. In 1883, Secretary of State for War, the Marquess of Hartington, had emphasised the importance of the Red Sea port of Suakin to protect the route to India.[59] The entire British trading network relied upon its protection. Britain faced a lengthy stint in Egypt, one with the power split between the Egyptian Khedive and the British Consul-General posted to Cairo.

Lying to the south of Egypt, Sudan had been of much less interest to the Gladstone government, where they had mostly overlooked the traditional Turkish-Egyptian rule.[60] Yet, the region very quickly became a thorn in Gladstone's side. The origins of the Sudan conflict can be traced back to March 1881 when a Nubian, Muhammad Ahmad ibn 'Abdallah, experienced a series of visions during which he believed the Prophet Muhammad appointed him as the Mahdi (guided one).[61] The Egyptian Khedive's ministers pleaded with British leaders to intervene in the region as an uprising gained strength, but the bankruptcy in Egypt left little money to finance any form of military campaign.[62] The Mahdist forces quickly notched up a string of victories in 1883 against Egyptian forces, which though of little concern to London, destabilised the Khedive's rule as Egyptian military resources were rapidly depleted. On 8 September 1883, commander-in-chief Hicks Pasha, marched with 10,000 men to Omdurman to quell the Mahdi forces only to be brutally defeated, forcing the Gladstone government to reconsider the situation.[63] There appeared only one option left for

[56] Martin Thomas and Richard Toye, *Arguing about Empire: Imperial Rhetoric in Britain and France, 1882–1956* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 19–49.
[57] Malcolm Saunders makes this claim in Saunders, *Britain, The Australian Colonies, and the Sudan Campaigns of 1884–85*, 10. Specifically, he cites Robert O. Collins, *Land Beyond the Rivers: The Southern Sudan, 1898–1918* (USA: Yale University Press, 1971), 4.
[58] Robinson, Gallagher, and Denny, *Africa and the Victorians*, 120.
[59] Robinson, Gallagher, and Denny, *Africa and the Victorians*, 133.
[60] Saunders, *Britain, The Australian Colonies, and the Sudan Campaigns of 1884–85*, 25–8.
[61] Robert O. Collins, *A History of Modern Sudan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 21.
[62] Eve Troutt Powell, *A Different Shade of Colonialism: Egypt, Great Britain, and the Mastery of the Sudan* (California: University of California Press, 2003), 68.
[63] Robinson, Gallagher, and Denny, *Africa and the Victorians*, 132–3.

Gladstone if he hoped to preserve Britain's economic and political position: to begin the evacuation of Egyptian garrisons and European residents from the region.[64] Gladstone's desire to avoid expansionist rhetoric was coming back to bite him as his critics throughout the empire could point to the shortcomings of his imperialistic hesitancy.

As the Sudan crisis became a more pronounced threat to Egyptian sovereignty, Gladstone turned to a man who had led a decorated career in service of the British Empire, Major-General Charles George Gordon. Nicknamed 'Chinese Gordon' for his role in quelling the Taiping Rebellion (1850–1864), Gordon had also spent significant time in the Sudan region in the employ of the Khedive. In an interview with the *Pall Mall Gazette* published on 9 January 1884, General Gordon rejected the policy of evacuation that was then being debated amongst the Gladstone government. This approach, he believed, would end in massacre, as the lack of transport made it almost impossible to evacuate Khartoum.[65] When Gordon returned to Khartoum, the impossible task was now his. He decided to fortify in Khartoum and hope that the Gladstone's government would send immediate relief.[66] Gordon's situation only increased the pressure on Gladstone. The Sudan crisis was becoming an effective means through which the Conservative Party could attack not just these immediate losses, but the entire Egyptian venture undertaken by the Liberal government.[67] Gladstone initially resisted the mounting political and public pressure, only finally relenting to send relief to Khartoum in August 1884. However, by then the situation had become unsalvageable. The men sent to rescue Gordon made the long trek up the Nile River only to find Khartoum had fallen, and the empire was soon in mourning.[68]

Gordon's death on 26 January 1885 had not been the first instance of colonial frustration with Gladstone's government. Strong views on imperial affairs were hardly new in the colonies. Though long respected within Free-Trade circles in New South Wales, Gladstone's aversion to imperial sentiment made him the subject of much criticism. At the same time as the news of General Gordon's death was being received in Australia, tensions remained from the New Guinea affair in 1883; many in the colonies still felt betrayed by the lack of British

[64] Saunders, *Britain, The Australian Colonies, and the Sudan Campaigns of 1884–85*, 13–4.
[65] 'Chinese Gordon for the Soudan'. *The Pall Mall Gazette*, 9 January 1884, 1.
[66] Collins, *A History of Modern Sudan*, 23.
[67] Robinson, Gallagher, and Denny, *Africa and the Victorians*, 139.
[68] K. S. Inglis, *The Rehearsal: Australians at War in the Sudan 1885* (Sydney: Kevin Weldon & Associates, 1985), 10.

support for Queensland's attempt to claim Papua for the empire. It was only the latest evidence in a perceived trend — that colonial opinion was ignored and undervalued. A *Sydney Morning Herald* article written while news of Gordon's fate was still being confirmed blamed the Colonial Office for not taking the matter more seriously. 'The English ministry is not much influenced by colonial opinion', the article stated, 'but it is a great deal influenced by home opinion'.[69]

The news of Gordon's death also illustrated just how interconnected the British world had become by the 1880s. When Gordon lost his life in Khartoum in 1885, there was a sense that the Australian colonies were sharing in a global event, one that could be traced through the newspapers much closer to real time. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the vast distances between the Australian colonies and Britain seemed to shrink through developments in steamship and telegraph technology, making for swifter and more reliable flows of information.[70] On 2 July 1872, Melbourne received its first telegraph message from overseas, bringing the Victorian colony into direct communication with England.[71] The implications were great. Communication between Melbourne and London had been reduced to only nine days, and through this channel, news travelled to the city at a faster rate from all parts of the globe.[72] The Colonial Office responded to this new technology by employing a clerk to work into the night hours, ensuring any colonial emergency would be responded to as they arose.[73] *The Argus* made the prediction that the 'telegraphic union' of the colonies with Britain would bring forth 'a stronger Imperial feeling and a more thoroughly cosmopolitan sentiment'.[74] Though the telegraph allowed the British World to become more interconnected, as historian Simon Potter points out, communication was still constricted by 'heavy commercial impulses' and 'institutionalized inequalities and hierarchies'.[75] While news would still be somewhat delayed and slow, as well as expensive, the continuing development of these lines of communication were transforming how the Australian colonies saw themselves as part of the world.

---

[69] *Sydney Morning Herald*. 11 February 1885, 8.
[70] Roland Wenzlhuemer, *Connecting the Nineteenth-Century World: The Telegraph and Globalization* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 86.
[71] James Grant and Geoffrey Serle, *The Melbourne Scene: 1803–1956* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1957), 133.
[72] *The Argus*. 3 July 1872, 4.
[73] Alan Lester, Kate Boehme, and Peter Mitchell, *Ruling the World: Freedom, Civilisation and Liberalism in the Nineteenth-Century British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 289.
[74] *The Argus*. 3 July 1872, 4.
[75] Potter, 'Webs, Networks, and Systems': 646.

The growing interconnectedness of the British World also transformed how the Australian colonies related to the imperial centre. The colonies more quickly received and interpreted decisions regarding British foreign policy and were just as ready to offer their own immediate criticisms. During his lengthy stint as Prime Minister in the 1870s, Benjamin Disraeli left office with much praise from the Australian colonies for how he approached imperialism. Contemporary writer Arthur Patchett Martin wrote 'throughout the length and breadth of Australia the name of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield, made the sunburnt settler glow with an unwonted pride of patriotism'.[76] His great rival Gladstone, however, left a more complex legacy in the colonies. Gladstone's anti-expansionist leanings tended to come to a head against the Australian colonies, particularly when it came to Queensland's annexation of Papua in 1883.[77] According to Martin, Gladstone suffered colonial criticism because the foreign and domestic policies of Great Britain were more readily available to the colonies through telegraph cables and therefore, more open to scrutiny.[78]

The Gladstone government's actions in Egypt demonstrated how nationalist ideas spread throughout the British Empire, particularly regarding military action against the Mahdist forces. In May 1884, Gladstone himself was somewhat sympathetic to the plight of the Sudanese people. In a House of Commons debate, he stated of a war against the Mahdi: 'It would be a war of conquest against a people struggling to be free. Yes; these are people struggling to be free, and they are struggling rightly to be free'.[79] Gladstone could only maintain this stance for so long as he eventually gave into pressure from Cabinet colleagues such as Chamberlain, Dilke, and Hartington to take a more aggressive line.[80] Gladstone was also left to justify an expensive military excursion which many perceived as a neglect of domestic issues, a concern also echoed by its Australian critics.[81] Sentimental attachment to Gordon aside, these criticisms made the Sudan campaign a perplexing issue for the Australian colonies. It had become a mission conducted entirely too late to save Gordon, and one aimed at restoring control in a region that was of little strategic interest, for a government that had been criticised as having bungled the entire situation. It made for a strange entry point for the first colonial contingent to support a British war effort.

[76] A. Patchett Martin, *Australia and the Empire* (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1889), 71.
[77] Thompson, *Australian Imperialism in the Pacific: The Expansionist Era*, 64–7.
[78] Patchett Martin, *Australia and the Empire*, 75.
[79] United Kingdom, *Parliamentary Debates,* House of Commons, 12 May 1884.
[80] Thomas and Toye, *Arguing about Empire*, 35.
[81] Thomas and Toye, *Arguing about Empire*, 31.

Spontaneity and Readiness: Dalley's Unprecedented Offer

Acting Premier William Dalley seized the opportunity immediately. It was Dalley's name attached to the telegram which offered troops for Sudan (during Premier Alexander Stuart's absence from the colony), though the idea was likely planted in his mind by the writing of Edward Strickland. A retired major-general who had served both in the Australian colonies and abroad, Strickland was enjoying his retirement in Sydney when he was inspired to pen a letter to the editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald* following news of Gordon's death. Strickland proposed that the Australian colonies follow Canada's lead in lending 'our mother country substantial aid in this time of need'. Here he was referring to the Canadian offer sent to the Colonial Office on 9 February of a battalion of infantry for foreign service.[82] Specifically, Strickland wrote 'I would suggest that a regiment 1000 strong be raised in Australia as speedily as possible, and placed at the service of her Majesty the Queen, to aid her troops already engaged in bitter war both in North and South Africa'.[83] Ideas of Christian enlightenment being brought to the African continent underline Strickland's writing as he argued that a military intervention was necessary 'for the maintenance of the integrity of our nation and the ascendency of Christianity'.[84] Historian Douglas Johnson writes how it was within this context that the figure of Gordon, 'became the symbol of rightness and righteousness'.[85] Strickland's language reflects imperialist ideas of British duty to bring religion to the continent, paving the way for Gordon's martyrdom throughout the British World.[86]

Strickland's letter highlighted the inter-colonial rivalries within the empire, as well as the potential for a heightened colonial responsibility within wider British imperialism.

---

[82] Edward Strickland, 'To the Editor of the Herald' *Sydney Morning Herald*. 12 February 1885, 5; The High Commissioner for Canada to the Colonial Office, telegram, 9 February 1885, 3. Located in C.-4324. Strickland proposed sending a contingent of 1,000 troops to eclipse the 600 Canadian troops that were rumoured to have been incorporated into the Royal Army. For further context of Canada's approach to the Sudan crisis, see George F. G. Stanley, *Canada's Soldiers: The Military History of an Unmilitary People*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada, 1960), 270–2; Phillip Buckner, 'The Creation of the Dominion of Canada, 1860–1901', in *Canada and the British Empire*, ed. Phillip Buckner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 75–7.

[83] Edward Strickland, 'To the Editor of the Herald' *Sydney Morning Herald*. 12 February 1885, 5. Strickland's mention of South Africa followed a period of heightened tensions between the British Cape Colony and the Boer Republics that had culminated in the First Anglo-Boer War (1880–81) and continued to grow following the discovery of gold in the Transvaal region in 1884. See Chapter Three for further context of British presence in South Africa.

[84] Edward Strickland, 'To the Editor of the Herald' *Sydney Morning Herald*. 12 February 1885, 5.

[85] Johnson, 'The Death of Gordon': 285–310.

[86] Robinson, Gallagher, and Denny, *Africa and the Victorians*, 24.

Strickland called for 'Australia' rather than 'New South Wales' to raise a contingent, possibly indicating that he envisaged a collective force from the colonies. Although it was Gordon's death in Sudan that drove Strickland to put pen to paper, he called for Australia to offer aid to Britain in both North and South Africa. Here he referred to the ongoing struggles with the Boer republics which had only recently culminated in the First Anglo-Boer War (1880–1881). The letter also reflected anxieties about Australian prestige. 'A grand opportunity is now presented to Australia', wrote Strickland, 'of proving by performing a graceful, a loyal, a generous act, that she yields not to Canada or to any portion of the British Empire in loyalty and affection towards the mother country'.[87] This prospect that the Canadians might outshine the loyalty of the Australian colonies helped set the wheels in motion.

Dalley made for an interesting protagonist in the Sudan episode. He had never sat comfortably with the Imperial Federation movement, the ever-changing scheme to bring together the colonies and Britain in a manner that reflected much of the justification of the Sudan expedition.[88] Although he never openly admitted it, there is a good chance he expected the offer would not be accepted. Later, after it was, and when it came to defending his decision, he stated that he was driven by a desire to show loyalty to the British Empire, while the timing also gave the best chance of the offer being taken up by the War Office. Despite several ministers being away at the time, Dalley quickly conferred with the colony's military forces, the local manager of the Orient Steamship Company and met with cabinet before officially forwarding his offer to the Colonial Office.[89]

Dalley now had to translate Strickland's sentiment into a practical response. His proposal on 12 February 1885 (the same day as Strickland's letter) consisted of a contingent that would provide service in Sudan, specifically comprising of two field artillery batteries and 500 infantry, to land in the Red Sea port of Suakin thirty days after embarkation.[90] The next day, another telegram was sent declaring that New South Wales was willing to 'defray all expenses' regarding their initial offer.[91] The offer was not without controversy. There was

[87]Edward Strickland, 'To the Editor of the Herald' *Sydney Morning Herald*. 12 February 1885, 5.
[88] Charles S. Blackton, 'Australian Nationality and Nationalism: The Imperial Federationist Interlude, 1885–1901', *Australian Historical Studies* 7, no. 55 (1955): 6.
[89] Saunders, *Britain, The Australian Colonies, and the Sudan Campaigns of 1884–85*, 21–2.
[90] William Bede Dalley to the Colonial Office, telegram, 12 February 1885, 4–5. Located in C.-4324.
[91] William Bede Dalley to the Colonial Office, telegram, 13 February 1885, 5. Located in C.-4324.

no legal authority allowing Dalley to make this decision. His opponents pointed out that he was misusing the colony's military resources by sending them away.[92] Getting the troops to Sudan was going to be expensive; even the use of steamship *Iberia* to get the troops to Suakin would cost £15,000, with £5,000 of that paid in cash up front.[93] The question of legality resonated all the way to the British parliament.[94] Dalley's telegram justifying his hasty decision was read in the House of Commons by Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, Evelyn Ashley: 'we prefer, thank God, slight constitutional improprieties to the abandonment of duty, the neglect of great opportunities, and we prefer the glory of giving noble example'.[95]

The War Office accepted the offer enthusiastically on 14 February, but not without caveats.[96] Many of the finer details on how the British government would approach Khartoum were still being decided. The War Office reduced the artillery to one battery and notified the Agent-General of New South Wales that the contingent would be placed under a British general's command.[97] There was also some doubt as to when the campaign would take place. It was likely that the soldiers would be spending time in summer quarters waiting to commence in Autumn. With this information, if New South Wales still wished to send their contingent immediately, there was 'no desire on the part of Her Majesty's Government to delay its departure'.[98] New South Wales accepted these terms and on 16 February 1885, Dalley sent a telegram declaring 3 March as the departure date and began organising the sending of supplies and the payment of the troops.[99] The New South Wales government were finally able to announce this decision publicly in a supplement to the Government Gazette on 21 February.[100]

No stipulations could deter Dalley and the New South Wales government. The desire to go ahead with the contribution, even after having discussed its qualifications, showed the

[92] Saunders, *Britain, The Australian Colonies, and the Sudan Campaigns of 1884–85*, 73.
[93] Charter Party RMS Iberia, Sydney to Suakin, 1885 – Sudan, Papers, AWM2, Item 8.
[94] United Kingdom, *Parliamentary Debates,* House of Commons, 30 April 1885.
[95] United Kingdom, *Parliamentary Debates,* House of Commons, 30 April 1885, (Evelyn Ashley).
[96] John Bramston to the Agent-General for New South Wales, telegram, 14 February 1885, 8. Located in C.-4324.
[97] John Bramston to the Agent-General for New South Wales, telegram, 14 February 1885, 8 Located in C.-4324.
[98] John Bramston to the Agent-General for New South Wales, telegram, 14 February 1885, 8. Located in C.-4324.
[99] William Bede Dalley to Saul Samuel, telegram, 16 February 1885, 9. Located in C.-4324.
[100] Private John Fraser, New South Wales Contingent – Sudan, Papers, AWM, 3DRL/7790, 1.

determination of the New South Wales government to commit to the Sudan expedition. The other Australian colonies were just as eager. Likely inspired by New South Wales, the Victorian representatives were next to offer support. Premier James Service's despatch was sent only a day after New South Wales, though it made no specific offer. 'If England values assistance of Colonies in Egyptian campaign', it stated, 'assure imperial government that Victoria is ready to do her part'.[101] On 17 February, the Victorian government followed this up by pledging 600 to 700 men, fully equipped and consisting of a naval brigade and mounted infantry. The same telegram also offered the first suggestions of a federated Australian unit to the British government, though it framed this idea as one that was still only being discussed between the colonies.[102] The South Australian government also sent an offer on 16 February of 250 troops, also free of expense for the British treasury.[103] Finally, Queensland's government sent a telegram on 17 February, declaring that there were men interested in fighting in the Sudan and simply asking the question of whether the British government required assistance.[104] The differences in how officials made these offers suggests there was little communication between the colonies on the issue, a fact that was best illustrated when Victoria later adjusted its offer to match the specifics of New South Wales' contribution.[105]

For all the criticism that fell upon Dalley following the campaign, these telegrams show that he was not alone. Each of the other Australian colonies (Tasmania and Western Australia being the exceptions) were willing to put themselves in New South Wales' position, with just as little consideration of the consequences. This eagerness can be mostly attributed to fears of missing out on the praise being lauded on New South Wales by the British government. But it also speaks to the other colonial governments' willingness to raise and despatch a colonial contingent of their own, even with little consideration of the practical challenges. If New South Wales was embarking upon a new era where they could assist in a British cause through a military contribution, the other colonies did not wish to be left behind.

[101] James Service to the Colonial Office, telegram, 13 February 1885, 6. Located in C.-4324.
[102] James Service to the Colonial Office, telegram, 17 February 1885, 11. Located in C.-4324.
[103] Arthur Blyth to the Colonial Office, telegram, 16 February 1885, 10. Located in C.-4324.
[104] Chas. S. Dicken to the Colonial Office, telegram, 17 February 1885, 12. Located in C.-4324.
[105] James Service to the Colonial Office, telegram, 17 February 1885, 11. Located in C.-4324.

The British government responded with immediate gratitude, expressing the view that these offers were evidence of a united empire. On 20 February 1885, in the Commons, Gladstone acknowledged each of the offers he had received, including Canada, Victoria, South Australia, and Queensland. However, he singled out the New South Wales contribution 'not merely because it was first in point of time, but likewise because it was more completely formulated than most of the other proposals, and consequently admits of more expeditious proceeding'. Gladstone also made special mention of South Australia, although Adelaide's offer of 250 infantry was declined due to Gladstone's feelings that the colony was not in a state of preparedness to meet this offer. However, he commended the offer given South Australia's relatively small population (200,000–300,000) with Gladstone receiving it with 'feelings of liveliest gratification' and 'acknowledgements of the public spirit of the colonies'. While the New South Wales' offer was still being laid before the House, Gladstone concluded the great outpouring of support bore 'testimony to the unity of the British Empire, and likewise powerfully tend to draw closely together the bonds of that union'.[106] Meanwhile, Dalley was quietly revelling in the Victorian offer being rejected, noting in a letter to Governor of New South Wales, Augustus Loftus, how offensive the colony's leading journal had been to him.[107]

Gladstone's insistence on the preparedness and immediacy of any colonial support meant that a federated force was never likely to be feasible. On 24 February, Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Derby, sent a telegram to the Governors of Victoria, South Australia and Queensland expressing gratitude at their offers, but politely declining. 'In these cases, as in that of Canada', Derby stated, 'the probability that the military operations now in progress may be suspended during the hotter months of the summer, has precluded the immediate employment of any force not actually prepared and equipped like that tendered by New South Wales'. Instead of dismissing these offers outright, Lord Derby insisted that there was a possibility of the other Australian contingents being involved in the campaign later in the year. If this scenario came to pass, a federated force was still a possibility. 'I am glad to understand', Derby wrote, 'that the question of uniting the colonial contingents into one

[106] United Kingdom, *Parliamentary Debates,* House of Commons, 20 February 1885, (William Gladstone).
[107] William Bede Dalley to Lord Augustus Loftus, letter, 23 February 1885, 36. Located in A3057.

Australian brigade is being considered'.[108] The short length of the campaign would extinguish these hopes.

The idea of a federated force was most likely driven by anxiety over the possibility that the other colonies might be excluded from fighting in Sudan. The South Australian government advocated for a united force in a telegram to their counterparts in New South Wales on 16 February, believing 'this would be most effective'.[109] The Victorian government followed up on this suggestion, citing South Australia's conception of the idea. They wrote to the New South Wales government the following day to say it was one 'in which we concur'.[110] By the time these telegrams had been sent however, members of the War Office had already decided to accept the New South Wales offer, while Victorian leaders came to terms with not being considered for the early stages of the campaign. The acting Colonial Secretary of New South Wales replied to the suggestion of inter-colonial co-operation with the line: 'the proposal which you make would interfere with the arrangement existing between the imperial authorities and this Government as to the direct command and disposal of the New South Wales contingent'.[111] This correspondence highlights not only how important immediacy was in allowing New South Wales the opportunity to participate, but also how disconnected the colonies still were when it came to organising a united front.

Dalley still held some apprehensions over the whole affair. He divulged as much in a letter to Loftus dated on 20 February admitting the toll the organisation of the contingent was having upon him, as well as the disturbance it would have on New South Wales' Civil Service.[112] However, the New South Wales government had found its offer accepted and now they not only had to raise and equip the force promised, but also justify why they had so hastily committed these resources to this foreign war that appeared to most within the colonies to have nothing to do with them.

---

[108] Earl of Derby to the Governors of Victoria, South Australia, and Queensland, telegram, 24 February 1885, 19. Located in C.-4324.
[109] Acting Chief Secretary, South Australia to the Acting Colonial Secretary, New South Wales, telegram, 16 February 1885, 37. Located in C.-4437.
[110] Premier of Victoria to the Acting Colonial Secretary, New South Wales, telegram, 17 February 1885, 38. Located in C.-4437.
[111] Acting Colonial Secretary, New South Wales to the Premier of Victoria, telegram, 18 February 1885, 38–9. Located in C.-4437.
[112] William Bede Dalley to Lord Augustus Loftus, letter, 20 February 1885, 33. Located in A3057.

‘Productive of the Greatest Benefits’: Defending the Decision

Discussions about the implications of sending a contingent from New South Wales began as soon as parliament met. By 17 March 1885, the contingent had left Australian shores and were on their way to Suakin.[113] ‘It is a subject of the highest gratification that the course which has been pursued has awakened the strongest feelings of loyalty and devotion to the throne and Empire in all the Australian colonies’, Loftus declared as he opened parliament, ‘and has evoked a sentiment of admiration and gratitude in the mother country which cannot fail to be productive of the greatest benefits’.[114] Certainly, the potential for mutual benefit was not lost upon Loftus as he claimed that closer bonds had been forged through shared conflict. A telegram relayed this speech to Secretary of State for the Colonies, the Earl of Derby, with Loftus assuring him ‘the public opinion of the country favours the course adopted by my Government, and the Ministry are assured of a large majority in their favour’, ensuring that he too was made aware of just how the colonies perceived the reciprocal nature of such a commitment.[115]

Representatives in the initial New South Wales parliamentary sessions following the contingent’s departure widely supported Loftus’ statement. Beyond the congratulatory speech, these discussions give insights to the motivation behind the proposal, or at least some justification for why it occurred. For example, one member of the Legislative Council, William Brodribb, believed that the colony had an obligation to support Britain’s imperial defence which this contingent’s service could go some way towards meeting. Brodribb listed the costs of naval defence in Australian waters (£100,000 per annum) asking, ‘with these figures before us are we not bound in honor to assist the mother country in her hour of trial?’[116] Also raised by Brodribb was the possibility that Victoria might have stolen New South Wales’ thunder. ‘Had he [Dalley] not taken “the bull by the horns,”’ Brodribb argued, ‘the Victorians would only be too happy to assist the dear old mother country in her hour of need.’[117] Dalley’s quick decision may have arisen from a perception he was slow to act on issues in the past. The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported the day after the contingent departed that ‘some of Mr. Dalley’s critics went so far as to say that his promptitude in regard to the

[113] The circumstances surrounding the departure of the contingents are explored in the following chapter.
[114] New South Wales, *Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Council, 17 March 1885, 1 (Augustus Loftus).
[115] Lord Augustus Loftus to the Earl of Derby, telegram, 17 March 1885, 23. Located in C.-4437.
[116] New South Wales, *Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Council, 17 March 1885, 10 (William Brodribb).
[117] New South Wales, *Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Council, 17 March 1885, 9 (William Brodribb).

Soudan would do much to atone for his dilatoriness in the matter of New Guinea'.[118] Dalley, possibly, had a point to prove to his critics.

The main source of dissent came from some representatives' belief that the offer had been made illegally. Others argued that Dalley had offered resources that were intended for local defence. News of these potential infractions even reached the ears of the British government. When Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, Evelyn Ashley, was asked about adverse criticism in the assembly, and votes by members as to whether the action was unwise and unjust, he replied: 'I am unable, without notice, to answer that question'.[119] Though this controversy raised some contention in New South Wales, the issue slowly petered out. Historian Malcolm Saunders claims that 'it was, above all, the impulsiveness and seeming highhandedness of the government which irked critics'.[120] Many within the New South Wales parliament were quick to withdraw their criticisms after their voices were heard, and the Australian Military Contingent Bill passed in the Legislative Assembly with a majority of 44 to 2.[121] It appeared that the impulsiveness of the decision was of concern to those who believed in the parliamentary process, but not strong enough to encourage significant criticism of the expedition itself. The vocalised objection to the contingent did not translate into a strong voting presence against its deployment. It marked the beginning of what would become a regular pattern for colonial approaches to these late nineteenth century conflicts.

Stronger critiques came from outside of parliament. The most prominent of these was from Henry Parkes, the former premier of New South Wales. In his 1892 book, *Fifty Years in the Making of Australian History*, Parkes reflected upon the initial excitement surrounding the Sudan expedition. 'From the first moment all my faculties of common sense and discernment, all my feelings of patriotism and loyalty to the Empire, were opposed to this movement', wrote Parkes, 'which I looked upon as uncalled-for, unjustifiable and quixotic'.[122] Since he lacked a seat in parliament during this stage of his illustrious career, Parkes turned to the *Sydney Morning Herald* to express his disdain. On 19 February, he wrote 'the pride of England must have fallen very low if she is prepared to exhibit the

[118] *Sydney Morning Herald*. 4 March 1885, 6.
[119] United Kingdom, *Parliamentary Debates,* House of Commons, 30 April 1885, (Evelyn Ashley).
[120] Saunders, *Britain, The Australian Colonies, and the Sudan Campaigns of 1884–85*, 41.
[121] New South Wales*, Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 25 March 1885, 261.
[122] Henry Parkes, *Fifty Years in the Making of Australian History* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1892), 418.

spectacle before the Military Powers of Europe of her armies marching against the Mahdi and his barbarous hordes, supported by 600 men from one of her colonies'.[123] Emboldened by the reception he was receiving, Parkes continued to use the press to criticise the decision by the New South Wales government with great regularity throughout the campaign.

Figure 1: *The Bulletin frequently criticised the unbridled imperial sentiment running throughout the Australian colonies. The Sudan campaign drew the publication's ire as they criticised the expense of colonial resources.*
Source: 'Johnny's Valentine'. *The Bulletin*. 21 February 1885, 5.

[123] Henry Parkes, 'The Soudan Expedition. To the Editor of the Herald' *Sydney Morning Herald*. 19 February 1885, 5.

Parkes' reputation meant that his voice was also the most concerning to the New South Wales government. Loftus reassured Derby: 'the popular enthusiasm in favour of the expedition continues and is ever increasing as the daily contribution to the Patriotic Fund [designed to support the expenses of the contingent] fully testifies', notwithstanding one 'Sir H. Parkes'.[124] In a telegram to the Earl of Derby dated 17 March, Loftus wrote: 'there is a certain party here, of which Sir Henry Parkes may be called the leader, which is exciting opposition to the policy of my Government in the regard of sending troops to the Soudan'.[125] In addition to his letters in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Parkes frequently delivered speeches decrying the New South Wales government's decision.[126]

Beyond concerns about the illegality of the offer and misuse of military resources, Parkes just did not particularly care for Dalley. Their rivalry extended as far back as 1872, when Dalley declared 'his occupation of his office a disgrace and a national humiliation'.[127] In a speech at Goulburn, Parkes argued that the offer of troops had been made by a man who was not premier, and that the premier had not considered the expense that would be put upon the colony (estimated by Parkes to be £1,000 per day).[128] At his most scathing, Parkes went so far as to declare Dalley's action enough to call many great men from the grave.[129] By 24 March, Parkes was using the *Sydney Morning Herald* to respond to Dalley's claim that Parkes was 'the voice of one who speaks from the sepulchre'.[130] Speaking to Dalley's tendency to enter and leave the Legislative Council, Parkes wrote: 'Mr. Dalley should look to the glass house in which he lives before he throws stones'.[131] Parkes' dedication to the dismantling of Dalley's authority suggest that he was leveraging his outspokenness on the Sudan issue to engineer a return to parliament. These motivations make it difficult to determine the extent to which Parkes truly opposed sending the contingent.

---

[124] Lord Augustus Loftus to the Earl of Derby, 2 March 1885, Series CO 201. New South Wales Correspondence, 1782–1900, AJCP.
[125] Lord Augustus Loftus to the Earl of Derby, New South Wales, telegram, 17 March 1885, 24. Located in C.-4437.
[126] Based upon a survey of the *Sydney Morning Herald* in February–March.
[127] *A Terrible Indictment: Dalley on Parkes in 1872* (Sydney: J. G. O'Connor, 1880), 3.
[128] 'Sir Henry Parkes at Goulburn'. *Sydney Morning Herald*. 20 March 1885, 5.
[129] 'Sir Henry Parkes at Goulburn'. *Sydney Morning Herald*. 20 March 1885, 5.
[130] 'Mr. Dalley's "Sepulchres" and "Resurrections:" To the Editor of the Herald'. *Sydney Morning Herald.* 24 March, 1885, 3.
[131] 'Mr. Dalley's "Sepulchres" and "Resurrections:" To the Editor of the Herald'. *Sydney Morning Herald.* 24 March, 1885, 3.

The Bulletin offered a more aggressive voice of dissent over the Sudan campaign. Founded by two Roman Catholics, Jules François Archibald and John Haynes, in Sydney during 1880, *The Bulletin* adopted a radical stance, campaigning to sever the close ties between the Australian colonies and Britain.[132] The magazine was crucial in transferring emerging nationalist ideas from pastoral areas into the major coastal cities, and frequently criticised the blind loyalty shown to British imperialism at the expense local concerns.[133] As such, it would continue to be an outspoken critic of all military ventures during Australia's colonial period. Rallying against the patriotic sentiment that arose from Gordon's death, *The Bulletin* retorted: 'but the roar for blood and satisfaction is a wild beast roar, not the fit expression of the determination of a civilized nation'.[134] 'They [advocates of the contingent] have appropriated such terms as patriotism, national honour, prestige, valour, and glory, to themselves', *The Bulletin* railed, after the departure of the troops, 'and have taunted the dissentients from their craze with being meanly and pitifully deficient in these splendid attributes and emotions'.[135] The Sudan expedition simply provided the latest opportunity for *The Bulletin* to continue their anti-British, nationalist rhetoric. In 1883, *The Bulletin* had expressed fears the Imperial Federation movement would end with colonial troops and money being at the mercy of the London government.[136] To the publication, the Sudan campaign showed that their fears were being realised.

Sympathy for the Mahdi, meanwhile, also reared its head, sometimes in tandem with nationalist sentiment throughout the colonies. Henry Parkes' letter to the *Sydney Morning Herald* argued:

> The war in Egypt is a war of invasion against barbarous tribes, who in comparison with us, are fighting on their own soil. There is no pretence on our part of conquest on the one hand or of the defence of human rights on the other.[137]

In this line, Parkes reflected the earlier sentiment of Gladstone himself, who had displayed his own reservations about a military campaign against the Mahdi. *The Bulletin* sympathised

---

[132] Saunders, *Britain, The Australian Colonies, and the Sudan Campaigns of 1884–85*, 62.
[133] Graeme Davison, 'Sydney and the Bush: An Urban Context for the Australian Legend', *Australian Historical Studies* 18, no. 71 (1978): 191–209.
[134] 'By Jingo!'. *The Bulletin*. 14 February 1885, 4.
[135] 'Who are the Patriots?'. *The Bulletin*. 7 March 1885, 3.
[136] 'Imperial Federation'. *The Bulletin*. 29 September 1883, 1.
[137] Henry Parkes, 'The Soudan Expedition. To the Editor of the Herald' *Sydney Morning Herald*. 19 February 1885, 5.

with the position of the Mahdi against the British Empire. 'The Soudanese Arabs are not even rebels against the Queen's authority', it stated, 'It is only by a brutal perversion of terms that they can be called rebels at all, since they constitute a distinct race, in a geographically and politically distinct country, and are in arms to resist or throw off the yoke of a foreign invader of alien nationality'.[138] While *The Bulletin* freely stirred up controversy, Parkes was still aware of Britain's importance to the Australian colonies and softened his attack. He was potentially concerned about the ramifications of his speech should he return to parliament.

Parkes' comments spoke to much of the resentment being directed towards Gladstone's government, viewed as weak on the issue of Sudan and as the betrayers of Gordon. 'My ground to objecting to the offer which was made to the imperial authorities', stated member for Sandhurst, John Quick on 18 June in the Victorian Legislative Assembly, 'is that I, for one, as a citizen of the British Empire, entirely disapprove of the Gladstone Ministry as developed in the Soudan business — a policy which has been described in England as one of "slaughter and scuttle"'.[139] Quick believed: 'it would have been a matter to be deplored if this colony had spent its money and sent away a number of its best young men to support a policy which every right-thinking man must disapprove of'.[140] He admitted that the assistance would have been the right step to take if the matter had of been of great national emergency, but suggested the Victorian offer was only made to meet public sentiment. Perhaps Quick's most accurate assessment of Victoria's motivation to commit troops, was his suggestion that the offer had been made 'in order to repel the insinuation or taunt that Victoria was behind other colonies in patriotism or enterprise'. Victorian leaders, it seemed, were wary of all the glory being bestowed on New South Wales, just as Brodribb had been anxious about Melbourne stealing the initiative from Sydney.[141]

Many politicians raised questions over the process, but few were willing to outright reject the campaign itself. Perhaps much of this can be attributed to how quickly it went from being formulated to put into action. There was no consideration prior to Dalley's offer that the Australian colonies might send troops to fight in the Sudan; everything had hinged on Gordon's death. Also, the British government almost immediately accepted and praised the

[138] 'Who are the Patriots?'. *The Bulletin*. 7 March 1885, 3.
[139] Victoria*, Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 18 June 1885, 43 (John Quick).
[140] Victoria*, Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 18 June 1885, 43–4 (John Quick).
[141] Victoria*, Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 18 June 1885, 44 (John Quick).

offer, meaning any critics had to temper their objections once the policy had the support of the imperial centre. Most of all, it remained widely unknown just what was expected of this expedition, and what this contribution would entail, making it difficult to criticise. Would it tighten the bonds of imperial relations between the colonies and Britain? All involved now had to wait and see what would unfold, and what the campaign would bring the troops and New South Wales.

Conclusion: From Defence Forts to Expeditionary Forces

Throughout the 1870s, Jervois and Scratchley were direct in laying out what they believed to be the future of colonial defence. Local defence was at the forefront of their planning, with little suggestion that the colonies were in a position where they should be actively planning to defend British interests overseas. Yet, each of the Australian colonies that could provide a contingent of men to fight in Sudan were willing to do so, despite having little stake in Britain's war against the Mahdist forces. So why had such a complete change in defensive outlook occurred during those early months of 1885?

Much of the decision by Dalley and its widespread support can be attributed to the atmosphere surrounding the death of Gordon. The Australian colonies not only shared in the loss of this figure, but felt it was an important global event they could experience alongside Britain in closer time than ever before. The figure of Gordon, embodying the idealised qualities of an imperial figure, could rise above the thornier points within the Anglo-Australian relationship. These contestations between Australia and Gladstone included frustrations with Gladstone's imperial policy and his Liberal governments' perceived failings in past imperial matters, as well as on the fate of Gordon himself. In the relationship bound by sentiment and a sense of 'Britishness', Gordon's death drew the imperial world together in a manner that allowed for the extraordinary response of raising a colonial contingent.

Few statesmen were willing to define what they expected from the contingent. Much of the language surrounding the contribution was based in strengthening Anglo-Australian bonds and Britain's reciprocal obligation should Australian interests be threatened. Both of these factors were difficult to measure in the short term. Dalley and the supporters of the

contingent could, however, point to Gladstone's speech in the House of Commons as a sign that their actions had at least stirred the desired response from the London government, particularly during a time when there was tension between foreign and colonial policy. Though it helped those who committed the troops to defend the decision, the lack of tangible benefits from the Sudan expedition would come back to haunt those who promoted it.

While the Sudan expedition can be interpreted as a significant departure from the earlier colonial outlook regarding defence planning, it was a decision that was embraced by a vast cross-section of the colonies. Had circumstances only been slightly different, particularly had there been an extra month to organise, or if the campaign had been able to continue in the summer months, it is quite feasible that each of the Australian colonies would have sent their own contingents to serve in Sudan. But, as this chapter has demonstrated, the Sudan expedition can be better understood as an episode that arose from the changing global outlook of the Australian colonies. Brought closer to international events through new technologies, they were eager to search out a place for themselves in this rapidly changing imperial world.

Chapter Two:

'What Becomes of the Exaggerated, Extravagant Folly?': The New South Wales Contingent in Sudan

The New South Wales contingent embarked for Sudan on 3 March 1885 amid great excitement. The day marked the peak of enthusiasm for the Sudan expedition and the troops were sent off by large crowds at Circular Quay. One soldier, Gunner Thomas Judge, wrote to his brother on the day of his departure to say, 'every body [*sic*] turned out to wish us luck and the Contingent got the loudest Hoorays! Even more than the Governor'.[1] The *Daily Telegraph* in Sydney reported on the day of the contingent's embarkation that 'their object in proceeding to that far-off port is to attest their loyalty to the British Empire and their devotion as sons of Englishmen, Irishmen, and Scotsmen, to fight for the cause of the sea-girt on any occasion in any clime'.[2] Meanwhile, New South Wales Governor, Lord Augustus Loftus, was eager to enshrine the departure as an historically important moment. 'The event is regarded as not only one of the greatest in the annals of the Colony', he stated in a telegram to the Colonial Office, 'but as possessing a deep historic interest as the first occasion in which Australian troops have shared in the defence of the empire'.[3] Those present at the sending off were left in little doubt that this was a symbolically important moment.

Australian military historians have often acknowledged the Sudan contingent's importance as the first time a British colony raised an independent contingent to fight in an external conflict. But they have tended to make assumptions about its lasting significance. This is perhaps best illustrated by Peter Firkins' book *The Australians in Nine Wars: From Waikato to Long Tan*, first published in 1973. 'It was a modest milestone in Australia's military heritage, and, most significantly', Firkins argued, 'it had established a precedent. From then on, it was taken for granted that Britain's far-flung outposts should render military assistance to the mother country in time of conflict'.[4] Historian Malcolm Saunders sought to move

[1] Gnr Thomas Judge, New South Wales Contingent – Sudan, letter, 3 March 1885, AWM, PR82/162.
[2] 'Australian Troops for the Soudan: The Day of Embarkation'. *The Daily Telegraph*. 3 March 1885, 5.
[3] Lord Augustus Loftus to the Colonial Office, telegram, 3 March 1885, 3–4. Located in C.-4437.
[4] Peter Firkins, *The Australians in Nine Wars: From Waikato to Long Tan*, 2nd ed. (London: Pan Books, 1973), 7. Also see, Chris Coulthard-Clark, 'The Dispatch of the Contingent', in *But Little Glory: The New South Wales Contingent to the Sudan, 1885*, ed. Peter Stanley (Canberra: Military Historical Society of Australia, 1985), 29.

away from claims like Firkins', arguing in 1985 that when it comes to interpretations of the Sudan expedition's significance, 'none has been more misleading than that which holds that it established a precedent for the Australian colonies' involvement in future imperial wars'.[5] Saunders was right in that the contingent did not set an automatic precedent for overseas military service. But his statement glossed over the nuance of the legacy of the Sudan campaign. The New South Wales contingent to Sudan highlighted the dangers of imperial sentiment dictating matters relating to defence, with the desire to demonstrate loyalty overriding consideration for the wider connotations of sending a contingent to an imperial conflict. The fallout from Dalley's decision shaped the Sudan campaign's legacy into its aftermath.

This chapter argues that the Sudan expedition of 1885 did not establish a precedent when it came to Australian involvement in imperial wars. In fact, it revealed many of the limitations of an Australian contribution under the existing arrangements and Australian impressions soured quickly. The contingent did, however, symbolise the increasing Australian willingness to be more actively involved in imperial affairs. This chapter, therefore, serves a dual purpose. The first is to illustrate the nature of Australian involvement in the Sudan campaign, signposting key themes of colonial anxiety, emerging from the incorporation of Australian troops within British ranks, that re-occurred throughout future campaigns. The second is the evaluation of colonial leaders' interpretation of the campaign, the perceived worth of Australian contingents for imperial service, and what exactly the whole affair yielded physically and symbolically for New South Wales.

Building upon the previous chapter's exploration of the conditions that led to the Sudan contingent's deployment, this chapter discusses the nature of its members' experience in Sudan and seeks to understand the debates surrounding the conflict that persisted in its aftermath. Three major themes emerge from the Sudan contingent's service that would carry over into Australian involvement in future imperial wars. The first is the lack of knowledge throughout the Australian colonies of what the contingent's service would entail once the men arrived in Sudan and were assimilated into Britain's army. The second is the emergence of a colonial anxiety expressed by the New South Wales troops that also filtered through to

[5] Malcolm Saunders, *Britain, The Australian Colonies, and the Sudan Campaigns of 1884–85*, University of New England History Series 5 (Sydney: University of New England, 1985), 118.

Australian leaders and followers of the conflict back home. This anxiety was the pronounced fear of not measuring up to the reputation of the seasoned British Army. Third is the decline in domestic interest in the war once the initial excitement of sending troops passed. The Sudan expedition stands out as a significant moment when imperial enthusiasm was channelled into direct action in service of the empire. But, the conflict and its aftermath, raised new complications and questions as to Australia's ability to play a more active role in imperial defence.

'No Soldier Could Expect More': The Departure to Sudan

Members of the New South Wales contingent had little idea what they were signing up for, but that did not dissuade them from doing so in droves. In Sydney, there was such excitement at the prospect of serving in Sudan that six times the number of men required volunteered.[6] Within this pool of potential recruits there was some degree of experience, and many of the men had served in previous campaigns, including in Crimea and New Zealand.[7] The contingent that was raised in the end consisted of 771 men, accompanied by 218 horses, though by the time the campaign truly began in Sudan, both a private and a lieutenant-colonel had left for family reasons, and five horses had perished on the journey.[8] Of these men, Australian born troops were slightly outnumbered by those born in England, Scotland, and Ireland. Most belonged to the Church of England, although one soldier insisted that the question of religion seldom came up during the journey to Sudan.[9]

[6] 'The Soudan Contingent: History of the Contingent'. *Sydney Morning Herald*. 15 February 1886, 6.
[7] 'The Soudan Contingent: History of the Contingent'. *Sydney Morning Herald*. 15 February 1886, 6.
[8] These figures are provided in Saunders, *Britain, The Australian Colonies, and the Sudan Campaigns of 1884–85*, 85–6; K. S. Inglis, *The Rehearsal: Australians at War in the Sudan 1885* (Sydney: Kevin Weldon & Associates, 1985), 46; Colonel Richardson to the Principal Under-Secretary, Colonels Secretary's Office, telegram, 26 March 1885; Colonel Richardson to the Principal Under-Secretary, Colonels Secretary's Office, telegram, 7 April 1885. Both located in NAA: SP459/1, 453/1/131.
[9] Important to note that this remark is made on the journey to Sudan and may not reflect the rest of the contingent's service, see Corporal Robert Small, New South Wales Contingent – Sudan, diary, 2 March 1885, AWM, PRO6341, 17.

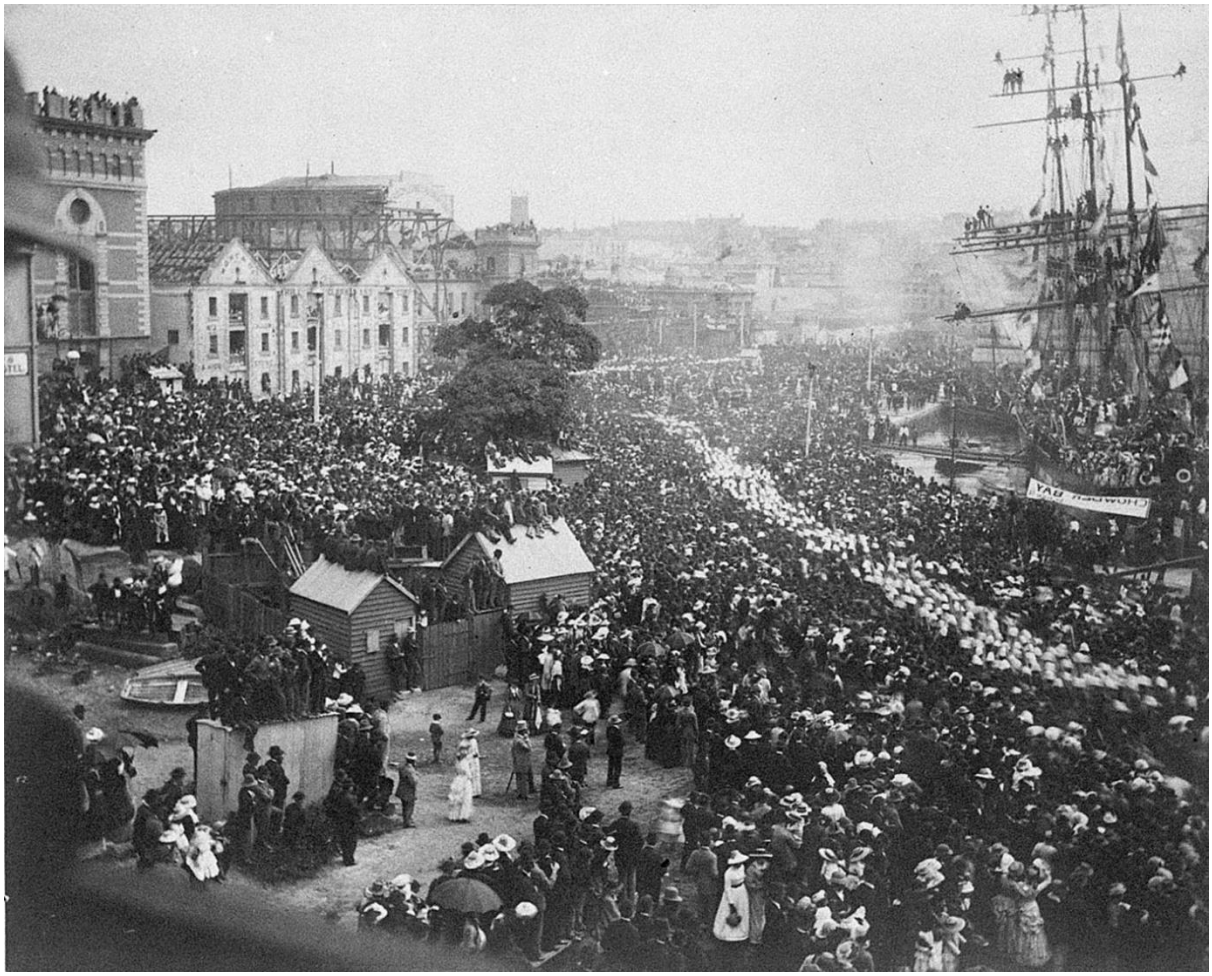

Figure 2: *The Departure of the New South Wales Contingent. The crowds present were a testament to the excitement throughout the colony preceding their departure. From this time onwards, the departure of contingents became 'events' in the Australian colonies.*
Source: 'Departure of N.S.W Contingent for Soudan', 3 March 1885, photograph, State Library of New South Wales. Call No: Government Printing Office 1 – 16236.

The contingent which left Sydney was composed of an infantry battalion, an artillery battery, an ambulance corps, a band, two chaplains and an interpreter.[10] Along with them also went four New South Wales based journalists, the military authorities restricting coverage to the local Sydney press, though one Victorian reporter sneaked aboard to report for Melbourne's *Daily Telegraph*, and, more concerningly for the same authorities, *The Bulletin*.[11] After their selection, the troops underwent rigorous training prior to their departure from Victoria Barracks.[12] Thomas Judge joked: 'we have trained so hard for the past weeks that I fear that

[10] Saunders, *Britain, The Australian Colonies, and the Sudan Campaigns of 1884–85*, 85–6.
[11] Fay Anderson and Richard Trembath, *Witnesses to War: The History of Australian Conflict Reporting* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2011), 27–8.
[12] Corporal Robert Small, New South Wales Contingent – Sudan, diary, 2 March 1885, AWM, PRO6341, 1.

the whole thing will be over within days of our arrival'.[13] The men travelled to Sudan on two troopships, SS *Iberia* and SS *Australasian*. Judge in the same letter lamented his assignment to *Australasian*, the less attractive of the ships: 'We are to travel with the horses, sharing their straw no doubt!'[14]

Lord Loftus was most eager to impress to the crowd that this moment marked a significant milestone in the colony's history. Wanting to bask in the event, the Governor addressed the military procession and eager crowd. Loftus' speech invoked the righteousness of the British Empire's activity in the Sudan region in suppressing the Mahdi's uprising and the importance of the contingent's service as an unprecedented moment in the history of the British Empire. Although many criticisms of Britain's campaign had arisen in the colonies, Loftus assured all present that the task ahead was a noble one: 'you will be greeted in Egypt by the hearty welcome of thousands of chivalrous soldiers who have never yet looked upon such an action as yours'. For Loftus, the moment was not just about communicating the British government's appreciation, but broader ideas of Australia finding a new place in the empire and the world. According to Loftus, the contingent showed 'the unity of the mighty and invincible Empire of which you [the contingent] are members', and he hoped they could 'share in the triumph as in the service'. Though it had been Dalley who had conceived of the Sudan expedition, Loftus was just as adamant about the potential benefits to the colony from receiving the British government's 'gratitude'.[15] The day's events made a noticeable impact on some of the soldiers who departed. Corporal Robert Small of the infantry wrote in his diary: 'I may say that the great enthusiasm among the people (on our ship leaving) was such as I never before witnessed in fact no soldier could expect more'.[16]

The contingent continued to garner the support of the other colonies. When the two ships arrived in Adelaide on 6 March 1885, they were just as warmly received by crowds as they had been in Sydney. *The South Australian Advertiser* declared: 'along with the expedition went the great heart of the community'. The same article continued, 'upon the *Iberia* the idea prevails that there is in the colony [New South Wales] a more substantial opposition to

[13] Gnr Thomas Judge, New South Wales Contingent – Sudan, letter, 3 March 1885, AWM, PR82/162.
[14] Gnr Thomas Judge, New South Wales Contingent – Sudan, letter, 3 March 1885, AWM, PR82/162.
[15] Reuters Telegraphic Agency to the Colonial Office, telegram, 3 March 1885, 3–4. Located in C.-4437.
[16] Corporal Robert Small, New South Wales Contingent – Sudan, diary, 3 March 1885, AWM, PRO6341, 1–2.

the movement than is by many supposed to exist'.[17] This suggested that the criticisms of the Sudan expedition had been prevalent enough to filter through the ranks of the contingent, despite the overwhelming crowds that had bidden them farewell. In *The South Australian Advertiser's* assessment of the turn-out to witness the contingent's arrival, such opinion was not present on the day *Iberia* arrived. Despite Adelaide's offer of support being declined, the South Australian crowd embraced the contingent and were just as keen to share in the novelty of the event.

The opposition hinted at by *The South Australian Advertiser* was still far from a movement. *The Bulletin*, while acknowledging that it would be difficult to ascertain which side the majority was on, claimed in convoluted fashion that 'it is sufficient that it cannot be disputed that if not a majority, a considerable minority in N. S. Wales view the dispatch of our contingent to Soudan with repugnance'.[18] At least in the initial stages of organising the campaign, support was widespread. This is best exemplified by the 'Patriotic Fund', established to receive donations for the contingent and which received the support of a cross section of New South Wales society.[19] Despite these cries of protest, there was little that emerged from the Sudan expedition that could be considered indicative of a protest movement. Historians tracing Australia's developing peace movements have grappled with the Sudan as a source for these ideas, but generally agree there was little coordination amongst the campaign's foremost opponents.[20] The lack of such a movement can also be attributed to the shortness of the campaign, as well as the declining interest amongst the public following the initial patriotic fervour.[21]

What the campaign would entail remained unclear to most. Details surrounding the fall of Khartoum were still being verified and brought to public attention even as the contingent were heading to Suakin.[22] Certainly, the thrill of the journey appealed to those who

[17] 'War in the Soudan: With the Australian Troops on Board the Iberia'. *The South Australian Advertiser*. 9 March 1885, 6.
[18] 'Who are the Patriots?'. *The Bulletin*. 7 March 1885, 3.
[19] Saunders, *Britain, The Australian Colonies, and the Sudan Campaigns of 1884–85*, 36–7.
[20] A good example can be seen by W. A. Wood who in a 1962 article claimed there was an anti-war movement led by the working class, see: W. A. Wood, 'The Sudan Contingent of 1885 and the Anti-War Movement', *Bulletin of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History*, no. 3 (1962): 52–69.
[21] Malcolm Saunders and Ralph Summy, 'One Hundred Years of an Australian Peace Movement, 1885–1984: Part I: From the Sudan Campaign to the Outbreak of the Second World War', *Peace and Change* 10, no. 3 (1984): 40.
[22] Based on a survey of the *Sydney Morning Herald* during March 1885.

volunteered. Gunner Thomas Judge referred to a 'great adventure' in a letter written to his brother before his departure.[23] The 3 March 1885 issue of the *Sydney Morning Herald* reserved an entire page to celebrate the departure of the Sudan contingent that included a large map of the region. The map titled 'The Theatre of War in the Soudan' (many of its details copied from the *United Services Gazette*) was included to showcase the portion of Sudan that the paper felt 'probably is fated to be the scene of the great battles in the present war', and intended for this map to 'be of value both to those taking active part in the expedition and those who may watch the progress of events with vivid interest', though the map neglected to include Suakin.[24] This indicated that the paper, at least, predicted the expedition would involve some serious combat. The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported as the contingent left:

> nobody supposes that either the applications or the subscriptions have been the result of serious thinking as to the exigencies of the British Government, or the wants of the Soudan. Many of those who have offered their money or their lives may have no very definite idea as to what the Soudan is, or why British soldiers happen to be there.[25]

The situation was not much clearer in Britain. Parliament had viewed the entire Egyptian entanglement as a blunder, while achieving little consensus on how to begin salvaging it.[26] Gladstone's hesitation had been perceived as the cause of Gordon's downfall, and it appeared still to be an issue even as the New South Wales government prepared to send troops overseas. By April, cabinet felt safe in returning to a policy of evacuating from Sudan, sensing that the dangers posed to stability in Egypt by the Mahdist forces had been greatly exaggerated.[27] However, Gladstone's perceived weakness over Sudan caught up to him when the Conservative government assumed power on 8 June 1885 under Lord Salisbury.[28] Despite their criticism of Gladstone throughout the entire Egyptian affair, the Conservatives adopted the same evacuation policy as the Liberal party.[29] The Australian soldiers were being thrust into a situation that remained politically charged back in Britain.

