

Rewriting Empire: The South African War, The English Popular Press,
and Edwardian Imperial Reform

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the ways in which English newspaper correspondents during the South African War utilized their commentaries and dispatches from the front to expose British imperial weaknesses. Their willingness to challenge aggressive censorship campaigns and jingoistic propaganda provided the groundwork and momentum necessary for the military, economic, and social reform efforts that commenced during the Edwardian era in England. Those reporters, whether politically conservative or liberal, exploited their press positions and socio-political connections to transform the meanings of patriotism and imperial duty. Exposing its failings to the domestic population was the most effective way to save their beloved empire. I emphasize critical war events, such as the Mafeking siege and the Treaty of Vereeniging, as springboards from which the journalists launched their reform crusades.

Correspondents played an important role in shifting the power relationship among the press, the government, and the British public in the early twentieth century. My study analyzes Fleet Street's heightened efforts to shape popular opinions and influence policymaking in a climate of intense media saturation. Such struggles to control and manipulate information remain commonplace in twenty-first century nation-states, rendering my paper important in terms of its modern relevance. My project pulls mainly from newspapers as primary sources, which I analyze not for their accuracy but for their impact and significance as historical documents. Drawing on archival research conducted across England in 2011 and 2015, this project contends that South African correspondents played a vital role in initiating conversations about much-needed imperial

improvements that helped to stabilize the British Empire in the years preceding World War I.

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could push myself any harder. Nick, I can't even. Ivy, you have grown from a plucky, curious toddler when I first started school at UVA into a smart, compassionate young woman on the verge of middle school. I love you so much sweet girl, and I am so proud of you. Call me crazy, but I have to include a shout-out to my flock of chickens. I knew nothing about raising such birds when they entered my life in April 2016, but they truly have been a source of happiness and comfort as I fought through these last few months of intense writing and revision. They have enriched my life in ways I didn't think possible—especially a little black bantam Cochin rooster named Teddy.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

BRDW	Broadwater Collection
CAB	Cabinet Papers
CID	Committee of Imperial Defense
CIV	City Imperial Volunteers
CO	Colonial Office
FO	Foreign Office
IAPC	Increased Armaments Protest Committee
ILP	Independent Labour Party
LL	Liberal League
MP	Member of Parliament
NRU	National Reform Union
NSL	National Service League
PM	Prime Minister
PRO	Public Records Office
RCMS	Royal Commonwealth Society
SACC	South African Conciliation Committee
SAR	South African Republic
TNA	The National Archives at Kew
TRL	Tariff Reform League
WO	War Office

Rewriting Empire: The South African War, The English Popular Press, and Edwardian Imperial Reform

“They do not want war correspondents in South Africa. I don’t know whether ‘they’ ever wanted them.” –Edgar Wallace, *The London Daily Mail*, June 19, 1901

INTRODUCTION

The South African War (1899-1902), initially a small-scale colonial struggle between Britain and Dutch “Boer” settlers, constituted a major turning point for the former’s global empire. The conflict posed larger questions regarding military strength, an imperial federation, and domestic social problems that significantly impacted British policymaking efforts in the post-war years. Although overshadowed historically in the twentieth century by the two world wars, the fight for power in South Africa was the “formidable event that influenced how the Edwardians thought about Empire.”¹ English newspapers’ war correspondents integrated those issues into their dispatches. The writers, frequently privileged graduates of imperially focused British public schools, watched closely as the struggle exposed substantial military weaknesses. Reporters utilized their influential positions as front-line information purveyors to illuminate anxieties about unaddressed issues that could threaten the empire’s future stability. Their commentaries primed readers, sometimes subtly and sometimes not, about British army inadequacies; the prioritization of costly war endeavors over urban poverty and other domestic social and economic concerns; and the potential value of a federated imperial system based upon preferential trade and protective tariffs. This thesis argues that those correspondents’ wartime coverage served to initiate dialogues among politicians, the

¹ J.D. Startt, *Journalists for Empire* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1991), 63.

press, and to a degree, the home population, concerning the military, economic, and social reform efforts that would characterize the Edwardian years.