---

[23] Gunner Thomas Judge, New South Wales Contingent – Sudan, letter, 3 March 1885, AWM, PR82/162.
[24] 'Map of the Soudan'. *Sydney Morning Herald*. 3 March 1885, 5.
[25] *Sydney Morning Herald*. 4 March 1885, 6.
[26] Ronald Robinson, John Gallagher, and Alice Denny, *Africa and the Victorians* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1961), 154.
[27] Robinson, Gallagher, and Denny, *Africa and the Victorians*, 155.
[28] Inglis, *The Rehearsal*, 129.
[29] Robinson, Gallagher, and Denny, *Africa and the Victorians*, 155.

In Sudan itself, it had already been a frustrating campaign before the New South Wales contingent arrived. Under the leadership of General Gerald Graham, the plan was for the force of 13,500 troops (including 2,000 Indian troops) to advance on Berber through the desert.[30] Beginning in March 1885, it would mark one final campaign against the Mahdist forces before the summer. Between 21 and 22 March, General Graham fought two significant battles against the Mahdi's most prominent military commander, Osman Digna, and his forces between 21 and 22 March at Hashin and Tofrek.[31] Both were long and bloody, with minimal British gains. Casualties from the Battle of Tofrek were notably severe. Over 100 British and Indian troops were killed with 140 wounded, 900 camels lost, and an estimated 1,000–2,000 Mahdists also lay dead.[32] By the time the New South Wales contingent eventually arrived, the British outlook for their campaign did not look optimistic from any quarters.

The role the New South Wales contingent were likely to play in the Sudan was also still unclear. Rumours circulated that the contingent would only be used for guarding navvies, while one pamphlet published prior to their departure suggested the men might be involved in 'the greatest battle fought in the Soudan yet'.[33] The *Sydney Morning Herald* published an article on 20 March 1885, after the troops had departed, based on a Reuters Telegram from London (dated 10 February). The article hoped to clarify the campaign's details for the public. It laid out the proposed British operation as such: 'the plan of the campaign is understood to be to re-take Khartoum, finally crush Osman Digna, open up the Suakim-Berber route, and pacify the country between the Nile and the Red Sea'. The article mentioned the strength of Osman Digna's army, describing the plan as 'a formidable undertaking, as Osman Digna is in great strength. Forces estimated at 10,000 are massed, at latest accounts, near Tamai'. The article continued: 'the advance must be made step by step, leaving open a perfect line of communication', towards Berber with the potential for General Wolseley to then storm Khartoum 'before the hot weather sets in'.[34] It was an optimistic evaluation, especially considering it was based on information more than a month old.

---

[30] Fergus Nicoll, *The Sword of the Prophet: The Mahdi of Sudan and the Death of General Gordon* (United Kingdom: Sutton Publishing, 2004), 227.
[31] Nicoll, *The Sword of the Prophet*, 227.
[32] Mark Simner, *The Sirdar and the Khalifa: Kitchener's Reconquest of Sudan, 1896–98* (United Kingdom: Fonthill, 2017), 58.
[33] *'From Suakim to the Nile' with List of the New South Wales Contingent* (Sydney: Turner and Henderson, 1885), 7.
[34] 'General Graham's Force: Plan of the Suakim-Berber Campaign. A Formidable Undertaking'. *Sydney Morning Herald*. 20 March 1885, 8.

An avid explorer by the name of Arthur T. Holroyd took it upon himself to help demystify the African continent for the New South Wales contingent.[35] Holroyd produced a pamphlet, titled *Suakim and the Country of Soudan*, based upon his time in Sudan.[36] Holroyd wrote with the approval of Dalley, and designed it to give the troops 'an epitome of the route in which they were about to embark' while also providing a detailed map of the region.[37] Holroyd primarily emphasised some of the conditions experienced in the Sudan while also giving an account of the different locations lying on the route from Suakin to Khartoum. Most notably, Holroyd warned of the dangers of disease. 'If a person should lie down in a damp place, or where dew has fallen', Holroyd wrote, 'he is almost certain to be attacked with either Egyptian ophthalmia or Asiatic dysentery'.[38] Considering sickness would become the greatest threat to the contingent, it was a vital warning. The pamphlet gave the contingent some preparation for what they were about to face.

The New South Wales contingent left to join an expedition that had already fought its most significant battles. British statesmen were rapidly losing confidence in the campaign and had begun to make plans for its postponement during the Sudanese summer while they reconsidered if it were worth continuing at all under the current circumstances. Enthusiasm to be part of a mission to avenge General Gordon had driven the mission, and both the London and New South Wales governments were pleased with the symbolism of their participation. But there was little thought given to what they might achieve once arriving in Sudan itself. The uncertainty was hardly relieved when their service actually commenced.

[35] Arthur T. Holroyd, *Suakim and the Country of Sudan* (Sydney: Thomas Richard, Government Printer, 1885), 25; Ralph Sutton, *Soldiers of the Queen: War in the Soudan* (Sydney: M. S. Simpson & Sons, 1985), 72.
[36] Holroyd, *Suakim and the Country of Sudan*.
[37] Holroyd, *Suakim and the Country of Sudan*.
[38] Holroyd, *Suakim and the Country of Sudan*, 25.

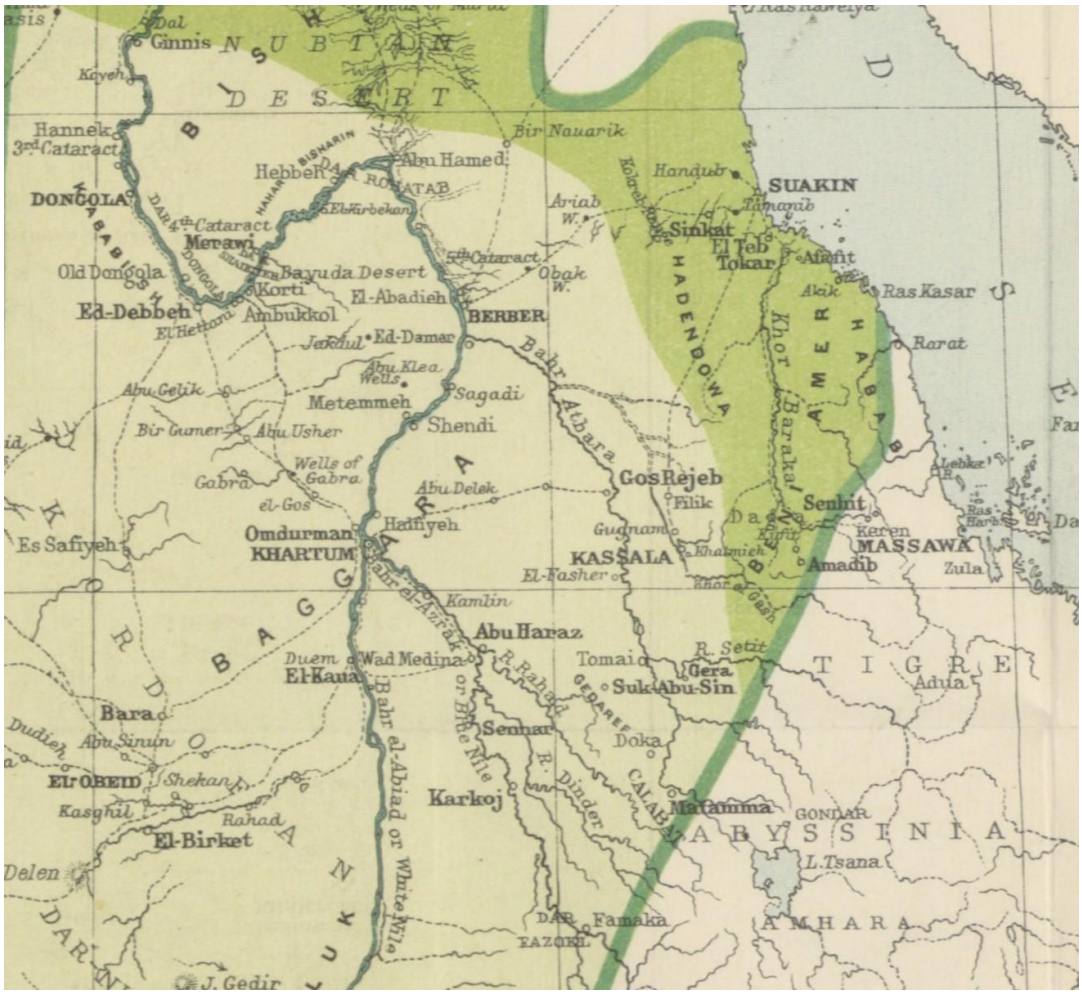

Figure 3: *Map of Sudan from 1894 featuring the New South Wales' contingents' destination of Suakin on the coast of the Red Sea, the intended destination of the railway line inland at Berber, and the site of Gordon's demise of Khartoum (labelled Khartum).*
Source: Map of Sudan, originally taken from Alfred Milner, *England in Egypt*, Mechanical Curator Collection, British Library.

'Dust Would Almost Choke a Fellow': Colonial Anxiety in Tamai

Even while en route to Sudan, the contingent was still being prepared to join the British forces. The diary entries of Private Frederick Brownlow detail frequent military parades and drills during the course of the journey.[39] Other activities included guard duty, and cleaning and assisting in the working of the ships. Meanwhile, on *Australasian*, duties also included

[39] Private Frederick Brownlow, New South Wales Contingent – Sudan, diary, 7–26 March 1885, AWM, PR00387, 2–9.

feeding and exercising the horses.[40] Many of the men were seasick once at sea and meals were often basic.[41] Those on *Iberia* occasionally sang to lift their spirits to a tune titled 'Under the British Flag' and featuring the lyrics 'under the British flag we'll fight our way to glory'. This was followed by reciting 'God Save The Queen', invoking their British identity.[42] There was still naturally some anxiety. Corporal Robert Small wrote in his diary: 'I feel certain if ever we go into action we may be obliterated but never disgraced'.[43] *Iberia* reached Aden on 26 March with little to report beyond a few injuries. When British officers boarded the ship, they left a positive impression on Small who noted: 'they all seem fine men'.[44] The contingent arrived at Suakin on 29 March where they disembarked to a speech from General Graham welcoming the contingent into the imperial forces.[45]

The contingent did not have long to adjust and were almost immediately thrown into their only real battle against the Mahdist forces. The skirmish at Tamai, fought between 2 and 3 April, best reflects the anxiety felt by the New South Wales soldiers, and observers back in the Australian colonies, as to whether the men would measure up to their British counterparts. The New South Wales contingent were absorbed into a body of over 12,000 troops from British and Indian regiments, allowing them feasibly to gauge their performance against more seasoned soldiers.[46] Colonel Richardson, the officer commanding the New South Wales contingent, made sure to relay the events via telegram to the New South Wales government. He reported how Sudanese forces fired upon them at night and how upon approaching the town's pre-emptively emptied wells, Sudanese forces met with return fire.[47] Private Thomas Mulready described his experience of Tamai in a letter to his family following the skirmish. He wrote: 'It was a hard march to Tamai and the weather is very warm when we were marching the dust would almost choke a fellow'.[48] The *Sydney Morning Herald* had mentioned the great military force of Osman Digna situated in Tamai, so many back in the colonies would have likely been puzzled by how underwhelming the skirmish

[40] Saunders, *Britain, The Australian Colonies, and the Sudan Campaigns of 1884–85*, 89.
[41] Private Frederick Brownlow, New South Wales Contingent – Sudan, diary, 7–26 March 1885, AWM, PR00387, 2–9.
[42] Corporal Robert Small, New South Wales Contingent – Sudan, diary, 12 March 1885, AWM, PRO6341, 4–5.
[43] Corporal Robert Small, New South Wales Contingent – Sudan, diary, 17 March 1885, AWM, PRO6341, 8.
[44] Corporal Robert Small, New South Wales Contingent – Sudan, diary, 26 March 1885, AWM, PRO6341, 27.
[45] Corporal Robert Small, New South Wales Contingent – Sudan, diary, 29 March 1885, AWM, PRO6341, 31.
[46] Inglis, *The Rehearsal: Australians at War in the Sudan 1885*, 94–5.
[47] Colonel Richardson to the Principal Under-Secretary, Colonels Secretary's Office, telegram, 4 April 1885. Located in NAA: SP459/1, 453/1/131.
[48] Private Thomas Mulready, New South Wales Contingent – Sudan, Letter, 1885, AWM, 3DRL/2873.

turned out to be.[49] Mulready wrote how 'the affair at Tamai lasted about a couple of hours and we burnt down the village and started back to Suakim', an early sign of the tactics many Australian soldiers would employ later in the South African War.[50] Only three men were wounded from the New South Wales contingent, with Sergeant W. E. Learoyd allegedly being the first.[51]

For some in the New South Wales contingent, the skirmish at Tamai served as a relief that they would not be found wanting. Mulready spoke to this anxiety when he wrote: 'I think we can stand the climate as well as any of the other regiments', showing that being thrust into the skirmish at Tamai may have helped to ease any of the fears held by the Australian men.[52] At the same time, the British officers in Sudan widely recognised the inexperience of the New South Wales contingent and expressed their satisfaction with how well they had acquitted themselves. After returning to Suakin from Tamai, Colonel Richardson wrote back to the New South Wales government: 'have not had a moment to spare since landing. General Graham is pleased with the men, and all is going on well'.[53] He reassured them that the more experienced British generals were pleased with how the contingent had assimilated themselves. In a similar vein, General Graham made sure to recognise 'the Australian Contingent [who] have cheerfully borne their share of hardships and have shown themselves worthy companions-in-arms', when he wrote back to the War Office.[54] Though the skirmish amounted to little in terms of the wider campaign, it did reassure both Australian and British leaders that New South Wales troops could acquit themselves as part of the British Army.

The diary of Sergeant A. O. Butler, however, paints a less professional image of the Tamai skirmish. In it, Butler describes it being 'intensely hot' to the point where several of the men were fainting, and of him being refused water upon request. Though Butler does not specify who, soldiers frequently fired on what they believed to be the enemy but were often aiming

[49] 'General Graham's Force: Plan of the Suakim-Berber Campaign. A Formidable Undertaking'. *Sydney Morning Herald*. 20 March 1885, 8.
[50] Private Thomas Mulready, New South Wales Contingent – Sudan, Letter, 1885, AWM, 3DRL/2873.
[51] At a private dinner upon his return, Learoyd was described as having been the first Australian to have 'felt the hot lead', see Gunner William Edward Learoyd, New South Wales Contingent – Sudan, Newspaper Article, 1885, AWM, PR03059; Colonel Richardson to the Principal Under-Secretary, Colonels Secretary's Office, telegram, 4 April 1885. Located in NAA: SP459/1, 453/1/131.
[52] Private Thomas Mulready, New South Wales Contingent – Sudan, Letter, 1885, AWM, 3DRL/2873.
[53] Colonel Richardson to the Principal Under-Secretary, Colonels Secretary's Office, telegram, 4 April 1885. Located in NAA: SP459/1, 453/1/131.
[54] General Graham to the War Office, telegram, 5 April 1885. Located in NAA: SP459/1, 453/1/131.

at nothing. The worst moment occurred when one officer killed a private whom he mistook for being a Mahdist. Meanwhile, the smell of the dead men and camels piling up was overwhelming, while some of the troops took to robbing the dead.[55] Such writing suggests that there were elements of the conflict that Richardson wished to keep from reaching those back in New South Wales, lest they find that the contingent had not quite lived up to their ideals of a disciplined British force.

The skirmish at Tamai proved the most eventful experience of the entire conflict for the New South Wales contingent. The remainder of the expedition saw little direct combat and the approaching summer months meant hopes of a push to Khartoum were gradually dimming. The contingent's time in Sudan mostly consisted of guard duty while the expeditionary force laid railway tracks, only occasionally facing long range fire from Mahdist forces that did little harm.[56] Mulready's letter predicted: 'the railway is onto here now but I hardly think it will go much further this summer as they say it will be very hot'.[57] Some of the New South Wales infantry, including an officer, a sergeant, two corporals, fifty private soldiers and a bugler, joined various British regiments to form a Camel Corps.[58] After a period of training, these repurposed soldiers would perform some patrol duty as well as be involved in a small skirmish in the village of T'Hakul.[59] Their final task was to bury the dead from the battle that had taken place two months previously and five miles from Suakin, a task that took eight hours to complete.[60] It would have undoubtedly raised little envy from the other troops. The New South Wales contingent found few alternatives to unpleasant work in the searing heat.

As the contingent settled in, colonial governments began to move on from the affair. At home, the year 1885 was a particularly violent year in the frontier wars across Australia, and numerous spot fires arose across the Australian colonies even during the few months the contingent was gone.[61] The Victorian parliament passed over the issue of the Sudan in favour of discussing more pressing matters such as local defence and the change of government in

[55] Sergeant A. O. Butler, New South Wales Contingent – Sudan, Diary, AWM, PR85/056.
[56] Saunders, *Britain, The Australian Colonies, and the Sudan Campaigns of 1884–85*, 94–5.
[57] Private Thomas Mulready, New South Wales Contingent – Sudan, Letter, 1885, AWM, 3DRL/2873.
[58] Trevor Turner, 'The Camel Corps, New South Wales Sudan Contingent, 1885', *Sabretache* 55, no. 4 (2014): 40.
[59] Turner, 'The Camel Corps', 42–5.
[60] Turner, 'The Camel Corps', 44–5.
[61] Henry Reynolds, *Forgotten War* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2013), 217, 225–6.

Britain. Many in parliament were still supportive of New South Wales' move. Thomas Henty, the member for Southern Province, explained to the Victorian Legislative Council: 'while referring to the subject of the defences, I may be allowed to say that I am sure we all think very highly of New South Wales for the action she took in sending a contingent to the war in the Soudan'.[62] Henty also tempered expectations during his appraisal of New South Wales' action, continuing: 'of course it was the idea that was so touching, because there was nothing in the thing itself. These colonies, with their handful of population, could do nothing for the old country'.[63] There was very little discussion suggesting Victoria was eagerly awaiting the chance to be involved in any further campaign in Sudan. All the same, support persisted for the contingent, though it was somewhat dulled once the occasion surrounding their departure had passed. It showed how instant these bursts of imperial sentiment occurred, and how difficult it was to maintain that same excitement into the campaign itself. It was a pattern that recurred into the lengthier contributions to British wars at the end of the century.

'Disgusted with Egypt': The End of the Sudan Campaign

The rest of the campaign continued to be surrounded by an atmosphere of uncertainty. The lengthy process of getting the contingent to Sudan and incorporated into the British Army always meant that plans might change quickly. There had been increasingly less for the Australian soldiers to do in the later months. Small took the opportunity to describe the Sudan landscape in his diary, writing 'there is something beautiful and romantic in it', soaking in the novelty of the experience.[64] By 13 April, however, news of the Russian advance towards India, culminating in the Panjdeh Incident, had infiltrated the ranks of the Australian contingent enough even to suggest the campaign would either be cut short or the contingent would be transferred to India.[65] Back in New South Wales, politicians debated the decision to bring the contingent home, but ultimately the British government insisted that the soldiers would be better served returning to the colony. The British government felt

[62] Victoria*, Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Council, 17 June 1885, 5 (Thomas Henty).
[63] Victoria*, Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 18 June 1885, 37 (H. J. Wrixon).
[64] Corporal Robert Small, New South Wales Contingent – Sudan, diary, 6 April 1885, AWM, PRO6341, 37.
[65] The Panjdeh incident represented a battle between Russian and Afghanistan forces in a small village south of modern Turkmenistan. Further Russian advance towards India created a large enough diplomatic crisis to turn the British Government's attention back towards the region. Corporal Robert Small, New South Wales Contingent – Sudan, diary, 13 April 1885, AWM, PRO6341, 41.

that under the changing circumstances in India, the focus should once again be entirely upon shoring up the colony's local defences. By May, the Gladstone government was finally ready to call the campaign off. Commander of the Nile relief effort, Lord Wolseley, arrived in Sudan the same month to relay the news to the British forces.[66] On 15 May, Wolseley spoke to the Australian troops to assure them that he would commend them in the future, his speech being met by three cheers for Wolseley, the Imperial Troops and Her Majesty the Queen.[67]

Disease and discomfort would be the lasting legacies of the Sudan experience. As early as 14 April, Small wrote: 'the impression that the Australians will soon leave Egypt seems to fill our men with joy most of them seem to be disgusted with Egypt'.[68] Dysentery was the prevalent killer of the Australian troops, who also suffered frequently from typhoid fever and sunstroke.[69] Troops held funeral services for their deceased comrades, including on the return journey home.[70] The final death toll would be nine men with all succumbing to sickness and none dying as the result of direct combat.[71] The contingent left Suakin on 18 May at 6am upon SS *Arab*, stopping by Colombo on the way back to Australia.[72] Small summed up the attitude of the contingent, writing: 'everyone happy & pleased to get away from the country of Upper Egypt'.[73] The return journey was just as uneventful, though the enthusiasm of March had evaporated. Disease severely affected the men, and it is estimated about one in ten men between Colombo and Albany (Western Australia) had been sick each day.[74]

Order began to break down towards the end of the contingent's service as well. Some men were reprimanded for jumping in the ocean to bathe while others left the ship at Colombo without leave.[75] On 5 March, Private Wright of the Ambulance Corps was tried, and found guilty, of striking both a Warrant Officer and Sergeant with a clenched fist.[76] Upon reaching

[66] Nicoll, *The Sword of the Prophet*, 227.
[67] Corporal Robert Small, New South Wales Contingent – Sudan, diary, 15 May 1885, AWM, PRO6341, 60.
[68] Corporal Robert Small, New South Wales Contingent – Sudan, diary, 14 April 1885, AWM, PRO6341, 41.
[69] Saunders, *Britain, The Australian Colonies, and the Sudan Campaigns of 1884–85*, 97–8.
[70] Corporal Robert Small, New South Wales Contingent – Sudan, diary, 9 June 1885, AWM, PRO6341, 80.
[71] Saunders, *Britain, The Australian Colonies, and the Sudan Campaigns of 1884–85*, 109.
[72] Corporal Robert Small, New South Wales Contingent – Sudan, diary, 18 May 1885, AWM, PRO6341, 63.
[73] Corporal Robert Small, New South Wales Contingent – Sudan, diary, 18 May 1885, AWM, PRO6341, 63
[74] Inglis, *The Rehearsal*, 129.
[75] Corporal Robert Small, New South Wales Contingent – Sudan, diary, 21 May 1885, AWM, PRO6341, 65, 74.
[76] Colonel J. S. Richardson, New South Wales Contingent – Sudan, Order Book, AWM, AWM 2, Item 4.

home again, Small wrote: 'we were all pleased to reach dear old Sydney again'.[77] To add to what had been a disappointing campaign, the contingent was forced to quarantine before finally disembarking on 23 June. A total of twenty-eight men were left behind by the contingent, including two men at Suakin and nine at Suez. Twelve men were left at Colombo due to illness, with five left on duty at Colombo hospital.[78]

The Sudan had been a somewhat lacklustre campaign. Little opportunity for distinction had presented itself. When the prospect of the contingent continuing to serve in India appeared a possibility, Dalley had the opportunity to revisit the proposals he had made in February with the benefit of time and hindsight. Once it had become apparent that the contingent would be returning from Sudan, Dalley met with the cabinet to discuss the question of a transfer to India. He began by outlining the situation as it stood: 'as far as can be ascertained it would appear to be a part of the policy of the Imperial Government to withdraw immediately all troops from the Soudan'.[79] The indication coming from Lord Derby and Lord Hartington was that they were still unsure of what form a transition into a campaign in India would take, but their language suggested that the contingent was better off back in the colony.

Dalley believed that India might give the contingent the opportunity to distinguish itself that Sudan had not. Despite the imperial government's strong insistence that the contingent should return, Dalley raised the prospect of writing to the imperial government, intimating that New South Wales would approve if the contingent volunteered its services in India. 'It seems to me', Dalley stated, 'that only in this way can we render effective the assistance which we endeavoured to furnish the Imperial Government'. Dalley believed that: 'wherever our Contingent can be useful it should be available for the mother country. This was clearly our intention in organising it and despatching it'. The minute was submitted to the New South Wales cabinet and immediately approved and acted upon.[80] They all agreed that after the effort taken to raise and despatch the contingent, it still had more to offer the imperial government.

[77] Corporal Robert Small, New South Wales Contingent – Sudan, diary, 19 June 1885, AWM, PRO6341, 86.
[78] NSW Contingent Nominal Roll of Members left Behind at Suez. Suakin and Colombo sick and at Colombo on duty, 1 June 1885 – Sudan, Papers, AWM2, Item 7.
[79] Lord Augustus Loftus to the Earl of Derby, telegram, 14 May 1885, 10–1. Located in C.-4494.
[80] Lord Augustus Loftus to the Earl of Derby, telegram, 14 May 1885, 10–11. Located in C.-4494.

Most in Britain and Australia were ready for the New South Wales involvement in the Sudan campaign to end even if Dalley was not. Enthusiasm for the conflict had mostly evaporated by the time he made his offer of service in India. On 28 April, the *Sydney Morning Herald* noted the situation in Russia would change the potential theatre of war and that the troops would be better utilised as part of a coastal defence strategy.[81] According to correspondents in Sudan, about one-third of the infantry, all the ambulance corps, and most of the artillery would volunteer for India — though all would go if ordered.[82] Nonetheless, the British government was keen to put an end to the Sudan campaign and on 23 June, Derby wrote to the Governors of South Australia, Victoria, and Queensland that: 'her Majesty's Government do not in existing circumstances propose to avail themselves of those offers', ending any speculation that their services would be required.[83] The Sudan campaign appeared to have completely petered out by this point, and would need to be reconsidered anyway after the sudden and unexpected death of the Mahdi on 22 June due to illness. [84]

The discussion around sending the contingent on to India touched on arguably the most significant and lasting implication of the Sudan campaign: its impact on colonial attitudes towards making similar contributions to future imperial conflicts. Tied up in the debates about the parliamentary processes surrounding the contingent's mobilisation was the question of whether resources that were intended for local defence should be used in overseas campaigns. David Buchanan, the member for Mudgee and the most significant critic of the campaign within the New South Wales parliament, best summarised this feeling. 'All that is demanded of us is that we should defend ourselves against invaders', Buchanan insisted, 'and if they do that they do their duty, and cannot be asked to do anything more, unless they are visited by a spontaneous insanity such as seems to have taken possession of this colony'.[85]

Buchanan was not alone in framing the debate as active overseas colonial contributions only being possible at the expense of local defence. The focus on local, mobile forces alongside

[81] *Sydney Morning Herald*. 28 April 1885, 7.
[82] 'The Soudan Campaign: Firing on the British Camp at Otao: Repulse of the Rebels'. *Sydney Morning Herald*. 28 April 1885, 7.
[83] The Earl of Derby to the Governors of South Australia, Victoria and Queensland, telegram, 23 June 1885, 12.
[84] Daniel Allen Butler, *The First Jihad: The Battle for Khartoum and the Dawn of Militant Islam* (Philadelphia: Casemate, 2007), 205–6.
[85] New South Wales, *Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 25 March 1885, 260 (David Buchanan).

fortifications, as promoted by Jervois and Scratchley, allowed many of the Sudan campaign's opponents to base their criticism on the perceived misuse of military resources. Now the campaign was coming to an end, there was little to show for it beyond statements from British leaders celebrating the strengthening of imperial bonds. Dalley, in his eagerness to send the contingent on to India, appeared to have expected that something more might be extracted given the time and expense committed to the contingent's despatch. He also might have hoped that he could find some accomplishment to use as ammunition against critics such as Parkes and the Victorian newspapers, whose' objection to his campaign had caused him a great deal of grievance. As the contingent returned to Australia, it was difficult to ascertain what exactly the Sudan campaign had achieved for New South Wales.

Figure 4: *A sketch of Lord Wolseley farewelling New South Wales troops at the conclusion of their Sudan campaign.*
Source: Lord Wolseley Farewelling the New South Wales Contingent, Sketch, AWM: 100954

Quickly Forgotten: The Fallout from the Sudan Expedition

Tributes to the contingent quickly rolled in from all parts of the empire. On 6 May, after the men had left Sudan, the Royal Colonial Institute, a non-government organisation designed to promote unity between Britain and the colonies, asked various public bodies within the United Kingdom to join them in penning a letter to 'our countrymen and kindred beyond the seas'. The letter emphasised the ties between Britain and the Australian colonies: 'We have always believed that our ties of blood and common love of freedom would keep the empire one and indivisible … We thank you for this proof that our faith is founded on truth'. The letter received a total of more than 20,000 signatures from what the Royal Colonial Institute described as 'men of all parties in politics and all classes in society', including university professors, labourers, clergy, and mayors of provincial towns (affixing a corporate seal to sign on behalf of the townships' inhabitants).[86] Derby received the telegram 'with pleasure' and transmitted a copy to the Governors of the colonies that had offered support to the British Empire only a few short months earlier.[87] The letter suggests that, much like in New South Wales, a large cross section of British society supported the act of a settler colony sending a contingent to Sudan and recognised the offer as an important moment in promoting unity within the empire.

However, back in the Australian colonies, the Sudan affair was quickly forgotten. Taking over from Loftus, newly appointed Governor of New South Wales, Lord Carrington, awarded campaign medals to the members of the contingent in February 1886. However, the War Office took three years to present the troops with the Khedive's Star commemorating their service in Egypt. The *Sydney Morning Herald* blamed this tardiness on the War Office and their 'insistence of an unnecessary amount of official routine and red-tapism'.[88] The topic of the Sudan contribution was still being brought up when the New South Wales parliament met again in September, but the great celebratory speeches given by Loftus in March had given way to infrequent jabs at its expense. Francis Abigail, the member for West Sydney, referred to it as 'the Punch and Judy' show that the Governor had been exhibiting at every banquet.[89] Many of the critics of the Sudan expedition were now able to use its lack of immediate, tangible benefits to criticise those who had supported it. David Buchanan

[86] The Royal Colonial Institute to the Colonial Office, telegram, 6 May 1885, 45–6. Located in C.-4437.
[87] Colonial Office to the Royal Colonial Institute, telegram, 13 May 1885, 48–9. Located in C.-4437.
[88] 'The Khedive's Star', *Sydney Morning Herald*. 3 May 1888, 8.
[89] New South Wales*, Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 9 September 1885, 83 (Francis Abigail).

made sure to ask: 'the expedition to the Soudan is all over now, and what becomes of the exaggerated, extravagant folly that was uttered by the Ministry at every banquet … What becomes of all that now?'.[90]

Buchanan's words encapsulated just how quickly the political rhetoric surrounding the Sudan expedition had shifted. The subject had become somewhat tiresome to those outside parliament. The *Sydney Morning Herald* stated on 15 September 1885: 'the question of the sending of the Soudan Contingent, for example, was discussed and settled in March last. It cannot be necessary to go so fully into that question again'.[91] However, Buchanan was adamant that it was vital to ask whether the outcomes of the Sudan expedition had been achieved, a difficult question for New South Wales politicians to answer definitively. Politicians were quick to bring up the Sudan expedition to weaken their opponent's stance on unrelated issues, holding the campaign over their heads if they felt it could help drive home a point against their opposition.

The legacy of the Sudan campaign was further muddied by the subsequent careers of the major figures involved. Henry Parkes parlayed his rejection of the Sudan expedition into a return to parliament in September 1885, where he immediately faced a backlash against his earlier criticisms.[92] Parkes' political aspirations are difficult to untangle from his rejection of the Sudan campaign for he would also soon follow the trend of putting it aside for other important topical issues such as federation. Meanwhile, the campaign's biggest supporters did not live long past its completion. An anonymous history of the Sudan expedition printed shortly after it had ended credited Dalley as the 'responsible author' of the movement, whose name 'is now written beside those of the founders of our constitution'.[93] However, that authorship dogged Dalley for the remainder of his life. Dalley passed away on 28 October 1888; the *Sydney Morning Herald* claimed his Sudan offer was 'the act by which he will be most remembered hereafter, and in virtue of which he will find his place in the history of the British Empire'. While acknowledging 'that act has yet to be judged in the light of history', the editor believed that it did 'more than anything that had preceded it to establish new and

[90] New South Wales*, Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 9 September 1885, 92 (David Buchanan).
[91] *Sydney Morning Herald*. 15 September 1885, 8.
[92] New South Wales*, Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 8 September 1885, 9–13.
[93] *The History of the Soudan Expedition: An Historical Record of the Events Relating to the Levy, Despatch, and Return of the New South Wales Contingent Raised for Service in Egypt. March–June 1885* (Sydney: W. M. Maclardy, Mercantile and Book Printer, 1885), 112.

improved relations between the Colonial Office and the colonies', suggesting the question of the campaign's achievements was still unresolved by 1888.[94] Strickland himself passed away on 18 July 1889, the *Sydney Morning Herald* noting his claim 'to be the originator of the idea'.[95] Both Dalley and Strickland felt the backlash of the Sudan expedition as it declined in popularity, but both men passed away before any re-evaluation of the decision was possible.

The Sudan expedition lessened the Australian colonies' willingness to contribute aid to the British government in future campaigns. The opposition movement against the Sudan expedition only gained greater traction towards the end of the decade. The former Gladstone Cabinet minister and expert on imperial affairs, Charles Dilke, published his book, *Problems of Greater Britain* in 1890, noting the enduring reputation of the expedition within the colonies.[96] He wrote that 'there has been a serious reaction since throughout Australia', and that 'his [Dalley's] abettors in the Soudan Expedition have not been forgiven by the public, and are continually branded as "Soudan men" by a portion of the press'. Even though New South Wales parliament held some staunch defenders of the Sudan campaign, by the end of the decade it appeared that the mood had significantly shifted in the wider public. This change in attitudes was so significant that Dilke believed: 'It would require a real and grave catastrophe before any colony in the future would venture to offer direct aid to the home Government, and it may be safely asserted that, when such offers come, New South Wales is not likely to take the lead'.[97] Dilke's statement carried a great deal of weight since its audience would have been many of the senior British political figures who had celebrated that same decision in 1885. His prediction would also be proven correct when it came to New South Wales' hesitancy in approaching the South African War in 1899.

Still, members of the New South Wales contingent had to measure up to a notion of honour attached to their service even in the conflict's aftermath. After the Sudan expedition had become an unpopular topic, a storm in the press occurred surrounding a case against Lieutenant Mulholland of the New South Wales B Company, who was accused by member for Bathurst, Francis Suttor, in New South Wales parliament of hiding behind a zareba (a

[94] *Sydney Morning Herald*. 29 October 1888, 7.
[95] *Sydney Morning Herald*. 19 July 1889, 7.
[96] Charles Westworth Dilke, *Problems of Greater Britain*, vol. i (London: London Macmillan, 1890).
[97] Dilke, *Problems of Greater Britain*, 295.

fence made of thorns) on his hands and knees when fired upon.[98] *The Daily Telegraph* argued that 'a man should be quite sure that he has this quality [physical courage] before he puts on the Queen's uniform', showing that even if the campaign had not lived up to a great deal, it had done little to dampen the prestige associated with serving.[99] Suttor believed 'instead of receiving a medal', Mulholland 'ought to be flogged'.[100] Regardless of the lack of combat, there was still a constructed set of expectations attached to an Australian contingent. Mulholland's apparent physical cowardice appeared to cause more angst than the other instances of ill-discipline in the contingent's ranks.

The outlook on the Sudan appeared to also change amongst those who served. Initially, William Learoyd, who would continue to have a lengthy career in the New South Wales volunteer forces that would see him serve as Sergeant in South Africa, was at least proud of his role. Learoyd stated at a private dinner that he 'went away to the Soudan, like many other Australian [*sic*] did, to do his duty, and to stand side by side with the English soldiers'.[101] As early as the medal ceremony held on 13 February 1886, one soldier made it so far as to appear before Governor Carrington, only to refuse his medal.[102] The soldier was not afforded the opportunity to declare his reasons for doing so.[103] In another example the *Sydney Morning Herald* published an article in 1910 written by a veteran who had been part of the contingent. Looking back on the campaign, he described the motivation for enlisting amongst many he spoke to: 'we were young and reckless in the stirring days of '85 and most of us enlisted for the fun of the thing, or because we had nothing better to do. No particular patriotic sentiment was involved'. This veteran made sure to note that within the companies composed of partially paid volunteers there was more of an underlying patriotic sentiment. Beyond indicating that there was likely a myriad of reasons as to why men enlisted, there is the suggestion that some of the soldiers had disowned the ideas of British patriotism that

[98] New South Wales*, Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 11 September 1885, 171 (Francis Suttor).
[99] 'The Mulholland Case. *The Daily Telegraph*. 28 September, 1885, 4.
[100] New South Wales*, Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 11 September 1885, 171 (Francis Suttor). Mulholland received a campaign medal with the rest of the soldiers in February 1886, see 'The Soudan Medals: The Presentation Ceremony', *Evening News,* 15 February 1886, 5.
[101] Gunner William Edward Learoyd, New South Wales Contingent – Sudan, Newspaper Article, 1885, AWM, PR03059.
[102] 'The Soudan Medals: The Presentation Ceremony', *Evening News,* 15 February 1886, 5. Such occurrence is not mentioned in Hutchison and Myers record of the medal presentations in their revised edition of their book in 1886, see Frank Hutchinson and Francis Myers, *The Australian Contingent: A History of the Patriotic Movement in New South Wales, and an Account of the Despatch of Troops to the Assistance of Imperial Forces in the Soudan*, 2nd ed. (Sydney: Government Printer, 1886), 298–9.
[103] 'The Soudan Medals: The Presentation Ceremony', *Evening News,* 15 February 1886, 5.

drove them to enlist. By writing 'no patriotic sentiment was involved', perhaps there was a sense of embarrassment at some of the overblown imperial rhetoric surrounding the campaign that continued to linger even into the next century.[104]

Conclusion: Evaporating Enthusiasm and Remaining Questions

The public enthusiasm that surrounded the departure of the Sudan contingent soon dissipated once the reality of the campaign itself set it. By October 1885, *Melbourne Punch* was poking fun at the whole affair: 'the burst of patriotism in New South Wales is over, and now the cost has to be counted — not the pecuniary cost, mark you, but the cost in revulsion of feeling about the whole affair'.[105] As far as its defenders were concerned though, the Sudan contingent had served its purpose. There was still enough evidence that pointed towards the contingent being received in the spirit of solidarity with which it had been intended. Influential British statesmen, such as the Marquess of Hartington, continued defending the contingent to the House of Commons in August, expressing his opinion that: 'it is impossible to overestimate the good conduct of all these contingents'.[106]

So why had such a sense of apathy set in following the contingent's return? The results of the expedition never truly reflected the excitement felt throughout the colonies in those early months of 1885. Anxiety about the colonial troops matching up to their British counterparts was rife throughout the early stages of the campaign. Although Tamai never amounted to more than a minor skirmish, it did give all concerned the confidence that these New South Wales soldiers would not be found wanting when faced with their first bout of combat against an enemy force. However, the lack of opportunity for any further distinction in the field meant that it was always going to be difficult to sustain colonial interest in the conflict. Dalley's last gamble to have the contingent serve in India shows a man trying to make the best of a disappointing situation.

Although the Sudan campaign checked the enthusiasm for colonial troops serving in foreign wars, some of the key political debates emerging from the Sudan case remained prevalent

[104] 'The Soudan Contingent: Some Recollections'. *Sydney Morning Herald*. 26 February 1910, 5.
[105] 'That Soudan Contingent'. *Melbourne Punch*. 8 October 1885, 7.
[106] Hartington's statement included Canadian and Indian troops, see United Kingdom, *Parliamentary Debates,* House of Commons, 12 August 1885, (Marquess of Hartington).

in the following years. One of the most significant of these was the dangers of public sentiment driving decisions relating to defence. Criticisms of Dalley not going through parliament to raise a contingent provoked a great deal of concern among his fellow politicians. Despite these concerns being drowned out by the urgency required for action, the idea that Dalley's methods were an inefficient and a dangerous way to approach such affairs lingered long after the event. Similarly, the use of colonial resources for matters not related to Australian local issues also raised eyebrows, and the reliance upon public funding was far from sustainable. If nothing else, these experiences showed a great deal more consideration was needed if another such imperial crisis arose.

Member of New South Wales Legislative Assembly, Phillip Gidley King, summarised his belief in the act's symbolic importance within parliament when he spoke on 17 March 1885. 'Now we have entered upon an epoch', stated King, 'which marks the time when we, as a colonial dependency of the British Empire, have tendered sympathetic aid and physical force in support of the armies of the mother country'.[107] But if the Australian colonies were entering upon such an epoch, it required a great deal more consideration than had been given following the death of General Gordon.

The most significant revelation of the Sudan expedition in Australia was that it had not made any clearer how the colonies should be approaching imperial defence. Building coastal defences was one matter, but the colonies had stumbled over themselves (and each other) to offer contingents for Sudan with the barest of organisation. The Colonial Defence Committee, established in London in April 1885 and the first agency purposed to organise the colonies' defence matters, signalled that Britain also recognised that lack of a unified direction was a serious concern.[108] For this brief moment in 1885, it appeared that colonial contributions might be the immediate future of how the Australian colonies contributed to defence, only for the campaign to reveal the complexities associated with this notion. However, the campaign revealed the willingness of the Australian colonies to be more active agents in shaping imperial affairs. The British government now had to find a way to channel this emerging enthusiasm into a more manageable system of defence across its empire.

[107] New South Wales*, Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Council, 17 March 1885, 4 (Philip Gidley King).
[108] Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, 50–1.

Chapter Three:

'Another Wild-Cat Scheme': The Australian Approach to the South African War

Fourteen years after the Sudan campaign had ended, Secretary of State for the Colonies, Joseph Chamberlain turned to the British colonies for support. Like most statesmen across the empire, he foresaw the longstanding tensions between the British Cape Colony and the Boer Republics erupting into another full-scale conflict, only nineteen years after the first Anglo-Boer War. Chamberlain's telegram, dated 3 July 1899, asked the governments of Canada, Victoria and New South Wales for a spontaneous offer of troops to be used in a military demonstration against the Transvaal, the common English term for the South African Republic.[1] It had now been some time since Dalley had so eagerly flung New South Wales into the military adventure in Sudan. By 1899, those few months were remembered for the feverish excitement of sending the contingents away, and for the sense of disappointment at how little had been achieved in return. There was no immediate telegraph to the Colonial Office like there had been in 1885, only a delayed response six days later from the New South Wales government simply stating they were 'unwilling to incur new taxation or loan'.[2] The British government was not pleased with this ambiguous response. Scrawled onto the Colonial Office document beside New South Wales' answer were the words: 'This is not very satisfactory. We could not call for volunteers for such a purpose. The whole point is in a spontaneous offer from the Colonial force'.[3] But the New South Wales government held fast. Five days later, a telegram from New South Wales contained the message: 'Premier answers Cabinet do not consider Transvaal affairs constitute crisis justifying spontaneous offer of detachment of troops on the eve of meeting of Parliament'.[4]

The Colonial Office hoped it could turn to Victoria for a demonstration of unbridled loyalty, but the Victorian government was just as wary. Both New South Wales and Victorian

---

[1] Craig Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War: The War in South Africa, 1899–1902* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2002), 18.
[2] The Earl of Beauchamp to the Colonial Office, 9 July 1899, Series CO 201. New South Wales Correspondence, 1782–1900, AJCP.
[3] The Earl of Beauchamp to the Colonial Office, 9 July 1899, Series CO 201. New South Wales Correspondence, 1782–1900, AJCP.
[4] The Earl of Beauchamp to the Colonial Office, 14 July 1899, Series CO 201. New South Wales Correspondence, 1782–1900, AJCP.

politicians understood the inevitability of their colonies' involvement should war break out once Chamberlain made the request, but in the early stages of July 1899, Victoria was looking towards 'a view to united action' alongside New South Wales in whether to send troops to the Transvaal.[5] Like New South Wales, this involvement came at a price. The Victorian Governor, Lord Brassey, responded to the British government's inquiry of the 5 July: 'Would the Imperial Government repay cost of preliminary training?'.[6] This was followed by another telegram a week later reading: 'Volunteers offer to serve in South Africa before the Gov't take further action, they desire assurance that Imperial Exchequer bear all expenditure. Could you inform me as to rate of pay: on the receipt of your answer I will urge haste?'[7] The two largest Australian colonies wanted to enter the war on their own terms, with London picking up the bill.

More than any other colonial conflict of this era, the South African War (1899–1902) gives us an important insight into the potential for the Australian colonies' to provide an ongoing supply of troops to support the British Army, and thereby, their ability to constitute an important pillar of imperial defence. The most extensive of the conflicts covered in this thesis, the South African War involved colonial contributions from all the Australian colonies — later States — over several years, featuring multiple waves of contingents raised under different circumstances. Many of these Australian contingents also saw significant combat for the first time, granting them the opportunity for distinction in the field that was not afforded those who volunteered for the Sudan Expedition in 1885. In addition, the war featured discrete phases. It meant that the circumstances under which these contingents were raised changed notably over the duration of the war.

By tracing the contemporary debates surrounding what constituted the Australian colonies' role in imperial defence in an increasingly competitive world, this chapter examines the processes through which they, once again, became involved in an overseas British conflict. It argues, however, that between the legacy of the Sudan campaign, the economic reality facing the Australian colonies, and the lack of further definition surrounding colonial

[5] Lord Brassey to the Colonial Office, 5 July 1899, Series CO 309. Victoria: Original Correspondence, 1851–1900, AJCP.
[6] Lord Brassey to the Colonial Office, 5 July 1899, Series CO 309. Victoria: Original Correspondence, 1851–1900, AJCP.
[7] Lord Brassey to the Colonial Office, 12 July 1899, Series CO 309. Victoria: Original Correspondence, 1851–1900, AJCP.

contingents in the years following Sudan in 1885, Chamberlain had to rely upon imperial sentiment to inspire the colonies into committing to the war in South Africa. However, developments since 1885 had rendered the channelling of this sentiment more complex. This chapter is the first of three that examines Australian involvement in the South African War by exploring the circumstances that led to the colonies becoming embroiled in the conflict. In doing so, it considers three key issues: first, the strategies that underpinned the Australian approach to imperial defence in the intervening years between the Sudan and South African conflicts, and how this often clashed with British governments' desire to achieve further co-operation between the settler colonies and the imperial centre; second, the manifestation of inter-colonial hierarchies and rivalries from their approach to the South African War; and finally, the extent to which the Australian colonies were prepared for the necessary contribution required of them in 1899, in light of their defensive planning over the previous fourteen years. If the colonial governments were going to be thrust into an imperial conflict under Chamberlain's direction, they were at least determined to shape the terms under which they did so.

A Disunified Empire: Debating Colonial Responsibility for Imperial Defence, 1885–1899

The Colonial Office's establishment of the Colonial Defence Committee (CDC) in April 1885 was designed to address the disconnect between Britain's colonies and the imperial centre. The timing appeared fortuitous. Even as the Sudan contingent was toiling away in the desert heat, the British government was looking to correct some of the inconsistencies in how the colonies were situated within the wider network of imperial defence. After all, the Colonial Office had noted a lack of preparedness as an underlying reason for knocking back other colonial offers for service in Sudan. By August of the same year, the CDC had begun requesting that colonial governments provide reports pertaining to their defences. At the top of the CDC's list of inquiries was the state of troops in the colonies, but they also catalogued supplies right down to stocks of telegraph wire and submarine mines, all for the War Office's records.[8] With the British government's growing fears of a large scale war between international powers multiplying by the day, particularly given Russian advances

[8] Donald Gordon, 'The Colonial Defence Committee and Imperial Collaboration: 1885–1904', *Political Science Quarterly* 77, no. 4 (1962): 529–30.

through Afghanistan, the CDC saw it as time to correct the haphazard approach to colonial defence that had defined colonial policymaking since self-government.[9]

The CDC re-iterated Jervois and Scratchley's findings from the previous decade — that Australia was most susceptible to short-lived shoreline raids. Responding to a study of Queensland's defensive infrastructure in 1890, the CDC assured the colony: 'Attack in force upon any of the ports of these colonies is so highly improbable, that it need not be taken into consideration so long as the squadron in Australasian waters is maintained at the strength it will shortly possess'. The same report also stressed the CDC's desire for consistency between the colonies on their defensive strategy, conveying that: 'Under these circumstances, it appears to the CDC that Queensland should be in possession of a scheme of defence that now exists in other colonies'.[10] Cohesion between the British colonies and the imperial centre was at the forefront of the CDC's operations, showing that in the decade since the Australian colonies had actively sought guidance on defensive affairs, the messaging had not changed.

Nowhere was this disunity better showcased than in the haphazard response to the Sudan crisis. It revealed the lack of means for co-ordinating, mobilising, and sanctioning a contingent such as New South Wales'. The CDC only further emphasised the importance of local defence. By October 1891, the committee had reportedly held 58 meetings and considered some 470 items primarily regarding colonial defence across the formal and informal empire.[11] It addressed the entire defensive trajectory of the colonies since the removal of British garrisons. If the Sudan expedition showed the Australian colonies' willingness to play a more active role in the Empire's future, then the next fifteen years would represent the hammering out of the exact terms by which they would do so.

[9] Gordon, 'The Colonial Defence Committee and Imperial Collaboration': 526.
[10] Great Britain. Colonial Defence Committee & Queensland. Local Defence Committee. 1890, *Report of Local Committee [on] Queensland: remarks*.
[11] Gordon, 'The Colonial Defence Committee and Imperial Collaboration', 531–2.

Figure 5: *The colonial premiers at the first Colonial Conference in London, 1887. The conference represented an important step in colonial self-expression.*
Source: 'A Meeting of the Colonial Conference', London, 1887'. *London Illustrated News*. 11 June 1887, 672–3.

This re-organisation of colonial defence also involved giving Australian leaders a more active voice in imperial affairs. Alongside the CDC, a colonial conference was trialled to encourage the independent settler colonies to engage more directly with the Colonial Office. The first colonial conference, held in London in 1887, presented the opportunity for closer consultation between Britain and the settler colonies on imperial affairs, with the colonies given their best opportunity yet to discuss their respective visions of the empire's future.[12] Present at the opening of the conference was Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, who had been particularly complimentary about the value of the New South Wales contingent's service in Sudan.[13] But when it came to the nitty-gritty of the conference itself, the Sudan campaign

[12] Benjamin Mountford, 'Colonial Australia, The 1887 Colonial Conference, and the Struggle for Imperial Unity', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 47, no. 5 (2019): 914.
[13] Michael Bentley, *Lord Salisbury's World: Conservative Environment's in Late-Victorian Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 222–3.

of two years prior was almost entirely ignored.[14] It did not represent a direction envisaged by Salisbury's government. The notable exception was former Premier of New South Wales, Patrick Jennings, who used the contingent to account for the colony's abnormal expenditure in 1885 (equalling half of the total £300,000 that year).[15] The security of colonial assets was the main priority for Salisbury's government, and he hoped the colonial delegates could translate their enthusiasm for imperial unity into bearing more of the costs of imperial defence.

The British government received less agreement than they hoped from the colonial leaders. In fact, delegates agreed on very little at the conference, and there was no clear united colonial position on the key questions raised throughout the proceedings, only a wariness of conceding any of their rights of self-government. This gulf was best exemplified by the differences between Victoria and New South Wales, with the former being traditionally protectionist and the latter embracing free trade.[16] Victoria, represented by the only Australian-born delegate, Chief Secretary Alfred Deakin, treated the conference as an opportunity to voice concerns over Britain's approach to the Pacific region in the 1880s. Deakin exhibited what historian Graeme Davison (following A.A. Phillips's famous essay on the 'cultural cringe') termed the 'colonial strut', assuming the role of the great defender of Australian interests upon the 'world stage'.[17] The *Sydney Morning Herald* considered with tongue in cheek: 'Perhaps because the territory of Victoria was small, her politicians took the largest views and prosecuted them with the most extraordinary energy'.[18] Deakin did not wholly embrace the call for further bearing the costs of imperial security, believing Victoria had already made significant investments in coastal defence which benefitted the empire.[19] The issue of sub-imperialism also became heated as the Victorian delegate felt Britain weak on the subject of security in the Pacific. 'Who can wonder then', Deakin asked, 'that we fail in the South Seas while foreigners succeed? Who can wonder at the growing

[14] Based on a survey of *Proceedings of the Colonial Conference, 1887: Vol. 1* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1887), C. 5091. And *Proceedings of the Colonial Conference, 1887: Vol. 2 (Appendix)* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1887), C-5091-I.
[15] *Proceedings of the Colonial Conference, 1887: Vol. 1* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1887), C. 5091, 289–90.
[16] Mountford, 'Colonial Australia, The 1887 Colonial Conference, and the Struggle for Imperial Unity': 916.
[17] Graeme Davison, 'The Colonial Strut: Australian Leaders on the World Stage', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 51, no. 1 (2005): 8–10.; A.A. Phillips, *On the Cultural Cringe* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2006).
[18] 'The Opening Meeting' *Sydney Morning Herald*. 11 May 1887, 7.
[19] Mountford, 'Colonial Australia, The 1887 Colonial Conference, and the Struggle for Imperial Unity': 923–4.

intensity of Colonial complaint?'[20] Deakin's boldness appeared to pay off as Salisbury assured him personally that he would not be yielding British interests in the Pacific Islands, but it only highlighted just how divided the colonies could be on imperial topics.[21]

The Victorian government was thrilled with their colonial delegates giving voice to the colony's interests in London. When parliament reconvened following the conference's conclusion, Governor of Victoria, Sir Henry Loch, declared in his opening address that the delegates had 'discharged their important duties with credit and efficiency'. The 'important question of the government of the British portion of New Guinea was discussed in the Conference', stated Loch, 'and Great Britain has agreed to a settlement on the lines that have been steadily advocated by my advisors'.[22] Many in both the Legislative Council and Assembly celebrated Deakin's conduct.[23] Loch eagerly emphasised the leaps and bounds in the development of defensive resources within the colony. 'Five years ago we were at the mercy of any enemy', Loch went on to boast, 'within a short time when the present works are completed and strengthened by some slight and not very costly additions, we may absolutely defy insult or attack'.[24] Following the end of the colonial conference, there was a sense of confidence within Victoria that the measures they had undertaken over the previous few years would sufficiently protect the colony from any potential threat. Now they only needed to await circumstances under which this idea could be proven.

One of the more significant outcomes of the colonial conference was the Naval Agreement, which secured the payment of and annual contribution towards the Royal Navy by the colonies (£126,000 per annum).[25] However, British and Australian leaders alike remained concerned over the state of local forces in Australia. The Russian scare of 1885, caused by Russia's advance into Afghanistan, occurred when most of the colonies were holding some form of training camp, and accelerated the need for drills relating to the protection of Australian shores.[26] However, the old problems of uneven distribution of forces and lack of

[20] *Proceedings of the Colonial Conference, 1887: Vol. 1* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1887), C. 5091, 25.
[21] Judith Brett, *The Enigmatic Mr Deakin* (Melbourne: The Text Publishing Company, 2018), 136–7.
[22] Victoria*, Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Council, 7 June 1887, 1 (Sir Henry Loch).
[23] Based on a survey of Victoria*, Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Council, 7 June 1887. And Victoria*, Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 7 June 1887.
[24] Victoria*, Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Council, 7 June 1887, 1 (Sir Henry Loch).
[25] Mountford, 'Colonial Australia, The 1887 Colonial Conference, and the Struggle for Imperial Unity': 924.
[26] For instance, Queensland drew up schemes envisaging what an attack on Brisbane river might look like, and how to repel it. See Bob Nicholls, *The Colonial Volunteers: The Defence Forces of the Australian Colonies, 1836–1901* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1988), 107–112.

standardisation and co-operation between colonies persisted. Queensland and Victoria led the push for their forces to be subjected to routine inspections by a British expert.[27] Most of the colonial leaders agreed with this plan, with the notable exception of Henry Parkes, who believed that the Australian colonies could determine the viability of their defence forces under their own metrics.[28] Parkes was unwavering in his position on colonial defence. 'I had formed the opinion in the early years of my political life', wrote Parkes in 1892, 'that the country must depend upon its own resources for defence', though he neglected to detail how that arrangement might work.[29] Parkes died in 1896, and like Dalley and Strickland, never had the opportunity to provide an opinion on the Australian contribution to the South African War.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the depression of the 1890s and the prospect of federation overshadowed concerns about security.[30] Historians have tended to disagree about the extent to which defence played a role in federation.[31] Jeffrey Grey contends that although federation shaped the discussions around defence, there is little evidence to suggest that defence drove the movement to federate.[32] Craig Stockings, however, argues that throughout the debates surrounding federation, there was always a defence aspect.[33] The strongest advocates for federal defence argued it should be achieved prior to political federation, but found progress an uphill battle throughout the 1890s.[34] No matter how defence was positioned in these debates, the issues surrounding its organisation persisted until the commencement of the South African War — not even the eventual achievement of federation proved an easy fix.

---

[27] Jeffrey Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, 3rd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 52.
[28] Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, 52.
[29] Henry Parkes, *Fifty Years in the Making of Australian History* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1892), 526.
[30] Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, 55.
[31] For further discussion on how federation has been treated by historians in the years since, see Carolyn Holbrook, '"What Sort of Nation?": A Cultural History of Australians and Their Federation', *History Compass* 15, no. 11 (2017): 1–10; Carolyn Holbrook, 'Federation and Australian Nationalism: Early Commemoration of the Commonwealth', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 66, no. 4 (2020): 560–77.
[32] Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, 52.
[33] Craig Stockings, *Britannia's Shield: Lieutenant-General Sir Edward Hutton and Late-Victorian Imperial Defence* (Port Melbourne, Vic.: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 72.
[34] Helen Irving, *To Constitute a Nation: A Cultural History of Australia's Constitution* (Cambridge: The Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, 1997), 82.

Meanwhile the depression of the 1890s meant that defence was far from the forefront of colonial leaders' minds. The fall of world commodity prices and the collapse of the London bond market drove the depression, creating widespread unemployment, and consequentially, social unrest throughout the Australian colonies.[35] The collapse of these London markets also meant that colonial governments were unable to raise the same loans that they had been able to throughout the 1880s.[36] The depression reversed the great growth that cities such as Melbourne had experience throughout the 1880s, with many residents flocking to rural areas, or to the gold rush sweeping Western Australia.[37] But consequentially, the need to restore credit was another factor driving the expression of Australian unity with London towards the end of the century.[38]

Edward Hutton was one of the stronger voices pushing for a federated defence force. Already a decorated British Army officer, the War Office appointed Hutton commander of the New South Wales forces on 2 March 1893.[39] Hutton arrived in June 1893 to a warm reception, admitting that he had been told before leaving Britain 'that he would find a Herculean task before him'. He stressed, however, that with the co-operation of officers and his men, he believed that 'his task was likely to prove a labour of love'.[40] The idea of a federated defence scheme, Hutton believed, would not only solidify the disparate colonial defences but also had the potential to assist Britain externally.[41] If putting these plans into action required exploiting the colonies' recurring fears of invasion, such as during the onset of the Sino-Japanese War in 1894, then Hutton believed the debates generated were worth it.[42] Despite Hutton's best efforts, however, not even his defence schemes were able fully to penetrate the discourse surrounding the movement for political union.[43] Most importantly, Hutton truly believed colonial mounted troops were an untapped resource for the empire, providing

[35] Stephen Garton, *Out of Luck: Poor Australians and Social Welfare* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1990), 74–5.
[36] Garton, *Out of Luck*, 75.
[37] Graeme Davison, *The Rise and Fall of Marvellous Melbourne*, 2nd ed. (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2004), 14–5.
[38] James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783–1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 363.
[39] Craig Stockings, 'A "Trojan Horse" in the Colony? Federal & Imperial Defence in the Australian Colonies, 1893–96', *Journal of Australian Colonial History* 17 (2015): 159–84.
[40] 'Welcome to Major-General Hutton' *Sydney Morning Herald*. 21 June 1893, 6.
[41] Craig Stockings and Tom Richardson, 'The First Commander: Lieutenant-General Sir Edward "Curley" Hutton', in *The Shadow Men: The Leaders Who Shaped the Australian Army from the Veldt to Vietnam*, ed. Craig Stockings and John Connor (Sydney: NewSouth, 2017), 14.
[42] Stockings, 'A "Trojan Horse" in the Colony?': 159–84.
[43] Stockings, *Britannia's Shield*', 104–5.

value as an adjunct to the British Army that Hutton believed could serve anywhere throughout the world.[44]

This is not to say there was no movement on the federal defence front. One such scheme drawn up during the 1890s passed through a series of recommendations from both the intercolonial military conference held in Sydney, and the CDC stationed in London. The proposed scheme split the defence force of each colony into the categories of 'Passive Defence', for the protection of cities, towns and harbours, and 'Active Defence', a 'well-organised and thoroughly equipped field force' able to be moved anywhere across Australia at short notice. Both these modes of defence would be entirely at the disposal of their respective colonial governments.[45] The scheme's final point echoed the warnings of Jervois and Scratchley back in 1876. 'It will be too late when a war crisis arises to improvise an effective military organisation', the report warned, 'No expenditure of public money, however lavish, can then allay the panic and feeling of insecurity which will be the sure consequence of such a condition'.[46] The priority was to put local defences in order first; there were few provisions for the possibility of service outside of Australia within the confines of the defence schemes of the late nineteenth century.[47]

The potential for a more concrete foundation to colonial contributions may have had its best chance within the imperial federation movement. Although how it would be achieved was the subject of constant debate, imperial federation sought to bring together the colonies with the imperial centre in a more binding political structure. It became what Joseph Chamberlain liked to refer to as the 'great dream'.[48] Chamberlain's acceptance of the unglamorous role of Secretary of State for the Colonies afforded him the chance to further these goals of closer collaboration with the white settler colonies.[49] Chamberlain was one of imperial federation's strongest proponents, believing the future of Britain's position required further drawing

[44] Stephen J. Clark, 'Marching to Their Own Drum: British Army Officers as Military Commandants in the Australian Colonies and New Zealand, 1870–1901' (PhD Thesis, University of New South Wales, 1999), 252–3.
[45] 'Australian Federal Defence' No 40. 1896, 9.
[46] 'Australian Federal Defence' No 40. 1896, 10.
[47] Based upon a survey of a few schemes from this period including 'Australian Federal Defence' No 40. 1896; E Hutton, H MacKenzie, and F Hixson, *Defence of New South Wales* (Sydney: Government Printer, 1894); The Queensland Scheme makes provisions for moving troops to Thursday Island, see Great Britain. Colonial Defence Committee. Local Defence Committee. 1894, *Defence Scheme Revised to March 1894*, 4.
[48] J. L. Garvin, *The Life of Joseph Chamberlain*, vol. iii, 1895–1900: Empire and World Policy (London: Macmillan and Co., 1934), 177.
[49] Travis Crosby, *Joseph Chamberlain: A Most Radical Imperialist* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2018), 111.

upon colonial resources, and emphasising closer bonds. The South African War provided the perfect opportunity to put these ideas into practice. Writing in 1885, William Forester, the Chairman of the Imperial Federation League, defined Imperial Federation as: 'Such a union of the mother-country with her colonies as will keep the realm one State'.[50] As was made painfully obvious to Chamberlain through these colonial conferences, Australian leaders found the notion of one state clashed with the very idea of colonial autonomy.

However, at the 1897 Colonial Conference, Chamberlain found out just how difficult it was to commit any of the settler colonies to binding agreements. Coinciding with Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, the imperial fever of the occasion never quite translated into Chamberlain's conference with the colonial leaders. The 1887 Naval Agreement, the great achievement of the previous conference, was due to expire, and while colonial leaders were keen to renew it, they were averse to any other forms of centralised control from London.[51] Even the organisation of exchange of troops and standardisation of weapons proved to be of great difficulty.[52] The conference was hardly a success. The idea of the colonies making troops freely available for the use of the British government would have appeared absurd to colonial leaders; they wanted to be in control of their own resources.

The prospect of further contingents for service alongside the British Army was left in an uncertain position for much of the period between 1885 to 1899, with little progress made on deciding what would happen should the idea be raised again. It is evident that British politicians were preparing the colonies for a conflict on a large scale against another imperial power and were less concerned about what would happen should a smaller localised conflict break out like that witnessed in Sudan. The CDC were just as cold to the idea of raising contingents of Australian troops for imperial or general service. Brassey in 1898 put together a proposal offering 5,000 Australian mounted infantry for imperial service, with the deteriorating state of South Africa in mind.[53] Both the CDC and War Office did not believe

[50] W. E. Forster, *Imperial Federation* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1885), 1.
Robert Shields, 'The Quest for Empire Unity: The Imperial Federationists and their Cause, 1869–1893'. (PhD Thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1961), 88–9.
[51] Alex Little, Margaret Hutchison, and Benjamin Mountford, 'A Symbol of Imperial Unity? The Australian Colonies and the 1897 Imperial Conference', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 2023, 11–2.
[52] Little, Hutchison, and Mountford, 'A Symbol of Imperial Unity?', 14–5.
[53] Colonial Troops for Imperial Service in War: Australasia, 1898–1901, minute, 22 July 1898, Series W.O. 32/6365 War Office Registered Papers: General Series, AJCP.

that any Australian soldier would serve abroad at a lower pay than that in the colonies.[54] Brassey's response was indignant:

> Having had the opportunity of submitting my suggestions with reference to the enrolment of an Imperial Corps of Mounted Infantry I do not feel justified in entering into a controversy with the Colonial Defence Committee. If it is considered that Indian Cavalry would be as reliable in an encounter with such a tough and sturdy force as the Boer can put into the field, there would be nothing more to say. Though not a soldier I cannot agree with the opinion that Indian Cavalry would be as reliable as Australian horsemen in irregular warfare, where all would depend on individual energy, resources, and courage.[55]

Brassey, like many in the colonies, believed that Australian troops offered more adaptability to South African conditions than soldiers from other colonies. It is not difficult to imagine Brassey's frustrations when Chamberlain came calling the following year for a 'spontaneous offer of troops'.

While debates about defence raged on, the prospect of conflict in the late nineteenth century appeared increasingly likely. In February 1888, the former Colonial Secretary, the Earl of Carnarvon wrote to Henry Parkes: 'You know as I do the extremely frail tenure on which peace in Europe now rests, and the great probability that in the event of war you in Australia, as we in England, may become involved in hostilities'. Carnarvon painted the picture of Australians contending with the armed cruisers of France and Russia.[56] More alarming was the likelihood that Britain would be unable to assist Australia in the early stages of such a war.[57] However, the push for political federation, combined with the economic depression experienced throughout the 1890s, meant that tensions in South Africa were bubbling away at the same time defensive matters were of less concern to Australian leaders. When the South African War broke out in 1899 and British leaders called upon the Australian colonies to provide troops, they each had to face that decision separately, while little progress had been made in planning for such a scenario.[58]

---

[54] Colonial Troops for Imperial Service in War: Australasia, 1898–1901, minute, 22 July 1898, Series W.O. 32/6365 War Office Registered Papers: General Series, AJCP.
[55] Lord Brassey to the War Office, Colonial Troops for Imperial Service in War: Australasia, 1898–1901, telegram, 8 August 1898, Series W.O. 32/6365 War Office Registered Papers: General Series, AJCP.
[56] Henry Parkes, *Fifty Years in the Making of Australian History* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1892), 529–30.
[57] Parkes, *Fifty Years in the Making of Australian History*, 529–30.
[58] For a further discussion on federation and its impact on imperial defence, see Chapter Seven.

A More Cautious Approach to South Africa

On 12 October 1899, the *Sydney Morning Herald* declared: 'The Transvaal has sent an ultimatum to Great Britain'. The State Secretary of the South African Republic, F. W. Reitz, messaged the Governor of the Cape Colony, Alfred Milner, declaring that the presence of British troops positioned on the frontier trod upon the independence of the South African Republic in the Transvaal.[59] Reitz made a series of demands for the removal of these troops, including the reinforcements that had been sent to South Africa since June of that year, all while giving Britain a guarantee of non-aggression for the duration of these negotiations. The *Sydney Morning Herald* laid out the potential ramifications: 'If an answer in the affirmative to these requests was not returned by 5 o'clock yesterday afternoon, Mr. Reitz said the Republic would regard the British action as a declaration of war.' Unbeknownst to anyone in Australia, the Boer states had already declared war on the British Empire the previous day following the British government's rejection of the ultimatum.[60] The colonial leaders who had received Chamberlain's message in July had been mostly cautious, but now it was clear they too would be going to war.

Much like the Sudan conflict before it, long-standing tensions in South Africa were the source of great interest in the Australian colonies. The evolving situation came to prominence in Australian newspapers during May, and coverage continued throughout 1899 as the potential for war waxed and waned.[61] News still travelled slowly. Without any official correspondent in South Africa, the colonies were reliant upon telegraph cables through London, resulting in delays in receiving crucial updates.[62] The *Sydney Morning Herald* acknowledged the impact of these delays as well as the dangers of presuming hostilities, but declared that South African tensions were of great interest to Australians, 'not only as benefitting citizens of the Empire, but as a measure of self-protection'. The article elaborated: 'It need hardly be repeated that it is British supremacy in South Africa which is at stake here, and this implies the command of one of the most important trade routes and strategic points in which Australia is interested'.[63] With a notable Australian presence in the

[59] *Sydney Morning Herald*. 12 October 1899, 4.
[60] Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War*, 21.
[61] L. M. Field, *The Forgotten War: Australian Involvement in the South African Conflict of 1899–1902* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1979), 9.
[62] Field, *The Forgotten War*, 9.
[63] *Sydney Morning Herald*. 12 October 1899, 4.

Transvaal, it was the opinion of the *Sydney Morning Herald's* editors that the Australian colonies' involvement in South Africa was inevitable.

When Chamberlain sent his telegram in July 1899, he was banking on New South Wales in particular, committing wholeheartedly to the cause. New South Wales possessed the most efficient military organisation in Australia according to reports from annual camps in early 1899.[64] Chamberlain and the Colonial Office did not appreciate the lack of absolute commitment from New South Wales, as they had hoped for a repeat of the enthusiasm shown during the Sudan campaign in 1885. Historian C. N. Connolly argues that this appearance of spontaneity was manufactured by the Colonial Office, alongside other organisations, to inspire imperialistic fervour in Britain.[65] For someone who had repeatedly championed the growing unity of the Empire during his time in the Colonial Office, this was no doubt the source of frustration for Chamberlain. Instead, the two largest Australian colonies began the process of negotiation. The Victorian government reassured the Colonial Office through a telegram dated 1 August that the colony 'fully recognizes claims of Uitlanders [foreigners in South Africa]' and that 'Public meetings have been held in support' while 'numerous offers of service from Colonial forces have been received'.[66] The other Australian colonies also followed the events unfolding in South Africa with keen interest. However, the governments of Western Australia, Tasmania, and South Australia took little direct action to offer the Colonial Office military assistance during July and August. In the case of South Australia and Tasmania, the inaction of New South Wales was a major stumbling block, with both governments remaining in regular correspondence with New South Wales Premier, George Reid, seeking his guidance.[67]

Less bothered by the dilatoriness of the two larger colonies was Queensland, whose government seized on the opportunity shunned by Victoria and New South Wales. In July 1899, Permanent Commanding Officer of the Queensland Mounted Infantry, Colonel Percy Ricardo, discussed with Captain Henry Chauvel the possibility of offering a contingent for service in South Africa. This idea gained enough traction that the Premier of Queensland,

[64] Field, *The Forgotten War*, 6.
[65] C. N. Connolly, 'Manufacturing "Spontaneity": The Australian Offers of Troops for the Boer War', *Historical Studies* 18, no. 70 (1978): 106–17.
[66] Lord Brassey to the Colonial Office, 1 August 1899, Series CO 309. Victoria: Original Correspondence, 1851–1900, AJCP.
[67] Field, *The Forgotten War*, 16.

James Dickson, sent a cable on 11 July offering a contingent of 250 mounted infantry at the expense of the colony, in the event of war in the Transvaal.[68] The reply from Chamberlain, as reported in *The Telegraph* on 13 July, stated: 'Her Majesty's Government highly appreciate the loyal and patriotic offer of Queensland. They hope the occasion will not arise, but if it should they will gladly avail themselves of the offer'.[69] The Queensland governments' proactiveness amounted to little in the short-term but it did suggest that they were willing to contribute on similar terms to those offered by Dalley in 1885. Unlike Sudan, Chamberlain had asked for the troops himself, and they could expect a little more time to prepare for this contingent. Meanwhile, Chamberlain had perhaps hoped that by framing the offer as 'loyal and patriotic', it might inspire the other colonies to come forward in similar fashion.[70]

South Australian leaders reached out to the Colonial Office on 4 September and offered troops for foreign service 'in the event of circumstances rendering such action desirable'. While no doubt appreciated, scrawled on the document when it arrived in London was the line: 'as they do not mention the Transvaal we need not say anything about helping there'.[71] At the time both Queensland and South Australia made their offers, war in the Transvaal was still only being viewed as a possibility.[72] Still, Chamberlain appeared to have his sights set primarily on the bigger colonies when it came to his vision of a unified empire, one where the strongest white settler colonies would immediately come rushing to the empire's defence by despatching troops.

By October 1899, the Colonial Office decided to intervene. *The Daily Telegraph* presented a transcript of Chamberlain's telegram to the colonial governments from three days prior, anticipating the outbreak of war. Chamberlain expressed the London government's pleasure for 'the patriotic spirit exhibited by the people of Australia in offering to serve in South

---

[68] Henry Chauvel, Annotated Typescript Biography, AWM: MSS1406, 9; Queensland to the Colonial Office, 11 July 1899, Series CO 234. Queensland: Original Correspondence, 1859–1900, AJCP.
[69] 'Offer of Troops. Mr. Chamberlain's Reply. Offer Accepted in Case of Need', *The Telegraph*. 13 July 1889, 2.
[70] Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War: The War in South Africa, 1899–1902*, 18–9. The British Government had used similar tactics with Canada in 1885, hoping that New South Wales' commitment to send troops would inspire Canada to do similar, see George F. G. Stanley, *Canada's Soldiers: The Military History of an Unmilitary People*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada, 1960), 271–2.
[71] South Australia to the Colonial Office, 4 September 1899, Series CO 13. South Australia: Original Correspondence, 1831–1900, AJCP.
[72] Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War*, 19.

Africa', but he had specific contributions in mind. Britain desired units of 125 men composed of infantry, mounted infantry (both preferred), or cavalry (less desired) with each colony equally represented (though Chamberlain specifically stated two units from Victoria and New South Wales, and one unit from South Australia would be acceptable). On the issue of costs, the colonial governments were responsible for equipping the contingents while the imperial government would handle rates of pay as well as cover supplies and ammunition costs once in South Africa. The despatch from Chamberlain to the colonial leaders read more like a list of demands, and there was little room for deviation. Chamberlain ended this despatch by declaring: 'Troops to embark no later than 31st of October, Proceeding directly to Capetown [*sic*] for orders'.[73] While Chamberlain was direct in stating the Colonial Office's designs, the New South Wales government remained steadfast in deferring the decision to the meeting of parliament on 17 October.

The clarification on rates of pay helped to ease economic concerns, but colonial governments still sought to finalise all the details during October. Some of the smaller colonies took this opportunity to converse directly with the Colonial Office regarding their positions on the unfolding war. The West Australian government deferred the colony's outright commitment to any war until the other colonies had acted but did declare its support for Britain's position on 5 October. Governor Gerard Smith also stated: 'in the event of war being declared Western Australia should co-operate with the other colonies of Australia in offering to despatch a military force to the Transvaal.'[74] The Tasmanian government asked on 9 October if Her Majesty's Government would accept Tasmanian troops for service in South Africa (declining to give a figure at this stage).[75] On 12 October, the Tasmanian government followed this up by estimating a contribution of eighty troops, a number they considered the equivalent to other colonies based on their population.[76] They did not receive an answer.[77] On 13 October, the South Australian government officially offered 125 volunteers after a motion passed through both Houses of parliament, followed by a 24 October telegram

[73] 'Colonial Volunteers. Acceptance By Imperial Government. Despatch From Mr. Chamberlain. Terms and Rates of Pay. To Be Submitted to Parliament. A Matter of Urgency', *The Daily Telegraph*. 6 October 1899, 5.
[74] Sir Gerard Smith to the Colonial Office, 5 October 1899, Series CO 18. Western Australia: Original Correspondence, 1828–1900, AJCP.
[75] Tasmania to the Colonial Office, 9 October 1899, Series CO 280. Tasmania: Original Correspondence (Secretary of State), 1824–1900, AJCP.
[76] Tasmania to the Colonial Office, 12 October 1899, Series CO 280. Tasmania: Original Correspondence (Secretary of State), 1824–1900, AJCP.
[77] Tasmania to the Colonial Office, 17 October 1899, Series CO 280. Tasmania: Original Correspondence (Secretary of State), 1824–1900, AJCP.

adding that South Australia could also provide meat and vegetables for army use.[78] The colonial governments ensured that these big decisions were this time made via the appropriate democratic procedures.

The governments of Victoria and New South Wales continued to exercise caution towards the situation unfolding in South Africa. On 3 October 1899, former Victorian Premier, Duncan Gillies, posed a question to Premier George Turner in the Legislative Assembly. Gillies asked: 'whether the Premier is prepared to make any statement as to whether any forces are likely to be sent there? [South Africa]'.[79] Turner responded by indicating that he had been in discussions with the other colonies, particularly New South Wales, as to the possibility of despatching an Australian contingent to South Africa. He pointed out that these negotiations were still ongoing, and he would make a statement at the earliest possible moment allowed by the dealings of the other colonies.[80] Chamberlain's deadline put an end to this possibility. Victoria committed to sending troops to the Transvaal on 10 October following a debate in the Legislative Assembly filled with all the familiar rhetoric of loyalty and imperial unity.[81] On 17 October 1899, the Premier of New South Wales, William Lyne, declared in the Legislative Assembly: 'that this House is of the opinion that New South Wales should equip and despatch a military force for service with the Imperial army in the Transvaal'.[82] When the question of sending a contingent was put to parliament, it received a majority in favour of 75 to 10.[83]

The Sudan expedition in 1885 had a noticeable influence on New South Wales' approach to the outbreak of the South African War. The government was hesitant to commit itself wholeheartedly to a campaign in a foreign nation, particularly after the experience of the Sudan expedition had embarrassed the main figures involved. The New South Wales Premier, George Reid, regularly criticised the needless military expenditure which had haunted the Sudan expedition.[84] Member for Tamworth, William Sawers, spoke in the

[78] South Australia to the Colonial Office, 13 October 1899, Series CO 13. South Australia: Original Correspondence, 1831–1900, AJCP; Lord Tennyson to Mr. Chamberlain, 24 October 1899, Series CO 13. South Australia: Original Correspondence, 1831–1900, AJCP.
[79] Victoria, *Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 3 October 1899, 1592 (Duncan Gillies).
[80] Victoria, *Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 3 October 1899, 1592 (George Turner).
[81] Field, *The Forgotten War*, 27–8.
[82] New South Wales, *Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 17 October 1889, 1373–4 (William Lyne).
[83] New South Wales, *Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 17 October 1889, 1373–4.
[84] Connolly, 'Manufacturing "Spontaneity"': 109–0.

Legislative Assembly on 14 September 1899 regarding the potential for war between Great Britain and the Transvaal. 'I hope the Prime Minister will give us the assurance', Sawers inquired, that 'this colony will not indulge in another wild-cat scheme like the Soudan trip, and that money will not be paid for the sending away of troops unless the approval of Parliament is first gained'.[85] A letter to the editor of Brisbane's *The Telegraph* noted how 'New South Wales, not content with wilfully wasting some hundreds of thousands of pounds over this same Soudan business, and bringing everlasting disgrace on Australia, wants to waste still more money and send more men away to battle'.[86] It was a decision that still hung over that colony's government.

Politicians found the cost of sending these contingents to be the major sticking point. This was somewhat eased by Chamberlain's assurance that the colonial governments would only need to handle the equipping of troops, with all other expenses once in South Africa to be met by the imperial government. This assurance made it somewhat easier for the premiers to acquiesce in Chamberlain's request without putting too big a financial burden on their colonies. On the other hand, politicians frequent justification for the Sudan campaign was it ensured imperial aid would come to the colonies in the event of war. This form of security had only become more critical in 1899 with more ambitious imperial powers exerting their influence across the globe.[87] The Colonial Office's call for support being stronger than in 1885 also reinforced this idea. The rejection of Chamberlain's telegram would have been a difficult position for colonial governments to justify, but they still sought to find ways to impact how they entered the South African War.

Alfred Deakin was complimentary towards how the colonial governments responded to the South African War following its conclusion nearly three years later. During a speech at the Melbourne Town Hall on 2 June 1902, Deakin reflected upon the events of 1899, stating: 'We might be justly reproached that perhaps as a people we entered into this contest somewhat too light-heartedly. No one could say we entered into it hastily'.[88] Although Deakin's sentiments were most likely shaped by how long and arduous the war turned out to be, he placed a great deal of emphasis on how measured the approach of the colonial

[85] New South Wales*, Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 14 September 1899, 1347–8 (William Sawers).
[86] W. J. Clark 'Troops for the Transvaal', *The Telegraph*. 12 July 1889, 3.
[87] Field, *The Forgotten War: Australian Involvement in the South African Conflict of 1899–1902*, 3.
[88] 'Eloquent Speech By Mr. Deakin', *The Argus*. 3 June 1902, 6.

governments had been. Deakin continued: 'No well-informed person would say we entered into it unjustly. We entered upon it as an actual war only under the last provocation of actual invasion.'[89] Considering how hastily the New South Wales government had responded to the Sudan crisis, they were eager not to make the same mistakes when it came to the South African War. Unlike 1885, New South Wales waited for a meeting in parliament to put the action up to a vote, and consulted with the other colonies, such as Victoria, prior to offering troops for the war in South Africa. Even if colonial planning for the outbreak of war left much to be desired, the colonies were far more considered in entering a British war than New South Wales had been for Sudan. As it turned out, they would need to be.

'A Vanishing Quantity': Australian perceptions of the Boers

South Africa had been a well-documented source of British frustration for much of the nineteenth century. Unlike the Mahdist uprising in the 1880s, territorial disputes between the British Empire and the Boer Republics stretched back as far as the beginning of the century. Dutch-descended white Afrikaners settled into the territory northeast of the Orange River after departing the Cape Colony between 1835 and 1840 and henceforth, these groups came into constant conflict with British territorial ambitions.[90] Australians had already seen these tensions erupt from afar during the first Anglo-Boer War of the early 1880s, which ended with the British Empire forced to sign a peace treaty with the South African Republic. This did little to resolve matters. British expansionist interests, embodied by the imperialist and politician Cecil Rhodes, threatened the independence of the South African Republic, presided over by Paul Kruger following the commencement of his presidency in 1883.

Further complicating the situation in South Africa was the discovery of gold and diamonds in the Transvaal region. Gold changed the Transvaal forever, transforming it into the richest country on the entire African continent and shifting the balance of power in Kruger's favour.[91] Much like other gold rushes of the nineteenth century, the discovery of gold brought a great influx of migrants and fundamentally changed the demographic make-up of

[89] 'Eloquent Speech By Mr. Deakin', *The Argus*. 3 June 1902, 6.
[90] Thomas Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa* (London: Abacus, 1992), 45–6.
[91] Anthony Nutting, *The Scramble for Africa: The Great Trek to the Boer War.* (London: Constable & Company, 1970), 148.

the region while also upsetting the balance of the population.[92] The Uitlanders grew as a body of overwhelmingly British (75,000 of 100,000 men) skilled industrial workers, together forming an English-speaking class.[93] This group included many Australians who sought their fortune in South Africa, a phenomenon previously experienced in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, and Western Australia. Kruger's response was to impose heavy taxation on the Uitlanders due to concern that British dominance in the region might also lead to the extension of British rule in South Africa. Nine-tenths of the taxes gathered by Kruger's government came from the Uitlanders, creating further tensions that Rhodes, alongside co-conspirator Alfred Beit, hoped to exploit.[94]

The failed Jameson Raid of 1895 proved the major progenitor of the South African War. Orchestrated by Rhodes's British South Africa Company, the raid intended to stir up lingering resentment amongst the Uitlanders in the Transvaal, with Jameson acting to restore order to (and effectively control) Johannesburg and the goldfields. Administrator General of the Chartered Company, Leander Starr Jameson, led the force of 600 men, including mounted police and volunteers recruited at Mafeking by Jameson himself.[95] Jameson marched to Johannesburg only to find the Uitlanders unaware of the purpose of the raid and unsupportive of its cause. The plan ultimately failed to inspire the Uitlanders into direct action against Kruger's government. Instead, the Jameson Raid embarrassed the British government. The failure of the raid further soured relations between the South African Republic and the Cape Colony, with tensions spilling out onto the goldfields. At the time of the raid, several thousand Australians inhabited the Rand, some even forming an 'Australian Corps', though they had been instructed through a proclamation from Johannesburg not to assist Jameson.[96] The *Sydney Morning Herald* (taking its information from a telegram from the *Times*) reported that 2,000 Australians had held a meeting at Johannesburg in which they decided not to support the revolution.[97] Like many Uitlanders, there was little evidence to suggest the Australian residents intended to challenge the Kruger republic directly, although such meetings indicated that an atmosphere of hostility lay over the goldfields.

---

[92] R. L. Wallace, *The Australians at the Boer War* (Sydney: National Boer War Memorial Association, 1976), 17.
[93] Bill Nasson, *The South African War: 1899–1902* (London: Hodder Headline Group, 1999), 27; Jonathan Hyslop, 'The Imperial Working Class Makes Itself "White": White Labourism in Britain, Australia, and South Africa Before the First World War', *Journal of Historical Sociology* 12, no. 4 (1999): 399.
[94] Wallace, *The Australians at the Boer War*, 18.
[95] Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War* (London: Abacus, 1992), 2.
[96] Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War: The War in South Africa, 1899–1902*, 15.
[97] *Sydney Morning Herald*. 4 January 1896, 8.

Military enthusiasm grew across the Australian colonies as war in South Africa became a distinct possibility. The growth of the imperial federation movement reinvigorated zest for imperial strength and expansion throughout the white settler colonies.[98] The South African War reflected the shared belief between Britain and Australia that it was vitally important the war reflected a unified empire, made of white colonies facing off against a predominantly white enemy.[99] These ideas echoed the rhetoric surrounding New South Wales' entry into the Sudan conflict of 1885, emphasising the strengthening of the bonds of empire. Chamberlain's approach to the South African War also reflected the desire for white colonial troops to be shown as central in the conflict against the Boers. Chamberlain's cable asking for immediate support from the self-governing white colonies was steeped in the belief that to have non-white soldiers form the majority of Britain's war effort would set a dangerous precedent for this racialised vision of the empire's future, one Chamberlain was ever conscious of preserving.[100]

In Australia, ideas of race also played a significant part in hardening attitudes towards the Boer Republic. Back in 1885, General Gordon's death roused enthusiasm for war, but also justified the Australian retaliation. The South African War was more complex. The Australian public and leadership held little resentment towards the Boers, if they could even identify who they were, and the growing animosity mostly arose from Boer defiance of British hegemony.[101] Media depictions tended to demonise the Boers to justify Britain's imperial expansion and eventual war.[102] J. H. M. Abbott, who served in the war, recalled media depictions leading him to believe 'that we should meet in Africa some kind of a sub-tropical Esquimo — a hairy, primitive "loafer," with the manners of a cave-dweller and the principles of a gorilla'.[103] The portrayal of the South African Boers as lesser than white Europeans was an essential component of forming the Australian public's early impressions of them.[104] In some cases this led to parallels being drawn between Indigenous Australians and the Boers in South Africa. Concluding a sympathetic piece about the Uitlander cause,

[98] Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War*, 16–7.
[99] Craig Stockings, *Letters from the Veldt: The Imperial Advance to Pretoria Through the Eyes of Edward Hutton and His Brigade of Colonials* (Sydney: Big Sky Publishing, 2020), 26.
[100] Stockings, *Letters from the Veldt*, 21.
[101] Stockings, *Letters from the Veldt*, 26.
[102] Effie Karageorgos, 'War in a "White Man's Country": Australian Perceptions of Blackness on the South African Battlefield, 1899–1902', *History Australia* 15, no. 2 (2018): 325.
[103] J. H. M. Abbott, *Tommy Cornstalk: Being Some Account of the Less Notable Features of the South African War from the Point of View of the Australian Ranks* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1902), 237.
[104] Karageorgos, 'War in a "White Man's Country"': 325.

The Argus stated: 'The Boer is a vanishing quantity. In one sense he is an aboriginal, to be put up with because he is disappearing'.[105] These impressions evolved over time as Australian soldiers interacted with the Boers in South Africa but continued to be framed within an imperial framework, as well as influenced by Australian settler colonial mythology.[106]

The Boers, however, remained something of a mystery to the average Australian even in 1899. Positive images of the Boers were often centred around ideas of rural masculinity, inviting parallels with the image of the Australian bushman. Meanwhile, negative portrayals of the Boers often reduced them to archetypes of savagery.[107] A letter to the editor that appeared in *The Telegraph* in Brisbane, attributed to a W. J. Clark, suggested that there was at least some confusion among the public as to whom Britain was fighting. Clark suggested that many Queenslanders mistook the Boers for black South Africans and were, once again, displaying an enthusiasm to kill more black populations for 'experience', alluding to the Frontier Wars. Remarking upon how little the Australian public recognised the Boer people, Clark suggested:

> I would strongly advise our gallant soldiers to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the history of the trouble between England and the Transvaal … in my humble opinion, she [England] is distinctly wrong in the Transvaal affair, and I believe that every fair-minded man will agree with me.[108]

The campaign in South Africa drew a lot of attention in the newspapers, which spent some time trying to demystify the situation for the Australian public. *The West Australian* presented a detailed map of South Africa on 2 October 1899. Its main function was to provide an updated depiction of the landscape of South Africa, emphasising its transformation over the last five years 'on account of the bearing they have on the unsatisfactory state of affairs [war now seen as inevitable] now ruling in South Africa'. The article warned that: 'the Frontier of the Transvaal is admirably adapted for the tactics which the Boers have always made use of in warfare'.[109] *The Advertiser* featured an interview with E. W. Clarke, an ex-Troop Sergeant Major who fought in the first Boer War of 1881 and had

[105] *The Argus*. 22 July 1889, 8.
[106] Tandee Wang and Thomas J Rogers, 'Bushman or Boer — Australian Identity in a "White Man's War", 1899–1902', *British Journal for Military History* 7, no. 1 (2021): 66.
[107] Wang and Rogers, 'Bushman or Boer', 83–4.
[108] W. J. Clark 'Troops for the Transvaal', *The Telegraph*. 12 July 1889, 3.
[109] 'South Africa and the Transvaal', *The West Australian*. 2 October 1899, 5.

since settled in Adelaide. Clarke blamed the British Liberal government for what had unfolded since that conflict. 'I attribute all the difficulties that have occurred since Majuba Hill [the decisive battle of the first Boer War]', stated Clarke, 'to the policy followed by Mr. Gladstone after that battle in granting an armistice, instead of pushing up troops to Pretoria'. Clarke called the Boers: 'a miserable race, and neither the black nor the other white races have any love for them. They are inhospitable, treacherous, and obstinate. They are good shots and good horsemen, but they would never come into the open'. In Clarke's opinion: 'our Mounted Rifles would give a very good account of themselves if sent against the Boers', promoting the idea that Australian soldiers were perfectly suited for the warfare conducted in South Africa.[110]

Many in Australia were still sceptical about what the war would entail, and how long it would last. Public opinion in Britain tended to believe that the war would be won by Christmas of 1899; however, some newspapers were more cautious.[111] *The West Australian,* whose editor had already remarked upon the terrain being advantageous to the Boers, warned that 'The war may be a long job, but unless Great Britain is to forfeit all that she has secured in South Africa, it must be undertaken'.[112] But what followed would be a much longer and more drawn out conflict than most observers in Australia could have possibly predicted.

The Challenges of the First Contingent

Chamberlain's specifications did not make raising the contingents any easier for the colonies. Perhaps of some consolation to colonial leaders, was that they were freed from the added pressures of forming a unified force and could raise their units without confronting the problem of intercolonial co-operation. The first of the six waves of contributions from the Australian colonies departed in late 1899 as close to Chamberlain's deadline as resources allowed. Even as the first contingents left, there still was no real perceived emergency in the colonies. However, as we shall see in the following chapter, when news of the events of Black Week reached Australia later in the year, it inspired a more urgent atmosphere.

[110] 'The Situation in South Africa', *The Advertiser*. 18 July 1899, 4.
[111] Wallace, *The Australians at the Boer War*, 25.
[112] 'South Africa and the Transvaal', *The West Australian*. 2 October 1899, 5.

New South Wales, possessing the most significant military force of the Australian colonies, had few issues meeting the quota of 250 men. The Premier of New South Wales, William Lyne, cabled the Colonial Office on 7 October 1899 offering the Lancer squadron that was already in Aldershot, but awaited final approval from parliament on 17 October before fully committing.[113] The 102 strong squadron under Colonel Charles Cox, had been sent to England in early 1899 to gain experience training with British soldiers. Now their convenient location presented an opportunity for New South Wales not only to have the earliest contingent to arrive in South Africa, but also to have the luxury of the contingent's costs already accounted for — all without the headache of having to raise and despatch the contingent themselves.[114] Unfortunately, they would later find even this was not so straightforward. The Lancers left London on 9 October 1899 to great crowds, swelling to such a size as to suspend traffic along the route of the march.[115] As for the rest of the contingent, the matter became one of deciding exactly which regiments would be selected.

For the remaining colonies, numerous hurdles created difficulties in meeting the parameters set by Chamberlain. Some believed the war could be over before they even arrived and were unwilling to leave their businesses for what could prove to be, once again, a wild goose chase.[116] Other obstacles to men joining included suffering the criticisms of the war itself from various pockets in the colonies, as well as passing the medical and fitness tests that came with the recruitment process.[117] Victoria found that forty percent of their applicants did not pass these recruitment tests, even though they were not considered particularly rigorous.[118] The other colonies had their own challenges in raising numbers. Press reports indicated that Queensland was still recruiting as late as 17 October, even after having been the first to offer aid.[119] South Australia too had been slow to make up their numbers, provoking talk in Sydney of 'Apathetic South Australians'.[120] In the end, recruitment was still strong enough that nearly all colonial governments (South Australia and Queensland the

[113] The Earl of Beauchamp to Mr. Chamberlain, 3 October 1899, Series CO 201. New South Wales Correspondence, 1782–1900, AJCP.
[114] Field, *The Forgotten War*, 36.
[115] Field, *The Forgotten War*, 55.
[116] Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War*, 22.
[117] Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War*, 22.
[118] Field, *The Forgotten War*, 38.
[119] Field, *The Forgotten War*, 41
[120] Field, *The Forgotten War*, 41.

exceptions) did not have to resort to using civilian volunteers to make up the numbers, though Victoria did send married men.[121]

Figure 6: *Procession of the Victorian Contingent through Melbourne during October, 1899. These departures were still significant events in 1899, but would slowly decline throughout the South African War.*
Source: 'Procession of the Victorian Contingent Through Melbourne', 28 October 1899, Photograph Attributed to E. J. Frazer, State Library of Victoria, Call No: H36420/42.

The first wave of Australian forces departed in late October and early November 1899 for the Cape Colony. The Victorian and Tasmanian contingents left on 28 October following a march through the streets of Melbourne to large crowds. The Governor of Victoria, Thomas Brassey, cabled Chamberlain to describe scenes of 'most enthusiastic demonstrations from immense crowd which lined streets; most patriotic and loyal sentiments everywhere expressed'.[122] *The Age* was even more evocative: 'As they go a single sentiment is in the air. It shines with the arms of the soldiery, surges to and fro with swaying of the crowds,

[121] Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War*, 22; 'Farewelling Country Troops' *The Age*. 17 October 1899, 5–6.
[122] Lord Brassey to Mr. Chamberlain, 26 October 1899, Series CO 309. Victoria: Original Correspondence, 1851–1900, AJCP.

penetrates the city in every direction with subtle overwhelming power as of electricity'. The soldiers marched to crowds singing 'God Save the Queen', as well as 'Rule Britannia' and 'Soldiers of the Queen', expressing their place within the empire.[123] The Victorian Mounted Rifles and Infantry company totalled 250 men, meeting Chamberlain's requirements of two units of 125 men from Victoria, while Tasmania provided an additional 84 men on top of that.[124] *Medic* continued to Adelaide where it picked up the South Australian Mounted Rifles (consisting of 127 men) and then on to Albany to receive the Western Australian Mounted Infantry (consisting of 130 men) to similar crowds.[125] The South Australian Governor, Lord Tennyson, cabled Chamberlain on 1 November to say that the 'South Australian contingent [were] leaving amid great enthusiasm'.[126]

The first New South Wales units to depart from Australian shores also left on 28 October. This too was preceded by a march through the streets of Sydney in the pouring rain, reminiscent of the weather that had greeted the returning Sudan contingent fourteen years earlier.[127] The remainder of the New South Wales Lancers then departed on *Kent*, along with the New South Wales Medical Team of 86, to meet the Aldershot Lancers in South Africa.[128] On 2 November, large crowds assembled again to farewell the next body of the troops aboard *Aberdeen,* including the A and E squadrons of Mounted Rifles, with the First Australian Horse unit and men of the New South Wales Mounted Rifles to follow on *Langton Grange* a couple of weeks later on 14 November. The last of this first wave of contributions came from Queensland, which sent its First Queensland Mounted Infantry on 1 November, aboard *Cornwall,* five days after Chamberlain's deadline.[129]

The departure of the contingents gave the press a great opportunity to reaffirm the ties between the Australian colonies and Britain. On 4 November, *The Sydney Mail* dedicated no less than ten pages to the scenes of crowds farewelling these units throughout the colonies.[130]

---

[123] 'The Victorian Contingent. Melbourne's Farewell. Great Military Procession. Over 400 Troops in Column. Immense Popular Enthusiasm. Enormous Crowds of Spectators. Departure of the Medic' *The Age*. 30 October 1899, 5.
[124] Numbers sourced from Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War*, 395, 407.
[125] Numbers sourced from Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War,* 401, 404.
[126] Lord Tennyson to Mr. Chamberlain, 1 November 1899, Series CO 13. South Australia: Original Correspondence, 1831–1900, AJCP.
[127] Wallace, *The Australians at the Boer War*, 35.
[128] Numbers sourced from Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War*, 389–91.
[129] Numbers sourced from Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War*, 398.
[130] 'Australasia's Contingents for South Africa' *The Sydney Mail*. 4 November 1899, 1103–12.

Published at the top of the supplement was a message from Queen Victoria received via cable declaring her desire to 'thank the people of her colonies in Australasia for their striking loyalty and patriotism in their voluntary offer to send troops to co-operate with Her Majesty's Imperial Forces in maintaining her position and the rights of British subjects in South Africa'. Interestingly, the issue positioned the conflict as belonging to a tradition begun by the Sudan contingent in 1885, highlighting: 'The way led by New South Wales in sending the Soudan Contingent' and how it has 'been followed by every portion and dependency of the Empire in this the first important war in which it has been engaged in the present decade.' The article also pointed out: 'It is not that the Empire needs this help for the existing position, but rather as a demonstration of its solidarity', indicating that *The Sydney Mail* at least, presented the contribution as symbolic, while also somewhat tempering expectations that the service would amount to more than Sudan had.[131] The *Sydney Morning Herald* recommended that these images be kept as a souvenir to be sent abroad, 'particularly as it will be delivered in Great Britain near Christmas, and will serve as a seasonable greeting'.[132]

Conclusion: A More Calculated Response

The chaotic months that had defined the Sudan campaign were not an experience colonial politicians were willing to repeat. Despite numerous schemes and conferences intended to distinguish the colonies within a wider network of imperial defence, little movement had been made to define further the terms dictating colonial engagement in future imperial campaigns. Instead, nearly all defence considerations moved towards the local. The CDC sought to ensure the colonies first and foremost, could protect themselves within an increasingly competitive world. The intervening fourteen years revealed, more than anything, that the colonies were rarely on the same page as the Colonial Office on the matter of imperial defence. Instead, they remained ever conscious that binding agreement might involve concessions regarding the autonomy they had enthusiastically exercised for much of the latter half of the nineteenth century. The continual disagreement among colonial and British politicians over even the most minor of details indicated that colonial contingents were not going to be embedded in any continuous scheme anytime soon. Instead, their

[131] 'Australasia's Contingents for South Africa' *The Sydney Mail*. 4 November 1899, 1103.
[132] 'The War! Departure of Australasian Troops!' *Sydney Morning Herald*. 30 October 1889, 6.

operation would be, as Reid declared at the 1897 Colonial Conference, based upon sentiment.

With a lack of definition around the colonies' responsibilities should Britain become engaged in an imperial war, when Chamberlain called for a show of unity, their contributions were defined by negotiation. The economic dimension emerged as the major point of contention. The larger colonies of New South Wales and Victoria immediately set about shaping the economic terms upon which they would relinquish these local resources. Most colonial leaders were unwilling to commit to this war without parliamentary approval, trepidatious about repeating the undemocratic processes that surrounded Dalley's offer in 1885. Given Chamberlain's dream of imperial federation, the colonies' response was far from the burst of enthusiasm he had hoped for. It was only once he revealed the costs would be borne by the British exchequer, that he found willing participants in this latest exercise of a unified imperial vision.

At the onset of the South African War, many colonial politicians were enthusiastic for Australian troops to serve alongside their British counterparts. But they were also wary of any arrangement that marked a permanent infringement upon their independence and ability to control their own resources. Each of the contingents' departures was marked by widespread enthusiasm throughout the colonies, who were eager to share in these patriotic outbursts of imperial zeal, allowing the Australian public to share in this approach to imperial defence. At this early stage of the South African War, however, it did not look like colonial leaders would need to consider the ramifications of their decisions for any extended period. It would not be long until they found that their symbolic gesture of support for Britain's war effort would bind them closer, and for longer than they initially thought.

Chapter Four:

'A British Disaster' — The Early Phases of the South African War, 1899–1900

The Age called it 'A British Disaster'. On 10 December 1899, British Major General William Gatacre received information that 2,500 Boer soldiers were stationed at Stormberg, an important railway junction towards Bloemfontein. Gatacre responded by taking a force of 3,200 to surprise his enemy. *The Age* claimed that Gatacre's 'Afrikander [*sic*]' guides betrayed him; that he was led unaware into an ambush planned by Boer soldiers where 'it was discovered too late that the strength of the enemy had been much underestimated'.[1] In the immediate aftermath, it was estimated that 600 of his men were missing. Gatacre's report back to General Redvers Buller, Commander in Chief of the British effort in South Africa, also blamed the Afrikaner guides for leading him into a position unsuitable for an attack.[2] The reality was that he was far from faultless. The article neglected to mention that in his haste, Gatacre had forgotten to transmit orders to these 600 men, who were forced to surrender to their Boer opponents.[3] It had been a brutal and embarrassing defeat for the British Empire, but it was only a taste of what was to come.

The Australian colonies now saw South Africa as the centre of an imperial crisis. The series of defeats in the early stages of the South African War transformed how many across the empire interpreted the conflict. General Gatacre's disaster at Stormberg was followed by even more severe losses at Magersfontein and Colenso, all occurring between 10 and 17 December. They formed what would be known across the empire as 'Black Week'.[4] The perceived invulnerability of the British Empire was being seriously tested in a way it had not for some time. But the situation also presented an opportunity for the colonies to provide meaningful military aid to Britain. As the previous chapter explained, when the calls for Australian support for the South African War first materialised, they failed to stir the same immediate response as the Sudan conflict in 1885. New South Wales was particularly

[1] 'The Disaster. How The Trap Was Laid. A Force of Nearly 3200 Men. Nearly 600 Missing' *The Age*. 12 December 1899, 5.
[2] 'Heavy Loss of Men. Irish Rifles and Northumberlands. Nearly 600 Missing.' *The Age*. 12 December 1899, 5.
[3] Stephen Miller, 'In Support of the "Imperial Mission"? Volunteering for the South African War, 1899–1902', *The Journal of Military History* 69, no. 3 (2005): 692.
[4] Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War* (London: Abacus, 1992), 246.

hesitant to commit troops to another British war abroad without careful consideration, particularly after the Sudan expedition had been the source of such derision during the intervening years. Yet, reports of the Black Week defeats inspired unprecedented enthusiasm to enlist throughout the Australian colonies where many sensed the empire was facing a serious threat.[5]

Black Week marked a turning point in Britain's approach to the South African War. The losses stunned both the British public and politicians, who were quick to criticise the entire management of the war to this point.[6] Queen Victoria herself reaffirmed her desire for Field Marshal Lord Roberts and Lord Kitchener to assume command in South Africa, a solution acted upon by a British government eager to replace General Buller.[7] The first waves of Australian soldiers arriving in South Africa were mostly fortunate enough to miss these successive defeats. Instead, they were quickly incorporated into the changing war strategy under Roberts and Kitchener.[8] The first troops to arrive in South Africa were the New South Wales Lancers on 2 November, previously stationed in England for training, though only twenty-nine of them were involved in Lord Methuen's disastrous advance ending at Magersfontein.[9] Over the next few years, all the Australian colonies sent military units to participate, and unlike Sudan, they would be significantly involved.

This chapter argues that the Australian contingents serving under Roberts and Kitchener in the first half of 1900 represented the ideal, articulated by Chamberlain and others, whereby the Australian colonies would actively defend the British Empire by contributing colonial contingents. These contingents were perceived to possess unique characteristics that distinguished them from their British counterparts, and therefore, were part of an Australian contribution to the empire's defence that went beyond the symbolic gesture of unity. Instead, the colonial troops' involvement in these early stages of the South African War represented a practical reality where they could physically bolster Britain's military strength. Both in Britain and Australia, the successes of Australian soldiers during this phase of the war went beyond the rhetoric of demonstrating unity that defined the Sudan campaign, shifting further

[5] Jeffrey Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, 3rd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 55–6.
[6] Denis Judd and Keith Surridge, *The Boer War: A History* (London: I. B. Tauris & Company, 2013), 126.
[7] Judd and Surridge, *The Boer War*, 128–9.
[8] L. M. Field, *The Forgotten War: Australian Involvement in the South African Conflict of 1899–1902* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1979), 82.
[9] Field, *The Forgotten War*, 83–4.

towards the tangible advantages they provided to defending Britain's increasingly challenged imperial system. Underpinning this analysis are three key themes. First, Black Week had an emotional impact on the Australian colonies, and it further entrenched their commitment to the South African War. Second, the vague nature of colonial responsibility to the war influenced debates around sending further contingents. Finally, the successes of the Australian contingents in the South African War helped construct the idea of Australian units uniquely suited to supplement Britain's forces. By drawing together these themes of this chapter, this period best demonstrates the closest Australians came to this idea of supplementing British forces on an ongoing basis.

Black Week and the Blow to British Prestige

The British Army's three successive defeats during December, dubbed Black Week, changed the atmosphere surrounding the South African War. Following Gatacre's disaster at Stormberg on 10 December, Lord Methuen walked his forces into an ambush at Magersfontein the following day, resulting in 210 soldiers killed and 738 wounded.[10] As Methuen's forces made their retreat, General Buller failed effectively to co-ordinate an attack against General Louis Botha at Colenso. Buller's unsuccessful rescue attempt also cost the lives of many, including Frederick Roberts, son of the man soon to assume command at Buller's expense.[11] Australian readers consumed accounts of these disasters in the newspapers, although press reports, while painting a bleak picture, never strayed from believing the war's advantage still lay with Britain.[12]

Chamberlain's instructions regarding the organisation of colonial units left little ambiguity as to what the Colonial Office expected from the colonies, and by mid-November, these requirements had been mostly met. But of course, the situation now looked rather different. When Chamberlain had first contacted the colonies, it was widely expected that the British Army would emerge victorious with little challenge. The Black Week losses changed this perception. The conflict in South Africa was no longer a small war, but one quickly becoming an immense drain on British resources. The British government had sent one of its largest overseas expeditions to subdue one of the world's smallest nations, only to have

[10] Judd and Surridge, *The Boer War*, 124.
[11] Judd and Surridge, *The Boer War*, 124–6
[12] Field, *The Forgotten War*, 57.

several hundred soldiers killed or wounded within a single week.[13] Even worse was the surrender of British troops to Boer forces, an action even more unthinkable and damaging to British pride.[14] The Governor of Cape Colony, Alfred Milner, wrote to member of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly, Bernhard Wise, describing 'Gatacre's stupid fiasco' as 'clouding our whole horizon'.[15] He was relieved to inform Wise that the colonial contingents had not been involved in this affair.

In Australia, the biggest blow came to the notion of British prestige. The colonies relied upon the empire's perceived supremacy for their own protection, while any prolonged war was seen as a threat to colonial trading routes.[16] The *Times* of London, following the Magersfontein defeat, called for another 30,000 men to follow the recently departed British Fifth division and the soon to leave Sixth division. The newspaper specifically looked to the colonies 'whose forces are especially well suited to the exigencies of the present struggle' and who the *Times* believed 'would doubtless be proud to prove their devotion in this way to the Empire if they were invited to do so, and they should be invited now'.[17] The article made an immediate impact in the colonies. The *Sydney Morning Herald* editors directly referenced these words the following day, believing: 'There need be no doubt that such an appeal would be enthusiastically responded to in this colony'.[18] The Governor of New South Wales, the Earl of Beauchamp, also referenced the *Times* article when asking 'does British Government desire Colonies send more troops [to] South Africa?' on 14 December.[19] Despite being slow to contribute initially, the New South Wales government was on the front foot in assuring Britain of its support in the immediate aftermath of these defeats.

Perhaps the most significant outcome of Black Week for colonial leaders was that it assured them that this war would not be a repeat of the Sudan Expedition in 1885. The language surrounding the first wave of contributions echoed the idea of the symbolic gesture that the Sudan expedition represented, particularly from the smaller colonies which had fewer military resources to contribute. While decisive victory appeared more likely this time

[13] Pakenham, *The Boer War*, 247–8.
[14] Pakenham, *The Boer War*, 247–8.
[15] Alfred Milner to Bernhard Wise, telegram, 11 December 1899, 515–7. Located in MSS 1327-2.
[16] Barbara Penny, 'Australia's Reactions to the Boer War: A Study in Colonial Imperialism', *The Journal of British Studies* 7, no. 1 (1967): 107.
[17] *Times*, 14 December 1899, 9.
[18] *Sydney Morning Herald*. 15 December 1889, 6.
[19] The Earl of Beauchamp to Mr. Chamberlain, 14 December 1899, Series CO 201. New South Wales Correspondence, 1782–1900 AJCP.

around, it was assumed it would be swift and potentially without much direct involvement from colonial troops. In the immediate aftermath of Black Week, opposing the conflict became more difficult.[20] *The Bulletin* had been as vocal in its denouncement of the South African War as it had with Sudan, declaring in December 1899: 'To needlessly waste men and money in a foreign war, and in about the worst possible cause, is nothing less than a national crime'.[21] Reflecting on the mood in the colonies two months later, the paper identified the changing atmosphere: 'The Empire, Right or Wrong. It has obviously come to that now'.[22] In Victoria's Legislative Assembly, the member for Warrenheip, Edward Murphy, had criticised the initial decision to send troops since he believed the colony would be 'charged with forcing its soldiers on the mother country'. Now, Murphy believed that the events that passed meant 'every member of this Chamber and every person in Victoria would concur in the present proposal'.[23]

Perhaps the best indication of the changing atmosphere in Australia came from the return of the New South Wales Lancers. This first Australian contingent arrived in South Africa on 2 November 1899, just prior to Black Week, consisting of the Lancers who had been training in Aldershot throughout the year. Only seventy-two out of the 101 men, however, disembarked at the Cape, with the rest electing to return to Australia.[24] Under normal circumstances, they might have found sympathy for the legitimate medical reasons many cited requiring their return. They did not receive a kind reception. At Sydney, someone in the crowd allegedly called for three cheers for the returned Lancers, only to be met by groans from a small crowd.[25] The twenty-nine Lancers from Charles Cox's unit might have been welcomed back with more understanding had the Black Week events not occurred.[26] Instead, they were denounced as cowards and reviled in both the streets and in parliament.[27] The contingent faced a regimental inquiry on 11 December 1899, just as the events of Black Week were unfolding, with each of the soldiers called upon to answer why they declined

[20] For further discussion on attitudes towards the South African War following the capture of Pretoria, see Chapter Seven.
[21] 'The Disgraceful Transvaal War'. *The Bulletin*. 23 December 1899, 8.
[22] 'The Empire, Right or Wrong'. *The Bulletin*. 10 February 1900, 8.
[23] Victoria*, Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 9 January 1900, 2866 (Edward Murphy).
[24] Field, *The Forgotten War*, 54.
[25] 'The Returned Lancers. Landed Early Yesterday Morning', *The Daily Telegraph*. 11 December 1899, 5.
[26] Field, *The Forgotten War*, 54.
[27] Craig Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War: The War in South Africa, 1899–1902* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2002), 108.

active service.[28] The inquiry found that seven returned due to private reasons, and all of them were 'guilty of no military offence, and were well within their rights in deciding not to land at Capetown [*sic*]'.[29]

Meanwhile, the twenty-nine New South Wales Lancers who were attached to Lord Metheun's force fought at the Battle of Magersfontein. Since they constituted a relatively insignificant part of this force, the Australian troops emerged mostly unscathed by the reputational damage of the week's defeats. However, their participation in the battle, as well as their withstanding of fire from Boer troops, marked a new level of Australian involvement in a serious battle for the British Empire, eclipsing that of Tamai in Sudan.[30] It was perhaps fortunate most Australians troops missed the Black Week defeats. One can only imagine the outrage should Australian forces have been among those immediately captured, forced to retreat, or even let down by British command during their first serious confrontation. Instead, colonial leaders could now begin to praise the efforts of Australian Lancers under adversity. 'There is one thing that I am sure we will all feel proud of', spoke William Lyne to the New South Wales Legislative Assembly on 19 December 1899, 'and that is that when our men have been, now on three occasions, launched against an almost impregnable barrier, they have not shirked their duty, but have stood up to their guns, and faced the fire from the mouth of the cannon and from the mouth of the rifle'.[31] During the Sudan campaign of 1885, there was scant opportunity for achieving such distinction. By the time the rest of the Australian contingents arrived in South Africa, it looked like there would be a use for them after all.

Colonial Responsibility Met?: Discussing Further Contingents

Lyne had reason to give the early contingents such high praise — he had already begun planning to send more. In fact, he had the idea in mind even prior to the first contingents leaving, raising much scepticism among other colonial leaders. Despite their initial hesitations, the New South Wales government was now seemingly committed to a lengthy war effort. In early November, Lyne proposed forming an 'Australasian Contingent' with the premiers of the other Australian colonies, consisting of an equal number of men as the

[28] 'The Returning Lancers. Released From Quarantine. Regimental Inquiry To-day', *Sydney Morning Herald*. 11 December 1889, 7.
[29] 'The Returning Lancers', *Sydney Morning Herald*. 13 December 1889, 9.
[30] Field, *The Forgotten War*, 84.
[31] New South Wales, *Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 19 December 1889, 3503 (William Lyne).

first. The response was mixed; the Victorian government agreed to contribute their share of 250 men while Queensland's Premier, James Dickson, believed the first contribution had already proved the northern colony's loyalty. This reversal in attitudes was not lost upon *The Age.* 'In view of the fact that New South Wales ignored the proposal made by Victoria', the newspaper stated, 'that the first contingent should be sent away as a combined Australian force, Mr. Lyne's desire that the troops to be despatched to South Africa on his initiative should be known as the "Australasian Contingent" is thought, in political circles, to be singular, to say the least of it'.[32]

Based on the initial contributions, it is difficult to foresee how a combined Australian force could have worked. Each colony held vastly disparate military resources, were undertaking different approaches towards the war in South Africa, and faced difficulties organising their own forces. Combining the colonies' forces together only added further complications. The smaller colonies had already faced difficulties raising the first contingents; Tasmania had sent less than 100 men. Leaders in Queensland and South Australia were also hesitant to contribute more soldiers, both believing they had done enough to show requisite solidarity with the empire.[33] This issue was raised in the Victorian Legislative Assembly when discussing the Military Contingent Bill, with the question summarised by the member for Warrnambool and frequent critic of these military excursions, John Murray. 'Was it because the services of the second contingent were required in South Africa', Murray asked the Assembly, 'or was it proposed to send a second contingent merely as another expression of the loyalty of the colony to the mother country?'[34] The member for Kyneton, Hugh Rawson, answered that he viewed the first contingent as 'an expression of loyalty', but circumstances had changed in South Africa and it was 'now a bigger thing than any one [*sic*] could have anticipated'.[35] There appeared little uniformity of opinion between the Australian colonies on whether there was even a need for more contingents.

Once again, the imperial authorities made the decision for the colonies. The final blow for a combined Australasian force came when the Colonial Office requested additional units of

[32] 'The Australasian Contingent. Mr. Lyne's Proposal. Victoria Ready to Send 250 More Men. *The Age*. 6 November 1899, 5.
[33] Field, *The Forgotten War*, 58.
[34] Victoria*, Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 9 January 1900, 2865 (John Murray).
[35] Victoria*, Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 9 January 1900, 2865–6 (Hugh Rawson).

125 men, in a despatch received on 27 December 1899.[36] This despatch also took away some of the ambiguity about further Australian service. These specificities made it easier to assimilate separate colonial units into the British brigades. Lyne was concerned about how the British Army was using New South Wales units. He wished to be informed where they were being landed and how they were utilised, and was worried they were being subordinated by Victorian commanders.[37] Bernhard Wise confidentially wrote directly to Milner on the matter, calling senior Victorian figures 'incompetent', and requesting that the New South Wales contingent be attached to either a British regiment, or be put under a respected figure such as Hutton.[38] A strong push for a federal force by New South Wales would have given the colonies' military leaders a greater degree of control, but the resolution that the 125-man units would be attached to British forces eased these concerns. With any united force subject to colonial politics, any co-operation would have required a federal political body to determine how these contingents would be formed.

The most significant early contribution by the Australian colonies came on 1 January 1900 at Belmont, which also resulted in the first Australian deaths in battle. The force, led by Colonel T. D. Pilcher, consisted of 200 men of the Queensland Mounted Infantry. Five of the Queenslanders were on scout duty when Boer forces fired on them.[39] Two members of the Queensland force were killed, and subsequently, the *Telegraph* dubbed them 'Queensland Heroes'. The paper printed a cablegram from Alfred Milner stating: 'While regretting the casualties I congratulate you on the brilliant success obtained by the Australian troops in their first engagement', before the paper provided a short obituary for each man.[40] Significantly, they represented the first colonial troops to fall during the South African War, but also the first Australian troops to be killed in an imperial war as the result of direct combat. The flags at both the Victoria Barracks and the *Telegraph* chambers in Brisbane were hoisted at half-mast out of respect to the fallen soldiers.[41] Coming just a few weeks

[36] 'Australian Contingent. "Great Moral and Material Value." Opinion of the Imperial Authorities. On the Assistance From Australia. Transport Arrangements', *The Daily Telegraph*. 28 December 1899, 6.
[37] 'Australian Contingent. "Great Moral and Material Value." Opinion of the Imperial Authorities. On the Assistance From Australia. Transport Arrangements', *The Daily Telegraph*. 28 December 1899, 6; Field, *The Forgotten War*, 62.
[38] Bernhard Wise to Alfred Milner, confidential letter, 17 February 1900, 523–5. Located in MSS 1327-2.
[39] Field, *The Forgotten War*, 84–6.
[40] 'Queensland Heroes. Three Killed. Official Message', *The Telegraph*. 4 January 1900, 2. The article lists Private Rose as having been killed in combat, however, this was corrected the following day where he was listed as only wounded, see 'News of Queenslanders: Private Rose Alive', *The Telegraph*. 5 January 1900, 2.
[41] 'Flags Half-mast, *The Telegraph*. 4 January 1900, 2.

after the events of Black Week, the deaths brought into sharper relief the threat Australian soldiers faced in this imperial war.

'Rush Slap Bang into Them': Roberts, Bushmen, and the Push to Pretoria

The Australian contribution in South Africa began in earnest following Black Week. For some, it was still a chaotic start. Captain Chauvel arrived at Cape Town where an embarkation officer greeted Queensland's first contingent. Upon informing the officer that they were, indeed, the Queensland Mounted Infantry, the officer responded: 'Oh! I thought you were Australians', before proceeding to write down Queensland as two words.[42] The entire British approach to the war was under review. The most significant leadership change following Black Week was the replacement of Redvers Buller, mocked by the nickname 'reverse Buller', following dissatisfaction with his command in England (though he was given charge of the effort in Natal).[43] The new command led by Roberts was supported with significantly more resources, as the British leadership sought to turn the momentum of the conflict, recover from their early losses, and start making inroads into Boer territory.

Kitchener and Roberts incorporated the Australian units into this new approach. At Prime Minister Salisbury's insistence, Lord Kitchener was to join Roberts as Chief of Staff. Kitchener's popularity, Lord Salisbury reasoned, might smooth over some of the public concern over the way the South African War was being handled.[44] Roberts brought with him forty-one years of experience serving in the British Army across many parts of the world. Back in Sydney, Lyne put aside these announcements, declaring: 'I am not going to canvas these appointments'; however, they caused a great deal of excitement in the New South Wales Legislative Assembly, particularly from the member for Northumberland, John Norton, who believed: 'to have Roberts and Kitchener in charge will have the effect of saving thousands of lives'.[45] Many of the colonial forces would have also recognised Roberts from the Jubilee Celebrations held in London during 1897, where they had been placed under his command during the medal ceremony.[46]

---

[42] Henry Chauvel, Annotated Typescript Biography, AWM: MSS1406, 10–1.
[43] Pakenham, *The Boer War*, 244.
[44] Pakenham, *The Boer War*, 244.
[45] New South Wales, *Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 19 December 1889, 3503, 3506 (William Lyne) (John Norton).
[46] 'Australian Troops in England', *The Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser*. 10 July 1897, 67.

Roberts' first course of action was the relief of Kimberley and the advance towards Bloemfontein which commenced during mid-February.[47] It was during this month that many Australian soldiers faced their first serious conflict. Nineteen-year-old Private James E. Lawn, as part of the First Victorian Contingent, witnessed his first skirmish on 12 February at Pink Hill. It did not go to plan. The British were forced to retire, with many of the higher-ranking members of their unit killed and others taken prisoner by the Boers.[48] As a result of the skirmish, six Australian soldiers died, while twenty-three were wounded and twelve captured.[49] Two companies of the Wiltshire Regiment had been left behind at Rensburg, but the Boer presence around the Victorian camp had become so strong that they could not get anywhere near close enough to rescue them.[50] Private Harold Perry-Keene's records detail his own moment of the war becoming a reality at Abrahams Kraal. He recalls how he 'rode up on to the ridge to see how things were going, just in time to see an infantry man hit and blown to pieces by a shell'.[51] Throughout the early stages of 1900, the Australian troops faced constant shelling from the Boers, even while stationed at their camps.[52]

The Australian reinforcements continued to arrive during this period, beginning with the second wave of units in the early months of 1900. Lyne remained at the forefront of the Australian colonial leaders in his enthusiasm for further contributions and, once again, New South Wales filled its contingents without a great deal of difficulty, raising the largest number of men.[53] But even with the events of Black Week and an increased call for volunteers, there were challenges with meeting recruitment goals for mounted troops in the other colonies. Enthusiasm had not solved the issue of professionalism. Malcolm McKenzie, the member for Anglesea, lamented in the Victorian Legislative Assembly: 'I regret that circumstances have shown that we have not a very large number of trained men to call upon on such an occasion'.[54] The colony turned to the Victorian Mounted Rifles to volunteer, but their turnout for the first contingent had not been particularly strong and after two weeks, only 119 candidates had come forward out of a force of over 600.[55] Other colonies continued

[47] Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War*, 36.
[48] Private James Lawn, First Victorian Contingent – South Africa, Papers, AWM, PR88/127.
[49] Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War*, 68.
[50] Private James Lawn, First Victorian Contingent – South Africa, Papers, AWM, PR88/127.
[51] Private Harold Perry-Keene, First and Second Queensland Mounted Infantry – South Africa, Papers, AWM, PR02069, 1.
[52] Detailed throughout Private James Lawn, First Victorian Contingent – South Africa, Papers, AWM, PR88/127.
[53] Field, *The Forgotten War*, 64–5.
[54] Victoria*, Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 9 January 1900, 2875 (Malcolm Mckenzie).
[55] Field, *The Forgotten War*, 63.

to face similar problems. South Australia again found their soldiers struggled to pass riding and shooting tests.[56] Enlistment was not an issue, but the specialisation required to put together a mounted infantry force proved a headache. All the colonies sent their second contingents during mid-January 1900, with Western Australia and Tasmania both delayed until February and March respectively.[57]

Figure 7: *Wounded Soldiers in the Boer War. The figure sitting on the right is Private William Gamble, First Victorian Mounted Rifles, who was injured at Pink Hill.*
Source: 'South Africa, 1900. A Group of Soldiers Wounded in the Boer War', photograph, AWM: P01177.001.

[56] Field, *The Forgotten War*, 66.
[57] Numbers sourced from Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War*, 389–407.

Many of the first contingents served under Roberts as he advanced into the Kimberley region. His force included 180 members of the New South Wales Lancers and Australian Horse, 262 members of the First Queensland Mounted Infantry, 104 members of the New South Wales Mounted Rifles squadron as well as the New South Wales medical team.[58] Their operation began in earnest on 12 February where, under the command of Field Marshal John French, Australian troops rode around the Boer positions and caused them to flee.[59] Three days later, French's force charged into converging Boer fire at Klip Drift, which again, prompted a Boer retreat.[60] Following these successes, Roberts was able to march into Kimberley on 15 February and effectively end what had been a four-month siege.[61] The Boers appeared to be on the retreat by the end of February. Private Lawn wrote in his diary on 28 February: 'Our men chasing the Boers for miles, the Boers leaving everything behind, even their dinners on the fires'.[62] These victories not only marked a turn of British fortunes in South Africa but also encapsulated much of this phase of the war. The British command, now with greater resources deployed and more astute leadership, could push the Boers into retreating as they slowly progressed through these besieged territories.

The Australian troops were praised in Australia for their gallantry, while their losses were widely mourned. Banjo Paterson worked for the *Sydney Morning Herald* in South Africa as a war correspondent attached to the New South Wales Lancers. In one letter back to the paper, Paterson told of an officer of the Royal Engineers who praised the colonial troops for their scouting work. 'He would sooner have colonial troops for such a business', the officer was alleged to have said, more 'than any English troops, as the former were more used to the scouting work, and would not lose their heads'.[63] This praise, Paterson wrote, 'was a distinct compliment to our Lancers, and was much appreciated'.[64] He also assured the New South Wales public that the Lancers had faced 'the most severe fire', but 'Our men are now quite steady under fire, and if well led will give a good account of themselves'.[65] Australian press accounts during this stage of the conflict often emphasised their horse riding and

[58] Numbers sourced from Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War*, 69.
[59] Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War*, 68.
[60] Wallace, *The Australians at the Boer War*, 121.
[61] Wallace, *The Australians at the Boer War*, 121.
[62] Private James Lawn, First Victorian Contingent – South Africa, Papers, AWM, PR88/127.
[63] A. B. Paterson 'From the Seat of War' *Sydney Morning Herald*. 6 February 1900, 5.
[64] A. B. Paterson 'From the Seat of War' *Sydney Morning Herald*. 6 February 1900, 5.
[65] A. B. Paterson 'From the Seat of War' *Sydney Morning Herald*. 6 February 1900, 6.

bayonet skills, as well their ability to adapt to the environment.[66] Such correspondence could at least help solidify the narrative that Australian soldiers were uniquely suited for this conflict.

Disease was, once again, a formidable foe for the Australian contingents during their service in South Africa. Dysentery and typhoid fever ran rampant throughout the military ranks, particularly in Ladysmith where more than 3,000 men were sick when the relief force arrived.[67] Of the soldiers who were admitted to hospitals during the South African War, only 5% were due to wounds suffered.[68] Although disease was the most serious threat to Australian troops, they had to endure their own sets of discomforts and inconveniences under Roberts, a man who was building a reputation for administrative neglect in his wartime strategy.[69] According to Paterson, the men at the front rarely got full rations.[70] Other challenges involved being charged for replacing damaged uniforms, including helmets; one Queenslander questioned: 'The Lord knows how much they will charge for them'.[71] Paterson complained about the troops having little knowledge of news of other contingents or even the world at large, declaring: 'Honestly speaking, the people in Australia know more about the war from day to day than we do'.[72] According to one soldier in Natal, Buller had 'forbidden the correspondents to send any account of what is going on'.[73]

The Australian contingents were granted the experience of working alongside an array of soldiers from different parts of the empire. Lawn wrote of being part of a column including South Australians, Cornwalls, Canadians and Yorkshires.[74] Abbott noted in his account of the war that many Australian soldiers had read their Kipling (specifically *Soldiers Three*) which impacted their perception of the British 'Tommy', though he also added that: 'It is not his fault that he has no individuality', blaming instead their education.[75] While being under the celebrated figures of Roberts and Kitchener would have no doubt been a great

[66] Fay Anderson and Richard Trembath, *Witnesses to War: The History of Australian Conflict Reporting* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2011), 34.
[67] Wallace, *The Australians at the Boer War*, 52.
[68] Wallace, *The Australians at the Boer War*, 5.
[69] Pakenham, *The Boer War*, 380.
[70] A. B. Paterson 'At the Front' *Sydney Morning Herald*. 19 February 1900, 8.
[71] 'Inspecting Queenslander. Ragged Appearance', *The Telegraph*. 23 May 1900, 5.
[72] A. B. Paterson 'At the Front' *Sydney Morning Herald*. 19 February 1900, 8.
[73] 'Our Men at the Front', *Sydney Morning Herald*. 20 February 1900, 8.
[74] Private James Lawn, First Victorian Contingent – South Africa, Papers, AWM, PR88/127.
[75] J. H. M. Abbott, *Tommy Cornstalk: Being Some Account of the Less Notable Features of the South African War from the Point of View of the Australian Ranks* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1902), 216–7.

honour for the Australian contingents, many of the Australian troops were also commanded by a familiar face from the colonies, Edward Hutton. Having since departed New South Wales and accepted a position in Canada as a General Officer, Hutton pushed for a mounted infantry approach to the South African War, eventually getting his wish to be included in Roberts' campaign.[76] Writing home to his wife on 2 April 1900, Hutton said of the Australian troops: 'you may imagine how glad they were to see me'.[77] A few days later he reiterated: 'You have no idea how warmly the Australians have welcomed me. I am certainly the most fortunate man in the world to have under his command such splendid troops'.[78] The feeling was not completely mutual. One Queenslander in a letter home called Hutton a 'kid-gloved toff'.[79] Hutton continued to be a divisive figure throughout his time in South Africa, though the war gave him the opportunity to prove his theory of the potential of colonial troops in supporting the British Empire.[80]

Australians, too, had reason for optimism as their 1,500 strong second contingent, sourced from across the Australian colonies, arrived in South Africa to a more favourable military situation than the first colonial contingents had.[81] British fortunes were beginning to change quite rapidly. Buller, who had suffered further defeats in January, managed to relieve Kimberley on 28 February.[82] On 13 March, Roberts' column entered Bloemfontein relatively unopposed after a few days of skirmishes outside the city with the retreating Boers.[83] Perry-Keene wrote: 'I expected great things from pretty "Miss Bloemfontein" but was dead off her from the moment I sighted her, nor did she improve with time'.[84] It appeared the war was taking on the course that many had predicted at the beginning, with the British forces quickly overwhelming the Boers.

[76] Stockings, *Letters from the Veldt: The Imperial Advance to Pretoria Through the Eyes of Edward Hutton and His Brigade of Colonials*, 78–9.
[77] Stockings, *Letters from the Veldt*, 100.
[78] Stockings, *Letters from the Veldt*, 102.
[79] 'The Other Side of the Story', *The Telegraph*. 23 May 1900, 5.
[80] Craig Stockings and Tom Richardson, 'The First Commander: Lieutenant-General Sir Edward "Curley" Hutton', in *The Shadow Men: The Leaders Who Shaped the Australian Army from the Veldt to Vietnam*, ed. Craig Stockings and John Connor (Sydney: NewSouth, 2017), 14.
[81] Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War*, 71.
[82] Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War*, 70.
[83] Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War*, 72.
[84] Private Harold Perry-Keene, First and Second Queensland Mounted Infantry – South Africa, Papers, AWM, PR02069, 2.

Having successfully captured Bloemfontein, the campaign turned to Rhodesia, where the War Office planned to utilise the incoming Colonial Bushmen units. Sponsored by wealthy Australians and various social fundraising efforts, the Bushmen units were primarily composed of Australian labourers, farmers, and miners, but some middle-class and wealthier Britons made it through.[85] The Governor of New South Wales, the Earl of Beauchamp, cabled Chamberlain on 17 January 1900 asking whether the imperial government would accept a Bushmen contingent, arguing they would 'probably be of much service if properly officered'.[86] Less than an hour later, Beauchamp followed this up with some further specifics beginning with 'Ministers desire me to inform you that Colonists here have subscribed large sums of money to send contingents composed of good bush riders and good shots to South Africa', while also reassuring Chamberlain that 'Great enthusiasm prevailed throughout the colony'.[87] At first, colonial governments expressed concerns about the already stretched resources required to outfit bushmen appropriately. However, there was a rush to enlist throughout the colonies and great enthusiasm in raising the funds necessary to keep them in South Africa.[88] Within eleven weeks, 1,400 men had signed up and forces of different sizes were assembled in each of the colonies, ranging from half a squadron in Tasmania, to four squadrons in New South Wales.[89] The Bushmen regiments, which made up a significant part of the third contingents from the colonies, left Australian shores in late February and early March 1900 to begin their service in South Africa from April.

There were some concerns about the Bushmen contingents. The 'Imperial Bushmen's Contingent' commanded by Colonel James Mackay came with a list of orders from the Chief Staff Officer warning of 'evil-disposed persons' that may be among the crew and that with so many 'raw and half-trained troops' aboard, it was vital to carry out as many drills and exercises as possible on the voyage over.[90] The Bushmen units were widely celebrated throughout the war, embodying perceived characteristics of rural masculinity that offset the

[85] Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War*, 31–32.
[86] The Earl of Beauchamp to Mr. Chamberlain, 17 January 1900, Series CO 201. New South Wales Correspondence, 1782–1900, AJCP.
[87] The Earl of Beauchamp to Mr. Chamberlain, 17 January 1900, Series CO 201. New South Wales Correspondence, 1782–1900, AJCP.
[88] Wilcox, *Australia's Boer* War, 33.
[89] Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War*, 32.
[90] Major General J A Kenneth Mackay, New South Wales Imperial Bushmen's Contingent – South Africa, Papers, AWM, PR 87/207, Box 3.

limitations of a largely urban British force.[91] The idealised view of unique Australian characteristics suited for such a conflict appeared to be best represented by these forces.

The men marched for weeks into the interior of Rhodesia where they eventually met with the D Squadron of Queensland's Citizen Bushmen. The Queenslanders were inexperienced and given a supporting role in claiming Mafeking on 16 May, relegated to protecting the wagons at the rear.[92] In the skirmish that took place, however, the Queenslanders rushed to the front of the column once near its destination, coming under fire for the first time.[93] Newspapers anxiously followed the relief of Mafeking, Brisbane's *Telegraph* reporting 'the excitement in every town in the kingdom is intense'.[94] The Minister for Education in Queensland announced that once Mafeking was relieved, all schools could close for the remainder of the day.[95] Despite having Queensland contingents in the relief of Mafeking, newspapers such as *The Telegraph* appeared to have little knowledge of their involvement in these campaigns and any news of the specifics of their duty only emerged in short snippets.

As attention turned to Pretoria, many of the Australian contingents were placed under the command of Hutton or Field Marshal John French, and prepared for the extended advance that would last from May to June 1900. The strategy was for the mounted brigades to trap the Boer forces, who were expected to be positioned on the river lines, pinning them down ahead of Roberts' advancing infantry column.[96] The Boers planned some counterattacks, including surrounding 300 cavalry along the Zand River on 10 May, but were perpetually being forced to retreat north while their main commanders frequently evaded capture.[97] 'Why we were not allowed to rush slap bang into them [the retreating Boers] and collar everything they had', Petty-Keene wrote, 'goodness knows — for they were in a mess'.[98] It was not so easy for Captain Hilliard of the New South Wales mounted rifles at Zand River,

[91] Effie Karageorgos, 'The Bushmen at War: Gendered Medical Responses to Combat Breakdown in South Africa, 1899–1902', *Journal of Australian Studies* 44, no. 1 (2020): 22.
[92] Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War*, 106.
[93] Wallace, *The Australians at the Boer War*, 245.
[94] 'Mafeking. Still Surrounded. How Boers Repulsed. Kitchener's Whereabouts. Tidings Anxiously Awaited', *The Telegraph*. 19 May 1900, 6.
[95] 'When Mafeking is Relieved', *The Telegraph*. 17 May 1900, 4.
[96] Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War: The War in South Africa, 1899–1902*, 80.
[97] Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War: The War in South Africa, 1899–1902*, 80–1.
[98] Private Harold Perry-Keene, First and Second Queensland Mounted Infantry – South Africa, Papers, AWM, PR02069, 11.

where a Boer ambush of members of Hutton's brigade produced 'one of the most painful sights I ever hope to see'.[99] By mid-May, the force had made it half-way to Pretoria, reaching Kroonstad, and were buoyed by news of Mafeking's relief. On 5 June, Roberts' column advanced into Pretoria.[100] The momentous occasion was not lost on Perry-Keene, who wrote that his squadron 'had the luck to be the only ones of the Company to witness the hoisting of the British Flag — a sight one lives a lifetime to see — and sees but once'.[101]

Figure 8: *A parade celebrating the British Army's capture of Pretoria (A possible British flag raised in the background). The city's capture marked a significant moment in the South African War, but also heralded a new phase in its conduct.*
Source: 'Pretoria, South Africa C. 1900. British, South African and Colonial Troops Parade in the Municipal Square', photograph, AWM: A05480.

[99] Captain M A Hilliard to a Colonel of the New South Wales Military Forces, letter, 11 July 1900, 5–6. Located in AWM 1 4/22.
[100] Wallace, *The Australians at the Boer War*, 205.
[101] Private Harold Perry-Keene, First and Second Queensland Mounted Infantry – South Africa, Papers, AWM, PR02069, 12.

The taking of Pretoria marked a significant moment in the South African War but did not signal the end of Boer resistance in the region. Even in the immediate days after Pretoria had been taken, some Australian units were already being moved beyond the city's boundaries (much to the disappointment of Hillard and the New South Wales mounted rifles).[102] However, the moment proved an opportunity for both the British and the Boers to reassess their attitudes towards the conflict. Most British generals, including Roberts, believed that the capture of Pretoria effectively meant the end of the war, which brought currency reserves, ammunition stores, as well as surplus food into British possession.[103] Some Boer leaders, such as Ben Viljoen and Louis Botha, proposed that the war be brought to an end with the capture of Pretoria. They believed there was little to be gained in prolonging it any further.[104] Meanwhile, Boer General, Koos de la Rey, was proposing taking his troops west of the surrendered Transvaal and resuming hostilities there.[105] The Boer War Council debated whether to continue resisting the British advance, eventually settling upon digging in on the ranges near Pretoria.[106] In late October, the major Boer generals formally agreed to undertake a guerrilla campaign back into British territory, beginning with the disruption of second-line British garrisons.[107] The British leaders meanwhile were feeling the toll of an extensive march to Pretoria and Generals such as Hutton had little desire to prolong their time in South Africa more than necessary.[108] The war did not end with the taking of Pretoria, but was transforming into a different conflict.

'A New Era': Australian Reactions to The South African War

On 12 June 1900, a despatch from Chamberlain was read out to the New South Wales Legislative Council at the request of Beauchamp. It reiterated the thanks of Her Majesty's Government 'for the generous assistance and support afforded by New South Wales in connection with the war … New South Wales and the other colonies have reason to be proud of the part taken by their troops in the success already achieved'.[109] People of all classes and

[102] Captain M A Hilliard to a Colonel of the New South Wales Military Forces, letter, 11 July 1900, 10. Located in AWM 1 4/22.
[103] Bill Nasson, *The South African War: 1899–1902* (London: Hodder Headline Group, 1999), 180–1.
[104] Nasson, *The South African War*, 181.
[105] Nasson, *The South African War*, 181.
[106] Stockings, *Letters from the Veldt*, 214.
[107] Nasson, *The South African War*, 194.
[108] Stockings, *Letters from the Veldt*, 215.
[109] New South Wales, *Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Council, 12 June 1900, 4.

across different facets of society celebrated Australia's part in the relief of the British Empire.[110] With Chamberlain's despatch, there was now an opportunity for the Australian colonies to assess their own contributions to a successful British war effort.

The celebration of Australian troops took on a different dynamic than it had for Sudan. The second phase of the South African War would have best met the Australian imagination of how their troops would participate in a British war. When the New South Wales parliament reconvened in June 1900, it opened with a speech by Beauchamp. 'It is profoundly gratifying to observe that the Australian soldiers have won distinction in the field', stated Beauchamp, 'and shown a courage and devotion to duty which has earned the especial praise of Field-Marshal Lord Roberts and other commanding officers'.[111] The Victorian parliament reconvened on 27 June 1900 with Lieutenant-Governor John Madden, summarising the situation in which the colonies found themselves. 'The war in South Africa has not yet been brought to a conclusion', warned Madden, 'but the brilliant successes already achieved inspire confidence that, at no distant date, complete victory will crown our arms'.[112]

The fears of colonial troops' inexperience compared to seasoned British soldiers persisted into the South African War. However, the physique of Australian troops was drawing a great deal of admiration. This was not an entirely new phenomenon. As early as 1892, Henry Parkes had been adamant that: 'As to the physical character and style of the Australian Volunteer, few persons will rate him below the average of other countries', though there had been little chance to test this theory until South Africa.[113] There was great praise for the Australian soldiers and idealised characteristics began to be applied to these troops. Hutton's first impression seeing the Australians in South Africa was marked in a letter home: 'such fine looking workmanlike men!'[114] There is evidence that these platitudes from South Africa and Britain eased a lot of the concerns of the Australian leaders. Member of the Protectionist Party, Francis Clarke, spoke in the New South Wales' Legislative Assembly and expressed the belief that the decision to send troops was widely supported. 'The only thing which I regret about the matter', Clarke told the Legislative Assembly, 'is that the Imperial

[110] Craig Wilcox, 'Australians in the Wars in Sudan and South Africa', in *Before the Anzac Dawn: A Military History of Australia before 1915*, ed. Craig Stockings and John Connor (Sydney: NewSouth, 2013), 287.
[111] New South Wales*, Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Council, 12 June 1900, 2 (Earl of Beauchamp).
[112] Victoria*, Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Council, 27 June 1900, 2 (John Madden).
[113] Henry Parkes, *Fifty Years in the Making of Australian History* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1892), 527.
[114] Stockings, *Letters from the Veldt*, 100.

authorities did not seem to appreciate in the first instance, the offers of assistance made by the colonies as they ought to have been appreciated. They seemed to think they were paying us a compliment by accepting our proffered help'. The British view had changed as the war unfolded, Clarke conceded; 'That mistake has now been rectified, and we are now quite satisfied and much gratified to think that the valour of our troops has been recognised by the commanding officer in South Africa, and also by the British Government'.[115]

A more complex picture of the Boer cause was being assembled in Australian newspapers. In Cape Town, Paterson interviewed the anti-war campaigner, Olive Schreiner, who was vocal in her denouncement of the war. 'I cannot understand it at all', she confessed to Paterson, 'why you come here to shoot down other colonists of whom you know nothing — it is terrible'. 'You say that England was at war', Schreiner continued, 'and you wished to show the world that when the mother country got into a war the colonies were prepared to take their place beside her! Yes, but you ought to ask, you ought to make inquiries before you come over. You Australians do not understand. This is a capitalists' war!' It was still being instilled in the Australian troops that the Boers represented nothing more than the British enemy. Paterson featured in his *Sydney Morning Herald* column an interview with some of the residents of South Africa. In it, Paterson noted: 'We had given up thinking what the Boers were like or of considering them as human beings at all. To us they were simply so much enemy — as impersonal as the Maxim guns and the rifles that they used'.[116] These images of the Boer soldier continued to take on different dimensions the longer the war progressed, particularly impacted by the transformation in British tactics as the war went on.

Some opportunistic figures saw the success of Australian soldiers as potentially pointing towards a more permanent arrangement. Major General G. A. French, Commandant of the New South Wales forces, wrote to William Lyne in May 1900 stressing his desire to establish war reserves in the colonies. He wrote that Australia 'could do little as a war reserve for the navy, but much for the land forces of all arms, and especially the mounted services'.[117] French stressed: 'Now is the time to act. If we wait till the cold fit comes on progress may

[115] New South Wales*, Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 12 June 1900, 20 (Mr. F. Clarke).
[116] A. B. Paterson 'From the Boer Side' *Sydney Morning Herald*. 17 February 1900, 9.
[117] *Papers Relating to a Conference Between the Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Prime Ministers of Self-Governing Colonies; June to August, 1902.* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1902), Cd. 1299, 62.

be made impossible'.[118] French's comments marked the stirrings of an idea that would build throughout the remainder of the war. It was the concept of Australian soldiers bearing unique characteristics that the British Army should be taking advantage of on a regular basis. The Colonial Defence Committee also wanted to build on Australian successes in the field. In late 1901, they began making recommendations that Australia's Federal Field Force be organised with a stronger mounted brigade presence, drawn from pastoral districts.[119]

Importantly, the language from both British and colonial leaders focused on reaffirming the unity of the empire. Chamberlain expressed in a telegram to the New South Wales government: 'The action of the colonies has shown to the world that the whole force of the empire is available for the maintenance of British interests, has produced a lasting effect in this country, and inaugurates a new era in relations with the mother country'.[120] Members of all Australian colonial parliaments appreciated and echoed his statement after what was perceived to have been a successful campaign. Chamberlain's statement captured the British mood that surrounded the South African War in June 1900. The next two years, however, would further complicate how the war effort in South Africa, and Australia's place within it, was perceived.

Conclusion: Fully Committed

The Colonial Office ultimately determined how the Australian colonies would enter the war in South Africa, regardless of the levels of enthusiasm displayed by colonial leaders. The precise details of the make-up of the colonial contingents were guided by how they could be best assimilated into British forces. But Chamberlain's instructions were also testament to the lack of wartime planning over the previous fourteen years. Within this atmosphere of suspicion about forces being underutilised or subservient to rival colonial commanders, a federal force appeared a long way off. This was ironic, of course, as colonial leaders were busy putting the final touches on political federation.[121]

---

[118] *Papers Relating to a Conference Between the Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Prime Ministers of Self-Governing Colonies; June to August, 1902.* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1902), Cd. 1299, 63.
[119] Colonial Troops for Imperial Service in War, 1901–1902, 16 December 1901, Series W.O. 32/8303 War Office Registered Papers: General Series, 5, AJCP.
[120] New South Wales*, Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Council, 12 June 1900, 4.
[121] Discussed in greater detail in Chapter Seven.

For many in the colonies, it did not matter how disorganised the process of getting contingents to South Africa turned out to be, only that they had indeed been able to aid the British cause. Black Week had re-defined the South African War in the Australian colonies as a serious challenge to British hegemony, if not revealing it as an outright emergency. But it also transformed the image of the South African War into an opportunity for the Australian colonies to provide an effective intervention through military assistance in a manner far beyond what had been possible in 1885. Australian distinction through combat also gave greater credence to the concept of the war as the tightening of imperial bonds. It demonstrated the colonies sacrificing men and resources. This was proof of the idea that had constantly been promoted by both imperial and colonial governments — that if the empire found itself in danger, the Australian colonies would come to its aid. It seemed to confirm Reid's suggestion that sentiment would be the main factor determining Australian contributions to imperial defence.

Despite the results, the process of the Australian colonies despatching contingents to the South African War remained riddled with problems that had long-standing implications. The Bushmen contingents, though embodying many perceived Australian ideals, were also possibly the best example of just how improvised the whole process had been. If the colonies were willing to commit contingents on an ongoing basis, it appeared perplexing that there was little formal structure as to how they might do so. Yet, at the same time, the early stages of the South African War probably best illustrated the imperial idea as imagined by Chamberlain, with colonial forces actively defending the empire's interests, and with the unique attributes of colonial soldiers recommending a distinct and significant role. Here, it did not matter how the colonies had gotten to the point of farewelling multiple contingents to South Africa, only that they were now tangibly contributing towards the defence of empire. But in 1900, as the conflict in Africa continued, the world was shocked by news of an uprising in China. Now, colonial leaders would be forced to question what constituted an imperial emergency, and just how far they were willing to expend their precious defensive resources to support London's response.

Chapter Five:

'All Wars in All Parts of the Globe': The Australian Entry into the Boxer Rebellion

'The matter is of great urgency', read Lord Tennyson. As Governor of South Australia, Tennyson was charged with forwarding telegrams from Secretary of State for the Colonies, Joseph Chamberlain, to his counterparts in the other Australian colonies. On 27 June 1900, Chamberlain called for the 'immediate despatch to China of three vessels from the Australasian Squadron'. He was scrambling as events unfolded in China, stressing to the colonial leaders that their co-operation was necessary for the 'protection of life and property'. It was a straightforward request, based upon vessels in Australian waters being able to 'reach Hong Kong in three weeks' compared to the 'six or seven' it would take from England.[1] The Australian colonies' response, however, proved anything but simple.

When the Boxer Rebellion of 1899–1901 came to international attention, it sparked further debate in the colonies about what constituted a genuine imperial crisis. As noted above, Chamberlain's telegraph to the colonies requested the redeployment of three British vessels from Australian waters so they could be sent to China. There was no request for an imperial demonstration and no desire for spontaneous offers of troops. Yet, as events unfolded in China, the larger Australian colonies proved eager to send their limited naval resources abroad, even when local defence forces were already stretched thin. After the perceived success of the South African campaign, Roberts having only recently taken Pretoria, the desire for Australian representation in imperial wars was seemingly reaching its height.

Australia's role in the Boxer Rebellion was defined by its concurrent engagement in South Africa. Roughly 20,000 Australians fought in South Africa compared to the 500 men who served in China, while only six of those men would lose their lives in service.[2] However, it is precisely these factors that make the Boxer Rebellion an illuminating case study in understanding Australian participation in Britain's imperial wars. There was no suggestion that a lack of involvement would appear as a slight against the British Empire, nor that such

[1] Bob Nicholls, *Bluejackets and Boxers: Australia's Naval Expedition to the Boxer Uprising* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1986), 22.
[2] Craig Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War: The War in South Africa, 1899–1902* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2002), 347; Nicholls, *Bluejackets and Boxers*, 145.

a small number of naval men would be instrumental in relieving the siege of the foreign legations in Beijing. However, to Australian colonial leaders, it appeared as if the shackles had been lifted regarding the potential for Australian foreign service. The contributions in South Africa and China hinted that these overseas conflicts might not be singular emergencies, but rather the beginnings of a new order when it came to the white settler colonies' responsibility towards the empire. This chapter argues that the Boxer Rebellion inspired a degree of reflection as to what constituted an imperial crisis, and the circumstances qualifying Australian involvement. Within the context of the period, the Boxer Rebellion re-ignited debates about the concept of 'precedent', and where exactly a line needed to be drawn in devoting local resources for the empire's foreign affairs.

This chapter builds upon the work on the Boxer Rebellion by Australian historians Bob Nicholls and Richard Wilde, who have traced the course of the conflict and considered its implications for imperial defence respectively.[3] By further embedding this conflict in the context of the South African and Sudan conflicts, this chapter demonstrates how the Boxer Rebellion marked a significant shift in Australian perspectives of imperial wars. This chapter reconsiders three distinct aspects of the Australian commitment to the Boxer Rebellion. First, it examines the impact of geopolitical concerns upon the Australian colonies and how they saw their position in relation to China. Second, it looks at how inter-colonial rivalry, once again, influenced the response to an imperial crisis. Finally, it unpacks the nature of the concurrent conflicts in China and South Africa and how this atmosphere defined Australian attitudes towards imperial wars. The Australian approach to the Boxer Rebellion represented the colonies' appetite for involvement in imperial wars, but it also emphasised the need to define what constituted a crisis Australia should be involved in.

Naval Protection in the Pacific

The Australian premiers got a first-hand look at the strength of Britain's Navy during Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee celebrations in 1897. Ever eager to impress upon the colonies the strength of the empire, Chamberlain described the fleet as 'great, magnificent, unparalleled', boasting that it was 'only a part of the naval forces of the Empire spread in

[3] Nicholls, *Bluejackets and Boxers*; Richard Wilde, 'The Boxer Affair and Australian Responsibility for Imperial Defense', *Pacific Historical Review* 26, no. 1 (1957): 51–65.

every part across the globe'.[4] While in England, the premiers toasted the British Navy during a dinner held by the Royal Colonial Institute at the Hotel Cecil. Afterwards, the First Lord of the Admiralty, the Viscount Goschen, declared the need for 'absolute freedom in the movements of the British Navy, so as to enable it to confront an enemy wherever it could best bring about its final defeat'.[5] The premiers were assured that the Royal Navy could protect the colonies, that it was worth their renewed financial support.

As ever, colonial leaders were not entirely on the same page. The Premier of New South Wales, George Reid, commented that Goschen's words were marked by 'astuteness and patriotism', but also 'involved a latent design on the Australian purse'.[6] Colonial leaders were equally concerned about how these resources were being used. If the colonies were going to share costs of British naval operations further, their governments wanted assurance that they would be directly protected should war come to the Pacific. On the third day of the conference when delegates discussed the topic of imperial defence, Chamberlain asked whether 'the feeling of the Colonies mainly that the money which they contribute towards the defence of the empire should be spent in Australian territory?', to which Reid replied, 'that is the general idea'.[7] Defence negotiations had resulted in another stalemate.

The Australian colonies own naval resources were far from organised. Each of the self-governing colonies had been permitted to raise their own small navies under the Colonial Naval Defence Act of 1865. The act intended to widen the protection of British commerce while also alleviating any need to keep large bodies of sailors ready in the colonies, though Tasmania and Western Australia made no moves to raise navies of their own.[8] The 1890s recession meant most of these colonial fleets were being laid up due to the lack of funds necessary to keep them operational.[9]

---

[4] *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* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1897), C. 8596, 7.
[5] 'The Colonial Premiers' *The Sydney Mail*. 10 July 1897, 67.
[6] 'The Colonial Premiers' *The Sydney Mail*. 10 July 1897, 67.
[7] *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* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1897), C. 8596, 55.
[8] B. A. Knox, 'Colonial Influence on Imperial Policy, 1858–1866: Victoria and the Colonial Naval Defence Act, 1865', *Historical Studies, Australia and New Zealand* 11, no. 41 (1963): 61–79; Bob Nicholls, *Handy Men Up Top* (Sydney: Ditty Press, 1990), 7.
[9] Bob Nicholls, *Statesmen & Sailors: Australian Maritime Defence, 1870–1920* (Sydney: Self-Published, 1995), 27.

A few voices in Australia pushed for closer co-ordination of imperial and colonial naval forces. Commander Creswell of South Australia was in favour of a Royal Naval Reserve, hoping that it could even substitute for the ongoing contribution to the Auxiliary Squadron. Creswell's idea faced a major setback at the 1897 Colonial Conference once the financial maintenance agreement of the Royal Navy was renewed, but the reserve concept persisted.[10] In 1899, at a Conference of Commonwealth Naval Officers, Captain Collins, the Victorian Secretary of Defence, moved that even though a Royal Naval Reserve could not be maintained in Australia on the conditions required by the Admiralty, an effective naval force could be raised on the rates of pay and conditions of service suitable for the colonies.[11] The *Times* of London were quite scathing of their plans. 'The British Empire', The *Times* stated, 'requires only one Navy, homogenous, obeying a common law, maintaining one standard of efficiency, available for service wherever the need is most urgent'. The *Times* also took a dim view of colonial naval men. 'If they can be counted upon for continuous service in war', the article stated, 'they would serve as a useful reinforcement to the reduced crew of a ship of war; but little more can be expected of them'.[12] Melbourne's *Age* paraphrased the *Times* article the following day: 'A nondescript force of inadequately trained naval volunteers is, the "Times" maintains, an illusory scheme'.[13] It was something of a blow to the colonies' senior naval men who now had only further motivation to prove the worth of the colonies' navies.

The premiers at least shared Chamberlain's fears about the challenges facing the British Empire when they met in 1897. Though tensions continued to brew in South Africa, Chamberlain also warned the premiers of difficulties arising with 'Eastern nations', a nod to the tangled web in which Britain now found itself in China.[14] Following the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–95) that weakened the position of the Qing Dynasty in China, British policy centred around maintaining British trade and influence, while avoiding being pulled into future conflict.[15] 'If Japan were to endeavour to occupy a large part of the mainland of China', the *Times* reported after the armistice signed on 30 March 1895, 'difficulties would

[10] G. L. Macandie, *Genesis of the Royal Australian Navy* (Sydney: Government Printer, 1949), 61.
[11] Macandie, *Genesis of the Royal Australian Navy*, 69.
[12] 'The Naval Defence of Australia' *Times*, 28 September 1899, 6.
[13] 'Australia's Defence. The Naval Scheme. Conflicting Criticisms' *The Age*. 29 September 1899, 5.
[14] *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* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1897), C. 8596, 8.
[15] Thomas Otte, *The China Question: Great Power Rivalry and British Isolation, 1894–1905* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 74–5.

probably arise with several European Powers. Though this country would not be the most directly interested, it might not be possible for us to maintain an entirely neutral attitude'.[16] Tensions only grew in 1897 when Russia acquired Port Arthur on the Liaodong Peninsula, driving Britain to review its policy of isolation and to look towards building alliances with other national powers.[17] When the early signs of the Boxer movement appeared in China in 1899, British stability in the region was dependent upon co-existence with equally ambitious imperial powers.

China had stirred the imagination of many Australians throughout the nineteenth century. The region had been the centre of Australian attention due to the fluctuating Chinese migration to Australia, and the efforts by colonial governments to control this through legislation. Chinese migration to Australia began in earnest with the labour trade that emerged following the dismantling of convict transportation, but rose significantly during the gold rushes of the 1850s.[18] The more interconnected world that emerged through new technologies meant that from the 1860s onwards, China was becoming more accessible, and many Chinese families (and curious Australians) could move to and from China with relative ease.[19] By the 1880s, colonial newspapers and governments framed growing Chinese migration as a serious threat to an idealised vision of Australian society through miscegenation, and the competition of Asian workers.[20] The fears that were being pushed into legislation during this late nineteenth century period were predominantly grounded in ideas about invasion and racial displacement, more than evidence of an aggressive policy from Beijing itself.[21]

For much of the second half of the nineteenth century, visions of Chinese migration overwhelming the white Australian population were the centre of debates around restricting

[16] *Times*, 8 April 1895, 9.
[17] Philip Joseph, *Foreign Diplomacy in China, 1894–1900: A Study in Political and Economic Relations With China* (London: Routledge, 1928).
[18] David Walker, *Anxious Nation: Australia and the Rise of Asia 1850–1939*, 2nd ed. (Crawley, WA.: UWA Publishing, 2012), 37; Sophie Loy-Wilson, 'Coolie Alibis: Seizing Gold from Chinese Miners in New South Wales', *International Labor and Working Class History* 91, no. 91 (2017): 29.
[19] Kate Bagnall, 'Crossing Oceans and Cultures', in *Australia's Asia: From Yellow Peril to Asian Century*, ed. David Walker and Agnieszka Sobocinska (Perth: UWA Publishing, 2012), 121–2.
[20] David C. Atkinson, *The Burden of White Supremacy: Containing Asian Migration in the British Empire and the United States* (USA: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 19.
[21] Stuart Ward, 'Security: Defending Australia's Empire', in *Australia's Empire*, ed. Deryck Schreuder and Stuart Ward, Oxford History of the British Empire Companion Series (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 240.

immigration. Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds argue that immigration restriction became 'the quintessential expression of masculine sovereignty of "self-governing communities", a popular formulation that worked to collapse the distinction between independent republics and British colonies, thereby recasting the meaning of sovereignty itself'.[22] In 1888, Australian colonial leaders at a conference in Sydney concluded that to restrict migration effectively, more uniform legislation was required. These laws had the desired effect of reducing the Chinese population in Australia, ahead of the establishment of the White Australia Policy following federation.[23]

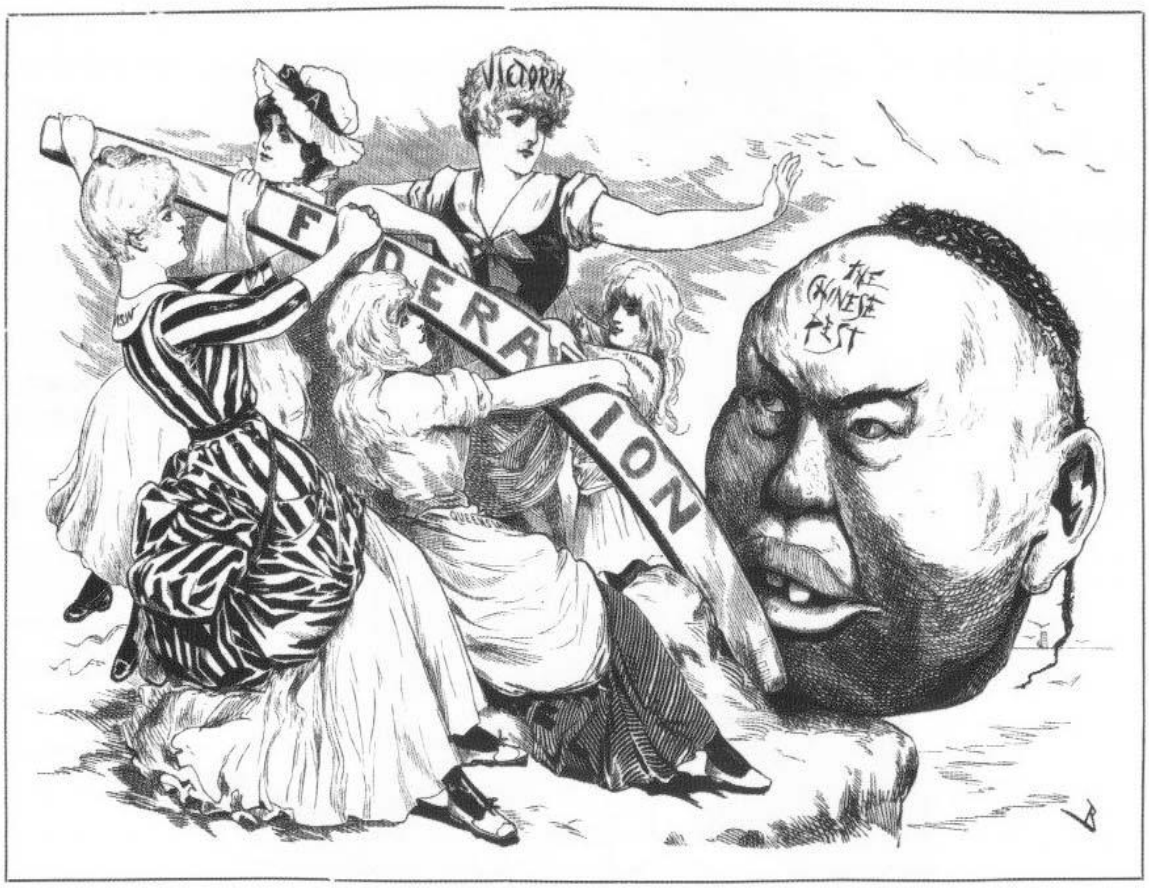

Figure 9: *An Anti-Chinese Immigration Cartoon from Punch magazine. The image depicts Federation as a possible solution to fears surrounding Chinese migration.*
Source: Anti-Immigration Cartoon, *Punch*. May 1888, Wikimedia Commons.

[22] Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 8.
[23] For more on the exact statistical decline of Chinese migration to Australia, see Chapter One. Benjamin Mountford, *Britain, China and Colonial Australia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 158–9; Walker, *Anxious Nation: Australia and the Rise of Asia 1850–1939*, 36.

The perceived threat of racial invasion stirred the imagination of Australian politicians, intellectuals, and writers during the late nineteenth century. The most famous account was Charles Pearson's *National Life and Character: A Forecast* (1893), which international figures such as Theodore Roosevelt and William Gladstone lauded for challenging prevailing ideas about Western expansion and progress.[24] 'We shall wake to find ourselves elbowed and hustled, and perhaps even thrust aside by peoples whom we looked down upon as servile', wrote Pearson, 'and thought of as bound always to serve our needs. The solitary consolation will be, that the changes have been inevitable'.[25] Prior to his stints as Viceroy of India and Foreign Secretary, George Curzon directly responded to Pearson's fears in his own *Problems of the Far East* (1894), which he dedicated 'To those who believe that the British Empire is, under providence, the greatest instrument for good that the world has seen'.[26] Curzon's criticism of Pearson targeted his Australian-centric view of China, as well as what he saw as the latter's misdiagnosis of the character of both the Chinese government (Curzon describing it as 'short-sighted, extortionate, universally corrupt') and the Chinese people (who Curzon also viewed as 'averse from national enterprise, untrained to conquest, devoid of patriotic ardour, content to stagnate').[27] These factors, Curzon believed, prevented China from becoming a 'dynamic and aggressive force'.[28] The military prowess of China was also of little concern to Curzon: 'There is no country in the world where the military profession is of smaller account, or where the science of warfare is less intelligently studied than in China'.[29]

Of more immediate concern to many Australian politicians was the number of Chinese coming into Australia through immigration. Contributing to this view was the work of George Morrison, who would soon become *Times* correspondent at Beijing. Morrison's book, *An Australian in China* (1895), traced his journey through the region, revealing the continent to many Australians for the first time.[30] Morrison took a strong stance against Chinese immigration to Australia in his writing. 'We cannot compete with Chinese',

[24] Charles Pearson, *National Life and Character: A Forecast*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan and Co, 1893); Marilyn Lake, 'The White Man Under Siege: New Histories of Race in the Nineteenth Century and the Event of White Australia', *History Workshop Journal* 58, no. 1 (2004): 41–2.
[25] Pearson, *National Life and Character*, 90.
[26] George Curzon, *Problems of the Far East: Japan-Korea-China* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1894).
[27] Curzon, *Problems of the Far East*, 413.
[28] Curzon, *Problems of the Far East*, 413.
[29] Curzon, *Problems of the Far East*, 411.
[30] George Morrison, *An Australian In China: Being the Narrative of a Quiet Journey Across China to Burma*, 3rd ed. (London: Horace Cox, 1895).

Morrison stated, 'we cannot intermix or marry with them; they are aliens in language, thought, and customs; they are working animals of low grade but great virility'.[31] Morrison also drew upon fears of racial displacement: 'There is not room for both in Australia. Which is to be our colonist, the Asiatic or the Englishman?'[32] Here, Morrison was stoking fears that Asian immigration had grand implications for Australians' racialised vision of their future. Morrison's status afforded him ample opportunity to express these views whenever he returned to Australia, only further reinforcing these ideas to Australian statesmen and the public.

Though the threat of Russian invasion through India began to decline by the mid-1890s, it was still believed to be the most likely direction by which an imperial confrontation could reach Australian shores.[33] 'New-Imperialism', a term that emerged towards the end of the nineteenth century in relation to the Scramble for Africa, now also defined the greater competition within the Asian region, with other empires extending their own influence and challenging long-standing British hegemony.[34] British suspicions of Russian power in Asia only continued to grow.[35] George Morrison, however, was more optimistic about Britain's situation in China at the turn of the century. During a brief stop in Melbourne during his journey from London to Beijing, Morrison declared in an interview with *The Argus* in January 1900: 'As far as Great Britain's position in China is concerned, I consider that it is a sound and satisfactory one', though he was wary of the increasing Russian presence in the region as well as the military power of Japan.[36] Australian security within the Pacific region still relied upon a strong British presence that was far from unchallenged.

The Growing Boxer Threat

The term 'Boxers' (known in China as the 'Righteous and Harmonious Fists') first appeared in the English newspaper of Shanghai, the *North-China Herald* on 9 October 1899. The name was used to describe members of a popular uprising that began to slowly spread

[31] Morrison, *An Australian In China*, 223.
[32] Morrison, *An Australian In China*, 224.
[33] Walker, *Anxious Nation*, 26, 38.
[34] James Hevia, *English Lessons: The Pedagogy of Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century China* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2003), 157.
[35] Hevia, *English Lessons*, 180–1.
[36] Cyril Pearl, *Morrison of Peking* (London: Angus & Robertson, 1981), 105; 'The Powers in the Far East' *The Argus*. 4 January 1900, 7.

throughout Northern China.[37] The paper's correspondents described scenes emerging throughout the country, where: 'For months they [the Boxers] have had a free hand, the magistrates knowing of their existence, but making no attempts to suppress them'. According to this correspondent, the situation was deteriorating. 'With the opening of Autumn, the bands have grown bolder and larger', they warned. 'Every night some Christian village is raided, the goods seized, what cannot be carried away being destroyed'. The article ended with a prescient prediction: 'Like other uprisings in China, this one promises to die out, rather than be stamped out, though quite probably some heads will be sacrificed to show the reality of official interference at the close'.[38]

The origins of the Boxer movement can be traced back to the flooding of the Yellow River in 1898, which, coupled with two years of drought, destroyed much of the peasant economy.[39] Many Chinese peasants were left destitute as a result, turning their grievances against the growing foreign presence in China, adopting the slogan 'Revive the Qing, exterminate the foreign'.[40] By 1900, at least 70% of the Boxer movement consisted of poor peasants, who were predominantly young and male.[41] The Boxers, though the subject of extensive historical research, still remain something of a mystery to historians due to the lack of written sources left behind (many of those involved were illiterate). They were also a decentralised organisation, a loose network, rather than a hierarchy with recognisable leaders.[42] This lack of leadership was the major reason why the correspondent for the *North-China Herald* was so confident the movement would slowly die out, believing that: 'Were there a leader of real power to come forward with a gift at organising, the danger would be great; but no such man has appeared'.[43]

---

[37] Lanxin Xiang, *The Origins of the Boxer War: A Multinational Study* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 112; 'Linchingchou, Shantung. Our Own Correspondent. Hostility to Foreigners'. *The North-China Herald and Supreme Court & Consular Gazette,* 9 October 1899, 710.
[38] 'Linchingchou, Shantung. Our Own Correspondent. Hostility to Foreigners'. *The North-China Herald and Supreme Court & Consular Gazette,* 9 October 1899, 710.
[39] David Silbey, *The Boxer Rebellion and the Great Game in China* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2012), 35–6.
[40] Robert Bickers, *The Scramble for China: Foreign Devils in the Qing Empire, 1832–1914* (London: Penguin Books, 2011), 343.
[41] Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 3rd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2013), 223.
[42] Silbey, *The Boxer Rebellion and the Great Game in China*, 35–6.
[43] 'Linchingchou, Shantung. Our Own Correspondent. Hostility to Foreigners'. *The North-China Herald and Supreme Court & Consular Gazette,* 9 October 1899, 710.

The Boxers, however, persevered. The movement showed increasing antagonism towards any foreign influence seeping into China. Their main target as they traversed the countryside were Christian missionaries.[44] The Boxers considered these missionaries disruptive to Chinese society, while their foreign status granted them exemptions from Chinese law.[45] China had traditionally been a difficult nut for foreign missionaries to crack. George Morrison observed during his time in the country: 'I believe it is now universally recognised that the most difficult of all missionary fields — incomparably the most difficult — is China', while he also accused the missionaries of being 'too often ignorant of the history of China'.[46] As Boxer numbers grew and the intensity of these attacks increased, the rebellion became impossible for foreign nations to ignore. The legations that represented these foreign powers in Beijing desperately feared that the Chinese army might join the Boxers in their cause, exacerbated by the Chinese Empress Dowager's ambiguity towards their actions.

The murder of English missionary Reverend Sidney Brooks in Shandong brought the Boxers to wider Australian attention.[47] On 6 January 1900, *The Argus* reported an attack on a missionary station where 'A party of local rebels, known locally as the "Boxers," raided the station', effectively identifying the source of attacks that had been reported on, but unattributed to any party, during 1899.[48] The Australian papers had granted some coverage to the murder of missionaries throughout China; however, their reports were still limited to brief statements of facts for much of late 1899 and early 1900 while the South African War remained the focus of press attention.[49] Still, the threat simmered in the background, particularly as Australian Christians serving on missions in China could potentially be targeted next.

The British government initially showed little interest in the events unfolding in Shandong, which they perceived as both a German and a Catholic problem (though to the Boxers, there was little difference between Catholics and Protestants).[50] The ministers at the foreign legations in Beijing each filed their complaints with the Qing government about the

[44] Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 222–3.
[45] Silbey, *The Boxer Rebellion and the Great Game in China*, 41–2.
[46] Morrison, *An Australian In China: Being the Narrative of a Quiet Journey Across China to Burma*, 68, 70.
[47] Diana Preston, *The Boxer Rebellion: The Dramatic Story of China's War on Foreigners That Shook the World in the Summer of 1900* (New York: Walker & Company, 2000), 32.
[48] 'Missionary Martyrs' *The Argus*. 6 January 1900, 13.
[49] Based upon a survey of Australian newspapers on Trove from 1899 through to June 1900.
[50] Lanxin Xiang, *The Origins of the Boxer War: A Multinational Study* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 122–3.

treatment of Christian missionaries, but were disappointed by the lack of response.[51] By March 1900, the situation in China became concerning enough for Britain, the United States, and Italy to each begin sending warships to northern China, though this made little impact inland.[52] Only a couple of months later, bluejackets from the United States, Britain, Japan, Russia, France and Italy were deployed to Beijing, where they were joined by sailors from Germany and Austria-Hungary, completing representation of what would loosely be referred to as the Eight-Nation Alliance.[53]

For many Chinese officials, the Boxer uprising represented the opportunity for some redemption after what had been a difficult period in terms of China's international standing. This era stretched as far back as the First Opium War (1839–1842), which marked the beginning of what Chinese nationalists of the twentieth century would call the 'century of humiliation'.[54] The Empress Dowager, concerned about the prospect of antagonising a significant part of the population, gave her support to the Boxers alongside many senior Manchu officials.[55] Any attempts by senior Chinese figures either to control Boxer aggravation or maintain diplomatic relations with other nations, however, was generally unsuccessful.[56] On 20 June, the Boxers fired on the foreign legations and war was effectively declared, beginning a siege of the international legations that, although only a couple of months in duration, would redefine the imperial landscape of China.[57]

Until this point in time, the Boxers had only been given limited coverage in the Australian press aside from reports of missionary deaths. Australian press attention was primarily occupied by the federation movement and the South African War, both of which were reaching critical stages in the first half of 1900. The Australian delegates had travelled to London hoping to secure the passage of the final draft of the Australian constitution. Meanwhile, British fortunes in the South African War were undergoing a revival under the leadership of Kitchener and Roberts, strengthened in part by the presence of Australian and

[51] Hevia, *English Lessons*, 191.
[52] Nicholls, *Bluejackets and Boxers*, 8.
[53] Nicholls, *Bluejackets and Boxers*, 8.
[54] Jonathan Fenby, *The Penguin History of Modern China: The Fall and Rise of a Great Power, 1850–2009* (London: Penguin Books, 2009), 86; Ian Hoskins, *Australian & The Pacific: A History* (Sydney: NewSouth, 2021), 207.
[55] Fenby, *The Penguin History of Modern China*, 87; Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 223–4.
[56] Edmund Wehrle, *Britain, China, and the Antimissionary Riots, 1891–1900* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1966), 184.
[57] Hevia, *English Lessons*, 192.

other colonial contingents. In Victorian and New South Wales parliaments, there was no discussion of the Boxers until it came to the question of sending contingents.[58] Any concerns regarding China were still largely framed in broad geopolitical terms, with the focus upon the present danger of both Russia and Japan. George Morrison, in an interview with *The Argus* on 4 January 1900, maintained that Great Britain's position in China was 'a sound and satisfactory one', though he was highly alert to Russian movement in the region and the growing military power of Japan.[59] A correspondent for the *Sydney Morning Herald* based in Hong Kong captured the changing mood in the region by late June. 'You are not asked now by everyone "What is the latest from South Africa?"', the correspondent stated, 'but "Any news from the North?" is the question on every lip. You see the trouble is so much nearer to us, and as we one and all have friends in the thick of it we appreciate it more'.[60]

The attack on the foreign legations naturally marked a critical turning point in the approach of the Australian press. On 22 June, following these attacks, the *Sydney Morning Herald* included a large article covering 'The Position of China' and detailing the rise of the Boxers as well as foreign influence within the region. 'The "psychological moment" seems to have come for the long-delayed settlement of affairs in China', stated the article, 'and the opportunity for decisive foreign interference is given by the movement of the "Boxers"'. The papers took a dim view of the Boxers. The *Sydney Morning Herald* described them as 'ignorant and bigoted', while 'ready to sacrifice their own lives without a murmur, and with at least an equal disregard for the lives of others'.[61] The article emphasised the role of Russia within China, particularly in connection with the Empress Dowager, who 'recognising that her rule required some foreign support, has attached herself firmly to Russia'. 'China', the report continued, 'seems to think that Russia has but to show her teeth for Great Britain to draw back'. The warning came from the article that: 'In the face of the encouragement given by the Empress Dowager, there is little hope of the rebellion being subdued by Imperial troops', with the main concern being that the Chinese army would supply them with weapons and direction. Until Chamberlain sent his telegram to Lord Tennyson, there appeared little indication that the conflict unfolding in China concerned Australian interests or would involve Australia in any significant way.

[58] Based upon a survey of Victorian and New South Wales Hansards from late 1899 until June 1900.
[59] 'The Powers in the Far East' *The Argus*. 4 January 1900, 7.
[60] 'The Trouble in China' *Sydney Morning Herald*. 18 July 1900, 7.
[61] 'The Position in China' *Sydney Morning Herald*. 22 June 1900, 5.

‘Every Help on the Matter’: Assembling the Naval Contingents

The Australian colonies could hardly reject Chamberlain’s proposals even if they had wanted to. As detailed by *The Argus* on 30 June 1900, the Australian Defence Agreement of 1887 settled at the first colonial conference in London dictated that vessels belonging to the Auxiliary Squadron required colonial permission to leave Australian waters.[62] The troopships HMS *Lizard* and HMS *Mohawk* belonged to the Royal Navy’s main Australian Squadron and therefore Chamberlain more informed than asked the colonial leaders that these vessels be removed. In the case of HMS *Wallaroo*, which was part of the Auxiliary Squadron, Chamberlain required colonial permission for its deployment beyond Australian waters. Unlike the South African War where Chamberlain had been eager to secure colonial support for British policy, there was no such request in relation to China, let alone calls for a significant military contribution.

The circumstances surrounding Britain’s entry into the conflict were also entirely different to South Africa. Chamberlain had desired a colonial contribution to the fight in South Africa, but in China the British government could deploy its large Indian force if necessary. It is difficult to know what Chamberlain expected to come of his telegram, though the urgent nature of the request suggests he had little time to give wider considerations much thought. The ongoing tensions surrounding the use of Britain’s naval forces might also indicate he wished to be as transparent as possible when it came to managing the colonies’ expectations. It is most likely he expected all the colonies to offer the same response as Tasmania and Western Australia, which lacking their own navy agreed to the removal of the ships.[63]

Unlike South Africa where Chamberlain gave specific demands for how contingents would be assembled, the remaining colonies scrambled to offer whatever naval resources were available. At the 1899 Conference of Commonwealth Naval Officers, it was estimated that the colonies had a combined Naval Force of 1,545 men, with only 1,000 considered ‘bona fide seamen’.[64] The first to make a substantial offer was Queensland, though theirs was the only offer outright rejected by the Colonial Office. Lord Lamington, the Governor of

[62] ‘For the Empire. Australian Help in China’ *The Argus*. 30 June 1900, 13.
[63] Tasmania to the Colonial Office, 29 June 1900, Series CO 280. Tasmania: Original Correspondence (Secretary of State), 1824–1900, AJCP; Western Australia to the Colonial Office, 28 June 1900, Series CO 18. Western Australia: Original Correspondence, 1828–1900, AJCP.
[64] Macandie, *Genesis of the Royal Australian Navy*, 70.

Queensland, assented to the release of the three vessels on 28 June, but also went a step further in offering the Queensland colonial vessels *Paluma* and *Gayundah* for service.[65] The Queensland government had purchased *Gayundah* at a similar time to South Australia purchasing its primary vessel, *Protector* (during the mid-1880s). When the Queensland government bought *Gayundah*, Premier Samuel Griffith had hoped the vessel would not just improve the colonies' Naval Defence Force, but also potentially be placed under the direction of the Admiral commanding the Australian Station.[66]

The Queensland government was desperate to secure some practical experience for its naval forces. The Boxer Rebellion looked like it might be their best opportunity. The editor of Brisbane's *Telegraph* newspaper believed that 'the Gayundah and the Paluma are the very best class of boats for the kind of fighting which will take place on the rivers of China', but the authorities in Britain thought otherwise and the Colonial Office declined both boats for service in early July.[67] The British Government came to this decision quickly through access to confidential reports on the Queensland Marine Defence Force assembled across the last few years, effectively settling on the position that these vessels were unfit for service.[68]

The British government accepted the Victorian offer of additional support first. Its government assented to Chamberlain's request when it came through, assuring that the colony 'will take steps to give every help on the matter'.[69] That help officially came a day later. Victorian Premier, Allan McLean, met with his cabinet and settled upon offering the services of 200 naval officers and men for service in China, either on the vessels Chamberlain was removing or by special transport, along with mounted guns on field carriages.[70] The Victorian government even offered to cover the expenses of the contingent, which though appearing a rash decision, guaranteed a relatively seamless transition into service compared to the other colonies. The decision did not require much further discussion,

---

[65] Queensland to the Colonial Office, 28 June 1900, Series CO 234. Queensland: Original Correspondence, 1859–1900, AJCP.
[66] S. W. Griffith to the Colonial Secretary's Office, 23 October 1884. Located in Norman S. Pixley, *The Queensland Marine Defence Force*, 1946, AWM, MSS 1220, 15–6.
[67] 'Queensland Gunboats. Offer for Chinese Service' *The Telegraph*. 2 July 1900, 4; 'Australian Assistance. The Gayundah and Paluma Declined' *The Telegraph*. 9 July 1900, 6.
[68] Nicholls, *Bluejackets and Boxers: Australia's Naval Expedition to the Boxer Uprising*, 41.
[69] Victoria to the Colonial Office, 28 June 1900, Series CO 309. Victoria: Original Correspondence, 1851–1900, AJCP.
[70] 'For the Empire. Australian Help in China' *The Argus*. 30 June 1900, 13; Victoria to the Colonial Office, 29 June 1900, Series CO 309. Victoria: Original Correspondence, 1851–1900, AJCP.

only the Victorian government inquiring as to whether medical officers would be required.[71] By 9 July, the Victorian government relayed to Chamberlain that the naval force would be ready to depart on 14 July; the only matter to be settled was how the contingent would be transported.[72]

A similar situation emerged in South Australia. The South Australian government immediately agreed to Chamberlain's request, stating they: 'freely consent to the immediate despatch of 3 vessels of the Australian squadron as desired', with no indication they would assist further.[73] It was only on 2 July that the government in Adelaide offered their prized gunboat, HMCS *Protector,* for service in China.[74] It appeared the press was pressuring the government to act, as had been the case in New South Wales in 1885. It is highly likely that someone from the South Australian government perused the Saturday edition of *The Advertiser* on 30 June where an editorial called the proposed Victorian contribution of 200 men 'an example for all the colonies'. 'What can South Australia do? What do its ministers contemplate?' posed the article, before offering the solution, 'But what about the Protector? Let South Australia offer her'.[75] *Protector* had been built in 1883 in England and launched the following year to sail to South Australia; along with its guns, it cost the colony a total of £65,000.[76] 'It is for the Government to seize the psychological moment', stated the *Advertiser*, 'and prove that South Australia will gladly do all, and more than all, the mother-country asks of her'.[77] There was no mention of the Queensland offer.

[71] Victoria to the Colonial Office, 6 July 1900, Series CO 309. Victoria: Original Correspondence, 1851–1900, AJCP.
[72] Victoria to the Colonial Office, 9 July 1900, Series CO 309. Victoria: Original Correspondence, 1851–1900, AJCP.
[73] South Australia to the Colonial Office, 28 June 1900, Series CO 13. South Australia: Original Correspondence, 1831–1900, AJCP.
[74] South Australia to the Colonial Office, 2 July 1900, Series CO 13. South Australia: Original Correspondence, 1831–1900, AJCP.
[75] 'Australian Ships for China' *The Advertiser*. 30 June 1900, 6.
[76] Neil Smith, *Carving up the Melon: Australians in the Boxer Rebellion, China 1900–1901* (Melbourne: Mostly Unsung Military History Research and Publications, 2000), 11; H. M. Cooper, *A Naval History of South Australia and Other Historical Notes* (Adelaide: The Hassell Press, 1950), 96–7.
[77] 'Australian Ships for China' *The Advertiser*. 30 June 1900, 6.

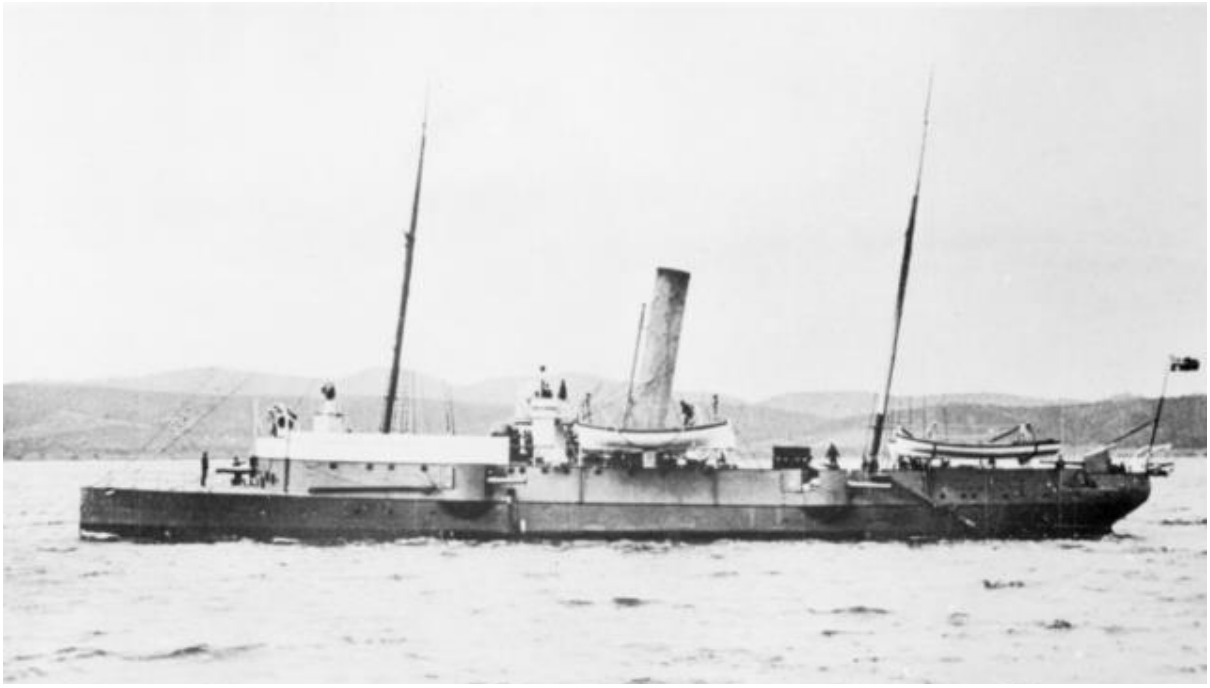

Figure 10: *Port side view of HMCS Protector. South Australians hoped the Boxer Rebellion might provide the chance to demonstrate the vessel's capabilities.*
Source: HMCS *Protector*, photograph, AWM: A04936.

The deployment of *Protector* could also be done quickly. All going well, the vessel could be despatched immediately, bypassing the challenge of raising forces. The ship though had a somewhat chequered history. On its arrival in 1884, some commentators were disappointed with how small the vessel was, while its inaugural role in a royal salute marking South Australia's forty-ninth anniversary in 1886 was marred by a gunnery accident resulting in the fatal killing of one person and severe wounding of another.[78] The government began making plans to sell the vessel as early as 1887.[79] Perhaps though this was the chance to salvage its reputation. If the vessel were ready, it could be manned with volunteers without the need to equip naval troops for land engagements or to find a sufficient vessel with which to transport men to China. By 7 July, Tennyson detailed the requirements for *Protector's* operation to the Colonial Office while also setting the terms for what he believed would be crew's pay: 'presume that pay will be same as here able seamen seven shillings, Warrant Officers twelve shillings, Officers same as Royal Navy as well as pensions for casualties'. The South Australian government also requested that the naval authorities in Sydney provide

[78] 'General News', *Adelaide Observer*. 4 October 1884, 29; 'Commemoration Day. Fatal Accident on H.M.C.S Protector', *Adelaide Observer*. 2 January 1886, 35. This early history of *Protector* has been compiled together by Evan W Hiscock and can be found in Private Henry Downes, HMCS *Protector* – Various Papers, AWM, PR03048.
[79] Nicholls, *Statesmen & Sailors*, 27.

necessary stores and ammunition for the journey.[80] Otherwise, it appeared that the government would only need the Colonial Office's confirmation before the gunboat could sail for China.

But South Australians also had other reasons to be concerned about what was unfolding in China. A 16 June article from *The Advertiser* listed the thirteen South Australian missionaries present in China from the Angus College and Belair Training Home, outnumbering even those from Victoria (eleven) and New South Wales (two).[81] With only reports of missionary deaths and Chamberlain's publicly leaked telegram declaring the urgency of the situation, the news from China appeared dire to friends and relatives of the missionaries back in Australia. Lord Tennyson's role in distributing the initial telegraph may have also left him feeling a responsibility to offer something to Chamberlain. These factors perhaps go some way to explaining the South Australian government's push to become involved in the Boxer conflict. But ultimately, their decision to offer *Protector* was not far removed from Adelaide's earlier eagerness to send resources to imperial crises.

The New South Wales government took a more cautious approach. The government granted permission to remove the three Royal Navy ships on 29 June, a day after most of the other colonies.[82] New South Wales Premier, William Lyne, wanted to assess the situation first, much like he had done with the South African War. 'I may say that up to the present time there has been no opportunity for expending money', Lyne informed the New South Wales Legislative Assembly on 3 July, though, 'a number of the members of the Naval Brigade are very anxious to go to China'. At that moment, Lyne remained non-committal: 'I do not say, however, that the occasion has arisen' and if it did, then Lyne's government hoped the men would be paid by the British Government.[83] But the premier may have been moving more quickly behind the scenes than it appeared. Earlier that morning, the Governor of New South Wales, the Earl of Beauchamp, sent a telegram to the Colonial Office making an offer of 300

[80] South Australia to the Colonial Office, 7 July 1900, Series CO 13. South Australia: Original Correspondence, 1831–1900, AJCP.
[81] 'Australian Missionaries in China' *The Advertiser*. 16 June 1900, 6.
[82] New South Wales to the Colonial Office, 29 June 1900, Series CO 201. New South Wales Correspondence, 1782–1900, AJCP.
[83] New South Wales*, Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 3 July 1900, 578 (William Lyne).

men, declaring 'Prime Minister [New South Wales Premier, William Lyne] desires to offer every assistance in this matter'.[84]

There were, of course, limitations to the assistance New South Wales could provide. Rumours were floating around in the papers that the colony had potentially between 2,000 to 3,000 troops that could depart at a few weeks' notice.[85] Certainly the Commandant of the New South Wales military forces, General French, believed that the colony had these resources at its disposal when he sent a telegram offering 2,000 volunteers for China, without the knowledge of either Beauchamp or Lyne.[86] Beauchamp quickly cleared up this mistake with the Colonial Office as French appeared the latest example of overzealousness when it came to the potential for the colonies to contribute to British wars.[87] Each of the colonies was still embroiled in the war effort in South Africa, with contingents currently occupied across the various parts of that country. Their governments' desire to put together sporadic responses of whatever resources they had available demonstrates that this concurrent conflict did little to quench the colonies' thirst for involvement in imperial wars, even if in the case of Queensland and General French, this went beyond their limited means.

The British government was pleased with the response they had received. First Lord of the Admiralty, George Goschen, responded to a question in the House of Commons on 3 July as to whether the costs of the contingents were being defrayed by the United Kingdom with the answer: 'I think the Australian colonies are far more bent on helping us in China than on any financial question'.[88] While Goschen was correct that the question of service very much outweighed the financial implications of sending contingents, this did not mean the colonies were not prepared to be bogged down in lengthy discussions about the costs. On 12 July, the government of South Australia was still awaiting decision as to how *Protector*'s crew would be paid.[89] By 16 July, representatives of the colonial government went so far as to send a telegram stating: 'South Australian government annoyed because no answer received as to

[84] New South Wales to the Colonial Office, 3 July 1900, Series CO 201. New South Wales Correspondence, 1782–1900, AJCP.
[85] 'Summary' *The Daily Telegraph*. 3 July 1900, 1.
[86] New South Wales to the Colonial Office, 20 July 1900, Series CO 201. New South Wales Correspondence, 1782–1900, AJCP.
[87] New South Wales to the Colonial Office, 20 July 1900, Series CO 201. New South Wales Correspondence, 1782–1900, AJCP.
[88] United Kingdom, *Parliamentary Debates,* House of Commons, 3 July 1900, (George Goshen).
[89] South Australia to the Colonial Office, 12 July 1900, Series CO 13. South Australia: Original Correspondence, 1831–1900, AJCP.

rate of pay "Protector" quite ready to start this day'.[90] An editorial in Adelaide's *The Advertiser* expressed the colony's growing frustration with the British government, stating: 'Had the Admiralty shown proper promptitude the vessel might well be on her way to China, and South Australia would thus have been assured the distinction of having sent the very first colonial contingent to the help of civilisation in the flowery land'.[91] Certainly, there was a feeling that South Australia's opportunity to swoop in ahead of the two larger colonies was being wasted. Finally, on 28 July, a telegram arrived from the Colonial Office informing the South Australian government stating that they were 'unable to take advantage of the use of the *Protector*', in what amounted to a bitter blow to the colony.[92]

By the end of July, the South Australian government having endured a month of frustration in their dealing with the Colonial Office, fully channelled their grievances into a telegram dated 31 July:

> Referring to your telegram of 28 July, my government much surprised at the communication of Her Majesty's Government declining "Protector" which was manned, stored, and quite ready to start at once, last fortnight, some of the men having broken up their homes so as to go. Universal feeling disappointment and indignation expressed, and my Government wish it to be understood clearly they cannot offer "Protector" later, as suggested in your telegram. It is advisable, so as to allay irritation, that all telegrams on the subject should be given publicity.[93]

In response to a telegram on 1 August suggesting that *Protector* remain due to 'European Complications', Tennyson suggested to Chamberlain that the British government 'propose what subsidy they consider … and I'm sure that South Australia will make up Imperial to Colonial pay'. Tennyson summed up the feeling within the colony at that point. 'After Her Majesty's Government's acceptance of patriotic offer', Tennyson wrote, 'South Australia feels it has been severely slighted. Men were disbanded yesterday; consequently no time should be lost if desire re-engage'.[94] Regardless of their feelings that the British government had treated South Australia's offer with disdain, the desire of its government still to be

[90] South Australia to the Colonial Office, 16 July 1900, Series CO 13. South Australia: Original Correspondence, 1831–1900, AJCP.
[91] 'The Protector' *The Advertiser*. 21 July 1900, 6.
[92] Nicholls, *Bluejackets and Boxers*, 41.
[93] South Australia to the Colonial Office, 31 July 1900, Series CO 13. South Australia: Original Correspondence, 1831–1900, AJCP.
[94] South Australia to the Colonial Office, 1 August 1900, Series CO 13. South Australia: Original Correspondence, 1831–1900, AJCP.

involved in the engagement overrode their annoyance. South Australia's campaign was rekindled again once the British Treasury agreed, upon Chamberlain's urging, to a subsidy of £1000 a month for the contingent.[95] Finally, on 3 August, *Protector* began its journey to Sydney.[96] Meanwhile, the steamship SS *Salamis* had brought back injured Australians from South Africa on 10 July 1900. This proved to be perfect timing as *Salamis* was suited for service in China.[97] Excitement began to build in the three colonies now their offers had been accepted, even if they had not had time to consider what they would actually be doing in China.

A Different Scramble for China

The issue of how the naval contingents would be paid provides a revealing insight into how the colonial governments approached the Boxer Rebellion. The Victorian government, perhaps rashly, decided to cover all expenses themselves; this was later estimated to cost around £20,000.[98] New South Wales officials, on the other hand, inquired to the Colonial Office: 'may I understand Her Majesty's Government desire to bear expense of contingent'.[99] Under this arrangement, however, personnel from Victoria would be earning roughly 50% more than the New South Wales forces, which would have only driven animosity between them.[100] It also created a hesitancy to enlist in New South Wales. On 17 July, McLean cabled Lyne asking: 'What are you doing? Our contingent is ready to sail', only to receive reassurance from Lyne that he had been busy and would respond the next day, which he duly neglected to do.[101] On the back of a significant massacre of Europeans in Beijing, *The Age* referred to the state of the 'Sydney Naval Contingent' as a 'a regrettable fiasco', lamenting that, 'Nothing is being done for despatching a force to China'.[102] Though frustrated, *The Age* was likely forced to temper its words. In both the Sudan and South African conflicts before it, Victoria had sought a united front with New South Wales and

[95] Nicholls, *Bluejackets and Boxers*, 41.
[96] South Australia to the Colonial Office, 3 August 1900, Series CO 13. South Australia: Original Correspondence, 1831–1900, AJCP.
[97] Smith, *Carving up the Melon*, 11.
[98] Victoria*, Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 10 July 1900, 205 (Charles Salmon).
[99] New South Wales to the Colonial Office, 10 July 1900, Series CO 201. New South Wales Correspondence, 1782–1900, AJCP.
[100] Nicholls, *Bluejackets and Boxers*, 29.
[101] Nicholls, *Bluejackets and Boxers*, 29.
[102] 'The Sydney Naval Contingent. A Regrettable Fiasco' *The Age*. 17 July 1900, 6.

may have been wary that their participation in China relied upon some form of collaboration.[103]

Another point of contention between the colonies emerged from a debate over the secrecy of Chamberlain's original telegram to Tennyson. The South Australian government was particularly aggrieved at the Victorian government for leaking the details of the telegram to the press, *The Age* publishing the contents in full.[104] Other Australian colonial governments complained about the leak, though representatives of the Victorian government assured Chamberlain that 'no one in Melbourne authorised that publication'.[105] Although Victorians denied any responsibility for the leak, their government had been quick to offer support and any leak of the telegram's details can most likely be attributed to the excitement surrounding the possibility of providing naval resources to Britain. Regardless, Chamberlain's telegram made it into the press in the other colonies, including South Australia. *The Advertiser*, when it reported the 'so jealously guarded' news, stated: 'It is difficult to imagine any sufficient reason for treating this as a State secret'.[106] *The Advertiser* touched upon an issue that would make up a lengthy debate within the New South Wales Legislative Assembly. These offers being leaked to colonial press made it difficult to detach the decision to send troops from overwhelming public sentiment. If an emotional surge of support for colonial contribution swept through the public, how could the government come to an impartial response?

If the desire to support the British cause was prevalent throughout the colonies, this hardly appears to have softened the competitiveness between them. *The Argus* reported on 29 June that New Zealand Premier, Richard Seddon, was preparing to despatch troops. In a speech at Wellington, Seddon confirmed that he 'had it within his mind for some days to send troops to China', and that 'the arrival of this strange body of soldiers would make the name of New Zealand known among nations'.[107] The Victorian offer came the same day this article was published, and Seddon's enthusiasm likely had some impact on Victoria's decision. As it came to pass, no formal New Zealand offer of naval resources was made (though they

[103] See the approaches to Sudan and South Africa detailed in Chapters One and Three.
[104] South Australia to the Colonial Office, 30 June 1900, Series CO 13. South Australia: Original Correspondence, 1831–1900, AJCP; 'England & China. Want of Gunboats. Appeal to Australia'. *The Age*. 30 June 1900, 9.
[105] South Australia to the Colonial Office, 2 July 1900, Series CO 13. South Australia: Original Correspondence, 1831–1900, AJCP; Victoria to the Colonial Office, 4 July 1900, Series CO 309. Victoria: Original Correspondence, 1851–1900, AJCP.
[106] 'Australian Ships for China' *The Advertiser*. 30 June 1900, 6.
[107] 'Statement by Mr. Seddon. He is Ready to Despatch Troops.' *The Argus*. 29 June 1900, 5.

acquiesced to the removal of the vessels). Seddon, ever eager to show his dedication to the imperial cause, appeared to lament the missed opportunity.[108]

Queensland was the most eager to be involved in China, and there was some annoyance in the colony that Adelaide's offer had been accepted when Brisbane's had been declined. Reporting on *Protector* not having yet left South Australia, an article in Brisbane's *The Telegraph* referred to the ship as: 'That antiquated specimen of naval architecture'.[109] The South Australian government's call for Captain W. R. Creswell from Queensland to command *Protector* in China (considered by *The Telegraph* as a 'considerable inconvenience to the local marine forces') may have helped to soothe over any lingering jealousies.[110] By the time *Protector* arrived in Brisbane, the Governor of Queensland climbed aboard to wish the contingent well (later *Gayundah*'s crew voluntarily washed *Protector* down upon their return stop while the men went ashore).[111] The excitement displayed was not dissimilar to the arrival of the Sudan Contingent in South Australia in 1885. These moments were still shared events among colonies. A more proactive Queenslander was Captain P. M. Keogh who, having failed to have his service accepted for the New South Wales Naval Contingent, travelled to Hong Kong in hopes of serving there. Keogh managed to secure a place with General Lorne Campbell's staff where he contributed towards organising the Australians' living quarters in Tianjin after beating them there by a couple of days.[112] He later returned with the rest of the Australian contingent aboard *Chingtu*, not totally managing to distinguish himself in his service despite his unique experience.[113]

Support for the contingents heading to China echoed the goodwill extended to those who had departed for Sudan and South Africa. *The Argus* declared on 30 June when reporting news of the Victorian offer: 'Where British life is in danger, or where there is British work to be done, there will British arms, naval and military, flock from all quarters'. This sentiment, of course, carried the understanding that this act would be reciprocated in Australia's time of need: 'And if ever Australia is in peril from fleets or privateers, she will

[108] New Zealand, *Parliamentary Debates,* House of Representatives, 4 July 1900, 243–4 (Richard Seddon).
[109] 'Points' *The Telegraph*. 24 July 1900, 4.
[110] 'Captain Cresswell, R.N. Going to China. With South Australian Contingent' *The Telegraph*. 3 August 1900, 4.
[111] Private George F. Jeffery, HMCS *Protector* – China, Diary, AWM, 3DRL/2246, 1, 7.
[112] 'With the Australians in China' *Sydney Morning Herald*. 20 November 1900, 5.
[113] 'The Australian Naval Contingent' *Sydney Morning Herald*. 19 April 1901, 7.

be helped in the same national manner'.[114] Victorian Member for Talbot and Avoca, Carty Salmon said: 'The services which have been rendered by the naval men of the empire in the Soudan, and quite recently in South Africa, are fresh in the minds of honourable members', showing that at least some were willing to link these conflicts into a pattern of colonial behaviour.[115] Others were not so convinced. Still, no-one was sure what service in China would entail. Member for Warrnambool, John Murray, expressed his fear that 'our little contingent of 200 will be entirely lost sight of', while 'we should not leave our own shores unguarded'.[116]

The smallness of the contribution, however, may have worked to the colonial governments' advantage. By offering a limited number of men, particularly compared to South Africa, it was more difficult to argue that the China forces constituted a significant disruption to colonial defence. Nor was there much sympathy for the Boxers, particularly with the large levels of support the intervention had gained from other imperial nations. Another important factor may have been the position of the South African War. Roberts' column had advanced into Pretoria at the beginning of June, signifying what many believed was the beginning of the end. The Australian colonies were already receiving contingents back from South Africa, making up for the departing contingents to China. But where was this localised threat to Australian shores emerging from if not from what was unfolding in China? It was again the process that lay at the heart of opposition, many wanting a distinction made as to how such offers would be made in the future. The lack of a framework for the deployment of these contingents continued to cause headaches.

The frustration with a lack of defined process for these military contributions is documented in the parliamentary records. On 25 July when the New South Wales Legislative Assembly put forward a vote to equip and despatch a contingent, many had the chance to voice their concerns about where to draw the line regarding colonial contributions to imperial conflicts. Underpinning these discussions was the feeling that these scenarios were becoming increasingly common. Members such as Northumberland's John Norton argued that if the government were able to suspend standing orders under claims of urgency, members were

[114] *The Argus*. 30 June 1900, 12.
[115] Victoria, *Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 10 July 1900, 204 (Carty Salmon).
[116] Victoria, *Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 10 July 1900, 205 (John Murray).

entitled to know precisely what they were intending to do.[117] George Reid, currently between roles as New South Wales premier and becoming leader of the Federal opposition, was critical of the handling of the question of sending contingents. 'Without opposing this motion', Reid stated, 'I think it my duty to point out that we are drifting into a most extraordinary state of things, in which the public credit may be engaged in the most serious way without one day's notice to members of the House'.[118] Norton was equally annoyed by the manner in which this was presented to parliament: 'This system of confidential communication on subjects that are committing this colony step by step to the most enormous undertakings is reducing this legislature to a farce'.[119]

Many were left, therefore, to justify why the Boxer Rebellion was considered so urgent as to justify shortcutting the parliamentary process. Member for the Tweed, R. D. Meagher stated:

> I am one of those who believe, with the great thinkers who have written on the question, that the big problem which is going to shake the rule of the Briton and the Muscovite will probably arise out of the China crisis. It is not a matter of the unemployed here. The safety of this colony and of Australia depends on the British Empire. I am not one of those who are stupid enough to believe that the 200 men going now will overawe the 300,000,000 Chinese; there is no one here who will for a moment hold such an absurd idea. What I do say is that our troops, by their coming into contact with the civilised powers of the world, will have an opportunity to train themselves in the art of war. We will have a number of Australian troops quartered alongside Germans, French, and Russians.[120]

Politicians raised similar issues in the Victorian parliament. Member for Geelong, Henry Bournes Higgins, argued in the Legislative Assembly: 'The people will be wanting to know whether we in these colonies are expected to volunteer each time to contribute valuable lives and money in aid of wars which may or may not interest us directly'.[121] Of particular concern to Higgins, who had dissented when it came to the South African contingents in a similar manner, was that a precedent had been set. 'I think the taxpayer of this country is entitled to know', stated Higgins, 'whether his liability is unlimited with regard to all wars in all parts

[117] New South Wales, *Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 25 July 1900, 1268 (John Norton).
[118] New South Wales, *Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 25 July 1900, 1268 (George Reid).
[119] New South Wales, *Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 25 July 1900, 1268 (John Norton).
[120] New South Wales, *Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 25 July 1900, 1270 (Richard Meagher).
[121] Victoria, *Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 19 July 1900, 381 (Henry Higgins).

of the globe which the particular Government of Her Majesty for the time being may think fit to wage'.[122]

Higgins hit upon the crux of the problem: where did these contributions end? In the last year, wars in South Africa and China had arisen on different sides of the globe. There was little to suggest that in Britain's far-flung empire, there was not another conflict just around the corner, which would make further demands of the Australian colonies. The conflict in China appeared to reveal that colonial governments, and popular opinion, were likely to be swept up in patriotic feeling and that colonial leaders would offer Britain additional resources in the face of any affront to the empire's positions. Although Higgins' opponents dismissed such questions as hypothetical and impossible to answer, they reveal that some observers at least were wary of the precedent the colonies appeared to be setting, and the implication for future imperial emergencies.

Politicians made several justifications for continuing along the path the colonies had established in all three conflicts. First and foremost, they argued they had to act immediately or miss their opportunity. One of the strongest reasonings was the possibility that other colonies might get the jump on them, an important driving factor already seen when it came to the offers made in regard to South Africa. Though conceding that the New South Wales troops would be like 'a drop in a bucket', William Lyne stated: 'But I should like to point out that each of the other colonies have offered to send troops to China to join the Imperial troops there'.[123] 'I think it will not stand to the credit of New South Wales', argued Lyne, 'if she, the mother colony of the group, on an occasion of this kind, stands back and allows other colonies to take the lead'.[124] Though the New South Wales delayed response contravened Lyne's statement, it did reflect a belief that New South Wales should take the lead. Meagher pointed out that New South Wales could potentially be left as 'a laughing-stock in the other colonies, who have obtained a good deal of kudos at our expense', a bitter blow to the prestige of the 'mother colony'.[125]

[122] Victoria, *Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 19 July 1900, 382 (Henry Higgins).
[123] New South Wales, *Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 25 July 1900, 1272 (William Lyne).
[124] New South Wales, *Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 25 July 1900, 1276 (William Lyne).
[125] New South Wales, *Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 25 July 1900, 1271 (Richard Meagher).

Lyne also believed that the Boxer Rebellion could prove the perfect opportunity for the colony's inexperienced navy. 'I think, as far as that is concerned, that it would be the best possible thing which would happen to the men of our Naval Brigade', he informed the New South Wales government, 'because they would then have received the practical experience which they had not hitherto had … It would be of great advantage if they were required to act in defence of our own shores'.[126] Moreover, he continued:

> They will gain useful information, and the education they will receive will render them when they come back of great service to this country. Of course, we all hope that we shall have most of our men back from South Africa to assist us in that military education which is necessary in a country like this, where we have never had any practical experience.[127]

Lyne appeared to be downplaying the emergency, instead insisting the decision was based on the attainment of valuable naval experience not otherwise provided by patrolling Australian shores. If it made for a somewhat inconsistent line, it achieved the desired end. New South Wales would get the chance to develop its navy, while Britain would secure additional support in China.

Conclusion: Concerning Patterns

Across the colonies, politicians were able to avoid long-lasting implications over their justifications for the China contingents. Australia's involvement in the Boxer Rebellion lasted less than a year, ending while many Australian soldiers were still waiting to be sent to South Africa for that seemingly unending war. The vague answer given by the contingent's defenders was that each of these conflicts needed to be judged on its own terms, giving them an out when it came to legislative change to offset the seemingly unmanageable fervour for war. Voices rang out in parliament pushing for more to be done in future to change the process by which parliaments decided which conflicts Australia should become embroiled in. However, very few statesmen had the appetite to press the matter further in Australia's contemporary political climate.

[126] New South Wales, *Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 25 July 1900, 1273 (William Lyne).
[127] New South Wales, *Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 25 July 1900, 1276 (William Lyne).

In the absence of concrete answers to these debates, the Australian contribution to the Boxer Rebellion can instead be understood as representative of wider concerns within the Australian colonies. Reports of missionaries being murdered in China garnered press attention, however, they never created a sense of imperial emergency on par with the death of Gordon or Black Week. What China did represent was an important geographical concern in the Australian imagination. Though Australian leaders hinted at the emerging nation forming an extension of British defence, positioned in the Pacific region, these ideas were never explicitly stated during the Boxer crisis. Instead, China's instability only further revealed the increasingly precarious position the Australian colonies appeared to be in. More than either the Sudan or South African Wars, the Boxer Rebellion was a stark reminder of just how important imperial defence was to the security of Australia.

While South Africa proved the opportunity for the Australian colonies to provide a united, if still separate, response to an imperial crisis, the sense of opportunity seeped into the colonial mindset when the conflict in China presented itself. New South Wales, for instance, appeared to have its hands tied once Victoria made its offer to the Colonial Office. General French's offer of 2,000 troops never materialised, but such outbursts of patriotism only highlighted just how eager some colonial figures were to exceed other offers. Meanwhile, the colony of South Australia appeared driven by both the Victorian offer, as well as the press applying pressures of inter-colonial rivalry upon the government by proposing *Protectors* service. These examples show that the jostling for acceptance of military resources that had begun with Sudan in 1885 was resurfacing again once China presented the chance. It was far from an ideal scenario for a group of colonies meant to strike some unity through federation in only a few months' time.

What emerged though was a complex decision that could not be attributed to one man's folly, nor a surge of imperial fervour, such as had been seen following the events of 'Black Week'. Instead, the colonies came to this decision through a set of overlapping fears, as well as a sense of opportunism. The Boxer Rebellion can be seen as a minor conflict in Australia's military history. But for the colonists teetering on the beginning of a new century and a new political era, it appeared part of an emerging pattern of colonial support for British overseas conflicts. This pattern was something they would have to address soon, or else risk being cast into every future British war that arose across the globe.

Chapter Six:

Contact with the Civilised Powers: The Colonial Naval Brigade at the Boxer Rebellion

It was considered an 'historical day for South Australia' by the *South Australian Register*. The men departing aboard *Protector*, 'the handy men in blue', were left pondering 'Who'd a' thought it?' at the resounding reception for their departure to help quell the Boxer Rebellion in China. The departures of colonial contingents had been big events in all the colonies, but this was a day many onlookers understood as even more significant. The departure of *Protector* coincided with the arrival of troops returning from their stint in South Africa. It was a moment not lost upon the *South Australian Register*. The paper reported that what the colony was witnessing 'is suggestive of the stirring times in which we live, the demands of the Empire, and the cheerful response of loyal and enthusiastic colonists to show practical sympathy with the mother country'.[1] The publication took this moment as a sign of the Australian colonies entering upon a new era, embarking upon what could be the new reality of Australia's imperial commitment.

It is easy to draw general parallels between the conflict against the Boxers and the Sudan episode fifteen years earlier. Both conflicts were relatively short affairs, their outcome decided before the Australians even arrived, and neither saw significant colonial involvement in frontline conflict. The Boxer Rebellion was effectively over by the time the naval contingents arrived, but Australians remained supportive of the contingent once this became known. Much like Sudan, the Australian volunteers were predominantly involved in performing monotonous service while enduring uncomfortable conditions. What separated the Boxer Rebellion from Sudan most was that the Australians rubbed shoulders with troops from across the world, representing all manner of foreign powers exerting their own influence in the region. The Boxer Rebellion marked the opportunity for the colonial naval men not only to represent the unity of the British Empire, but the emerging Australian nation within an international conflict.

[1] 'Our Fifth Contingents' *South Australian Register.* 7 August 1900, 6.

This chapter argues that the Australian contingents served a symbolic presence in the Boxer Rebellion. As part of an international conflict, the colonial troops represented the unity of Britain's Empire in the face of its direct imperial competition. As such, it revealed a different form of service where Australian troops were involved in bringing stability to a volatile atmosphere. It was a conflict that also had significant geo-political implications for Australia. The colonies' position in the Pacific region might become an important asset for the British Empire. London found its direct imperial competitors were able to exert influence not just in Europe, but in all parts of the world. This chapter explores these ideas in three directions: through the emphasis placed upon the behaviour of the naval brigades, their interactions with troops from other nations, and finally, the legacy of the Boxer contingent as representative of existing geo-political concerns. In a changing world with spot fires flaring up across Britain's far-flung empire, the nature of the Boxer Rebellion may have pointed towards the future of Australia's role in international affairs, driven by its geographical advantages.

'Trouble Might Break Out at Any Moment'

Colonial leaders were determined for their forces to represent Australia in the best light, particularly within such an international conflict. Helping their cause was the composition of the China contingent, which was markedly different from those still departing for the South African War. The median age for the Victorian force was roughly 35 and married, compared to the South African forces who tended to be younger, unmarried men.[2] Many of these were leaving behind more responsibilities than those who went to South Africa, though most were guaranteed their employment upon their return.[3] This also meant that these contingents did not necessarily create the same demographic concerns of fit young men leaving the colony that were beginning to plague the effort in South Africa.[4] The status of these men perhaps also accounts for the grievances surrounding the pay disparity between the colonies, as families left behind needed to be compensated during their absence. The New South Wales contingent was similarly composed of married men, with many having seen years of service in the Royal Navy. The Australian contingents, the *Sydney Morning*

[2] Bob Nicholls, *Bluejackets and Boxers: Australia's Naval Expedition to the Boxer Uprising* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1986), 28.
[3] Nicholls, *Bluejackets and Boxers*, 28.
[4] This idea is explored in greater detail in Chapter Seven.

Herald observed, 'judging from their capabilities on paper should make an eminently good show for the colony'.[5] Samuel Staughton, the member for West Bourke, noted optimistically that: 'These men have had the advantage of the discipline which a great many members of the other contingents lacked'.[6]

It was not just in parliament that the superior discipline of the force was being emphasised. At the farewell speeches for the New South Wales contingent, Commander Connor (in the temporary absence of the Commander of the New South Wales contingent, Captain Hixson) stated: 'You must suggest to the public by your demeanour that you can do your work quietly, earnestly, and in good order'.[7] Though alluding to the behavioural issues beginning to surface among troops in South Africa, the multinational nature of the Boxer conflict further reinforced the need to ensure these naval contingents were representing Australia in the best light.[8] The uneasy Eight-Nation Alliance assembled to protect the foreign legations (and interests) meant this truly was an unprecedented international affair for the Australian forces. With many of Britain's immediate rivals such as France and Russia engaged in the war with the Boxers, the naval brigade not only needed to showcase the strength of the Australian colonies, but also the unity of the British Empire in the face of its most immediate competition.[9]

Assembling the naval forces still presented its challenges. Captain Hixson called a muster of the naval brigade and the naval artillery volunteers at the Fort Macquarie drill hall on 11 July where he offered the terms for service in China. The men were required to be in robust health, between the ages of eighteen and forty-five and willing to commit to service in China indefinitely, only to return once they were dispensed with by the British authorities there. Upon hearing the pay they would receive, the men were dismissed to give them time to discuss these terms. Only twenty-six men from the Naval Artillery Volunteers and three officers of the Naval Brigade were willing to enlist.[10] The New South Wales Naval Brigade was still being finalised right up until its departure on the 8 August. After the pay dispute had been settled, New South Wales had 100 men from the Naval Brigade volunteer, and

[5] 'The Naval Contingent for China' *The Sydney Morning Herald*. 27 July 1900, 8.
[6] Victoria*, Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 10 July 1900, 206 (Samuel Staughton).
[7] 'The Muster at Fort Macquarie' *The Sydney Morning Herald*. 8 August 1900, 7.
[8] For more on the behaviour of the South Africa Contingents, see Chapter Seven.
[9] Robert Bickers and R. G. Tiedemann, eds., *The Boxers, China, and the World* (USA: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007).
[10] 'Volunteers from the Naval Forces' *The Sydney Morning Herald*. 12 July 1900, 7.

seventy of the Naval Artillery Volunteers. The final twenty-five places were filled by soldiers waiting for service in South Africa. With soldiers and sailors uneasy with the prospect of intermixing, the compromised title — the 'New South Wales Marine Light Infantry' — was settled upon.[11] New South Wales' difficulties in meeting their target for recruitment and their reliance on a mixed body of troops from different services, underline the strain on the colony's resources. It was a far cry from the 2,000 men which the Commandant of the New South Wales military forces, General French, had proposed.

The people of New South Wales came out on 8 August 1900 in the same droves as they had for the Sudan and South Africa send offs. Despite announcements that there were to be no public demonstrations, the *Sydney Morning Herald* wrote of a 'large and quite as sympathetic a crowd in the streets to wave and cheer bon voyage to the intrepid volunteers as had appeared when our soldiers went to the Transvaal'. Mounted police were called upon to keep the pressing crowds back so the contingent could complete its march through Macquarie Street towards the awaiting *Salamis*, which would take them to China. Many of the crowd brought miniature Union Jacks to wave. Captain Hixson, a long-standing member of the New South Wales Naval Brigade and the contingent's most popular member, raised his hat to the well-wishers.[12] The concurrent war in South Africa had done little to temper the spirits of the New South Wales public for a military procession through the streets of Sydney. It also showed the departure of these colonial contingents had become events, bringing together enthusiastic crowds willing to celebrate the occasion regardless of the scale of the conflict and contribution.

Carrying both the Victorian and New South Wales contingents, the transport ship *Salamis* made an uneventful journey to China, eventually anchoring off Victoria Harbour in Hong Kong. Upon landing, the men received the news that the legations had already been relieved.[13] The New South Wales contingent passed into the hands of Lieutenant Gillespie as Hixson, unsuited for active service at the age of sixty-seven, returned to Sydney. Engine Room Artificer Arthur Livingstone wrote that 'they all seemed very sorry to lose him'.[14] By 30 August 1900, *Salamis* continued its journey towards northern China. As they travelled

[11] Bob Nicholls, *Handy Men Up Top* (Balmain, NSW: Ditty Press, 1990), 9.
[12] 'The Muster at Fort Macquarie' *The Sydney Morning Herald*. 8 August 1900, 7.
[13] Nicholls, *Bluejackets and Boxers: Australia's Naval Expedition to the Boxer Uprising*, 55.
[14] Engine Room Artificer Arthur Livingstone, Victorian Naval Contingent – China, diary, 28 August 1900, AWM, PR85/047, 5.

north, it looked increasingly unlikely that the Australians would see serious action, and the rumour soon spread that they would instead be given the uncomfortable task of garrisoning forts. Captain Clarke of the Royal Navy spoke to the men aboard where, as Livingstone phrased it, he confirmed that 'things are only middling', but warned that 'if there is a war [in China] South Africa will be nothing to it'.[15]

However, the entire affair appeared to be coming to an end even before *Salamis* made it to Hong Kong. On 14 August, American troops scaled the Tartar Wall and planted the first foreign flag in the Outer City of Beijing.[16] Within their ranks was the Australian born Donald Charles Cameron who later served with the Queensland Imperial Bushmen in South Africa and eventually became a Queensland politician.[17] British forces entered the city and meeting little resistance were able to continue onwards to the legations.[18] Lancelot Giles, a 22-year old student interpreter, worked with the British Consular Staff at the time of the siege. He wrote in his diary: 'It was magnificent that the British should be the first to relieve us'.[19] Having recorded the events of the Boxer Rebellion as it unfolded in Beijing, Giles chose to end his report of the siege on that date, suggesting that he too thought that this marked the natural end to these extraordinary events. For the Australian naval contingent who had read about the threat to the legations, the news left them confused as to what awaited them next.

Instead of freeing the legations, the contingents were thrust into a constantly changing situation. The movement of the national forces was swift, and plans were being adapted on the fly. *Salamis* continued its journey north, eventually joining the fleet of warships belonging to the eight-nation alliance on 8 September.[20] However, by then British command had decided that the force would instead be concentrated in Tianjin, escaping the prospect of gloomy quarters in one of the forts. On 15 September, *Salamis* was again on the move. Upon arriving in Tianjin, the Victorian contingent settled in for what would be the remainder of their service in China while the New South Wales contingent was redirected to Beijing

[15] Engine Room Artificer Arthur Livingstone, Victorian Naval Contingent – China, diary, 4 September 1900, AWM, PR85/047, 8.
[16] Neil Smith, *Carving up the Melon: Australians in the Boxer Rebellion, China 1900–1901* (Melbourne: Mostly Unsung Military History Research and Publications, 2000), 7.
[17] Smith, *Carving up the Melon*, 7.
[18] Smith, *Carving up the Melon*, 7.
[19] Student Interpreter Lancelot Giles, British Consular Staff – China, diary, 14 August 1900, AWM, PR84/027, 53.
[20] Nicholls, *Bluejackets and Boxers*, 60.

on 10 October, leaving behind their Victorian counterparts.[21] Even with a change in scenery, the New South Wales contingent commenced its own similar service in Beijing upon reaching the British legation. By the time the contingent arrived, it had been over two months since the foreign legations had been relieved. Victorian Able Seaman, John Summerfield, was by now, beginning to miss home, or as he described it: 'that dear land of the free'.[22]

Meanwhile, *Protector* conducted its own separate campaign from the other naval brigades. Upon arriving in Hong Kong, *Protector* lowered the blue ensign of the colony of South Australia and hoisted the white ensign to signal it had been incorporated into the Royal Navy.[23] During its short stint in operation, the ship was primarily used to assist in securing forts which had already been taken by other nations, and to transport men, goods and despatches across China.[24] By November, it was agreed by the Admiralty that the services of the vessel would no longer be required, likely due to the winter months restricting marine transport as rivers froze over. On 24 November, the ship departed Hong Kong to return to Australia. Although the time spent manning the vessel proved uneventful, many on board were relieved at not having to settle in for the colder months that the other Australian contingents would endure.

'We are given to understand that the rebellion is about over', wrote a *Sydney Morning Herald* correspondent from Tianjin on 19 September, 'but that there may be a scrimmage or two, in which we shall certainly be honoured with a good place, just to show what we are made of'.[25] For the most part though, the conflict had ended without the Australians participating in any decisive moments. The Boxers lacked weapons beyond agricultural implements and archaic firearms, which meant any success required them to ambush their opponents completely.[26] They were swiftly defeated once well-armed foreign troops entered the country in large numbers. The campaign to relieve Beijing had mostly come to an end on 14 August (the Australians had arrived in Hong Kong to this news), and the Empress Dowager had fled while the Imperial Chinese Army and the Boxers thinned out almost immediately.[27]

---

[21] Nicholls, *Bluejackets and Boxers*, 73.
[22] Able Seaman John Summerfield, Victorian Naval Contingent – China, diary, 22 October 1900, SLV, MS 12676.
[23] Nicholls, *Bluejackets and Boxers*, 81.
[24] Nicholls, *Bluejackets and Boxers*, 82.
[25] 'With the Australians in China' *Sydney Morning Herald*. 20 November 1900, 5.
[26] David Silbey, *The Boxer Rebellion and the Great Game in China* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2012), 73.
[27] Nicholls, *Bluejackets and Boxers*, 56.

For those who had read Chamberlain's confidential telegraph leaked to the papers claiming, 'The matter is of great urgency' and that the ships were needed for the 'protection of life and property', the situation proved something of an anticlimax.

The Revolver or the Bayonet

'Things are all up side down nothing to eat, the sooner we leave the better I will like it', wrote a frustrated Engine Room Artificer, Arthur Livingstone, in his diary on 8 November 1900, in Tianjin.[28] First Class Petty Officer William Underwood shared in Livingstone's pessimism about serving during winter: 'I was in hopes we would not but have given up all hope [of returning home]'.[29] Their wishes would not be granted. Just over a week later, word had spread around that the contingent would be settling in for the winter months.[30] The question of the length of service had not been raised back in Australia at all. It was understood in the recruiting campaign that the men would be available to the British command in China for as long as was required. Both Lyne and McLean were happy for their contingents to remain for the winter, nor did either put a deadline on when they would be required back. Lyne, however, hoped their length of service would at least be 'reasonable'.[31] Otherwise, he was surprised that the question had been brought up at all.[32] Most likely both governments were resigned to their contingents serving for as long as was required, even if federation might impact their status. As the Chinese rivers began to freeze over, Victorians and New South Welshmen alike were stuck in China.

Although the Australians had witnessed relatively little direct fighting, the aftermath of the rebellion had nonetheless been an eye-opening experience for them. Able Seaman William Bertotto, of the Victorian contingent, described 'Great number of corpses of all ages and sizes floating down the river', with the 'smell sometimes unbearable', while Gunner John

[28] Engine Room Artificer Arthur Livingstone, Victorian Naval Contingent – China, diary, 28 August 1900, AWM, PR85/047, 25.
[29] First Class Petty Officer Walter Underwood, Victorian Naval Contingent – China, letter, 6 November 1900, AWM, PRO1515.
[30] Engine Room Artificer Arthur Livingstone, Victorian Naval Contingent – China, diary, 28 August 1900, AWM, PR85/047, 27.
[31] 'The Naval Contingents. Praise from the British Government' *Sydney Morning Herald*. 12 November 1900, 5; 'Our Naval Contingent' *The Age*. 10 November 1900, 9.
[32] 'The Naval Contingents. Praise from the British Government' *Sydney Morning Herald*. 12 November 1900, 5.

White noted their heads were all cut off.[33] First Class Petty Officer Walter Underwood recounted an explosion in a letter home to his brother, Fred Underwood, a sub-editor at Sydney's *Evening News,* where he witnessed 'a great mass of flame and from it came the bodies of men, limbs were falling in all directions … men were running about in flames'.[34] The event had a noticeable effect on Underwood. 'I could not sleep … I tossed and turned all night,' wrote Underwood, who had signed up to the conflict as a bandmaster, 'the cries and shrieks of the injured men and the sight of men being shot in cold blood would rise in front of me. I never want to witness such another scene'.[35] Even if the conflict were effectively over, the Naval Brigades could not have been prepared for the effects of the war on the Chinese people.

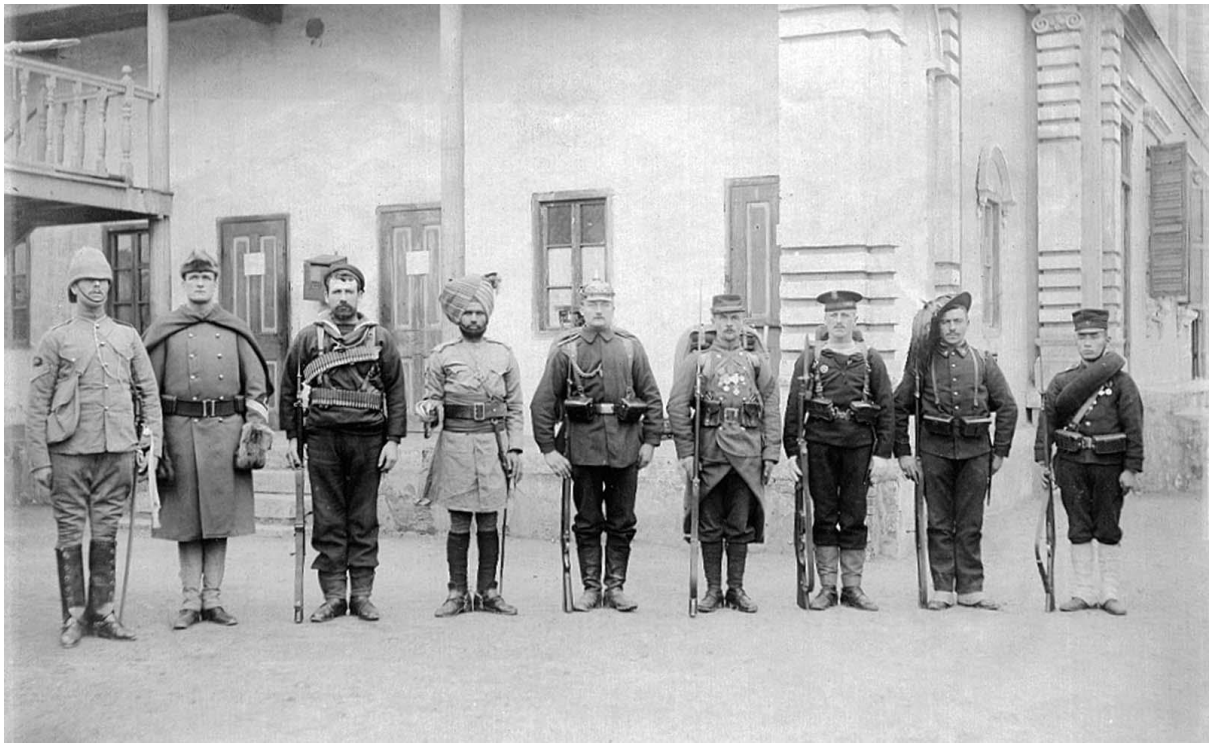

Figure 11: *Soldiers from across the Eight-Nation Alliance with Australia represented third from the left. This image, set to demonstrate British ideas of racial supremacy, was also testament to the changing place of Australia within the world.*
Source: Eight-Nation Alliance, photograph, Wikimedia Commons.

[33] Able Bodied Seaman William Bertotto, Victorian Naval Contingent – China, diary, 16 September 1900, AWM, PR85/020; Gunner John White, Victorian Naval Contingent – China, diary, 15 September 1900, SLV, MS 10660.
[34] First Class Petty Officer Walter Underwood, Victorian Naval Contingent – China, letter, 5 November 1900, AWM, PRO1515.
[35] First Class Petty Officer Walter Underwood, Victorian Naval Contingent – China, letter, 5 November 1900, AWM, PRO1515.

A more pressing issue facing the Australians was what had afflicted so many who had served overseas already, disease and sickness. Mosquitos and all manner of insects were described by Bertotto as 'very troublesome', and much of the water was almost undrinkable with 'a thick green scum on top and smell very high'.[36] When the New South Wales contingent left for Beijing, nine men had to be left behind due to illness, with Bertotto describing how they 'arrived at our quarters scarcely able to crawl, they were left behind without anyone to attend to them and without food'.[37] The first Australian died on 5 October, the New South Wales Light Infantry's Thomas Rogers, whom Livingstone described as being 'bad ever since leaving Sydney'. He was, Livingstone wrote, 'buried today without any fuss. They just put him on a truck and went away', with funds for a memorial stone raised by the contingent.[38] By that time, an estimated 25% of the contingent was sick with dysentery, influenza or any number of symptoms alluded to by the Australian men.[39]

The colonial governments did little to prepare the contingents for these conditions. During the late summer months upon arriving in China, many of the men 'along the line began to feel the effects of the heat, and a good many lay down, unable to proceed any further'.[40] The heat was only exacerbated by the close quarters aboard while travelling to Tianjin.[41] Once the winter months set in, Underwood described wind that 'is very keen and cuts you'.[42] It appeared that the Victorians were at least more prepared than their New South Wales counterparts, having brought wagons and khaki material to turn into uniforms. Livingstone described how 'We are going to give the N.S.W. half of our transport wagons, they are not half as well fitted out as we are with gear', suggesting that the early offer by the Victorian government and less difficult recruiting campaign meant they could better prepare for the conflict itself.[43] The British forces were left to organise winter clothing, obtaining monkey-

[36] Able Bodied Seaman William Bertotto, Victorian Naval Contingent – China, diary, 22 September 1900, AWM, PR85/020.
[37] Able Bodied Seaman William Bertotto, Victorian Naval Contingent – China, diary, 10 October 1900, AWM, PR85/020.
[38] Engine Room Artificer Arthur Livingstone, Victorian Naval Contingent – China, diary, 6 October 1900, AWM, PR85/047, 20; Sergeant Major Bert Blyth, New South Wales Naval Contingent – China, Papers, AWM, 3DRL/2181, Wallet 1, Folder 2.
[39] Nicholls, *Bluejackets and Boxers*, 71.
[40] Able Bodied Seaman William Bertotto, Victorian Naval Contingent – China, diary, 20 September 1900, AWM, PR85/020.
[41] Gunner John White, Victorian Naval Contingent – China, diary, 15 September 1900, SLV, MS 10660.
[42] First Class Petty Officer Walter Underwood, Victorian Naval Contingent – China, letter, 7 November 1900, AWM, PRO1515.
[43] Engine Room Artificer Arthur Livingstone, Victorian Naval Contingent – China, diary, 9 September 1900, AWM, PR85/047, 10.

jackets, socks, moccasins and mittens for the Australian contingents who were completely underprepared for the Chinese winter.[44] This short-sightedness from the colonial governments, particularly New South Wales, indicates that amongst the pressures of raising the contingents, they did not give much thought to the length of the contingents service or what they would face once they made it to China.

The Chinese people also left a noticeable impression on the Australians, who after arriving late to the conflict, were seeing its full effects. Private George F. Jeffery from *Protector* referred to them as 'very funny chaps'.[45] Livingstone wrote in his diary: 'they [The Chinese] all look half starved and a lot of them have wounds and sores on them, the look of them would make you sick'.[46] There was less sympathy for any Boxers or their collaborators, whom the Australians guarded as prisoners and were involved in executing. Bertotto describes handing over the prisoners to the Germans, who made them dig their own graves before they were shot.[47] He found guard duty more uncomfortable, fearing reprisals from Boxer sympathisers in the city.[48] As time went on, some observers became increasingly desensitised to these executions. By November, Underwood wrote how he was 'used to seeing Chinamen being shot', having earlier believed 'shooting is far too humane' in response to Boxers convicted of murder.[49] 'There has been too much sentiment in dealing with her [China]', Underwood wrote in 1901, 'China of to-day actually has no civilisation, no education, no religion and no sense of moral obligation, no knowledge of international law'.[50] It is more likely that the Australians were becoming more desensitised as beheadings were increasingly practiced, an exercise Jeffery notes, the Russians were doing with some frequency.[51]

---

[44] Nicholls, *Bluejackets and Boxers*, 100; Able Bodied Seaman William Bertotto, Victorian Naval Contingent – China, diary, 12 November 1900, AWM, PR85/020.
[45] Private George F. Jeffery, HMCS *Protector* – China, Diary, AWM, 3DRL/2246, 1.
[46] Engine Room Artificer Arthur Livingstone, Victorian Naval Contingent – China, diary, 12 September 1900, AWM, PR85/047, 11.
[47] Able Bodied Seaman William Bertotto, Victorian Naval Contingent – China, diary, 25 October 1900, AWM, PR85/020.
[48] Able Bodied Seaman William Bertotto, Victorian Naval Contingent – China, diary, 25 October 1900, AWM, PR85/020.
[49] First Class Petty Officer Walter Underwood, Victorian Naval Contingent – China, letter, 10 November 1900, AWM, PRO1515.
[50] First Class Petty Officer Walter Underwood, Victorian Naval Contingent – China, letter, 14 January 1901, AWM, PRO1515.
[51] Private George F. Jeffery, HMCS *Protector* – China, Diary, AWM, 3DRL/2246, 4.

The remainder of the Australians' time in China involved a range of duties. These included inspections, police work, guard duty, or gathering any food or necessities to help get through the winter. As in earlier conflicts, the men on the ground had a great deal of difficulty in deciphering any larger plans for the contingent. It was only when winter uniforms were handed out to the contingent that they were resigned to being in China for the winter. However, little suggests they were surprised by what awaited them in China. It showed just how vague and undefined the nature of their contribution was. But, judging by the acceptance of this situation amongst colonial leaders and the men themselves, it seems clear that the Australians understood the value of this adaptability when it came to overseas service in British wars.

In China, the Australians experienced two watershed events that shook the British Empire: Australian federation and the death of Queen Victoria. Captain Tickell had the honour of announcing to the Victorian contingent on New Year's Day 1901 that Edmund Barton would be Australia's first Prime Minister, which elicited three cheers while the officers were treated to a celebratory dinner later that night at the Astor House.[52] Queen Victoria's death later that month was perceived as a more minor event to some Australian servicemen. Livingstone wrote in his diary: 'Received word today that the Queen was dead. Done some washing today, received an xmas card'.[53] On 2 February, a memorial service was held for Queen Victoria where Betotto's main observation was how cold the temperature was ('the thermometer 32 below zero') and that he was 'not sorry when it was finished'. In the dead of winter in China, the seismic changes transforming the empire were of relatively little consequence to those Australian servicemen who were more concerned about their own immediate future.[54]

Echoing the experience of the Sudan contingent of 1885, some of the Australians were also assigned to guard duty on the newly restored railway line between Beijing and Tianjin. Work was slightly more pleasant for the naval men, some even working as ticket collectors on the restored and functioning service.[55] A few of the New South Welshmen took well to this new

[52] First Class Petty Officer Walter Underwood, Victorian Naval Contingent – China, letter, 14 January 1901, AWM, PRO1515.
[53] Engine Room Artificer Arthur Livingstone, Victorian Naval Contingent – China, diary, 24 January 1901, AWM, PR85/047, 37.
[54] Able Bodied Seaman William Bertotto, Victorian Naval Contingent – China, diary, 2 February 1901, AWM, PR85/020.
[55] Nicholls, *Handy Men Up Top*, 20.

occupation. Seventeen of these men remained behind at the end of their deployment to work on the railway full-time, at the plea of the director of the railways.[56] The service was to be six months at the equivalent of ten shillings per day, with quarters and return voyage accommodated for (but not rations).[57] No Victorians offered their services, suggesting that they were more than happy to return home. Notably, Anglo-Russian tensions were already building on these railways and were threatening to spill over, which may have impacted their decision to turn down railway work and to leave sooner rather than later. By April, it was being reported in Australian papers that the allies in China allegedly desired 6,000 foreign troops garrisoning the railways on a permanent basis.[58]

With little to do in China, the Australian naval men rubbed shoulders with Chinese civilians and soldiers from across the world, often in confined circumstances. The contingents witnessed such occasions as the Emperor of Japan's birthday in November, as well as Chinese New Year in February, experiences they unlikely would have been afforded otherwise.[59] The Australians' interaction with troops from the Eight-Nation Alliance, however, were mixed. There was mass looting at the conclusion of the Boxer war, with Australian accounts typically blaming other nations for this behaviour.[60] The Australians though were not totally innocent. Correspondent of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, J. R. Wallace, for instance, secured eighteenth century woodcuts from a temple where the Empress Dowager worshipped.[61] Little would have prevented other members of the contingent from doing the same.

Australian impressions of other nations' soldiers were also varied. Even though these perceptions tended to be coloured by pre-existing prejudices, they also often fluctuated over time. Private George Jeffrey noted some members of *Protector* were frightened of the

[56] 'The Australian Naval Contingent' *Sydney Morning Herald*. 19 April 1901, 7. Bob Nicholls puts this number at 18 in his book, though the *Sydney Morning Herald* correspondent gives 17 names in his report, see Nicholls, *Handy Men Up Top*, 20.
[57] 'The Australian Naval Contingent' *Sydney Morning Herald*. 19 April 1901, 7.
[58] 'Foreign Garrisons for Railways' *Sydney Morning Herald*. 9 April 1901, 7.
[59]AWM, PR85/020; Private George F. Jeffery, HMCS *Protector* – China, Diary, AWM, 3DRL/2246, 5; Able Bodied Seaman William Bertotto, Victorian Naval Contingent – China, diary, 19 February 1900, AWM, PR85/020. Worth noting that Bertotto curiously puts the Emperor of Japan's birthday celebrations as February 11 and may have confused this for another national holiday, see Able Bodied Seaman William Bertotto, Victorian Naval Contingent – China, diary, 11 February 1901.
[60] Robert Bickers, *The Scramble for China: Foreign Devils in the Qing Empire, 1832–1914* (London: Penguin Books, 2011), 350.
[61] These were handed to the British Museum as revealed by a note dated to 1928, see John R. Wallace Papers, State Library of New South Wales, MLMSS 346, Box 3.

Americans early in their service.[62] Underwood complained in his letters that 'The more I see of the Germans, French and Russians I realize they hate us cordially and rejoice in anything to our disadvantage. The Italians, Austrians, Americans and Japs we are on friendly terms, but the German is treacherous and grasping'.[63] By contrast, an earlier letter states: 'With the Germans we get on very well', and this relationship might have deteriorated over time.[64] As reporter for the *Sydney Morning Herald*, John Wallace also reinforced the ideas of cruel, brutal Russians contrasting with respected, lenient Britons.[65] Interestingly, Wallace had a lot of praise for the Japanese soldiers, whom he described as 'the smartest, trimmest and tidiest men, always respectful, smiling and good-natured. They are the heroes of the present campaign, have shown themselves to be fearless, and regarded as little bricks'.[66] It was a perception yet to be influenced by the concerns over Japanese military strength that emerged in the twentieth century.

The awkward alliance between the nations responding to the Boxer crisis made for a tense atmosphere. Underwood appeared to be on edge: 'If you get into a row with a foreigner here you don't argue the point much; the revolver or the bayonet settles it'.[67] At least two members of the New South Wales Contingent were arrested for drunk and disorderly behaviour, with Private F. M. Foster found in such state in the German quarters, where he was handed over to the American police.[68] The mix of close quarters and general idleness proved a dangerous combination. Interactions with foreign troops varied from soldier to soldier but demonstrated that the Australians also developed their perceptions of the various nationalities present based on national type and were willing to paint large groups of foreign troops with the same brush.

How the Australian soldiers identified themselves also varied. Captain Clarke, upon addressing the men early into their time in China, emphasised the point that although they

[62] Private George F. Jeffery, HMCS *Protector* – China, Diary, AWM, 3DRL/2246, 2.
[63] First Class Petty Officer Walter Underwood, Victorian Naval Contingent – China, letter, 14 January 1901, AWM, PRO1515.
[64] First Class Petty Officer Walter Underwood, Victorian Naval Contingent – China, letter, 12 December 1900, AWM, PRO1515.
[65] John R. Wallace Papers, State Library of New South Wales, MLMSS 346, Box 2.
[66] John R. Wallace Papers, State Library of New South Wales, MLMSS 346, Box 2.
[67] First Class Petty Officer Walter Underwood, Victorian Naval Contingent – China, letter, 14 January 1901, AWM, PRO1515.
[68] Sergeant Major Bert Blyth, New South Wales Naval Contingent – China, Papers, AWM, 3DRL/2181, Wallet 1, Folder 2.

were from Victoria and New South Wales, they were all considered British and as such it was their duty to uphold the flag. Underwood summarised that Clarke wanted them seen as 'Englishmen from Australia'.[69] Especially with a larger Indian force deployed in China compared to South Africa, it was necessary to maintain this perception of a united white British Empire in the eyes of its imperial rivals. Lieutenant Roberts of the naval contingent wrote in a letter published in the *Sydney Morning Herald*: 'we are the only white (British) troops in China (excepting some Americans)'.[70] How this idea of Australian colonial and British identity was represented was complex, and not necessarily mutually exclusive. Underwood appears to have taken Clarke's words to heart when a Chinese man asked if he was American to which he responded by stating that he was English.[71] However, Bertotto in his diary describes a scenario where he shared a room with two Japanese and two Chinese men, referring to himself and a comrade as 'two Australians'. This suggests that even though they were being asked to refer to themselves as British when interacting publicly with other nations, some troops retained aspects of their own colonial Australian identity.[72]

Tensions threatened to spill over in the final days of Australian service. The British and Russian rivalry that had been simmering away during the entire conflict looked to finally be erupting into a serious engagement. By 15 March 1901, differences had arisen with the Russians over a section of railway, with all British men called to arms and extra ammunition issued. Bertotto described how 'things began to look serious; and international feeling ran high', while Livingstone overheard how a 'Russian General told one of our officers yesterday that he would like to have our blood, he told him to try it on tomorrow'.[73] New South Wales Naval Brigade members had to be called back from Beijing to bolster numbers. Bertotto, quite worried, observed that Russia had three times the men that Britain did.[74] Fortunately, this threat did not amount to anything serious, and the Australian contingents

[69] Engine Room Artificer Arthur Livingstone, Victorian Naval Contingent – China, diary, 4 September 1900, AWM, PR85/047, 8. First Class Petty Officer Walter Underwood, Victorian Naval Contingent – China, letter, 8 September 1900, AWM, PRO1515.
[70] 'Letter from Lieutenant Roberts' *Sydney Morning Herald*. 18 April 1901, 5.
[71] First Class Petty Officer Walter Underwood, Victorian Naval Contingent – China, letter, 14 January 1901, AWM, PRO1515.
[72] Able Bodied Seaman William Bertotto, Victorian Naval Contingent – China, diary, 14 November 1900, AWM, PR85/020.
[73] Able Bodied Seaman William Bertotto, Victorian Naval Contingent – China, diary, 15 March 1901, AWM, PR85/020; Engine Room Artificer Arthur Livingstone, Victorian Naval Contingent – China, diary, 21 March 1901, AWM, PR85/047, 43.
[74] Able Bodied Seaman William Bertotto, Victorian Naval Contingent – China, diary, 15 March 1901, AWM, PR85/020.

would have been comforted when a notice was posted stating that they were being relieved of their service by the Royal Welsh Fusiliers on 24 March, and could make their exit. Meanwhile, Tianjin devolved into street fighting.[75]

Figure 12: *Sikh and Russian Guards face off over railway tracks, illustrating both the multinational nature of the conflict, as well as the escalating tensions surrounding this uneasy alliance.*
Source: 'China, C. 1900. Russian and Sikh Guards Face One Another', photograph, AWM: A05061.

[75] Able Bodied Seaman William Bertotto, Victorian Naval Contingent – China, diary, 23 March 1901.

If the Australian naval contingents appeared to have escaped potential confrontations with the Russians, when, they returned home aboard SS *Chingtu*, they still had one final trial to overcome. On 26 April as the vessel reached Australian shores, a doctor immediately put it into quarantine. Livingstone wrote in his diary: 'you should have heard the moan that went up, we got 14 days to do'.[76] For some, this was the final straw. It had been a long, cold, and difficult experience in China, and now the end of the mission was being dragged out. Men had to wait for vaccinations to take hold, with some even taking to burning their arms with cigars to appear vaccinated, either to escape quarantine earlier or to avoid what Livingstone disturbingly described as being vaccinated with a pair of scissors.[77] A couple of men broke out of quarantine, only to be quickly jailed, showing there were limits to how long their good behaviour could last.[78] The men had left Australian shores to crowds of people flocking to send their farewells, only to find themselves terrorised by mosquitos, frozen and bored in the Chinese winter, and now quarantined in a country that had federated without them.

The Tide is Turning? Aftermath of the Boxer Rebellion

The Australian public were well informed of events unfolding in China. The *Sydney Morning Herald* in New South Wales and *The Age* in Victoria both provided substantial coverage with updates from correspondents in the region, including once the New South Wales contingent had split off to go to Beijing.[79] The South Australians aboard *Protector* also had representation in the press through their own correspondent reporting back to the *Adelaide Observer*. Though no doubt of great interest to those reading, the news of the relief of the legations before the contingents had even arrived put an immediate dampener on those hoping for deeper Australian involvement. Any reports coming from the contingents back to the colonies took a month to arrive, and so most of the information they provided was out of date. Nevertheless, if General Gordon's death felt like an event they were sharing as it unfolded, then having colonial forces posted in both South Africa and China must have felt to many Australians as if they had truly arrived on the global stage.

---

[76] Engine Room Artificer Arthur Livingstone, Victorian Naval Contingent – China, diary, 26 April 1901, AWM, PR85/047, 48.
[77] Engine Room Artificer Arthur Livingstone, Victorian Naval Contingent – China, diary, 7 May 1901, AWM, PR85/047, 51; Engine Room Artificer Arthur Livingstone, Victorian Naval Contingent – China, diary, 14 May 1901, AWM, PR85/047, 51.
[78] Engine Room Artificer Arthur Livingstone, Victorian Naval Contingent – China, diary, 14 May 1901, AWM, PR85/047, 51.
[79] 'The Naval Contingent in China' *Sydney Morning Herald*. 12 December 1900, 7.

On 2 November, *Protector* had been released to return to Adelaide.[80] Governor Tennyson was assured by the Naval Commander-in-Chief from China, Edward Seymour: 'Good services, been most useful. Is efficient and well-kept man-of-war, and reflects great credit on captain, officers, and men'.[81] As far as Tennyson was concerned, *Protector*'s crew had done all that could have been asked of them. In writing to Chamberlain, he stated how the Naval Commander-in-Chief's words had:

> [G]iven great pleasure throughout this colony … the fact that Her Majesty's Colonial Ship has been in active service with other men of war of Her Majesty's Navy, and has done good work under Imperial Command, may lend to show the value of our Naval Reserve (trained in a Colonial Ship) and be another bond of union between the various portions of the Empire.[82]

The South Australian government's expectations of *Protector*'s services were tempered throughout the campaign, and they were more appreciative of the opportunity than concerned with how the vessel was used. Being incorporated into the Royal Navy was already an honour for the now somewhat antiquated vessel, but gaining experience serving alongside British vessels was what the colonial navies had been clamouring for since their inception. Hoisting the white ensign was a moment the colony could genuinely celebrate.

The honours did not end there. *Protector*'s arrival in Sydney on 18 December 1900 coincided with the upcoming Commonwealth inauguration. As pointed out by *The Advertiser*, it was 'the only Australian warship that has seen foreign service with a British squadron, and this fact would render her an object of peculiar interest during the festivities'.[83] Technically, the South Australian government had little control over the gunboat's fate because it was still under imperial control until it returned to South Australia.[84] The South Australian government raised no objections and were all too happy to also have their contribution positioned as a central part of these festivities. However, for those on board who wished to 'be at home at Christmas time', they found they only just missed the age-old promise that their war would be over by the festive season.[85] By 6 January, *Protector* was 'once more at her old berth in the Port Adelaide river'. Although her sailors received a great welcome, *The*

[80] Able Bodied Seaman William Bertotto, Victorian Naval Contingent – China, diary, 11 February 1901, 5.
[81] 'The Protector' *The Advertiser*. 10 November 1900, 6.
[82] South Australia to the Colonial Office, 14 November 1900, Series CO 13. South Australia: Original Correspondence, 1831–1900, AJCP.
[83] 'A Nation's Birthday' *The Advertiser*. 19 December 1900, 4.
[84] 'The Protector' *The Advertiser*. 20 December 1900, 4.
[85] 'The Gunboat Protector. Arrival at Sydney' *The Advertiser*. 19 December 1900, 5.

Advertiser considered them 'unfortunate in not having had an opportunity of fighting their ship, or of taking a share in any hostile demonstration on shore'.[86] Perhaps most indicative of the South Australians' experience was Jeffery's diary, where he wrote about witnessing 'one of the sights of a lifetime'.[87] These remarks referred not to his experience in serving alongside the Royal Navy, nor the international event that unfolded in the distant land of China, but rather the federation celebrations held in Sydney.

British command knew how to appease the colonial governments once it required their contingents to stay in China during the winter months. Commander-in-Chief of the China station, Edward Seymour, complemented the New South Wales forces for their 'most useful for police work, and also for guarding the legation', while Commandant of the British forces, Alfred Gaselee stated the Victorians 'were invaluable. Discipline excellent. Am very glad to have them with China field forces'.[88] No doubt such statements made the decision to keep the forces serving in China easier to make. Even though colonial governments had little issue with the contingents remaining in the service, the complaints about their treatment in China were enough to penetrate discussion in the Victorian Legislative Council. Its members, however, did not wish to interfere with the war effort unless it were an emergency, or these criticisms were from a more authoritative source.[89] Otherwise, neither the New South Wales nor Victorian parliaments spent any further time discussing the decision.

The moment of federation coinciding with the deployment of Australian contingents to South Africa and China inspired reflection. The speech given by General Lorne Campbell to the Victorian contingent at the Commonwealth Dinner held in the Astor House in China, emphasised how fitting it was that federation had occurred during a time when maintenance of the empire was being fought for in China and South Africa, for the 'upholding of the national flag and national honor'.[90] An *Evening News* article paraphrased Captain Frederick Tickell's response, his speech confirming that the nation would look forward to the growth of its burdens and duties. 'Australia was not only ready but willing to face those responsibilities, the events of the past fifteen months had proved'.[91] Tickell framed colonial

[86] 'Welcome Home Again' *The Advertiser*. 7 January 1901, 4.
[87] Private George F. Jeffery, HMCS *Protector* – China, Diary, AWM, 3DRL/2246, 8.
[88] 'The Naval Contingents. Praise from the British Government' *Sydney Morning Herald*. 12 November 1900, 5; 'Our Naval Contingent' *The Age*. 10 November 1900, 9.
[89] Victoria*, Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Council, 20 November 1900, 81–2.
[90] 'With the Australians' *Evening News*. 19 March 1901, 7.
[91] 'With the Australians' *Evening News*. 19 March 1901, 7.

responsibilities as including the despatch of military resources for foreign conflicts, marking a new era with Australia more frequently defending the empire.

While federation was a symbolically significant moment of emerging national identity, it had little impact on Australian involvement in the Boxer Rebellion itself. As early as January 1901, it looked likely the contingent would return before March anyway. The naval and military forces of the colonies remained under independent colonial control until 1 March when they would be transferred over to the Commonwealth.[92] Such administrative arrangements preceded any changes to the existing service of the contingents in China and, as it happened, the contingent had already been divided.[93] Discussions over the identity attached to these forces may have occurred had the colonies been required to send more contingents, as would become the case with South Africa, but there were already enough complications with the transfer of matters from the state to federal level. The men in China remained under the control of their home colonies, now their home states.[94]

The outcomes of the Boxer Rebellion did little to quell Australian security fears. The whole affair significantly damaged China; its imperial system weakened while it emerged severely indebted to the foreign powers after signing the 'Boxer Protocol' on 7 September 1901.[95] Foreign presence in the region also increased in the aftermath of the Boxer affair. In 1902, Britain signed an Anglo-Japanese treaty, ensuring it would go to war with Russia should a third power join Russia's side in any potential war with Japan. The treaty supported Australian journalist, George Morrison's, long-standing theory that Russia was Britain's most significant enemy within Asia.[96] The Australian contingents had already found themselves embroiled in escalating Russian and British tensions when they were quickly mobilised to protect the railway in Tianjin. Although they were sent to a war against the Boxers, these contingents had been at the centre of larger geo-political struggles.

[92] The impact of federation on the states defensive planning is discussed in the following chapter. Jeffrey Grey, *A Military History of Australia* (3rd Edn., New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 66–7.
[93] Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, 66–7.
[94] These complications are discussed in more detail in Chapter Seven.
[95] James Hevia, *English Lessons: The Pedagogy of Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century China* (USA: Duke University Press, 2003), 193.
[96] Peter Thompson and Robert Macklin, *The Man Who Died Twice: The Life and Adventures of Morrison of Peking* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2004), 204.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* was more optimistic about the outcome of the conflict. 'We were told that our prestige was lost, that the trade was rapidly slipping from our hands, and that Russia and not England was looked to by the Chinese as the pre-dominating power in Asia', it reported on 16 April 1901. 'To-day the tide is turning. We are assured that Great Britain is alive to the situation, and it does at least seem probable that in the valley of the Yang-tse, at any rate, British interests will not be without energetic representatives'.[97] Australia continued down the path of immigration restriction following federation — one of the earliest major pieces of legislation passed was the Immigration Restriction Act, encompassing a dictation test.[98] Still, some authors continued to look to China with a great deal of wariness. The same year as the Anglo-Japanese treaty, British explorer, Archibald Colquhoun, wrote in his book *The Mastery of the Pacific* that 'The utilisation of the large force lying dormant in China is one of the great problems of the future and upon its solution depends to a great extent the future of the Pacific'.[99] Australian leaders could only hope that their service in China further guaranteed British protection would come should they need it.

Conclusion: A Different Form of Service

The *South Australian Register*, proudly farewelling its 'fifth contingent', expressed like other colonial voices before it, that the departure of their contingent marked a new epoch in how the colonies defended the empire.[100] The paper's editors had more reason to believe this idea was true than most. For South Australia, it marked the latest in a series of contributions beginning with the deployment of the colony's first contingent to South Africa in late 1899. When *Protector* returned only a few months later, it did not matter that it had been utilised for little more than transport, it was enough of an honour being assimilated into the Royal Navy for a short period of time. Many colonial leaders stressed the importance of being involved in such an international conflict, viewing it as the opportunity for their forces to gain valuable experience. But they were also proud that Australians had well represented both the British Empire, and emerging nation, on the world stage.

---

[97] 'Our Interests in China' *Sydney Morning Herald*. 16 April 1901, 4.
[98] John Hirst, *The Sentimental Nation: The Making of the Australian Commonwealth* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2000), 285.
[99] Archibald R. Colquhoun, *The Mastery of the Pacific* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1902), 420.
[100] 'Our Fifth Contingents' *South Australian Register.* 7 August 1900, 6.

Of course, this discipline was not totally embodied by the men stationed in China. Their service was the source of a great deal of frustration. Diary sources confirm Australian naval troops continually jostled against those from other nations, their first experiences of serving aside such a diverse group resulting in continual friction. But these same troops also realised just how quickly they could be thrust into a deteriorating situation between imperial powers. This flexibility was demonstrated during the railway dispute with Russia. The Boxer Rebellion revealed just how precarious the British position was in China, and how this often manifested in escalating tensions. The combination of little direct combat, uncomfortable conditions, uneasy co-operation with others, and an uncertain future surrounding their stay in China meant that even these supposedly disciplined men became increasingly agitated at their service.

If the situation in China could change at the drop of the hat, what prevented the Australian colonies from being thrust into another war in the immediate future? The Boxer Rebellion raised, but ultimately failed to answer many of the persistent questions surrounding the nature of these colonial contributions. Instead, the conflict reveals a distinct moment when the colonies were embroiled in concurrent conflicts, one that illustrated the extent of their desire to gain as much valuable experience serving alongside Britain as possible. But it also showed the colonies' eagerness to be represented in international developments that might affect their own position. With no indication that their involvement in imperial wars would end with China and South Africa, this conflict raised concerns about just how far the colonies would commit to the precedent they appeared to be setting for themselves. Perhaps the Boxer Rebellion pointed towards the future of Australia's role if it were set along this path, a duty where the new nation was not defined by its engagement in combat, but rather its symbolic presence in foreign wars.

Chapter Seven:

Creeping Indifference: Australia and the 'Third Phase' of the South African War

As the Boxer contingents returned to Australian shores, no clear end to the ongoing war against the Boers looked imminent. As noted in previous chapters, contemporary commentators assumed the war would be over as early as 1899. After a difficult start, most observers were also inclined to believe that Britain had corrected its course during the early months of 1900. But the Boer leaders dug in their heels. Guerrilla tactics underpinned their effort to prolong the war, the Boers profiting from their knowledge of the South African countryside. The British approach to the last years of the war was defined by their adoption of a 'scorched earth' policy, controversially consisting of tactics such as the burning of civilian farms and utilisation of concentration camps to force a resolution. As Australia became a nation in 1901, it had contingents serving alongside Britain in both China and South Africa. It was naturally a moment rich in symbolism. Many Australian leaders were eager to make an example of Australia's ongoing solidarity with Britain despite the constitutional changes taking place through federation. But for all the grand expressions of imperial sentiment, the practical nature of these Australian contributions and their wider purpose came under closer scrutiny the longer the South African War dragged on.

Meanwhile, amidst these changing circumstances, the war was taking on a more complex position in the Australian colonies. Member for Waratah in the New South Wales parliament, Arthur Griffith, and his case against the *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate* best illustrates these transforming attitudes. Griffith brought a libel case against the paper after it had accused him of being a 'mouth-piece' for the anti-war league. His petition (or as they called it, 'manifesto') denounced Britain's 'devastation of the Boer territories house by house and farm by farm', and the 'great loss of human life', which 'could not and cannot be justified by any grounds of military necessity'.[1] The case did not make it to the courts until December 1902, once the South African War had been over for some months. Griffith was ultimately unsuccessful. As reported by *The Newcastle Herald*, Justice Pring, who presided

[1] 'Free Speech or License?', *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*. 8 February 1902, 4.

over the case, summarised his view of this surfacing anti-war movement. It was 'the bounden duty of every subject to stand by the nation until, at all events, the war was over', Pring stated, 'Then if the war had been improperly brought about, as the plaintiff had suggested in his pamphlet, was the time to bring to book those who were responsible'.[2] That Griffith felt able to bring his case marked the shift in public attitudes towards the war. The climate surrounding the war since the heights of public enthusiasm during Black Week had truly changed.

This chapter picks up the story of the South African War from where we left off in Chapters Three and Four. Focusing on the Australian contribution to the war from mid-1900 onwards, it investigates the changing nature of the conflict, and the transformation of Australian attitudes towards Britain's campaign following the capture of Pretoria. How these attitudes manifested has been the subject of much historical inquiry over the years, due to the war coinciding with federation, naturally a seminal moment in the formation of Australian national identity.[3] Historian L. M. Field best defined the question of how far Australian attitudes had shifted in his 1979 book *The Forgotten War* where his depiction of the Commonwealth troops marching through 'undemonstrative streets' was accompanied by the statement: 'It is difficult to say whether the Commonwealth troops were victims of apathy or antipathy'.[4] Historians Barbara Penny and Chris Connolly both debated this subject in a series of articles in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Penny argued that Australia was fully committed to the war effort in South Africa for its entire duration, while protestations (such as Griffith's) were limited in scope and impact. Connolly disagreed with this assessment. He argued that the Australian governments merely met British demands while the Australian public treated the war with an overall sense of muted enthusiasm.[5] This chapter explores these important debates. However, it frames them in terms of how these changing attitudes impacted Australia's ability to continue contributing towards Britain's imperial mission in South Africa, and potential future conflicts.

---

[2] 'Alleged Libel. Verdict for Defendants. Griffith V Newcastle Herald. Mr. Justice Ping Concurs.', *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*. 9 December 1902, 5.
[3] Helen Irving, *To Constitute a Nation: A Cultural History of Australia's Constitution* (Cambridge: The Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, 1997), 6.
[4] L. M. Field, *The Forgotten War: Australian Involvement in the South African Conflict of 1899–1902* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1979), 149.
[5] C. N. Connolly, 'Class, Birthplace, Loyalty: Australian Attitudes to the Boer War', *Historical Studies* 18, no. 71 (1978): 210–32; Barbara Penny, 'Australia's Reactions to the Boer War: A Study in Colonial Imperialism', *The Journal of British Studies* 7, no. 1 (1967): 97–130; Barbara Penny, 'The Australian Debate on the Boer War', *Historical Studies* 14, no. 56 (1971): 526–45.

As such, this chapter argues that the changing nature of the South African War, and primarily its development into a prolonged guerrilla conflict during the latter half of 1900, revealed the limitations of Australia providing contingents for imperial wars over the long-term. These limitations were particularly brought to bear when Australian contributions were foremost driven by the need to meet the British governments requirements, which seemed to be showing few signs of slowing down. This situation revealed the difficulty of maintaining a heightened imperial sentiment over an extended period. Although the Australian colonial governments (and the federal government in 1902) sent additional contingents to South Africa right up until the war's conclusion in 1902, they did so amidst diminishing enthusiasm and increasing weariness about the conflict. These limitations primarily revealed themselves in three ways: first, Australia's ability to continue to send a professional standard of men to serve alongside Britain's army; second, declining public enthusiasm for the war, either through apathy or antipathy, as it continued into its later stages; and, finally, the Australian troops' perception of the war fluctuating between the support of Britain's imperial mission and the war as an opportunity to escape economic hardships in Australia. Through these three developments, the prolonged nature of the South African War demonstrated the limitations of Australian enthusiasm for British imperial wars, and how local issues dominated Australian concerns once their responsibility to support Britain in such an emergency had been met.

'Into a Hornets Nest': Prolonging the War

Some opportunistic Australians predicted the war would effectively be over by mid-1900. A month after Roberts claimed Pretoria, a vessel carrying roughly 100 passengers prepared to leave Victorian shores for South Africa. Instead of carrying military contingents, however, the Blue Line steamer *Yarrawonga* carried artisans such as builders and carpenters hoping to secure employment, in their words, 'on specc'.[6] *The Argus* newspaper interviewed some of those boarding. The men primarily hailed from Melbourne and Sydney, were mostly in the dark about South Africa, and were entirely unsure as to what awaited them there. Two of those interviewed by the paper admitted to being swept up in the news of the relief of Mafeking, having booked their passage in its immediate aftermath. Now, they were not so

[6] 'Exodus to South Africa', *The Argus*. 4 July 1900, 5.

sure. As *The Argus* concluded: 'it would be a long time before South Africa became sufficiently settled to afford the best opportunity for the workingman'.[7] It remained an uncertain proposition, but the possibility of economic relief was tantalising for these Australian workers who viewed the uncertainty surrounding the South African War as an opportunity.

No consensus existed in Australia about when the South African War would end. The situation was not all that much clearer on the ground in South Africa. Captain Maurice Hilliard, of the New South Wales Mounted Rifles, wrote to a fellow officer back home in July 1900: 'of matters generally you will know far more than me'.[8] Public enthusiasm for the war had reached its height as Australian contingents helped to reverse the Black Week defeats. These men participated in a chain of victories under the command of celebrated British military leaders Herbert Kitchener and Frederick Roberts. The first half of 1900 was a time of peak enthusiasm for the war.[9] It was also the point at which speaking out against the war had become most difficult. As Reid read Chamberlain's telegram celebrating the 'action of the colonies' that were inaugurating 'a new era in relations with the mother country', there was a sense that what the Australian colonies had sought to accomplish had been achieved.[10] On 15 October, Roberts informed the colonial troops that the 'war, as a war, was over so all those that had urgent cases can go home', but he suggested those that could remain do so.[11] This was enough for Private James Lawn, serving in the Victorian Mounted Rifles, to hand in his application to return home the very next day.[12]

The second half of 1900 was riddled with signs the war might be coming to an end. Field Reporter, Banjo Paterson, penned the poem 'With French to Kimberley', which appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 29 September 1900. Centred around the successful movement of Field Marshal John French, as he drove Boer troops away from Kimberley, Australians reading the lines: 'Aye, French was through to Kimberley! And ere the day was done / We saw that Diamond City stand, lit by the evening sun', could be forgiven for taking

[7] 'Exodus to South Africa', *The Argus*. 4 July 1900, 5.
[8] Captain M A Hilliard to a Colonel of the New South Wales Military Forces, letter, 11 July 1900, 15. Located in AWM 1 4/22.
[9] For more details on this enthusiasm, see Chapter Four.
[10] New South Wales*, Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Council, 12 June 1900, 4.
[11] Private James Lawn, First Victorian Contingent – South Africa, Papers, AWM, PR88/127.
[12] Private James Lawn, First Victorian Contingent – South Africa, Papers, AWM, PR88/127.

this to mean the war was indeed over.[13] Paterson himself was one of many war correspondents who returned to Australia that year. Prominent reporters such as W. T. Reay and Frank Wilkinson would no longer be in South Africa by the end of 1900, while W. J. Lambie had been killed by the Boers in February 1900.[14] Wilkinson, in particular, was eager to see his work from South Africa published in full, doing so the following year, before the war's end.[15] Meanwhile, Paterson embarked upon a lecture tour of Australia describing his experience.[16] More opportunistic figures, such as the watchmaker and jeweller, F. H. Smith, gave away free medals (titled 'The National Commemorative Medal') with the purchase of goods that acknowledged the duration of the war as spanning the years, 1899–1900.[17] During October, the New South Wales government was in communication with the Colonial Office regarding the organisation of a day of observance to celebrate the conclusion of the war. At that stage however, the British government had not made any plans.[18]

The Australian governments' most immediate concern with the South African War was men remaining in that country for any longer than necessary. In New South Wales' Legislative Assembly on 31 July 1900, William Lyne stated: 'I cabled some time ago to the Imperial authorities in South Africa that there was a very strong objection to the offering of any special inducements to our troops to remain in that country, and not to return to this colony'.[19] Specifically, he did not want a large number of 'young men' induced to remain in South Africa, particularly when the prospect of despatching naval men to China was being discussed the very same day.[20] Australian ministers' concerns lay in British command disbanding contingents before they returned to Australia. The New South Wales government stressed as much to the Colonial Office.[21] The Victorian government expressed the same. In a memorandum detailing the conditions under which contingents were raised for South Africa, forwarded to the Colonial Office, their representatives stated that: 'This government

[13] A. B. Paterson, 'With French to Kimberley', *Sydney Morning Herald*. 29 September 1900, 4.
[14] Field, *The Forgotten War*, 139.
[15] See Frank Wilkinson, *Australia at the Front: A Colonial View of the Boer War* (London: John Long, 1901); Frank Wilkinson, *Australian Cavalry: The N.S.W. Lancer Regiment and the First Australian Horse* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1901).
[16] 'War Lecture', *The Telegraph*. 7 February 1901, 5.
[17] 'National Commemorative Medal' *Queensland Times, Ipswich Herald and General Advertiser*. 7 July 1900, 4.
[18] The Earl of Beauchamp to the Colonial Office, 23 October 1900, Series CO 201. New South Wales Correspondence, 1782–1900, AJCP.
[19] New South Wales*, Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 31 July 1900, 1432 (William Lyne).
[20] New South Wales*, Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 31 July 1900, 1432–4 (William Lyne).
[21] The Earl of Beauchamp to the Colonial Office, 9 October 1900, Series CO 201. New South Wales Correspondence, 1782–1900, AJCP.

does not wish, however, to encourage discharge in South Africa'.[22] Queensland too was wary of troops joining new forces.[23] Discontent was also brewing over the length of Australian service, and troops in South Africa sought guarantees that they could return after the twelve months initially stated.[24] Most had not made arrangements for the war lasting as long as it had. An Australian politician serving in South Africa, Colonel Kenneth Mackay, warned Lyne in the postscript of a confidential telegram that if the option to return home were not given, 'I feel sure trouble must take place'.[25]

The ambiguity surrounding further Australian commitments to South Africa created headaches for the colonial governments throughout 1900. During September, Victoria witnessed such a surge of men who had completed sick leave and reapplied to return to South Africa that its government contacted Chamberlain to ask for 'Definite instructions' on how to handle them. The Victorian government believed their re-application unnecessary at this present stage of the war.[26] The concern was great enough that an anxious Victorian government followed this telegram up nearly two weeks later.[27] Such enthusiasm for re-enlisting raised suspicions that men were seeking opportunities in South Africa outside the bounds of the war itself. As pointed out by *The Daily Telegraph*:

> For the men who were sent to Africa on this understanding to seek their own personal interests there and give the eternal go-by to the colonies, whose loyalty and patriotism their despatch was intended to prove, would be consequently somewhat of an anti-climax to the great movement connected with their departure.[28]

Colonial governments were raising concerns surrounding the undermining of these contingents as early as July 1900. Reid summed these up in the Legislative Assembly: 'I am only anxious that this precedent should not be discredited by any endeavour to turn what

[22] Lord Brassey to the Colonial Office, 8 September 1900, Series CO 309. Victoria: Original Correspondence, 1851–1900, AJCP.
[23] Queensland to the Colonial Office, 11 October 1900, Series CO 234. Queensland: Original Correspondence, 1859–1900, AJCP.
[24] Major General J A Kenneth Mackay, New South Wales Imperial Bushmen's Contingent – South Africa, Papers, AWM, PR 87/207, Box 3.
[25] Major General J A Kenneth Mackay, New South Wales Imperial Bushmen's Contingent – South Africa, letter, 1 May 1901 AWM, PR 87/207, Box 3.
[26] Lord Brassey to the Colonial Office, 5 September 1900, Series CO 309. Victoria: Original Correspondence, 1851–1900, AJCP.
[27] Lord Brassey to the Colonial Office, 18 September 1900, Series CO 309. Victoria: Original Correspondence, 1851–1900, AJCP.
[28] 'The Return of the Contingents', *The Daily Telegraph*. 4 July 1900, 6.

was a patriotic impulse, and to a certain extent an act of self-sacrifice into what might be really a scheme of emigration from Australia of the best elements we possess', to which member for Glen Innes, Francis Wright added: 'At our expense!'.[29] Reid laid out his position clearly: 'I do claim that the contingents should be disbanded in Australia — that they should not be disbanded under any circumstances in South Africa'.[30]

There were still moments of Australian achievement to celebrate during 1900. Two such occasions involved members of the Tasmanian Imperial Bushmen's contingent, John Bisdee and Guy Wylly, who became early Australian recipients of the Victoria Cross. Both men were part of an escort for a supply detachment at Zwartkloof when they were ambushed by Boer forces as they entered a narrow pass. Both Bisdee and Wylly gave their horses to wounded members of their force, with Bisdee assisting Captain Brooke, the man partially responsible for failing to notice signs of nearby Boers and leading them into the trap.[31] When Hobart's *The Mercury* interviewed Bisdee about this honour upon his return to Australia, he stated that he only discovered he had been awarded the Victoria Cross a few days before departing South Africa when he read the *Cape Argus.*[32] Other Australians continued to face similar adversity. Following the siege of the Elands River camp in early August by Commandant Koos de la Rey, Major Tunbridge reported back to New South Wales to list the ten casualties of the battle.[33] Most were caused by fragments of shells, Tunbridge praising his 'untiring' medical team working under constant shell fire. He passed on the message that the British officer commanding, Lieutenant Colonel Charles Hore, told him of the Australians: 'I could not speak too highly of them'.[34]

The battles at Zwartkloof and Elands River signalled a new phase of the South African War. The Boers had already achieved some success utilising guerrilla tactics from March and July 1900 under Generals Christiaan De Wet and Jacobus de la Rey respectively.[35] As territorial

[29] New South Wales, *Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 3 July 1900, 580 (George Reid and Francis Wright).
[30] New South Wales, *Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 3 July 1900, 581 (George Reid).
[31] Craig Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War: The War in South Africa, 1899–1902* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2002), 152.
[32] 'Tasmanian Victorian Cross Heroes. How Bisdee and Wylly Won the Honour.', *The Mercury*. 14 December 1900, 4.
[33] Major W H Tunbridge to the Commandant of the New South Wales Defence Force, letter, 15 September 1900, 8. Located in AWM 1 4/23.
[34] Major W H Tunbridge to the Commandant of the New South Wales Defence Force, letter, 15 September 1900, 5, 7. Located in AWM 1 4/23.
[35] Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War* (London: Abacus, 1992), 472.

advantage fell away due to the British advance, senior Boer commanders utilised more mobile forces able to strike at British communications infrastructure. Historians have speculated upon this decision by Boer Generals to prolong the war, from what many of their leaders pointed out, was a disadvantageous position. John J. Stephens argues that the Boer leaders were motivated to preserve their concept of racial supremacy, particularly following the breakdown of peace negotiations on 28 February 1901.[36] Meanwhile, Leopold Scholtz states that senior Boer commanders such as de la Ray and General Jan Smuts had clear designs on a third Boer Republic in the Cape Colony, effectively bringing together one South Africa under a Boer government.[37] Historian Thomas Pakenham, meanwhile, argues that the only way to counter Roberts' scorched earth campaign was to advance into the Cape Colony and Natal, where such tactics could hardly be utilised.[38]

British commanders were forced to adapt to the changes in Boer tactics. Roberts handed command over to Kitchener in November 1900, though neither were particularly eager to relieve the Australian troops of their duty.[39] Roberts had been popular as a leader. Journalist Frank Wilkinson wrote in his account of the conflict: 'We Australians owe him a deep debt of gratitude. He was the first to openly recognise us as useful allies. He made life tolerable for us in South Africa'. Kitchener, on the other hand, was an unknown figure to Wilkinson.[40] Roberts did not make a great impression on all the Australians. Writing home, Alexander McQueen stated in a postscript:

> I may say, although it may seem almost disloyal, that universal satisfaction is felt among the troops that Bobs [Roberts] has given over command as the men are heartsick of the shocking easy way he played with the Boers — [Redvers] Buller is the only man that has really done much here. Kitchener is hoped to do a lot and is very severe.[41]

Meanwhile, President of the South African Republic, Paul Kruger, fled to Mozambique during September hoping to raise further support for the war from Europe.[42] President of the Orange Free State, Martinus Steyn, had other ideas. He continued carrying out the Boer

---

[36] John J. Stephens, *Fuelling the Empire: South Africa's Gold and the Road to War* (United Kingdom: John Wiley & Sons, 2003), 278–9.
[37] Leopold Scholtz, *Why the Boers Lost the War* (United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 112–3.
[38] Pakenham, *The Boer War*, 473.
[39] Field, *The Forgotten War*, 140.
[40] Wilkinson, *Australia at the* Front, 234, 237.
[41] Alexander McQueen – South Africa, letter, 12 January 1901, SLV, MS 9662, 2.
[42] Pakenham, *The Boer War*, 458.

resistance in this new phase of guerrilla tactics, making good on his pre-war promise that once 'at war we will continue to the bitter end'.[43]

Australia's own campaign received a boost with the return of the first contingents by the end of 1900. Their departure from South Africa had commenced earlier in the year with injured and ill soldiers, but by December, most of these troops made their way back to Australia having served the designated twelve months. The celebrations greeting these returning forces marked a renewed enthusiasm for the war, which had noticeably declined during more recent troop departures. Chief Justice of Tasmania, J. R. Dodds, wrote confidentially to Chamberlain at the Colonial Office to how the Tasmanian contingent's return had been 'witnessed by many thousands of people, including visitors from many parts of the colony'.[44] When their transport, SS *Harlech Castle*, left Melbourne for Hobart, the contingent volunteered to replace the stokers who had deserted or were drunk and unfit for duty. Pronounced by Dodds as 'creditable to the men of the Contingent', the situation could just as easily have spoken to how eager these troops were to return home.[45]

The incoming Australian contingents would have to adjust to a new form of warfare, what Recruiting Sergeant, Thomas Patrick described as 'quietly putting our heads into a hornets [*sic*] nest'.[46] Mounted troops became the most effective means of combating the more mobile Boer forces, yet the necessary resources and specialisation were more difficult to organise the longer the war went on.[47] Roberts brought in more than 12,000 horses from Australia, as well as Argentina and Britain, with roughly 66% of these horses ridden to death by the end of the war or put down on account of rampant diseases.[48] By the end of December 1900, it was clear Kitchener required more men from the Australian colonies, even after having released many of the initial contingents. It was revealed in the *Sydney Morning Herald* that Kitchener, while praising the Tasmanian contingents, was 'suggesting' that their

[43] Quoted in Scholtz, *Why the Boers Lost the War*, 134.
[44] Tasmania to the Colonial Office, 8 December 1900, Series CO 280. Tasmania: Original Correspondence (Secretary of State), 1824–1900, AJCP.
[45] Tasmania to the Colonial Office, 8 December 1900, Series CO 280. Tasmania: Original Correspondence (Secretary of State), 1824–1900, AJCP.
[46] Recruiting Sergeant, Thomas Patrick, Prince of Wales Light Horse Regiment – South Africa, letter, 18 November 1901, SLV, MS 10164.
[47] Field, *The Forgotten* War, 140.
[48] Bill Nasson, *The War for South Africa: The Anglo-Boer War, 1899–1902* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2010). 169. For more details on the role of horses in the South African War, see Sandra Swart, *Riding High: Horses, Humans and History in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2010), 103–137.

strength be kept up by further drafts. 'Lord Kitchener specially asks that the men may take their horses with them', the article ran. It was a request that showed how under resourced the British Army was for the prolonged conflict.[49] The colonies were being urged to further commit to the war in South Africa.

Although federation was less than a month away, some colonial governments nonetheless replied immediately and independently. The Tasmanian government, reinvigorated by Kitchener's praise, quickly began putting together another contingent by announcing they were taking applications.[50] The response to Chamberlain, sent on 26 December, suggested '12 months or until end of war probably would be acceptable' for this service.[51] On 27 December, South Australia's rapid response complying with Kitchener's suggestion was met with the scrawling by a member of the Colonial Office that they were: 'Much grateful at prompt action'.[52] There still appeared a great deal of enthusiasm for making further contributions to the South African War despite the ongoing difficulties with getting men to return to Australia. The timing too seemed strange. Defensive co-ordination would need to undergo significant transformation once taken over by a federal government. Many in the colonies would have been surprised such a call was coming from Kitchener at all when news came through that Roberts' departing address at Cape Town had described the war a 'practically over'.[53]

'If Representations Were Made to Us': War and Federation

The federation movement, which culminated in the colonies coming together on 1 January 1901, occurred while many Australians were serving in South Africa and China. Despite this, both conflicts have often sat in the background in histories of this momentous shift in Australia's political landscape. Histories of federation have taken note of the role of Australian contingents in Britain's struggles in South Africa, as well as their praise and

[49] 'Keeping Contingents Up To Their Strength', *Sydney Morning Herald*. 28 December 1900, 5.
[50] 'Keeping Contingents Up To Their Strength', *Sydney Morning Herald*. 28 December 1900, 5.
[51] Tasmania to the Colonial Office, 26 December 1900, Series CO 280. Tasmania: Original Correspondence (Secretary of State), 1824–1900, AJCP.
[52] South Australia to the Colonial Office, 27 December 1900, Series CO 13. South Australia: Original Correspondence, 1831–1900, AJCP.
[53] 'Lord Roberts's at Cape Town', *The Argus,* 17 January 1901, 5.

participation within federation proceedings.[54] The symbolic importance of Australian involvement in two concurrent imperial wars also penetrated the language surrounding federation itself, particularly in relation to the reinforcement of the Anglo-Australian relationship. However, none of the processes of handing colonial responsibilities over to the newly established federal government occurred overnight. For much of the remainder of the South African War, Australian contributions would still primarily be shaped by the individual states while the transfer of defence matters to the Commonwealth took place.

Defence has often been considered as being relatively low on the list of the founding fathers' priorities as they sought to bring the nation together.[55] Certainly, changes in the management of defence were not immediate. Naval and military matters were not transferred to the Commonwealth until 1 March 1901. Until a British regular officer could be appointed to oversee Australia's military, the various commanders of the states remained responsible for their own forces.[56] At the time of federation, roughly 5,000 Australian troops were stationed in South Africa, with more volunteers still to be recruited in the coming months.[57] Meanwhile, a large chunk of Australia's naval forces remained on duty in the cold Chinese winter. The organisation of these forces was only made more difficult by their current placement under British command overseas.

Edmund Barton was appointed the first Prime Minister of Australia to lead an interim government until an election could be held in March. Barton's campaign began in earnest in mid-January. Holding many advantages as an incumbent, Barton also had a full ministerial team that presented a wider ranging policy platform than their free-trade rivals under George Reid.[58] Despite these advantages, Barton's Protectionist Party formed a minority government, both in the House of Representatives and the Senate.[59] Beyond Reid closing the gap at the election, Barton had other problems to address. The newly minted cabinet was composed of the strongest personalities found throughout the colonies, ranging from more

[54] For examples of the breadth with which the South African War is dealt with in Federation studies, see Irving, *To Constitute a Nation*, 10, 204; John Hirst, *The Sentimental Nation: The Making of the Australian Commonwealth* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2000), 231–8.
[55] Discussed in further detail in Chapter Three
[56] Jeffrey Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, 3rd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 66–7.
[57] Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, 67.
[58] Hirst, *The Sentimental Nation*, 284.
[59] Hirst, *The Sentimental Nation*, 284.

radical members such as Charles Kingston, to the more conservative John Forrest.[60] Barton's focus in the early years of his Prime Ministership also lay in the potential for legislation addressing immigration control.[61] Other than the desire to see a reduction in spending, matters of defence were mostly forced to take a backseat in the new Commonwealth.

Taking over as Minister for Defence, former Premier of Western Australia John Forrest, was considered a somewhat unusual fit for the position. Although Forrest previously held some responsibilities for defence in his role as colonial premier, this had never extended to the organisation of military volunteers.[62] Forrest was placed in a difficult position. No uniformity existed between the colonies when it came to the structure of their defence forces. This made the transfer of power from state to federal level a drawn out, complex process.[63] Adding to this was the fact that the South African contingents were still subject to the individual state terms of service, each reconfirmed with the Colonial Office the previous year. These issues forced John Forrest to act with uncharacteristic humility when the redrafted Defence Bill was introduced to the House of Representatives on 9 July 1901, providing a scheme for federal defence. After the lengthy back and forth over the finer points of the Bill, Forrest apologised: 'If I have not dealt as fully with some points as some honorable members might desire, I can only plead that I do not yet consider myself a military expert'.[64] The new Australian government still had several hurdles to overcome when it came to co-ordinating the deficiencies of the various colonial defence systems.

Although defence matters remained lower down the list of priorities for the Protectionist government, Australian contingents were nonetheless at the forefront of the inauguration parades celebrating federation. A host of forces featured from across the different states, many having recently returned from South Africa in December of the previous year. The remaining members of the Sudan contingent from 1885 were represented in the 'A' section alongside members of the Mounted Police and other retired naval men and cadets.[65] In addition, the crew of *Protector*, having reached Sydney from China in late December, was also able to briefly take part before returning to Adelaide. It meant all three conflicts

[60] Geoffrey Bolton, *Edmund Barton: The One Man for the Job* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2000), 229.
[61] Bolton, *Edmund Barton*, 234.
[62] F. K. Crowley, *Big John Forrest 1847–1918: A Founding Father of the Commonwealth of Australia* (Perth: University of Western Australia Press, 2000), 303–4.
[63] Crowley, *Big John Forrest 1847–1918*, 314.
[64] Australia*, Parliamentary Debates,* House of Representatives, 9 July 1901, 2172 (John Forrest).
[65] 'Military Contingents', *The Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser*. 5 January 1901, 9.

featuring independently raised colonial forces were represented on the day.[66] The *Sydney Mail* reporting on the event described in great detail their impressions of the Australian contingents:

> Our men in their sober khaki lacked the individual splendour, but they looked workmanlike, and many were surprised to note that while one colonial trooper would be lost beside the colour scheme of his Imperial comrade, a dozen colonials looked as well as a dozen Imperials, because the brilliancy of the Imperial outfit rather decreased than increased when massed, while the effect of the khaki in mass close at hand was to throw up the men rather than the uniform.[67]

Considering federation marked such a critical juncture in nascent Australian identity, the *Sydney Mail* were determined to assert a distinction between Australian troops and their British counterparts. Even so, the Indian troops were judged to have received the most attention for being 'lo[o]se and cool and workmanlike, even while so brilliant'.[68]

Some publications looked to the South African War to help define the new nation. The *Sydney Morning Herald* hailed Rudyard Kipling's poem 'The Young Queen' when it came to their attention. Laden with references to the Australians fighting in South Africa, the editor predicted it would 'doubtless be given the prominence it deserves' in the forthcoming federation celebrations.[69] Other cases played down conflict as determining Australian nationhood. The New South Wales government awarded a prize of 50 guineas for an ode in connection with federation, which was awarded to George Essex Evans from Queensland for his contribution. Within the poem are the lines: 'Freeborn of Nations, virgin white, Not won by blood, nor ringed with steel', referring to Australia as a nation free of conflict despite having a military presence in both South Africa and China at the time of writing.[70] Such absences suggest that these were not entirely considered Australia's wars, although the Duke of York and Cornwall did reflect on the Australian presence in South Africa and China during the opening of the Commonwealth parliament.[71]

---

[66] 'Military Contingents', *The Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser*. 5 January 1901, 9; Bob Nicholls, *Bluejackets and Boxers: Australia's Naval Expedition to the Boxer Uprising* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1986), 83.
[67] 'Commonwealth Day, January 1, 1901', *The Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser*. 5 January 1901, 24.
[68] 'Commonwealth Day, January 1, 1901', *The Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser*. 5 January 1901, 24.
[69] 'Mr. Kipling's New Poem', *Sydney Morning Herald*. 6 November 1900, 4.
[70] 'Commonwealth Day. The Prize Ode', *Sydney Morning Herald*. 1 January 1901, 12.
[71] For the context of the Duke of York and Cornwall's speech, see Conclusion.

The war itself occupied a complex position in Australian political and public thinking in early 1901. Few commentators pointed out that Australia's military forces featuring in an inauguration parade might be strange considering the nation was still bound up in Britain's war in South Africa. This can perhaps be put down to just how disengaged Australia had become with the war itself. As the new year approached, Premier of New South Wales, William Lyne, had been somewhat slower in responding to the call for more troops than the other colonies. He put this down to having other matters on his mind at the time.[72] It was, however, Lyne's opinion that this matter of troop numbers should be one for the federal government, not for the individual states.[73] This was not the opinion of colonies such as Tasmania and South Australia, who at the end of 1900 were ready to continue their existing contributions. A meeting was held between the Australian premiers about the matter on 7 January 1901 at the Sydney Treasury, where they came to the unanimous agreement that 2,300 men from across the states would be formed into contingents in the same manner as previous contributions.[74] Lyne took charge of sending the telegram to Chamberlain on behalf of the states, insisting on provisions for equipment ('very desirable') and transport ('Absolutely necessary') while also forcing the agreement that all soldiers be given the option of returning home whenever they desired.[75] Later that night, Lyne insisted arrangements were only being made to meet the current deficiencies in the contingents.[76] Due to return on SS *Orient* the following morning were 685 men and if the British government wanted them replaced, it was going to continue to be at their own expense.[77]

This meeting would seem to indicate that Australian state governments were at least using federation as an opportunity to better co-ordinate a response to Britain's demands. This, however, was not entirely the case. A little over a week later, the Victorian government floated the possibility of a 'sixth contingent' due to such large numbers of suitable men enlisting.[78] Even in New South Wales, they were willing to exceed their 1,000 man quota to almost double that size, because of the sheer number of applicants they were receiving.[79] As reports of these actions circulated throughout the other states, each government followed

[72] 'Troops for South Africa', *South Australian Register*. 1 January 1901, 4.
[73] 'Troops for South Africa', *South Australian Register*. 1 January 1901, 4.
[74] 'Troops for South Africa. Conference of Premiers', *Sydney Morning Herald*. 8 January 1901, 5.
[75] Premier's Office, Sydney to the Principal Under-Secretary, minute, 7 January 1901. Located in AWM 1 4/24.
[76] 'Troops for South Africa. Conference of Premiers', *Sydney Morning Herald*. 8 January 1901, 5.
[77] 'Returned Australian Soldiers', *Sydney Morning Herald*. 9 January 1901, 5.
[78] 'Victorian Fifth and Sixth Contingents', *Sydney Morning Herald*. 19 January 1901, 9.
[79] 'The Federal Contingent. 2000 Men and Horses to be Sent', *Sydney Morning Herald*. 5 February 1901, 6.

suit by offering more men than initially agreed upon, in many cases referring to these as a 'sixth contingent'.[80] The appetite remained for each of the states to outdo each other when it came to raising contingents for imperial service. In all cases, these offers were being driven by the amount of recruits each of the states were receiving. Many were still willing to go to South Africa despite the harsh reality of the conflict being evident to all within the colonies by this stage.[81] Victorian member of the Scottish Horse, Harry Victor Roberts, was explicit in his sentiment when he wrote home during July 1901 telling his brother in large block letters: 'DON'T COME'.[82]

The previous year, the various colonial governments had been concerned about the length of time their troops were in South Africa; now the states were raising the possibility of a 'sixth contingent'. State leaders justified the contribution as drafts to replace the existing contingents that, because of the arrangements made, would not place any great financial burden upon the states.[83] This also meant they did not feel the need to ask their respective parliaments for permission. But the prospect of Australia continuing to lose so many fit young men was still causing some concern. Many of those enlisting used this opportunity to escape what had been a decade of depression, as well as the drought that had now taken hold throughout much of the country.[84] In July 1901, the troopship *Orient* left Victorian shores carrying not only recent arrivals from the South African War who were eager to return, but also members of the Naval Brigade that served in China, who themselves had only recently made it back to Australia.[85] With the war predicted by many to be almost over, South Africa presented the possibility of stable employment for many Australians struggling in rural and city areas.

In the new federal set up, who was responsible for the South African contribution was not immediately apparent. Prime Minister Barton was not eager to take over management of the South African contingents. He deigned it instead 'more satisfactory to leave the completion of this work in the hands of those who had begun it'.[86] During July, Kitchener was reported

[80] Field, *The Forgotten War*, 141.
[81] Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War*, 190.
[82] Private Harry Victor Roberts (registered as William Aitkin Roberts), Scottish Horse – South Africa, letter, June 1901, SLV, MS 9882.
[83] Field, *The Forgotten War*, 141; Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War*, 189.
[84] Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War*, 189.
[85] 'Soldiers Returning to the War', *The Argus,* 23 July 1901, 5.
[86] Australia*, Parliamentary Debates,* House of Representatives, 21 June 1901, 1488 (Edmund Barton).

to have asked the War Office for 50,000 additional mounted troops. Barton (acting for the absent Minister of Defence, John Forrest) stated that he not received any recommendations from state ministers: 'and I do not see any reason for suggesting that we should add to the number of men we have already sent to the front'. Barton, however, conceded that: 'Of course, if representations were made to us that more of our men, who have done such splendid work, were required, that would be another matter'.[87]

Perhaps an explanation for Barton's attitude can be found in his words at a banquet held at the Hotel Cecil by the British Empire League on 30 April 1900. In London as part of the delegation to present the Australian constitution to British parliament, Barton was puzzled by British perceptions of Australia's contribution to the war thus far. The British Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, noted when praising the Australian contribution:

> [T]hey have done this for no immediate interest of their own. They have not been led to it by matters in which their own communities were in the first instance interested. They have been drawn to it by their sympathy with their fellow-subjects of the Queen and their enthusiasm for the Empire over which she reigns.[88]

Barton's response expressed the cordiality required, but with an undercurrent of bemusement at Salisbury's words. Barton stated that he did not feel the need for the Prime Minister to appear so surprised, the colonies were simply doing the duty of Britons in any part of the world.[89]

Federation had not deterred some governments from offering further contributions. The Premier for Queensland, Robert Philp, had allegedly contacted the War Office in July 1901, making his own inquiries as to whether the state could offer troops to fight in South Africa. Philp stated that these offers were from men not under the 'defence force authorities', and would be sent to relieve the fifth and sixth drafts.[90] When this news was printed in *The Age* and presented to Barton on the same day, it was met with a terse response. 'Noticing the statement that an offer had been made', stated Barton, 'I caused a communication to be sent to the Imperial authorities, reminding them that the Defence departments of the several

[87] 'Soldiers for South Africa', *The Argus,* 23 July 1901, 5.
[88] 'British Empire League', *Times*, 1 May 1900, 6.
[89] 'British Empire League', *Times*, 1 May 1900, 6.
[90] 'Further Drafts for South Africa', *The Age,* 24 July 1901, 5.

States were transferred to the Commonwealth on the 1st of last March'.[91] Barton was frustrated by Queensland's freelancing, but the state governments appeared equally as annoyed by the lack of federal action.

The symbolism of the South African War was adopted into some of the ceremony surrounding federation, but overall the coming together of the Australian colonies had little impact upon the approach to the war itself. State premiers were allowed to continue to dictate how they contributed to the war on their own terms. Even when coming together, they each based their contributions on enthusiasm for enlistment rather than the agreed upon quota. The South African War was a further complication to the transfer of power that Forrest presided over. The new federal minister found himself unable to organise forces that were bound to existing state agreements. Overall, federation did not mark a stronger, more unified commitment to South Africa in its first year. The war served as an ongoing distraction to Barton's government that was willing to comply with Kitchener and Chamberlain's demands. However, they were less eager to use federation as a marker for a stronger Australian commitment.

'Even to the Pianos and Organs': Australia and the 'Third Phase' of the War

When Roberts left South Africa in December 1900, he paid great compliment to the Australian contingents. *The Argus* reported Roberts claim that they had endured 'hardships and suffering without a murmur and perfect cheerfulness', while the Australian troops also exhibited 'conspicuous humanity towards the enemy'.[92] While Roberts' words would have undoubtedly pleased the Australian government and public alike, this portrayal of Australian troops was not entirely accurate. Though the breakdown of discipline within Australian ranks has often been associated with the later stages of the war, Australian soldiers established something of a reputation for ignoring orders from the very start. Instances of Australian Scouts engaging in running fights at close quarters was already occurring during Roberts' taking of Johannesburg.[93] The question of humanity displayed during wartime continued to be a central theme of the South African War, especially once British tactics

[91] Australia*, Parliamentary Debates,* House of Representatives, 24 July 1901, 2939 (Edmund Barton).
[92] 'The Boer War. Lord Roberts's Farewell Order. Colonial Troops Praised.', *The Argus,* 4 December 1900, 5.
[93] Nasson, *The War for South Africa*, 197.

changed to counter mobile Boer units. South African historian Leopold Scholtz argues that neither Kitchener or Roberts saw the war beyond their own strategic aims, giving little consideration to the wider implications of their actions.[94] The prevailing belief that the South African War was a 'gentleman's war' fell apart the longer the Boers held out and the further news of these revised British tactics spread across the empire.

By September 1900, this new pattern of war had truly been established.[95] The main Boer threat came from de Wet and President Steyn in the Free State, de la Rey in Western Transvaal, and Louis Botha and Benjamin Viljoen in the eastern Transvaal.[96] The change in British tactics was not entirely without precedent. British commanders were unbothered by soldiers' tendency to turn towards the destruction and looting of Boer properties throughout the first year of the war. Roberts was now simply turning towards privately disclosing to senior commanders that they should burn certain farms for strategic purposes.[97] By July 1900, Kitchener actively encouraged the use of all means possible to end Boer resistance, without a great deal of specificity as to what this meant. Of course, this fell to many of the incoming Australian contingents who were given freer rein to lay waste to the landscape under this 'scorched earth' policy.[98] One Australian, Private Lawn, wrote in his diary on 26 October that 'all had to get out & burn some farmhouses that were near'.[99]

Australian contingents were becoming somewhat notorious for their adoption of these tactics. Corporal J. H. M. Abbott, who recalled his involvement in the war through his 1902 book, *Tommy Cornstalk*, noted: 'We have tried lenient measures — a leniency which only returned to us in derision … But it is cruel — bitterly, heartrendingly cruel!'[100] The Boers particularly found much to dislike in the Australian troops. The Australians shared similarities with the Boers in regards to their pioneering spirit and dislike of foreign influence, but to the Boers their presence naturally also represented the very British imperial

[94] Scholtz, *Why the Boers Lost the War* (United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 152–3.
[95] R. L. Wallace, *The Australians at the Boer War* (Sydney: National Boer War Memorial Association, 1976), 285.
[96] Wallace, *The Australians at the Boer War*, 285–6.
[97] Pakenham, *The Boer War*, 440.
[98] Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War*, 220–1.
[99] Private James Lawn, First Victorian Contingent – South Africa, Papers, AWM, PR88/127.
[100] J. H. M. Abbott, *Tommy Cornstalk: Being Some Account of the Less Notable Features of the South African War from the Point of View of the Australian Ranks* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1902), 255.

project they were fighting against.[101] Often, Australian soldiers advanced into towns destroying anything in sight, including food and water, as well as any valuables that had been left behind.[102] As the nature of the war began receiving international attention, a Parisian newspaper in late 1900, the *Martin*, referred to colonial troops (but especially Australians) as 'scum and robbers of the worst sort'. It was an evaluation Australians could read for themselves in the *Sydney Morning Herald*.[103] Member for West Bourke, Samuel Staughton's reference to the Boxer contingent in Victorian parliament having discipline that other contingents lacked, suggests these events had already become well known in Australia.[104] Kitchener issued a series of proclamations throughout 1901, beginning with the stamping out of all armed resistance. He hardened his stance and threatened the confiscation of property and began exiling Boers in August.[105] It was only the British government's reservations that prevented Kitchener from going further. Still, as these proclamations were declared, it became increasingly difficult to prevent the Australian soldiers from taking their frustrations out on Boer villages.

Soldiers' letters published in Australian newspapers were key to revealing some of these tactics to the public. On 24 August 1901, *The Daily Telegraph* in Sydney published a soldier's letter detailing his adherence towards this new wartime strategy. In this case, the letter was from Sergeant William Miller who wrote while in Standerton Hospital recovering from a war injury. Miller's letter detailed his involvement in the looting and burning of farms. 'When we come to a farm house, it is then looted by us, and the women stand helplessly by weeping', wrote Miller. 'All their cattle, sheep, pigs, and poultry are confiscated, and the houses are burnt to the ground. The furniture is destroyed, even to the pianos and organs. We then take the women along with us till an opportunity occurs to send them to a refugee camp'.[106] Miller left little ambiguity as to what was transpiring in South Africa. Even Roberts back in England was concerned about these tactics. He wrote to Kitchener on 18 January 1902 to ask whether stories of Boer wounded being killed, and

[101] Emanoel Lee, *To the Bitter End: A Photographic History of the Boer War 1899–1902* (United Kingdom: Viking, 1985), 62.
[102] Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War*, 235.
[103] *Sydney Morning Herald*. 9 November 1900, 6.
[104] Victoria*, Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 10 July 1900, 206 (Samuel Staughton). See Chapter Six for more detail.
[105] Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War*, 235.
[106] 'Letter from Standerton. Looting and Burning Farm Houses' *The Daily Telegraph*. 24 August 1901, 9.

prisoners being forced to dig their own graves that were reported in the papers were true. It was a claim Kitchener feverishly denied.[107]

At least by 1901, it appeared that there was little effort to censor soldiers accounts in Australian publications. Certainly, with few Australian journalist present in South Africa, these letters became a more valued resource for detailing the war past 1900, which may explain why they did not receive the same censorship many war correspondents complained about in their own writing.[108] Anti-war leader, Professor George Arnold Wood, believed that the *Sydney Morning Herald* was censoring its columns to remove any views that were not supportive of the British government's position.[109] It is more likely that some self-censorship was occurring on the part of soldiers in South Africa. For instance, although letters from women working in South Africa sometimes challenge imperial narratives, they also regularly defended their position within the imperial project.[110] The fact that Miller's letter appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* may indicate the ambivalence the Australian public began to feel towards the war by 1901.

Just as indicative of the changing nature of the war was Kitchener's use of concentration camps. These camps were designed to keep Boer women and children, as well as Black South African communities, out of war zones. British welfare campaigner, Emily Hobhouse, investigated the conditions of the Boer concentration camps, creating a stir back in Britain. Hobhouse reported the poor, deteriorating conditions of the camps to politicians and public alike.[111] Leading figures quickly took notice of Hobhouse's reports, but looked to apportion blame elsewhere. Administrator of the Transvaal and Orange River Colony, Alfred Milner, believed that the costs of addressing these issues should be borne by the British Army, since the camps fell under the umbrella of military planning and strategy. Roberts, meanwhile, thought the response should not cause great difficulty and that something should be done immediately to ensure conditions were improved.[112] By 1902, the camps had undergone

[107] Rodney Atwood, *Roberts & Kitchener in South Africa, 1900–1902* (United Kingdom: Pen & Sword Military, 2011), 249–50.
[108] Fay Anderson and Richard Trembath, *Witnesses to War: The History of Australian Conflict Reporting* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2011), 34, 38–9.
[109] Barbara Penny, 'The Australian Debate on the Boer War', *Historical Studies* 14, no. 56 (1971): 534.
[110] Nicole Anae, '"Among the Boer Children": Australian Women Teachers in South African Concentration Camp Schools, 1901–1904', *History of Education Review* 45, no. 1 (2016): 40–1.
[111] Thomas Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa* (London: Abacus, 1992), 505.
[112] Owen Coetzer, *Fire in the Sky: The Destruction of the Orange Free State, 1899–1902* (Weltevreden Park, South Africa: Covos-Day Books, 2000), 127.

some consideration after the complaints of Millicent Fawcett, who travelled to investigate the claims made by Emily Hobhouse.[113] A report at the Bloemfontein Camp, conducted between 16 to 19 September 1901 by the Committee of Ladies, described conditions where: 'Women are seen washing clothes in dirty puddles', and two-thirds of people slept on the ground.[114] The South African Conciliation Committee stated that the findings have been 'welcomed by all who have felt the mortality in those camps a burden on the national conscience'.[115]

Figure 13: *Destruction of a Boer farm, likely initiated by the Fourth Victorian Imperial Bushmen Contingent. This image is indicative of the transforming nature of the South African War, and British tactics.*
Source: 'Destruction of a Building on a Boer Farm Near the Town of Ottoshoop', photograph, AWM: P01222.009.

[113] Nicole Anae, '"Among the Boer Children": Australian Women Teachers in South African Concentration Camp Schools, 1901–1904', *History of Education Review* 45, no. 1 (2016): 30.
[114] A. W. G. Raath, *The British Concentration Camps of the Anglo-Boer War, 1899–1902* (Bloemfontein, South Africa: War Museum, 1999), 119, 121.
[115] Raath, *The British Concentration Camps of the Anglo-Boer War*, 173.

At the time these reports were coming to light in June of 1901, *The Daily Telegraph* referred to it as a 'Radical Agitation' coming from Britain. The paper referred to other war correspondents who claimed the 'camp officials were doing everything possible under the circumstances'.[116] However, by 21 October, *The Daily Telegraph* reported the deaths of the 'white persons' within these camps (Hobhouse did not concern herself with the Black South African camps) including the shocking child mortality of 1,964 individuals in the month of September alone (compared to 447 adults).[117] *The Bulletin* also ran these statistics in October, claiming of the women and children who made up the concentration camps: 'Kitchener certainly makes war on them much more successfully than he does on grown-up men'.[118] Enough ambiguity remained over what was transpiring in South Africa to ensure that Australian newspapers did not necessarily take these events at face value. Nearly every Australian war correspondent had returned by this point, and the reporting on these cases may have caused more of a stir had Australian journalists been present to validate these claims. On 6 December, following Hobhouse's deportation from South Africa, *The Age* referred to her descriptions of the camps as 'exaggerated and incorrect', playing down Kitchener's responsibility for them.[119] The reports on these camps had a great impact in Britain where the conduct of the war was seriously concerning, yet they failed to make any great seismic impact in Australian support of the war.

What did stir a more emotional response in Australia was the case of Breaker Morant. Between July and September 1901, Morant's trial illustrated some of the broader divisions emerging between Australian troops and British command. Four Australians serving as part of the Bushveldt Carbineers — Peter Handcock, Harry Picton, George Witton, and the most famous, Harry 'Breaker' Morant — embarked upon a campaign of murdering Boer prisoners as revenge for the killing of Morant's friend, Captain P. F. Hunt.[120] What happened next was the source of great dispute due to the degree to which most Australians, including key ministerial leaders, were in the dark about the prosecution of Morant. News reached Australian shores in late March 1902 that Handcock and Morant had been tried and executed

[116] 'South Africa. The Radical Agitation. Highly-Colored Reports. Condition of Refugee Camps' *The Daily Telegraph*. 28 June 1901, 5.
[117] 'The Horrors of War. In Concentration Camps. Terrible Infant Mortality' *The Daily Telegraph*. 28 June 1901, 5; Christina Twomey, 'Ambivalence, Admiration and Empire: Emily Hobhouse's The Brunt of the War and Where It Fell (1902)', in *Fighting Words; Fifteen Books That Shaped the Postcolonial World*, ed. Dominic Davies, Erica Lombard, and Benjamin Mountford (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2017), 60.
[118] 'The Slaughter of Children'. *The Bulletin*. 5 October 1901, 9.
[119] 'Miss Hobhouse's Deportation' *The Age*. 6 October 1901, 5.
[120] Atwood, *Roberts & Kitchener in South Africa*, 249.

in February, their case having been summarised in a couple of lines to the London press earlier in the month without their names being revealed. According to the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the opinion of military authorities in Australia was that any secrecy was intended for 'the purpose of saving the good name of Australian soldiers'.[121] Barton gave a conservative answer on 2 April 1902 when tasked with explaining what had happened. 'I am endeavouring to obtain information', Barton stated, 'I need not say that it would be most unwise for any of us to come to a conclusion or form any judgement on the subject in view of the conflicting accounts that have appeared'.[122] The Prime Minister was only able to speculate without any additional official information on the subject. Kitchener's response was matter of fact. Morant originated the actions, and Handcock carried them out in a 'cold-blooded manner'. The prisoners were then convicted after a 'most exhaustive trial'. There were, according to Kitchener, 'no extenuating circumstances'.[123]

The entire affair was shrouded in mystery in Australia. A reporter at *The Argus* took to interviewing an ex-trooper, J. A. Heath, who served in the Bushveldt Carbineers. While able to verify parts of the story, he had never actually met Morant or knew such a person existed.[124] Once word spread of the trial and execution of Morant, the story naturally shocked many Australians. However, the case appeared to have little effect in swinging the pendulum either way in support or rejection of the South African War. For many, it was easy to mentally disassociate Morant's name from Australia. Despite Australians' widespread abhorrence at the crimes he had committed, they could at least note that Morant had been born in England, and the Bushveldt Carbineers were not even an Australian regiment.[125] Even republican magazine and publisher of Morant's poetry, *The Bulletin*, found it difficult to excuse his actions completely. Still, one of its writers, Frank Fox, tried to at least lay some of the blame at the feet of Kitchener.[126] Fox wrote letters to the editors of major metropolitan newspapers in July expressing his own suspicions about the process afforded to the men.[127] In the meantime, it would take some time for Morant to pass into Australian folklore as a figure betrayed by his British commanders.

---

[121] 'The Execution of Australians. The Concealment of the News', *Sydney Morning Herald*. 31 March 1902, 8.
[122] Australia*, Parliamentary Debates,* House of Representatives, 2 April 1902, 11250 (Edmund Barton).
[123] 'The Court-Marshalled Australians' *The Argus.* 7 April 1902, 5.
[124] 'The Bushveldt Carbineers' *The Advertiser.* 8 May 1902, 3.
[125] Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War*, 282, 335.
[126] The coverage of Morant in *The Bulletin* began in earnest in April, see 'The Red Page'. *The Bulletin*. 5 April 1902, 2.
[127] Frank Fox, 'The Bushveldt Carbineers. To the Editor' *The Advertiser.* 2 July 1902, 6.

The first significant anti-war movement emerged from the South African War. This was due in no small part to the establishment of middle-class peace organisations such as the Peace and Humanity Society (PHS) in Victoria during June 1900, and the Anti-War League (AWL) in New South Wales during January 1902.[128] Leader of the AWL, Professor George Arnold Wood of the University of Sydney, was particularly outspoken about the change in British tactics and the inhumanity displayed by troops in South Africa.[129] Wood was the subject of much public vilification, including in the university senate, which attempted to censure him for his views. He was eventually saved by interventions from Barton and the New South Wales Labor Party defending his freedom of speech.[130] Nevertheless, these events gave a face to the burgeoning movement against the South African War.

Still, the anti-war movement failed to have a great impact in swaying wider Australian attitudes. Historians, Malcolm Saunders and Ralph Summy, argue that the widespread support of the war by major institutions, as well as the lack of Australian hardships associated with the war and relative distance from what occurred in South Africa, all made it difficult for these organisations to make a significant dent in public support.[131] As a result, none of the peace groups ballooned to any great size. According to the *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*, as of 13 February 1902, the AWL only had the 200 subscribed members.[132] For the first time in Australia, an identifiable peace movement emerged from Australian involvement in a foreign conflict. Yet, their campaign failed to turn much momentum against the South African War itself.

Critics still expressed their objection to the war in the parliamentary debates throughout 1901 in the face of 'pro-Boer' allegations. Although Henry Bournes Higgins, the member for Geelong and a prominent critic of Australian involvement in Britain's wars, lost his seat in 1900, he resumed his stance in the House of Representatives following the first federal elections.[133] Another such critic was the member for Northumberland in New South Wales

[128] Malcolm Saunders and Ralph Summy, 'One Hundred Years of an Australian Peace Movement, 1885–1984: Part I: From the Sudan Campaign to the Outbreak of the Second World War', *Peace and Change* 10, no. 3 (1984): 41.
[129] R. M. Crawford, *A Bit of a Rebel: The Life and Work of George Arnold Wood* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1975), 169–78.
[130] Saunders and Summy, 'One Hundred Years of an Australian Peace Movement': 41.
[131] Saunders and Summy, 'One Hundred Years of an Australian Peace Movement': 42.
[132] 'The Anti-War League', *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*. 15 February 1902, 5.
[133] Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War*, 188; Australia*, Parliamentary Debates,* House of Representatives, 14 January 1902, 8738.

parliament, John Norton, who framed the changing British tactics as part of his objection to the war, justified by the 'wholesale and reckless burning of Dutchmen's farms in South Africa'.[134] Norton referred to the conflict as 'that very disgraceful war', claiming: 'I take leave also to say that we can demonstrate our loyalty by organising our defences in Australia … What better service can we render to the empire than to make this part of the empire safe? That would be better than going filibustering all over the world'.[135]

Nevertheless, support was still prevalent enough that pressure built upon Barton in late 1901 to offer further contributions to the war. On 21 December, Chamberlain telegrammed Barton requesting 1,000 men, with the imperial government offering to re-imburse the Australian government for the costs of equipping the troops.[136] Increasingly under pressure for his lack of action throughout the year, Chamberlain's request was enough to stir the Prime Minister into action. Barton brought the decision before the House of Representatives on 14 January 1902, where only five members voted against the formation of a federal contingent.[137] In doing so, Barton voiced his objection to criticisms being made 'abroad' towards the 'humanity and the valour' of the empire's soldiers.[138] However, as the vote illustrated, neither the knowledge of this criticism of the war, or the growth of Australia's anti-war movement made a great impact on those members of the new Australia parliament. So long as the financial burden of sending troops to South Africa was minimal, few were willing to withdraw support for Britain's war effort even as it was becoming increasingly unpopular. The Australian government and the parliament were prepared to make a federal commitment to the war, under the existing terms.

This did not mean, of course, the government did not see an end to its ability to contribute Australian resources. Issues persisted with the raising of contingents even into 1902. The British government desired men that could ride and shoot, also preferring men that had already seen service in South Africa and therefore, had some experience in warfare.[139] Riding and shooting tests were once again held across the states, and in Victoria this resulted in men being turned away. 'We may have to fall back on these [men],' stated the Major

[134] New South Wales, *Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 25 July 1901, 76–7 (John Norton).
[135] New South Wales, *Parliamentary Debates,* Legislative Assembly, 25 July 1901, 77 (John Norton).
[136] Australia, *Parliamentary Debates,* House of Representatives, 14 January 1902, 8738.
[137] Australia, *Parliamentary Debates,* House of Representatives, 14 January 1902, 8738.
[138] Australia, *Parliamentary Debates,* House of Representatives, 14 January 1902, 8738.
[139] Australia, *Parliamentary Debates,* House of Representatives, 14 January 1902, 8738.

Irving discussing results of these tests, 'but we won't if we can help it. They're not the sort we want'.[140] Commonwealth forces tended to find firing more difficult than riding according to recruiting tests held in January and February at the Royal Agricultural Showgrounds in Sydney.[141] It was no easier to put contingents together in 1902 than it had been in 1899.

The departure of the first federal contingent best summarised the growing public disengagement from the South African War, as well as the Australian federal and state governments' ability to continue to offer resources over such an extended period. *The Age* reported at the departure of the first federal contingent that: 'No bright sunshine, no fluttering flags, no gay music graced the departure', despite noting that, for the first time in history, it was 'Australia going to war' and the weather had done little to impact past celebrations.[142] Major-General Edward Hutton, perhaps the greatest champion of Australia's military potential, farewelled the Third Battalion on 2 April but he appeared noticeably frustrated with the state of the men's appearance, not to mention the fact many had deserted before departure with their advanced pay in their pockets.[143] For these men, the war was an opportunity for relief, not the privilege in serving the empire. Finally, it appeared that the standard of troops available was also in slow decline. Those looking on could have only sensed what an anti-climax the war had become by 1902 as Hutton shook his cane at the remaining men, yelling 'why don't you stand still?'[144]

'The End of Our Long and Terrible Trial': The Aftermath of the South African War

Peace was declared with the Treaty of Vereeniging on 31 May 1902, though Chamberlain preferred to think of it as the Boers signing the 'terms of surrender'.[145] For many in Australia, this marked the end of what had been a long and frustrating war. Australia was still sending its third federal contingent right up until the month the war ended, though none of these men

[140] 'Recruiting the Contingents', *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate*. 8 February 1902, 2.
[141] Papers relating to Commonwealth Contingent for South Africa in Camp at Royal Agricultural Showground, Sydney, Jan–Feb 1902. Located in AWM1 3/31.
[142] 'First Federal Contingent' *The Age*. 13 February 1902, 5.
[143] 'General Hutton and the Contingent', *The Daily Telegraph*. 3 April 1902, 4.
[144] 'General Hutton and the Contingent', *The Daily Telegraph*. 3 April 1902, 4.
[145] Pakenham, *The Boer War*, 564.

saw active service.[146] South African historian, Leopold Scholtz, puts the eventual Boer defeat down to a few factors. The first element was the limited nature of Boer leaders' aims. Some initially only hoped to maintain Boer sovereignty, while other leaders became convinced that victory could be achieved through expanding the war into the Cape Colony and stirring an uprising against British rule there.[147] Scholtz's second point lays fault at the lack of unified objective and established hierarchy in Boer command, particularly in the latter stages of the war. This made it difficult for the Boers to achieve any significant leverage over their British opponents.[148] For Britain, victory had finally been achieved but it had proved to be the empire's most expensive and elongated conflict since the Napoleonic Wars at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Barbara Penny posits that in Australia, there was not a great deal of interest in the treaty.[149] Certainly in parliament few cared how exactly the war had ended, only that it had indeed ended. There was little discussion on how the terms of peace were being shaped. Upon announcing the declaration of peace to the House of Representatives, Alfred Deakin declared: 'the end of our long and terrible trial by combat has at last been reached'.[150] Member for Wentworth, William McMillan, expressed his feelings following Deakin's remarks: 'It is a matter of profound thankfulness to us all that this terrible war which has been so long continued and has been so devastating, and which has been attended in some respects with so little glory, has been ended at last'.[151] The Federal government's attention could now turn to other more pressing matters without this unwanted distraction.

News reached Australia sometime on 2 June 1902, with the *Sydney Morning Herald* reporting the next day that 'Peace has been signed at Pretoria'.[152] Though victory celebrations had been considered as early as 1900, they proved to be muted affairs in 1902. The federal government made little effort to give much public fanfare to the end of the conflict, particularly after the extravagant celebrations following federation the previous

[146] Henry Chauvel was one such man eager to return to the war, leaving Queensland as part of the Australian Commonwealth Horse from Queensland in May 1902. He only made it as far as Newcastle and returned home in August of the same year. See Henry Chauvel, Annotated Typescript Biography, AWM: MSS1406, 18–20.
[147] Scholtz, *Why the Boers Lost the War*, 132–3.
[148] Scholtz, *Why the Boers Lost the War*, 135–8.
[149] Penny, 'Australia's Reactions to the Boer War': 126.
[150] Australia*, Parliamentary Debates,* House of Representatives, 3 June 1902, 13189 (Alfred Deakin)
[151] Australia*, Parliamentary Debates,* House of Representatives, 3 June 1902, 13189 (William McMillan)
[152] *Sydney Morning Herald*. 3 June 1902, 6.

year.[153] Many of the states still held celebratory events, with the usual expressions of gratitude towards Chamberlain, Kitchener and the British Empire, as well as choruses of 'God Save the King' and 'Rule Britannia'.[154] Notably, there were no celebrations in New South Wales.[155] The colony that had inquired into the possibility of a day commemorating the war in October 1900 had found less to be enthused about when the end actually came in 1902.

By the end, roughly 20,000 Australian men and over eighty women had served in the South African War, with a death toll of approximately 600.[156] Unlike Sudan and China, Australians had perished as the result of direct combat, yet it was still disease and sickness that impacted Australian forces most. Victorian surgeon, T. N. Fitzgerald, wrote a report on his travels to South African hospitals on 7 August 1900: 'permit me to say that it is my opinion from a surgical point of view that the campaign has been splendidly conducted and a success'.[157] Fitzgerald's report disguised the reality of the challenges faced by British hospitals. A Royal Commission into the South African War in 1903 stated that the medical department suffered most during the war, a statement backed up by Roberts who declared it had faced 'perhaps greater disabilities than the other army departments'.[158]

In the immediate aftermath of the conflict, there was still some debate as to what Australia had gained from the whole affair. John Forrest, in the House of Representatives, made the case that the experience gained by Australians participating in the conflict would prove invaluable in local defence. Forrest stated: 'The experience which we have gained in South Africa will, I think, deter any foreign foe from making a descent upon the shores of Australia'.[159] Others hoped that the war would signal closer imperial collaboration in matters

[153] Field, *The Forgotten War*, 179.
[154] Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War*, 342.
[155] Craig Wilcox states that public meetings in New South Wales tended to be rare, see Craig Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War*, 342.
[156] Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War*, 345–7. As of July 2021, ten have been identified as Indigenous Australians by Michael Bell at the Australian War Memorial. Reasons for Indigenous Australians choosing to enlist in the war continue to be debated by historians; see John Maynard, '"Let Us Go"...It's a "Blackfellows" War': Aborigines and the Boer War', *Aboriginal History* 39 (2015): 143–62.
[157] Government House, Melbourne to Joseph Chamberlain, 18 September 1900, Series CO 309. Victoria: Original Correspondence, 1851–1900, AJCP.
[158] 'Report of the Royal Commission on the South African War', *The British Medical Journal* 2, no. 2226 (1903): 484–7.
[159] Australia*, Parliamentary Debates,* House of Representatives, 9 July 1901, 2159 (John Forrest).

of defence. On a high from the recent return of the first Tasmanian contingent, Chief Justice of Tasmania, John Stokell Dodds, wrote to Chamberlain on 8 December 1900 to state:

> I am earnestly hoping for some form of Imperial unity, and I wished to avail myself of the opportunity of endeavouring to make the people of the Colony understand what the Imperial connection means, in order that a desire for unity of the Empire may be encouraged and strengthened. As far as this Colony is concerned, I think that the time is opportune for the discussion of a proposal to establish an Imperial Council of Defence. The military spirit has been aroused thoroughly, and the people are more than pleased by the gracious consideration for the wishes which has been shown recently by Her Majesty's Government.[160]

Dodds hoped to leverage the South African experience into a push for a more unified approach to the empire's defence. He would not be the only one seeking to do so.

Further proof of Australian valour came with the award of three additional Victoria Crosses for members of Australian contingents, adding to Bisdee and Wylly's earlier accolades. Captain Neville Howse of the New South Wales Medical Staff Corps, Lieutenant Frederick Bell of the West Australian Mounted Infantry, and Lieutenant Leslie Maygar of the Fifth Victorian Mounted Rifles all received the award for sheltering, or evacuating, men while under heavy fire.[161] In addition, Sergeant James Rogers was awarded a Victoria Cross for evacuating men on horseback. Initially a member of the First Victorian contingent, he won the award while serving in the South African Constabulary, after his contingent had returned home.[162] Those attached to the belief that Australians could prove themselves worthy imperial Britons through the South African War were able to draw upon these examples of Australians measuring up to British ideals in conflict.[163]

The immediate years following the South African War had only further muddied its reputation in Australia and Britain. Australia's first public servant, Robert Garran, wrote to British scholar Richard Jebb, to state that 'patriotism made [the contingents] possible,

[160] Tasmania to the Colonial Office, 8 December 1900, Series CO 280. Tasmania: Original Correspondence (Secretary of State), 1824–1900, AJCP.
[161] Ian Uys, *Victoria Crosses of the Anglo-Boer War* (Fortress: Knysna, 2000), 86, 96–7, 88–9.
[162] Ian Uys, *Victoria Crosses of the Anglo-Boer War* (Fortress: Knysna, 2000), 88–9.
[163] As of 2023, this acknowledgement to the six Victoria Cross recipients remains the only reference to colonial conflicts within the Australian War Memorial.

undoubtedly it was largely the spirit of adventure that made up their numbers'.[164] The war had taken a heavy toll upon South Africa as well. Irreparable damage had been done throughout the war to many Boer and Black South African communities which continued to be felt in the years that followed.[165] As the jingoism subsided, the war began to be seen as a somewhat costly episode in British history rather than an imperial triumph.[166] Adding to the growing ambiguity about the war was the eventual use of Chinese migrants in revitalising the Witwatersrand goldfields. Their labour afforded critical ammunition to the Liberal party against the Conservatives who had been so successful in the 'khaki election' of 1900, but in 1906 were swept away by the 'Liberal landslide'.[167] The Liberal party equated the treatment of the indentured Chinese migrants to slavery. Their call was only further justified when it was discovered labourers had been flogged under the order of the soon to be Governor of the Transvaal and Orange River Colony, Alfred Milner.[168] British policy in South Africa continued to have a great impact on determining broader approaches to empire back in London.

The Federal government left much of the commemoration of the South African War to the individual states. Some state governments made a head-start even while the war was still ongoing, buoyed by the enthusiasm at the first contingents returning in 1900. The erecting of public monuments was first completed in Western Australia, then South Australia and Tasmania, all completed before the beginning of the First World War, with Queensland's revealed shortly after that war's conclusion.[169] Monuments in the larger states of Victoria and New South Wales would not be completed until 1924 and 1940 respectively, by which point Australia had been, of course, involved in another major conflict.[170] Numerous local communities put up their own memorials to the contingents. In some cases, they were assisted by the returning troops themselves who desired to see their contributions remembered.[171]

---

[164] Luke Trainor, 'Building Nations: Australia and New Zealand', in *The Impact of the South African War*, ed. David Omissi and Andrew Thompson (United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 252.
[165] For more on the aftermath of the South African War, see David Omissi and Andrew Thompson, eds., *The Impact of the South African War* (United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).
[166] Martin Meredith, *Diamonds, Gold, and War: The British, The Boers, and the Making of South Africa* (United Kingdom: Simon & Schuster, 2007), 493.
[167] Peter Clarke, *Hope and Glory: Britain 1900–2000*, 2nd ed. (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 32–4.
[168] Meredith, *Diamonds, Gold, and War*, 493.
[169] Carolyn Holbrook, 'The Great War in the Australian Imagination Since 1915' (PhD Thesis, University of Melbourne, 2012), 39–40.
[170] Holbrook, 'The Great War in the Australian Imagination Since 1915', 39–40.
[171] Wilcox, *Australia's Boer War*, 355.

The Defeat of the Imperial Reserve Idea

As the South African War came to an end, key figures throughout the British Empire took the opportunity to reconsider its implications for the future of imperial defence. Lieutenant Colonel Edward Altham, an intelligence officer who had initially severely underestimated the Boers, returned to England in 1900.[172] As part of the intelligence division, Altham wished to harness the potential of colonial troops within a more permanent structure. Altham's document, titled *The Organization of Colonial Troops for Imperial Service*, was passed around the War Office for consideration.[173] The war, according to Altham, had established two central facts. Firstly, 'that the Regular Army, as organized before the war, was by itself quite inadequate in strength to the military needs of the Empire'; secondly, 'that the self-governing Colonies are willing and able to assist in making good some part of the deficiency in military strength which the war has disclosed'.[174] Altham's idea, to be dubbed the 'Imperial Australian Force', would consist of two mounted brigades and one infantry brigade and be at the 'disposal of the Imperial Government for general service in any part of the Empire, in the case of war between Great Britain and one or more European Powers', as soon as transport was arranged.[175] The final organisation would include troops from New Zealand (4,500) and Canada (3,000), with Australia contributing 9,000 troops.[176] Altham did not consider any naval arrangements in his document, considering them a separate matter.

Director General of Military Intelligence, William Nicholson, seized upon this idea. Like Roberts and Altham, he was amongst a batch of senior British figures to return from South Africa in late 1900. Nicholson submitted the paper to Roberts. The roughly 16,000 men proposed, estimated to cost £130,000 a year, seemed to him, reasonable enough. 'If hereafter it be found possible to give the Colonies a voice in deciding questions of Imperial policy', argued Nicholson, 'we might fairly ask them to pay their share of the cost of Imperial

[172] Pakenham, *The Boer War*, 96.
[173] Organization of Colonial Troops for Imperial Service, 1901–2, papers, Series W.O. 32/8303 War Office Registered Papers: General Series, 1, AJCP.
[174] Organization of Colonial Troops for Imperial Service, 1901–2, papers, Series W.O. 32/8303 War Office Registered Papers: General Series, 1, AJCP.
[175] Organization of Colonial Troops for Imperial Service, 1901–2, papers, Series W.O. 32/8303 War Office Registered Papers: General Series, 5, AJCP.
[176] Organization of Colonial Troops for Imperial Service, 1901–2, papers, Series W.O. 32/8303 War Office Registered Papers: General Series, 9, AJCP. South Africa was the big question in this, but at present Altham considered any estimation of South African contribution to be 'mere academic labour'.

defence'.[177] Roberts too was eager: 'The expense involved is not heavy, while the advantage to be gained is considerable'.[178] What remained to be negotiated was the same question that had plagued all arrangements with Australia: How much was their government willing to concede without a larger voice in imperial affairs? Nevertheless, it was a conversation deemed worthwhile prior to the Australian ministers travelling for the June 1902 Colonial Conference. The Australian government too, was ready to negotiate.[179]

The 1902 Conference was held to coincide with the coronation of King Edward VII. Considering the federation of Australia had occurred between conferences, the Australian representatives Barton and Forrest were embarking upon a new era of Australia's relationship with the British Empire and the closing of the previous one. Matters of defence were given a great deal of attention by Chamberlain, once again presiding over the conference. In addition to the ongoing payment to the Royal Navy (increased to £200,000 per annum and the source of much agitation in Australian Parliament), the establishment of a Royal Naval Reserve allowed for improved training on more modern warships.[180] The First Lord of the Admiralty, William Palmer, acknowledged the excellent service of Australia's existing Naval Brigades in China, looking upon this Royal Naval Reserve as a 'new departure', but one he endorsed with much satisfaction.[181] The scheme involved one or two cruisers of the Australian Auxiliary Squadron to be manned exclusively by Australians under the command of a British officer, granting them the experience the Australian government so greatly desired for its forces. However, any ship from the Australian squadron had to be able to be moved from Australian waters, even without the permission the British government sought during the China crisis, much to the chagrin of the Australian leaders.[182]

The idea of an imperial reserve, however, hit a significant roadblock. At the conference, Prime Minister of New Zealand, Richard Seddon, was the most ambitious to see an imperial

[177] W. G Nicholson to Lord Roberts, Organization of Colonial Troops for Imperial Service, 1901–2, telegram, 16 December 1901, Series W.O. 32/8303 War Office Registered Papers: General Series, AJCP.
[178] Lord Roberts to Secretary of State, Organization of Colonial Troops for Imperial Service, 1901–2, telegram, 31 December 1901, Series W.O. 32/8303 War Office Registered Papers: General Series, AJCP.
[179] The Colonial Office to the War Office, Question of an Imperial Reserve for the Colonies, 1902, telegram, 6 May 1902, Series W.O. 32/8305 War Office Registered Papers: General Series, AJCP.
[180] Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, 73.
[181] *Papers Relating to a Conference Between the Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Prime Ministers of Self-Governing Colonies; June to August, 1902.* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1902), Cd. 1299, 18.
[182] Richard Jebb, *The Imperial Conference: A History and Study*, vol. I (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1911), 359.

reserve established. Nonetheless, Seddon understood that both the circumstance of their deployment and ongoing payment warranted discussion.[183] His British and Australian counterparts were more hesitant. British Secretary of State for War, St John Broderick, listed numerous reasons why an Imperial Reserve, though not without its merits, might prove difficult. Among these, the Secretary of State listed the time constraints of relying upon a distant force, as well as the diversity of troops (which had been celebrated in South Africa) being something the British government was trying to reduce. St John Broderick gave his final explanation:

> [H]owever loyal and patriotic the feeling, you can only treat contingents which are got together on the spur of the moment, but not one on which the Empire would be justified in relying in any way to the exclusion of its own regular troops, and my point is that cases must and will arise in which we shall have to ask, in which we shall require a larger force than we have of our own, and in which the Colonies who send it to us on the ground that they think us worthy of support in a particular emergency should be prepared to send us reliable forces.[184]

The papers of the conference summarised the Australian position:

> [The colonial representatives] were of opinion that the best course to pursue was to endeavour to raise the standard of training for the general body of their forces, to organize the departmental services and equipment required for the mobilisation of a field force, leaving it to the Colony, when the need arose, to determine how and to what extent it should render assistance. The Imperial sentiment in the Colonies was steadily growing, and their action in the late war left no room for doubt that such assistance would be given readily and effectively and to the utmost of their ability in any future emergency. To establish a special force, set apart for general Imperial service, and practically under the absolute control of the Imperial Government, was objectionable in principle as derogating from the powers of self-government enjoyed by them, and would be calculated to impede the general improvement in training and organisation of their defence forces, and, consequentially, their ability to render effectively held, if it should be required.[185]

It was one less thing for Barton and Forrest to worry about in the aftermath of federation. The *Defence Act* 1903, forming the basis for much of Australia's military operations into the

[183] *Papers Relating to a Conference Between the Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Prime Ministers of Self-Governing Colonies; June to August, 1902.* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1902), Cd. 1299, 27.
[184] *Papers Relating to a Conference Between the Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Prime Ministers of Self-Governing Colonies; June to August, 1902.* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1902), Cd. 1299, 31.
[185] *Papers Relating to a Conference Between the Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Prime Ministers of Self-Governing Colonies; June to August, 1902.* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1902), Cd. 1299, 32.

future, only accepted volunteers to serve outside Australia.[186] Seddon was less pleased with the outcome. Writing from the Hotel Cecil to St John Broderick on 11 August 1902, he referred to proceedings as a 'development of an embarrassing nature', and left the matter 'open for His Majesty's Government to open negotiations with New Zealand apart altogether from the Conference'.[187] The response on the Secretary of State's behalf made it clear he wanted to close that door. 'Noting your withdrawal on behalf of the New Zealand Government from the negotiation initiated at the Conference of Prime Ministers', the telegram stated, 'Mr. Secretary Broderick begs to thank you most sincerely for your valuable co-operation and assistance'.[188]

Conclusion: Disengaging from British Wars

To return to L. M. Field's question of whether Australian perceptions of the war were surrounded by a sense of 'apathy or antipathy', certainly both the novelty of the initial contingents and the sense of imperial emergency represented by Black Week, had worn off by the war's end. Local interests such as federation and the transfer of powers from state to federal level occupied the new Barton government. Defence matters were low on the list of priorities for the federal government, and Barton handed them over to the inexperienced Forrest to determine the path ahead. While the South African War continued, it became an issue that appeared to be passed between colonial and federal governments in a somewhat awkward manner.

The limits of Australian engagement with a British imperial conflict were laid out to bear by the South African War. The quality of Australian troops appeared to diminish by the time later contingents were being farewelled. The prospect of adventure or economic opportunity seemingly drove the desire to go to South Africa as much as support for Britain's imperial mission. Now that the war was no longer perceived as short and due to end in the immediate future, Australian men had to weigh up the costs and benefits of departing from Australia for an extended period of time. It was not just the volunteers whose outlook of the war had

[186] Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, 71.
[187] Richard Seddon to John Broderick, Imperial Reserve in the Self-Governing Colonies, 1902, memorandum, 11 August 1902, Series W.O. 32/8306 War Office Registered Papers: General Series, AJCP.
[188] War Office to Richard Seddon, Imperial Reserve in the Self-Governing Colonies, 1902, telegram, 20 August 1902, Series W.O. 32/8306 War Office Registered Papers: General Series, AJCP.

changed, but the broader public's sympathies appeared to be dissipating, best seen in the diminishing crowds that came to farewell the final contingents.

None of these movements against the South African War greatly impacted governmental decisions to continue their support. While Australian governments raised concerns about the length of service and the dreaded possibility of men remaining in South Africa indefinitely, both colonial and Australian parliaments remained willing to continue to support Britain's war effort should they be asked, and the terms be reasonable. It was a system that, for the time being, appeared to work in the Australian governments' favour. It allowed them to continue to meet British demands for troops, without it placing any great burden on the federal government's local interests.

The defeat of the Imperial Reserve idea at the 1902 Colonial Conference was in some part influenced by Australian successes in South Africa. The perception of Australian troops as uniquely suited for the war against the Boers in South Africa represented the very fluctuation in military resources across the British Empire that the London government was looking to rectify. Barton and Forrest agreed with St John Broderick's assessment of the fault of the Imperial Reserve idea. The Australian government had emphasised its desire to control its own military resources through its dealings with the British government across the South African War, all the way up to 1902. The Australian leaders reasserted the critical importance that the Commonwealth was able to exercise this independence should Britain, once again, find itself turning to them for assistance in an overseas war.

Conclusion

The newly anointed Duke of Cornwall and York (Later George V) visited Australia during May 1901, one of the destinations on his extravagant tour of the British Empire. Much had changed throughout the empire in the last year. The Australian colonies had federated into the one nation, they had been part of successful campaigns in both China and South Africa, and they were now entering an era under a new monarch, King Edward VII. The Duke's arrival in Australia was perfectly timed. It afforded him the opportunity to open proceedings at the first session of Australia's House of Representatives, held at the Melbourne Exhibition building on 9 May 1901. As the Duke stood up to address the House, he expressed the place of the federated nation within Britain's empire:

> His Majesty has been pleased to consent to this separation, moved by his sense of the loyalty and devotion which prompted the generous aid afforded by all the colonies in the South African War, both in its earlier and more recent stages, and of the splendid bravery of the colonial troops. It is also His Majesty's wish to acknowledge the readiness with which the ships of the special Australasian Squadron were placed at his disposal for service in China, and the valuable assistance rendered there by the naval contingents of the several colonies.[1]

The Australian contributions to British wars were a central part of the Duke of Cornwall and York's visit. The Boxer contingents had returned from China the previous month, but even as the Duke made his speech in parliament, many Australian troops were still embroiled in Britain's campaign in South Africa. To further show the appreciation of the monarchy for these contributions, the Duke of Cornwall and York presented medals to soldiers who fought in the South African War, many having returned as part of the first contingent at the end of the previous year.[2] For these troops who had fought as part of the campaign and the Australian leaders who had endorsed it, it was further vindication that their efforts had indeed made some impression upon Britain.

Symbolic unity was the strongest justification by Australian leaders for offering military contributions in the late nineteenth century. Such rhetoric was indicative of this period of

[1] Australia*, Parliamentary Debates,* House of Representatives, 9 May 1901, 18 (The Duke of Cornwall and York).
[2] 'Presentation by the Duke. War Medals for Victorian Soldiers'. *The Argus*. 24 April 1901, 6.

Anglo-Australian relations. In the aftermath of colonial self-government, these conflicts became moments when the ties of empire were strengthened through the re-affirmation of the colonies' dedication to Britain's imperial project. In every case, Australian and British leaders were eager to bask in how each contribution represented the Australian colonies coming to Britain's aid whenever the moment arose. The reality was that the way this imperial sentiment manifested was much more complex below the surface.

Successive British governments wrestled with the need to shore up the empire in the face of heightened imperial competition. It meant the re-examination of how the colonies fitted into the empire, seeking further collaboration with them through the conference system that emerged in the late nineteenth century. However, the colonies were never eager to commit more than what was absolutely necessary when it came to improving the defence of Britain's empire, particularly when they had little influence over how these resources were distributed and utilised. This thesis has examined the contestation between Britain's need for efficiency across its empire against the colonies' desire for further imperial voice, wariness of committing to schemes that placed great financial burden upon themselves, and, most importantly, their colonial autonomy. These three conflicts, bound together into the one coherent narrative, are vital windows through which we can examine this contestation, and the important role of imperial sentiment within it.

The Sudan campaign provides the logical starting point for examining the period, marking the unprecedented moment when an independent settler colony raised, equipped, and despatched military resources for an overseas British conflict. This decision by acting New South Wales Premier, William Dalley, has often been viewed as a precedent for later, more substantial contributions to British wars, or as a novel moment of embarrassment driven by a few overreaching colonial leaders. Instead, the campaign was more indicative of the atmosphere surrounding Australian defence than has often been credited. In the aftermath of the final departure of British garrisons from the Australian colonies in 1870, there existed no clear definition as to how colonial governments should manage their defensive resources, let alone what this meant for their wider position in defending Britain's empire. When news of General Gordon's death reached the Australian colonies, their response was not only indicative of an underlying imperial attachment that ran through the colonies, but also of the colonies' newfound connection with the world, brought closer by new technologies. However, the instantaneous and haphazard response by Dalley and his fellow colonial

leaders indicated that even with this widespread enthusiasm to participate in Britain's imperial mission, there was little consideration for any process that would structure how they did so.

Though the Sudan expedition was short lived, and the New South Wales contingent were involved in little direct combat, the campaign itself reveals key themes that would continue to underlie Australian contributions to British wars during this era. First was the lack of knowledge surrounding what Australian service would entail, as well as clearly defined expectations of what they might achieve. This undefined expected outcome of the contribution fed into debates about what purpose these commitments served. Second was the sense of colonial anxiety exhibited by both Australian soldiers and leaders about measuring up to the idealised standard of the British Army. It resulted in the need for continual reassurance that this standard was indeed being met. Finally, the general decline in enthusiasm for the conflict once the initial wave of excitement had passed, reveals the limited nature of imperial sentiment as a motivation for driving the defence of Britain's empire. The Sudan campaign lingered into the following years as a cautionary tale of the dangers of this sentiment running unchecked, but also demonstrated the growing desire of the Australian colonies to be more active participants in imperial affairs. They hoped that actions such as the contribution to Britain's campaign in Sudan, might accelerate Britain granting them a greater voice in confronting the empire's challenges.

The British government was also becoming increasingly aware of the challenges the empire faced. Like Sudan before it, the Australian involvement in the South African War was indicative of broader discussions surrounding defence of the empire. However, in this case, it was not a matter of that direction being vague, but a departure from considerations primarily focused on local defence, and regular payments for the upkeep of the Royal Navy. The Colonial Defence Committee and the colonial conference were established to better co-ordinate issues relating to the settler colonies' defences, but they did not give much consideration of what the Australian colonies' role would be if Britain were engaged in another war. When Secretary of State for the Colonies, Joseph Chamberlain, looked to harness the same imperial enthusiasm in 1899 that had inspired the Sudan contribution, he was disappointed at the lacklustre response, particularly from New South Wales where leaders had already witnessed the fallout such a campaign could bring. The lack of

organisation made for a haphazard response to the South African War and Chamberlain resorted to making demands of the colonies.

Black Week revealed that the campaign in South Africa would not be a repeat of what had occurred in Sudan. Following a series of rapid defeats by the Boers, Britain faced a serious challenge to its prestige in a manner it rarely had for much of the nineteenth century. But the war also represented a moment where the Australian colonies could actively participate in defending British interests in the region in a more significant manner than they had in 1885. Thus, the British effort in the South African War, conducted during the first half of 1900 under the leadership of Roberts and Kitchener, allowed for the Australian troops to go beyond their symbolic presence in showing the strength of the British Empire. Instead, these contingents demonstrated how Australian troops could best supplement British forces on an ongoing basis. British command and the Australian public widely hailed these Australian troops, particularly the Bushmen contingents raised from rural areas. Their successes evoked early forms of Australian exceptionalism, where these troops were perceived as bearing unique qualities that could complement the British Army. However, the longer the war continued, the more complex this image of continual Australian service became.

While these colonial contingents served in South Africa, the colonies of New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia all took the extraordinary step of pledging more defensive resources for the Boxer Rebellion in China. Though much smaller than the contribution to South Africa, the Australian presence at the Boxer Rebellion provides an important window into the geographical advantage the Australian colonies might have in shaping Britain's imperial defence going forward. But the concurrent nature of the Boxer Rebellion with South Africa also raised questions as to what constituted a crisis worth contributing defensive resources towards, what the colonies could gain from external service, and the dangers of imperial sentiment in driving these decisions. Ultimately, the relatively low financial sacrifice made to send these contingents and the valuable experience deemed to be gained, meant that the case-by-case approach towards imperial wars was, for the time being, a manageable one.

The Australian presence at the Boxer Rebellion demonstrated the importance of representation. The conflict in China presented the opportunity for Australia to be a discernible force within an international conflict. It was also one that unfolded in a

geographically important region. The imperial powers exerting influence in China represented the closest external threat to Australian security of the three conflicts. As such, Australian personnel represented not only the strength of the British Empire, but the emerging Australian nation's own interests as well. The Eight-Nation response to the Boxer uprising created a unique situation in which Australian engagement with troops from across the world was often structured within pre-existing notions and anxieties. These interactions often revealed the Australian troops own overlapping connections to aspects of both British and national identity. The Boxer Rebellion was a very different conflict to what was unfolding in South Africa, but it also revealed an important form of service that might be required should Australia continue down this path of contributing to British wars. If South Africa showed how Australians could practically supplement the British forces, then the war in China revealed the importance of a symbolic presence Australia might have in global affairs and their place within an increasingly competitive imperial world.

The extended war in South Africa continued beyond the capture of Pretoria for almost another two years, revealing many of Australia's limitations in contributing to a lengthy overseas war. These limitations could be seen through three critical factors. The first of these was the decreasing ability for Australia to continue to supply effective military resources over an extended period. The second factor was the decreasing enthusiasm of the Australian public for the conflict in the later years of the war. Finally, there was a general sense of detachment from Britain's imperial mission in South Africa as an increasing number of volunteers viewed South Africa as a source of potential economic relief. The South African War ended with muted celebrations throughout Australia, with leaders having moved on to more pressing local issues long before the conclusion of the war in 1902.

At the 1902 Colonial Conference, St John Broderick decided to dismiss the imperial reserve idea. His explanation summarised many of the key points that had underlined Anglo-Australian negotiations throughout the conflicts of this period. To the Minister for War, Australia's geographical position and the perceived physical and cultural attributes of its troops, might provide an untapped resource for Britain's wider scheme of imperial defence. In a world where a crisis might erupt anywhere, the potential for physically capable and adaptable Australian troops to be first on the scene, could have been of great advantage to the empire. However, these ideas, like so many proposed by British statesmen seeking to find advantage through their colonial assets, was at the mercy of the difficulties of imperial

organisation. The British government, eager to find some standardisation throughout the empire, found that relying on these white settler colonies in a binding, permanent manner would prove a bridge too far.

Throughout each of these cases where Australia sent troops to overseas wars, criticisms of Australia's approach to these conflicts never managed to penetrate parliamentary voting. Much of this can be attributed to politicians not wanting to be perceived as any less loyal to Britain than their colleagues, many of them predominantly voicing concerns over the processes involved with sending contingents, rather than the results. In many ways, these conflicts yielded their own advantages for Australian colonial leaders who approached each of these conflicts not only through the broader idea of the symbolic unity of the empire, but also through their own nationalist interests. If these resources were available to the colonies, then they might be able to turn these imperial crises into an opportunity for national growth. Through examining these conflicts in the one comprehensive study, this thesis identifies three main nationalist factors driving these contributions.

The first, and the most important factor, was that under the existing arrangements, the despatch of colonial contingents allowed for a contribution to British defence that did not encroach upon the Australian colonies' independence. The late nineteenth century escalation of imperial re-evaluation was defined by the British government's desire for the colonies to further bear the costs of maintaining the Royal Navy. However, colonial leaders were generally hesitant to pay for its upkeep. They were even more concerned about relying upon a naval presence outside of their own control. Colonial contributions represented an active Australian participation in defending the empire, one which allowed the colonial governments greater control over the resources they were contributing. In effect, these military contributions proved the colonies were willing to defend the empire but meant that they could do so without committing to schemes manufactured in London that might pull these military or economic resources out of the colonies' control for an indefinite period.

The second factor, though one that was notoriously difficult to prove, was that these colonial contributions ensured reciprocity from Britain should the Australian colonies find themselves requiring its support. Examining these conflicts through the lens of the Age of High Imperialism also places them within the perceived growing threat that emerging imperial powers posed to the isolated Australian colonies. The case of the Boxer Rebellion

proves the greatest example of this idea, where powers such as Russia and Japan were exhibiting ambitions within the Pacific region. By responding to each of these British crises, Australian leaders were not just hoping that they displayed the unity of the British Empire, but that this connection would further ensure that Britain would also protect Australia should it find itself in danger.

The third factor was that the foreign conflicts granted the Australian military and naval resources the opportunity for valuable experience that they would not have received otherwise. Each conflict reveals some of the anxieties surrounding the colonial forces measuring up to the standards set by the more seasoned British troops. These anxieties can be traced from the skirmish at Tamai in 1885, where all involved were eager to prove that the Australian troops could acquit themselves alongside the British forces. The image of the Bushman units was widely celebrated in the South African War because it was seen as the confirmation that Australian soldiers bore exceptional qualities that distinguished them in the field. These wars allowed for the otherwise stationary Australian forces to effectively gain experience within the structures of Britain's imperial forces.

As explored throughout this thesis, the Australian contribution to the Sudan, China, and South African conflicts is more indicative of the colonies' evolving role in British imperial defence than has traditionally been acknowledged. Instead, these conflicts provide crucial insights into Australia's developing relationship with Britain during the Age of High Imperialism. These conflicts composed a distinct period when the Australian colonies sought to redefine their responsibility towards imperial defence, cognisant of their own need to ensure they could guarantee protection for their isolated continent. When taken together in this manner, these colonial contributions reveal Australia's willingness to actively contribute to Britain's imperial mission through a contribution of defensive resources. The Australian colonies entered each war with the possibility that they were embarking upon a new era in their responsibility towards defending the empire, defined by a regular, ongoing support to British wars. However, any attempts by the British government to further define or even structure these contributions was met with resistance from Australian colonial leaders, who were reluctant to commit to binding agreements, which they saw as treading upon their colonial independence.

Yet, Australian leaders were determined to shape the manner by which they entered these British wars. The period encompassing these conflicts was defined not only by the negotiation between the Australian colonial and British governments over matters of imperial defence, but also the expression of Australian national interests underpinning their approaches to the Sudan, China, and South African wars. The Australian governments assured British leaders that a shared imperial sentiment was at the forefront of their contributions, however, as detailed throughout the thesis, other local interests also drove these decisions. These interests included the granting of military experience for colonial defences; the use of these contributions as a less restrictive and more economically frugal form of imperial defence; and finally, the expression of imperial sentiment to ensure reciprocal protection from Britain should Australia be threatened by other imperial powers. This thesis demonstrates that these conflicts were not just moments of direct Australian obligation to the British Empire. They were part of a distinct period where Australia's own local interests defined their relationship with British imperial defence, driven by the need of the colonies and the emerging nation to find security in an increasingly competitive imperial world.

Bibliography

Australian War Memorial – Official Records (National Archives of Australia held by the Australian War Memorial)

AWM1 3/31. Papers relating to Commonwealth Contingent for South Africa in Camp at Royal Agricultural Showground, Sydney. Commonwealth and Pre-Federation Records. January–February 1902.

AWM1 4/22. Letter from Captain M A Hilliard, NSW Mounted Rifles, Serving in South Africa, to Unnamed Colonel at HQ NSW Military Forces, Sydney. Commonwealth and Pre-Federation Records. 11 July 1900.

AWM1 4/23. Report from Major W H Tunbridge, Officer Commanding Second Regiment, Rhodesian Field Force, at Elands River, South Africa. Commonwealth and Pre-Federation Records. 15 September 1900.

AWM2 4. Contingent Orders. Sudan Records. May 1885.

AWM2 7. NSW Contingent Nominal Roll of Members Left Behind at Suez, Suakin and Colombo Sick and at Colombo on Duty. Sudan Records. 1 June 1885.

AWM2 8. Charter Party RMS Iberia, Sydney to Suakin. Sudan Records. 23 February 1885.

Chauvel, Henry. *Annotated Typescript Biography*. AWM: MSS1406.

Murray, P. L. *Official Records of the Australian Military Contingents to the War in South Africa*. Melbourne: Government Printer, 1911.

Australian War Memorial – Personal Records

Bertotto, William T. Papers, Australian War Memorial, PR85/020.

Blyth, Bert. Papers, Australian War Memorial, 3DRL/2181.

Brownlow, Frederick. Papers, Australian War Memorial, PR00387.

Butler, A. O. Papers, Australian War Memorial, PR85/056.

Downes, Henry. Papers, Australian War Memorial, PR03048.

Fraser, John. Papers, Australian War Memorial, PRO1515.

Giles, Lancelot. Papers, Australian War Memorial, PR84/027.

Jeffery, George F. Papers, Australian War Memorial, 3DRL/2246.

Judge, Thomas, Papers, Australian War Memorial, PR82/162.

Lawn, James. Papers, Australian War Memorial, PR88/127.

Learoyd, William Edward. Papers, Australian War Memorial, PR03059.

Livingstone, Arthur J. Papers, Australian War Memorial, PR85/047.

Mackay, J A Kenneth. Papers, Australian War Memorial, PR87/207.

Mulready, Thomas. Papers, Australian War Memorial. 3DRL/2873.

Perry-Keene, Harold. Papers, Australian War Memorial, PR02069.

Small, Robert. Papers, Australian War Memorial PR06341.

Underwood, Walter. Papers, Australian War Memorial, PR01515.

National Library of Australia

'Australian Federal Defence', 40, 1896.

Hutton, E, H MacKenzie, and F Hixson. *Defence of New South Wales*. Sydney: Government Printer, 1894.

Scratchley, P. H. *Lectures on Defence Subjects* (Melbourne: John Ferres, Government Printer, 1880).

National Archives of Australia

National Archives of Australia: Defence Corporate Support Centre, Sydney Central; Sp459/1 Correspondence Files, Multiple Number Series, 1912–1964, 453/1/131, Soudan [Sudan] Contingent 1885, 1885–1938.

Colonial Conference Papers and Proceedings

Intercolonial Conference Held at Sydney. Sydney. Houses of General Assembly. 18 January 1881.

Proceedings of the Colonial Conference, 1887: Vol. 1 (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1887), C. 5091.

Proceedings of the Colonial Conference, 1887: Vol. 2 (Appendix) (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1887), C-5091-I.

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 (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1897), C. 8596.

Papers Relating to a Conference Between the Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Prime Ministers of Self-Governing Colonies; June to August, 1902. (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1902), Cd. 1299, 18.

Colonial Defence Committee

Great Britain. Colonial Defence Committee & Queensland. Local Defence Committee. 1890, *Report of Local Committee [on] Queensland: Remarks*, 1890.

Great Britain, Colonial Defence Committee. Local Defence Committee. *Defence Scheme Revised to March 1894*. 1894.

United Kingdom Command Papers

Correspondence Respecting Offers by Colonies of Australia and Canada of Troops for Service in Soudan (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1884–1885), C-4324.

Correspondence Respecting Offers by Colonies of Australia and Canada of Troops for Service in Soudan (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1884–1885), C-4437.

Correspondence Respecting Offers by Colonies of Australia and Canada of Troops for Service in Soudan (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1884–1885), C-4494.

State Library of New South Wales

Letters to Lord Loftus, 1879–1886. Manuscripts. A 3057.

John R. Wallace Papers, 1884–ca. 1910. Manuscripts. MLMSS 346.

Bernhard Ringrose Wise — Papers, 1879–1916, with Miscellaneous Family Papers, 1824–1917. Manuscripts. MLMSS 1327.

State Library of Victoria

McQueen, Alexander, Correspondence. Manuscripts. MS 9662.

Patrick, Thomas, Letters, 1901–1902. Manuscripts. MS 10164.

Reynolds, William, Papers, 1859–1915 Jul. 22. Manuscripts. MS 12676.
Roberts, Victor, Letter and Related Boer War Items. Manuscripts. MS 9882.

White, John, Diary 1900. Manuscripts. MS 10660.

Colonial Office — Accessed through the Australian Joint Copying Project

Series CO 13. South Australia: Original Correspondence, 1831–1900.

Series CO 18. Western Australia: Original Correspondence, 1828–1900.

Series CO 201. New South Wales Correspondence, 1782–1900.

Series CO 234. Queensland: Original Correspondence, 1859–1900.

Series CO 280. Tasmania: Original Correspondence (Secretary of State), 1824–1900

Series CO 309. Victoria: Original Correspondence, 1851–1900.

War Office — Accessed through the Australian Joint Copying Project

Series WO 32. War Office Registered Papers: General Series.

Parliamentary Hansards

Australia House of Representatives Parliamentary Debates.

New South Wales Legislative Assembly Parliamentary Debates.

New South Wales Legislative Council Parliamentary Debates.

New Zealand House of Commons Parliamentary Debates.

United Kingdom House of Representatives Parliamentary Debates.

Victorian Legislative Assembly Parliamentary Debates.

Victorian Legislative Council Parliamentary Debates.

Newspapers and Periodicals

Sydney Morning Herald.

Bulletin [New South Wales].

Sydney Mail.

The Daily Telegraph [New South Wales].

Evening News [New South Wales].

Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate [New South Wales].

The South Australian Advertiser.

South Australian Register.

The Age [Melbourne].

The Argus [Melbourne].

The Telegraph [Queensland].

Queensland Times, Ipswich Herald and General Advertiser.

The West Australian.

London Illustrated News.

Times [London].

Pall Mall Gazette [London].

The North-China Herald and Supreme Court & Consular Gazette [Shanghai].

PhD Theses

Clark, Stephen J. 'Marching to Their Own Drum: British Army Officers as Military Commandants in the Australian Colonies and New Zealand, 1870–1901'. PhD Thesis, University of New South Wales, 1999.

Holbrook, Carolyn. 'The Great War in the Australian Imagination Since 1915'. PhD Thesis, University of Melbourne, 2012.

Shields, Robert. 'The Quest for Empire Unity: The Imperial Federationists and Their Cause, 1869–1893'. PhD Thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1961.

Published Primary Works

The History of the Soudan Expedition: An Historical Record of the Events Relating to the Levy, Despatch, and Return of the New South Wales Contingent Raised for Service in Egypt. March-June 1885. Sydney: W. M. Maclardy, Mercantile and Book Printer, 1885.

'From Suakim to the Nile' with List of the New South Wales Contingent. Sydney: Turner and Henderson, 1885.

A Terrible Indictment: Dalley on Parkes in 1872. Sydney: J. G. O'Connor, 1880.

Abbott, J. H. M. *Tommy Cornstalk: Being Some Account of the Less Notable Features of the South African War from the Point of View of the Australian Ranks*. London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1902.

Bufton, John. *Tasmanians in the Transvaal War*. Hobart: S. G. Loone, 1905.

Colquhoun, Archibald R. *The Mastery of the Pacific*. London: Macmillan and Co., 1902.

Curzon, George. *Problems of the Far East: Japan-Korea-China*. London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1894.

Deakin, Alfred. *Irrigated India: An Australian View of India and Ceylon, Their Irrigation and Agriculture*. London: W. Thacker & Co., 1893.

Dilke, Charles Westworth. *Problems of Greater Britain*. Vol. i. London: London Macmillan, 1890.

Forster, W. E. *Imperial Federation*. London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1885.

Holroyd, Arthur T. *Suakim and the Country of Sudan*. Sydney: Thomas Richard, Government Printer, 1885.

Hutchinson, Frank, and Francis Myers. *The Australian Contingent: A History of the Patriotic Movement in New South Wales, and an Account of the Despatch of Troops to the Assistance of Imperial Forces in the Soudan*. 2nd ed. Sydney: Government Printer, 1886.

Jebb, Richard. *The Imperial Conference: A History and Study*. Vol. I. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1911.

Martin, A. Patchett. *Australia and the Empire*. Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1889.

Morrison, George. *An Australian In China: Being the Narrative of a Quiet Journey Across China to Burma*. 3rd ed. London: Horace Cox, 1895.

Parkes, Henry. *Fifty Years in the Making of Australian History*. London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1892.

Pearson, Charles. *National Life and Character: A Forecast*. 2nd ed. London: Macmillan and Co, 1893.

Wilkinson, Frank. *Australian Cavalry: The N.S.W. Lancer Regiment and the First Australian Horse*. Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1901.

Wilkinson, Frank. *Australia at the Front: A Colonial View of the Boer War*. London: John Long, 1901.

Secondary Works

Anae, Nicole. '"Among the Boer Children": Australian Women Teachers in South African Concentration Camp Schools, 1901–1904'. *History of Education Review* 45, no. 1 (2016): 28–53.

Anderson, Fay, and Richard Trembath. *Witnesses to War: The History of Australian Conflict Reporting*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2011.

Atkinson, David C. *The Burden of White Supremacy: Containing Asian Migration in the British Empire and the United States*. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2016.

Atwood, Rodney. *Roberts & Kitchener in South Africa, 1900–1902*. South Yorkshire, United Kingdom: Pen & Sword Military, 2011.

Bagnall, Kate. 'Crossing Oceans and Cultures'. In *Australia's Asia: From Yellow Peril to Asian Century*, edited by David Walker and Agnieszka Sobocinska, 121–44. Perth: UWA Publishing, 2012.

Ballantyne, Tony. *Orientalism and Race: Aryanism in the British Empire*. United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001.

Barbary, James. *The Boer War*. London: Victory Golliancz, 1971.

Beaumont, Joan. 'ANZAC Day to VP Day: Arguments and Interpretations'. *Journal of the Australian War Memorial*, no. 40 (2007): 1–5.

Beaumont, Joan. 'Australian Military Historiography'. *War & Society* 42, no. 1 (2023): 99–121.

Belich, James. *The New Zealand Wars and the Victorian Interpretation of Racial Conflict*. 2nd ed. Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2015.

Belich, James. *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783-1939*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Bell, Duncan. *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860–1900*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007.

Bellanta, Melissa. 'Rethinking the 1890s'. In *The Cambridge History of Australia*, I: Indigenous and Colonial Australia:218–41. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Bentley, Michael. *Lord Salisbury's World: Conservative Environment's in Late-Victorian Britain*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Bickers, Robert. *The Scramble for China: Foreign Devils in the Qing Empire, 1832–1914*. London: Penguin Books, 2011.

Bickers, Robert, and R. G. Tiedemann, eds. *The Boxers, China, and the World*. Lanham, USA: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007.

Blackton, Charles S. 'Australian Nationality and Nationalism: The Imperial Federationist Interlude, 1885–1901'. *Australian Historical Studies* 7, no. 55 (1955): 1–16.

Bolton, Geoffrey. *Edmund Barton: The One Man for the Job*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2000.

Brett, Judith. *The Enigmatic Mr Deakin*. Melbourne: The Text Publishing Company, 2018.

Bridge, Carl, and Kent Fedorowich. *The British World: Diaspora, Culture and Identity*. London: Frank Cass, 2003.

Bright, Rachel, and Andrew Dilley. 'After the British World'. *The Historical Journal* 60, no. 2 (2017): 547–68.

Brogden, Stanley. *The Sudan Contingent*. Melbourne: The Hawthorn Press, 1943.

Buckner, Phillip. 'The Creation of the Dominion of Canada, 1860-1901'. In *Canada and the British Empire*, edited by Phillip Buckner. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Buckner, Phillip, and R. Douglas Francis. 'Introduction'. In *Rediscovering the British World*, edited by Phillip Buckner and R. Douglas Francis, 9–20. Alberta: University of Calgary Press, 2005.

Burroughs, Peter. 'Defence and Imperial Disunity'. In *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, edited by Andrew Porter, III: The Nineteenth Century:320–44. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Butler, Daniel Allen. *The First Jihad: The Battle for Khartoum and the Dawn of Militant Islam*. Philadelphia: Casemate, 2007.

Cain, P. J., and A. G. Hopkins. *British Imperialism: Innovation and Expansion 1688–1914*. United Kingdom: Longman Group, 1993.

Carnegie, Margaret, and Frank Shields. *In Search of Breaker Morant: Balladist and Bushveldt Carbineer*. Melbourne: H. H. Stephenson, 1979.

Carver, Field Marshal Lord. *The National Army Museum Book of The Boer War*. London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1999.

Clark, C. M. H. *A History of Australia*. Vol. IV: The Earth Abideth For Ever, 1851–1888. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1978.

Clark, C. M. H. *A History of Australia*. Vol. V: The People Make Laws, 1888–1915. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1981.

Clarke, Peter. *Hope and Glory: Britain 1900–2000*. 2nd ed. London: Penguin Books, 2004.

Coetzer, Owen. *Fire in the Sky: The Destruction of the Orange Free State, 1899–1902*. South Africa: Covos-Day Books, 2000.

Cole, Douglas. 'The Crimson Thread of Kinship': Ethnic Ideas in Australia, 1870–1914'. *Australian Historical Studies* 14, no. 56 (1971): 511–25.

Collins, Robert O. *A History of Modern Sudan*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Collins, Robert O. *Land Beyond the Rivers: The Southern Sudan, 1898–1918*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971.

Connolly, C. N. ‘Class, Birthplace, Loyalty: Australian Attitudes to the Boer War’. *Historical Studies* 18, no. 71 (1978): 210–32.

Connolly, C. N. ‘Manufacturing “Spontaneity”: The Australian Offers of Troops for the Boer War’. *Historical Studies* 18, no. 70 (1978): 106–17.

Connor, John. *Australian Frontier Wars, 1788–1838*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2002.

Cooper, H. M. *A Naval History of South Australia and Other Historical Notes*. Adelaide: The Hassell Press, 1950.

Coulthard-Clark, Chris. ‘The Dispatch of the Contingent’. In *But Little Glory: The New South Wales Contingent to the Sudan, 1885*, edited by Peter Stanley. Canberra: Military Historical Society of Australia, 1985.

Crawford, R. M. *A Bit of a Rebel: The Life and Work of George Arnold Wood*. Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1975.

Crosby, Travis. *Joseph Chamberlain: A Most Radical Imperialist*. London: I. B. Tauris, 2018.

Crotty, Martin, and Craig Stockings. ‘The Minefield of Australian Military History’. *The Australian Journal of Politics and History* 60, no. 4 (2014): 580–91.

Crowley, F. K. *Big John Forrest 1847–1918: A Founding Father of the Commonwealth of Australia*. Nedlands, Perth: University of Western Australia Press, 2000.

Curran, James, and Stuart Ward. *The Unknown Nation: Australia After Empire*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2010.

Curthoys, Ann, and Jessie Mitchell. ‘The Advent of Self-Government, 1840s–90’. In *The Cambridge History of Australia*, edited by Alison Bashford and Stuart Macintyre, 149–69. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Daly, M. W. ‘The British Occupation, 1882–1922’. In *The Cambridge History of Egypt: Volume Two, Modern Egypt, from 1517 to the End of the Twentieth Century*, edited by M. W. Daly, 2:239–51. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Darwin, John. ‘Empire and Ethnicity’. *Nations and Nationalism* 16, no. 3 (2010): 383–401.

Darwin, John. *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830–1970*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Darwin, John. ‘A Third British Empire? The Dominion Idea in Imperial Politics’. In *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, edited by Judith Brown, IV: The Twentieth Century:64–86. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Darwin, John. *Unfinished Empire: The Global Expansion of Britain*. New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2014.

Davison, Graeme. ‘The Colonial Strut: Australian Leaders on the World Stage’. *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 51, no. 1 (2005): 6–16.

Davison, Graeme. *The Rise and Fall of Marvellous Melbourne*. 2nd ed. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2004.

Davison, Graeme. ‘Sydney and the Bush: An Urban Context for the Australian Legend’. *Australian Historical Studies* 18, no. 71 (1978): 191–209.

Denton, Kit. *The Breaker: A Novel*. Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1973.

Denton, Kit. *For Queen and Commonwealth*. Sydney: Time-Life Books, 1987.

Fenby, Jonathan. *The Penguin History of Modern China: The Fall and Rise of a Great Power, 1850–2009*. London: Penguin Books, 2009.

Fenton, Damien. ‘Australians in the New Zealand Wars’. In *Before the Anzac Dawn: A Military History of Australia before 1915*, edited by Craig Stockings and John Connor, 118–47. Sydney: NewSouth, 2013.

Field, L. M. *The Forgotten War: Australian Involvement in the South African Conflict of 1899–1902*. Melbourne.: Melbourne University Press, 1979.

Firkins, Peter. *The Australians in Nine Wars: From Waikato to Long Tan*. 2nd ed. London: Pan Books, 1973.

FitzSimons, Peter. *Breaker Morant: The Epic Story of the Boer War and Harry ‘Breaker’ Morant: Drover, Horseman, Bush Poet, Murderer or Hero?* Sydney: Hatchette Australia, 2020.

Gallagher, John, and Ronald Robinson. ‘The Imperialism of Free Trade’. *The Economic History Review* 6, no. 1 (1953): 1–15.

Gammage, Bill. *The Broken Years: Australian Soldiers in the Boer War*. Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1974.

Garton, Stephen. *Out of Luck: Poor Australians and Social Welfare*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1990.

Garvin, J. L. *The Life of Joseph Chamberlain*. Vol. iii, 1895–1900: Empire and World Policy. London: Macmillan and Co., 1934.

Gordon, Donald. ‘The Colonial Defence Committee and Imperial Collaboration: 1885–1904’. *Political Science Quarterly* 77, no. 4 (1962): 526–45.

Grant, James, and Geoffrey Serle. *The Melbourne Scene: 1803–1956*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1957.

Grey, Jeffrey. *The Australian Army: A History*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Grey, Jeffrey. *A Military History of Australia*. 3rd ed. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Grundlingh, Albert. *The Dynamics of Treason: Boer Collaboration in the South African War of 1899–1902*. Translated by Bridget Theron. Pretoria: Protea Book House, 2006.

Hassam, Andrew. *Through Australian Eyes: Colonial Perceptions of Imperial Britain*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2000.

Hevia, James. *English Lessons: The Pedagogy of Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century China*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2003.

Hirst, John. *The Sentimental Nation: The Making of the Australian Commonwealth*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Hobsbawm, Eric. *The Age of Empire: 1875–1914*. New York: Vintage Books, 1989.

Holbrook, Carolyn. *Anzac: The Unauthorised Biography*. Sydney: NewSouth, 2014.

Holbrook, Carolyn. 'Federation and Australian Nationalism: Early Commemoration of the Commonwealth'. *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 66, no. 4 (2020): 560–77.

Holbrook, Carolyn. '"What Sort of Nation?": A Cultural History of Australians and Their Federation'. *History Compass* 15, no. 11 (2017): 1–10.

Holt, P. M. *The Mahdist State in the Sudan, 1881–1898: A Study of Its Origins, Development and Overthrow*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970.

Holt, P. M. *A Modern History of Sudan, from the Funj Sultanate to the Present Day*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1961.

Hopkins, A. G. 'Back to the Future: From National History to Imperial History'. *Past & Present* 164, no. 1 (1999): 198–243.

Hoskins, Ian. *Australian & The Pacific: A History*. Sydney: NewSouth, 2021.

Hutchinson, Samuel. *Settlers, War, and Empire in the Press: Unsettling News in Australia and Britain, 1863–1902.* Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

Hyslop, Jonathan. 'The Imperial Working Class Makes Itself "White": White Labourism in Britain, Australia, and South Africa Before the First World War'. *Journal of Historical Sociology* 12, no. 4 (1999): 398–421.

Inglis, K. S. *The Rehearsal: Australians at War in the Sudan, 1885*. Sydney: Kevin Weldon & Associates, 1985.

Inglis, K. S. *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1998.

Irving, Helen. *To Constitute a Nation: A Cultural History of Australia's Constitution*. Cambridge: The Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, 1997.

Jeffery, Keith. 'Kruger's Farmers, Strathcona's Horse, Sir George Clarke's Camels and the Kaiser's Battleships: The Impact of the South African War on Imperial Defence'. In *The South African War Reappraised*, edited by Donal Lowry, 188–202. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000.

Johnson, Douglas. 'The Death of Gordon: A Victorian Myth'. *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 10, no. 3 (1982): 285–310.

Johnston-White, Iain, and Jatinder Mann. 'Conclusion: Why Revisit the British World?' In *Revisiting the British World: New Voices and Perspectives*, edited by Jatinder Mann and Iain Johnston-White, 253–261. New York: Peter Lang, 2022.

Joseph, Philip. *Foreign Diplomacy in China, 1894–1900: A Study in Political and Economic Relations With China*. London: Routledge, 1928.

Judd, Denis, and Keith Surridge. *The Boer War: A History*. London: I. B. Tauris & Company, 2013.

Karageorgos, Effie. '"An Act of Grace": Reading Gender and Nationalism Within Australian South African War Pension Provisions'. *Australian Historical Studies* 53, no. 1 (2022): 75–96.

Karageorgos, Effie. *Australian Soldiers in South Africa and Vietnam: Words from the Battlefield*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016.

Karageorgos, Effie. 'The Bushmen at War: Gendered Medical Responses to Combat Breakdown in South Africa, 1899–1902'. *Journal of Australian Studies* 44, no. 1 (2020): 18–32.

Karageorgos, Effie. 'Mental Illness, Masculinity, and the Australian Soldier: Military Psychiatry from South Africa to the First World War'. *Health and History* 20, no. 2 (2018): 10–29.

Karageorgos, Effie. 'War in a "White Man's Country": Australian Perceptions of Blackness on the South African Battlefield, 1899–1902'. *History Australia* 15, no. 2 (2018): 323–38.

Kennedy, Dane. *The Imperial History Wars: Debating the British Empire*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018.

Kennedy, Greg, ed. *Imperial Defence: The Old World Order 1856–1956*. London: Routledge, 2008.

Kennedy, Paul. *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*. London: Penguin Books, 1976.

Kingston, Beverley. *The Oxford History of Australia*. Vol. III: Glad, Confident Morning, 1860–1900. Melbourne: Oxford University Press Australia, 1988.

Knox, B. A. ‘Colonial Influence on Imperial Policy, 1858-1866: Victoria and the Colonial Naval Defence Act, 1865’. *Historical Studies, Australia and New Zealand* 11, no. 41 (1963): 61–79.

Lake, Marilyn. ‘British World or New World?: Anglo-Saxonism and Australian Engagement with America’. *History Australia* 10, no. 3 (2013): 36–50.

Lake, Marilyn. ‘The White Man Under Siege: New Histories of Race in the Nineteenth Century and the Event of White Australia’. *History Workshop Journal* 58, no. 1 (2004): 41–62.

Lake, Marilyn, and Henry Reynolds. *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men’s Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Lee, Alexander. ‘‘‘What the Boers Did Australia Can Do, and Do Ten Times Better”: The Impact of the Boers on Australian Defence Policy’’. *The International History Review* 44, no. 3 (2022): 478–96.

Lee, Emanoel. *To the Bitter End: A Photographic History of the Boer War 1899–1902*. United Kingdom.: Viking, 1985.

Lester, Alan, Kate Boehme, and Peter Mitchell. *Ruling the World: Freedom, Civilisation and Liberalism in the Nineteenth-Century British Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021.

Louis, William Roger, Alaine M. Low, Nicholas P. Canny, P. J. Marshall, Andrew Porter, and Judith M. Brown, eds. *The Oxford History of the British Empire*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Lowry, Donal. ‘The Boers Were the Beginning of the End’?: The Wider Impact of the South Africa War’. In *The South African War Reappraised*, edited by Donal Lowry, 203–246. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000.

Loy-Wilson, Sophie. ‘Coolie Alibis: Seizing Gold from Chinese Miners in New South Wales’. *International Labor and Working Class History* 91, no. 91 (2017): 28–45.

Macandie, G. L. *Genesis of the Royal Australian Navy*. Sydney: Government Printer, 1949.

Macintyre, Stuart. ‘Australia and the Empire’. In *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, edited by Robin Winks, V: Historiography:163–81. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Macintyre, Stuart. *A Concise History of Australia*. 4th ed. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Macintyre, Stuart. *The Oxford History of Australia*. Vol. IV: The Succeeding Age, 1901–1942. Melbourne: Oxford University Press Australia, 1988.

Matthew, H. C. G. *Gladstone: 1809–1898*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Maynard, John. '"Let Us Go"...It's a "Blackfellows" War': Aborigines and the Boer War'. *Aboriginal History* 39 (2015): 143–62.

McQuilton, John. *Australia's Communities and the Boer War*. 1st ed. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

Meaney, Neville. 'Britishness and Australian Identity: The Problem of Nationalism in Australian History and Historiography'. *Australian Historical Studies* 32, no. 116 (2001): 76–90.

Meaney, Neville. *A History of Australian Defence and Foreign Policy, 1901–1923*. Vol. I: The Search for Security in the Pacific, 1901–1914. Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1976.

Meredith, Martin. *Diamonds, Gold, and War: The British, The Boers, and the Making of South Africa*. United Kingdom: Simon & Schuster, 2007.

Miller, Stephen. 'In Support of the "Imperial Mission"? Volunteering for the South African War, 1899–1902'. *The Journal of Military History* 69, no. 3 (2005): 691–711.

Mitcham, John C. *Race and Imperial Defence in the British World, 1870–1914*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Mountford, Benjamin. *Britain, China and Colonial Australia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Mountford, Benjamin. 'Colonial Australia, The 1887 Colonial Conference, and the Struggle for Imperial Unity'. *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 47, no. 5 (2019): 912–42.

Nasson, Bill. *The South African War: 1899–1902*. London: Hodder Headline Group, 1999.

Nasson, Bill. *The War for South Africa: The Anglo-Boer War, 1899–1902*. Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2010.

Nicoll, Fergus. *The Sword of the Prophet: The Mahdi of Sudan and the Death of General Gordon*. United Kingdom: Sutton Publishing, 2004.

Nicholls, Bob. *Bluejackets and Boxers: Australia's Naval Expedition to the Boxer Uprising*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1986.

Nicholls, Bob. *The Colonial Volunteers: The Defence Forces of the Australian Colonies, 1836–1901*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1988.

Nicholls, Bob. *Handy Men Up Top*. Balmain, NSW: Ditty Press, 1990.

Nicholls, Bob. *Statesmen & Sailors: Australian Maritime Defence, 1870–1920*. Balmain, NSW: Self-Published, 1995.

Nutting, Anthony. *The Scramble for Africa: The Great Trek to the Boer War*. London: Constable & Company, 1970.

Odgers, George. *100 Years of Australians at War*. 2nd ed. Sydney: Lansdowne Publishing, 2003.

Omissi, David, and Andrew Thompson, eds. *The Impact of the South African War*. United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.

Otte, Thomas. *The China Question: Great Power Rivalry and British Isolation, 1894–1905*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Pakenham, Thomas. *The Boer War*. London: Abacus, 1992.

Pakenham, Thomas. *The Scramble for Africa*. London: Abacus, 1992.

Pearl, Cyril. *Morrison of Peking*. London: Angus & Robertson, 1981.

Peel, Mark, and Christina Twomey. *A History of Australia*. 2nd ed. United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

Penny, Barbara. 'The Australian Debate on the Boer War'. *Historical Studies* 14, no. 56 (1971): 526–45.

Penny, Barbara. 'Australia's Reactions to the Boer War: A Study in Colonial Imperialism'. *The Journal of British Studies* 7, no. 1 (1967): 97–130.

Perry, Adele. 'Whose World Was British? Rethinking "British World" from an Edge of Empire'. In *Britishness Abroad: Transnational Movements and Imperial Cultures*, edited by Kate Darian-Smith, Patricia Grimshaw, and Stuart Macintyre, 133–52. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2007.

Phillips, A.A. *On the Cultural Cringe*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2006.

Pietsch, Tamson. 'Rethinking the British World'. *Journal of British Studies* 52, no. 2 (2013): 441–63.

Pixley, Norman S. *The Queensland Marine Defence Force*, n.d.

Potter, Simon. 'Webs, Networks, and Systems: Globalization and the Mass Media in the Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century British Empire'. *Journal of British Studies* 46, no. 3 (2007): 621–46.

Powell, Eve Troutt. *A Different Shade of Colonialism: Egypt, Great Britain, and the Mastery of the Sudan*. California: University of California Press, 2003.

Preston, Diana. *The Boxer Rebellion: The Dramatic Story of China's War on Foreigners That Shook the Worlds in the Summer of 1900*. New York: Walker & Company, 2000.

Price, Charles. 'Immigration and Ethnic Origin'. In *Australians: Historical Statistics*, edited by Vamplew Wray, 2–23. Sydney: Fairfax, Syme & Weldon, 1987.

Raath, A. W. G. *The British Concentration Camps of the Anglo-Boer War, 1899–1902*. Bloemfontein, South Africa: War Museum, 1999.

Reynolds, Henry. *Forgotten War*. Sydney: NewSouth, 2013.

Reynolds, Henry. *Unnecessary Wars*. Sydney: NewSouth, 2016.

Richards, Eric. 'Migrations: The Career of British White Australia'. In *Australia's Empire*, by Deryck Schreuder and Stuart Ward, 163–85. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Robinson, Ronald, John Gallagher, and Alice Denny. *Africa and the Victorians*. New York: St. Martins Press, 1961.

Rose, J. Holland, A. P. Newton, and E. A. Benians. *The Cambridge History of the British Empire*. New York: Macmillan Company, 1929.

Royle, Trevor. *Crimea: The Great Crimean War, 1854–1856*. United Kingdom: Little, Brown and Company, 1999.

Saunders, Malcolm. *Britain, The Australian Colonies, and the Sudan Campaigns of 1884–85*. University of New England History Series 5. Sydney: University of New England, 1985.

Saunders, Malcolm, and Ralph Summy. 'One Hundred Years of an Australian Peace Movement, 1885-1984: Part I: From the Sudan Campaign to the Outbreak of the Second World War'. *Peace and Change* 10, no. 3 (1984): 39–56.

Scholtz, Leopold. *Why the Boers Lost the War*. United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

Schreuder, Deryck, and Stuart Ward, eds. *Australia's Empire*. Oxford History of the British Empire Companion Series. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Sharf, Frederick, and Peter Harrington. *China, 1900: The Eyewitnesses Speak: The Experience of Westerners in China during the Boxer Rebellion, as Described by Participants in Letters, Diaries and Photographs*. London: Greenhill Books, 2000.

Silbey, David. *The Boxer Rebellion and the Great Game in China*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2012.

Simner, Mark. *The Sirdar and the Khalifa: Kitchener's Reconquest of Sudan, 1896-98*. United Kingdom: Fonthill, 2017.

Smith, Neil. *Carving up the Melon: Australians in the Boxer Rebellion, China 1900–1901*. Melbourne: Mostly Unsung Military History Research and Publications, 2000.

Snook, Colonel Mike. *Beyond the Reach of Empire: Wolseley's Failed Campaign to Save Gordon and Khartoum*. United Kingdom: Frontline Books, 2013.

Spence, Jonathan. *The Search for Modern China*. 3rd ed. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2013.

Stanley, George F. G. *Canada's Soldiers: The Military History of an Unmilitary People*. 2nd ed. Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Limited, 1960.

Stanley, Peter. *But Little Glory: The New South Wales Contingent to the Sudan, 1885*. Canberra: Military Historical Society of Australia, 1985.

Stephens, John J. *Fuelling the Empire: South Africa's Gold and the Road to War*. West Sussex, United Kingdom: John Wiley & Sons, 2003.

Stockings, Craig. *Britannia's Shield: Lieutenant-General Sir Edward Hutton and Late-Victorian Imperial Defence*. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

Stockings, Craig. 'A "Trojan Horse" in the Colony? Federal & Imperial Defence in the Australian Colonies, 1893–96'. *Journal of Australian Colonial History* 17 (2015): 159–84.

Stockings, Craig, and John Connor, eds. *Before the Anzac Dawn: A Military History of Australia before 1915*. Sydney: NewSouth, 2013.

Stockings, Craig, and Tom Richardson. 'The First Commander: Lieutenant-General Sir Edward "Curley" Hutton'. In *The Shadow Men: The Leaders Who Shaped the Australian Army from the Veldt to Vietnam*, edited by Craig Stockings and John Connor, 9–36. Sydney: NewSouth, 2017.

Stockings, Craig. *Letter from the Veldt: The Imperial Advance to Pretoria Through the Eyes of Edward Hutton and His Brigade of Colonials*. Sydney: Big Sky Publishing, 2020.

Surridge, Keith. *Managing the South African War, 1899–1902*. United Kingdom: Boydell Press, 1998.

Sutton, Ralph. *Soldiers of the Queen: War in the Soudan*. Sydney: M. S. Simpson & Sons, 1985.

Swart, Sandra. *Riding High: Horses, Humans and History in South Africa*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2010.

Tan, Chester. *The Boxer Catastrophe*. 2nd ed. New York: Octagon Books, 1975.

Thomas, Martin, and Richard Toye. *Arguing about Empire: Imperial Rhetoric in Britain and France, 1882–1956*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.

Thompson, Andrew. *The Empire Strikes Back? The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-Nineteenth Century*. United Kingdom: Pearson Education, 2005.

Thompson, Peter, and Robert Macklin. *The Man Who Died Twice: The Life and Adventures of Morrison of Peking*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2004.

Thompson, Roger. *Australian Imperialism in the Pacific: The Expansionist Era, 1820–1920*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1980.

Trainor, Luke. ‘Building Nations: Australia and New Zealand’. In *The Impact of the South African War*, edited by David Omissi and Andrew Thompson, 251–67. United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.

Tucker, Albert V. ‘Army and Society in England 1870–1900: A Reassessment of Cardwell Reforms’. *Journal of British Studies* 2, no. 2 (1963): 110–41.

Turner, Trevor. ‘The Camel Corps, New South Wales Sudan Contingent, 1885’. *Sabretache* 55, no. 4 (2014): 40–53.

Twomey, Christina. ‘Ambivalence, Admiration and Empire: Emily Hobhouse’s The Brunt of the War and Where It Fell (1902)’. In *Fighting Words; Fifteen Books That Shaped the Postcolonial World*, edited by Dominic Davies, Erica Lombard, and Benjamin Mountford, 57–71. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2017.

Uys, Ian. *Victoria Crosses of the Anglo-Boer War*. South Africa: Fortress, 2000.

Walker, David. *Anxious Nation: Australia and the Rise of Asia 1850–1939*. 2nd ed. Perth: UWA Publishing, 2012.

Wallace, R. L. *The Australians at the Boer War*. Sydney: National Boer War Memorial Association, 1976.

Wang, Tandee, and Thomas J Rogers. ‘Bushman or Boer — Australian Identity in a “White Man’s War”, 1899–1902’. *British Journal for Military History* 7, no. 1 (2021): 64–86.

Ward, Stuart. ‘Security: Defending Australia’s Empire’. In *Australia’s Empire*, edited by Deryck Schreuder and Stuart Ward, 233–57. Oxford History of the British Empire Companion Series. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Waters, Christopher. ‘Nationalism, Britishness and Australian History: The Meaney Thesis Revisited’. *History Australia* 10, no. 3 (2013): 12–22.

Webster, Anthony. *The Debate on the Rise of the British Empire*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006.

Wehrle, Edmund. *Britain, China, and the Antimissionary Riots, 1891-1900*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1966.

Wenzlhuemer, Roland. *Connecting the Nineteenth-Century World: The Telegraph and Globalization*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Wilcox, Craig. *Australia’s Boer War: The War in South Africa, 1899–1902*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Wilcox, Craig. ‘Australians in the Wars in Sudan and South Africa’. In *Before the Anzac Dawn: A Military History of Australia before 1915*, edited by Craig Stockings and John Connor, 264–95. Sydney: NewSouth, 2013.

Wilde, Richard. ‘The Boxer Affair and Australian Responsibility for Imperial Defense’. *Pacific Historical Review* 26, no. 1 (1957): 51–65.

Wood, W. A. ‘The Sudan Contingent of 1885 and the Anti-War Movement’. *Bulletin of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History*, no. 3 (1962): 52–69.

Xiang, Lanxin. *The Origins of the Boxer War: A Multinational Study*. London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003.

Ziino, Bart, and A M Condé. ‘Engaging with War Records: Archival Histories and Historical Practice’. *Archives and Manuscripts* 48, no. 2 (2020): 97–108.