The British engaged various indigenous African peoples in armed conflicts during the nineteenth century. But the South African War differed distinctly from previous skirmishes and had much higher stakes for the empire. Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain warned Parliament in 1896 that provoking the Boers would lead to “a long war, a bitter war, and a costly war...and it would leave behind it the embers of a strife which I believe generations would hardly be long enough to extinguish.”² The British Cape Colony held strategic significance as both a refueling station on the Indian sea route and the imperial governmental center in southern Africa. Problematically, that settlement and Britain’s nearby Natal Colony possessed substantial colonial Dutch “Afrikaner” populations, which could assist their rural Boer brethren in attacking the Cape if hostilities commenced.

The discovery of gold and diamonds in the neighboring landlocked Boer Republics during the late 1800s enhanced the region’s commercial value. The impoverished Transvaal (also known as the South African Republic, or SAR) and Orange Free State stood poised to challenge Britain’s local economic power. For the British, the mines’ resources offered insurance for continued regional dominance and opportunities for English investors seeking to exploit potential new markets abroad. Additionally, Britain had been on the gold standard since 1821. London City businessmen were growing wealthy by trading in invisible exports and relied on gold to maintain the pound’s stability.

² Qtd. in Andrew Porter, “The South African War and the Historians,” *African Affairs* 99, no. 397 (October 2000): 635.

The rapid influx of British financiers and prospectors into the Transvaal and the Orange Free State incited Boer ire. Dutch settlers viewed such actions as threatening to their republics' sovereignty, and disputes over economic and political rights led to war with Britain in 1899. Amsterdam-based editor Charles Boissevain labeled the conflict "a great crime" and condemned what he viewed to be "sordid pride and selfishness of the ungenerous plutocracy of international capitalists."³ Radical liberal Britons would denounce the war as the result of mining magnates' greed. Access to Boer mines helped the British to remain on the gold standard. However, respect for the average Englishman declined among foreign observers, who cast the British as bullies and the Boers as victims.

In earlier colonial conflicts, Britain battled black African peoples, but the South African War pitted the purportedly superior British forces against other whites.⁴ An embarrassing defeat of Queen Victoria's troops by a European opponent would validate increasing anxieties about the army's seeming lack of progress since the Crimean War. Fears concerning military unpreparedness were confirmed by a number of British losses early in the Anglo-Boer fight. In December 1899, the imperially minded *London Daily Mail* declared that "awaken[ing] each morning to the consciousness that 7,000 miles away the bravest troops in the world" were struggling in battle against colonial farmers "is the [unfortunate] lot of all of us...in the United Kingdom."⁵ As British military woes

³ Charles Boissevain, *The Struggle of the Dutch Republic: A Great Crime (An Appeal to the Conscience of the British Nation)* (Amsterdam: Handelsblad, 1900), 2.

⁴ Non-white African peoples played significant roles as laborers, porters, and even combatants during the South African War, a fact often neglected in the early historiography and in English newspapers' war coverage. Those intentional exclusions allowed both Britons and Boers to later label the conflict a "white man's war." Such historical omissions will be addressed later in this paper.

⁵ *The London Daily Mail*, December 20, 1899.

persisted, the Conservative government found it increasingly difficult to cloak military failures with jingoistic propaganda.

Opportunistic European nation-states, such as Kaiser Wilhelm II's formidable Germany, supported the Boers with an eye to terminating Britain's worldwide domination. Power-hungry countries reveled in British fighting fiascoes and anticipated their own chances to defeat Britain's troops on the future's battlefields. Chamberlain biographer and Unionist *Daily Telegraph* journalist J.L. Garvin argued that the main threat to continued British global supremacy would be from "rival master-races."⁶ Increasingly, the government realized that Britain's days of relatively uncontested global hegemony were numbered, and her tally of enemies was growing rapidly. As new players with big guns entered the game of empire building, maintaining international preeminence required the British military to keep winning, a result no longer assured. The empire desperately needed to display strength and solidarity at that critical moment. For some politicians, a formal imperial federation comprised of England, her colonies, and her self-ruling white dominions could promote patriotism and potentially suppress emerging local national identities in British territories.⁷ In Chamberlain's eyes, a system of preferential trade and high tariffs on foreign imports would bolster the empire's economic standing against heightened European competition. Those policymakers believed that solidifying control over their South African colonial possessions would provide a springboard from which to launch federation dreams into reality.

The war commenced as a crisis of confidence was engulfing English society. Commentators across the political spectrum expressed concern with the state of the

⁶ Anna Davin, "Imperialism and Motherhood," *History Workshop Journal* 5, no. 1 (Spring 1978): 10.

⁷ See Stuart Ward, "Transcending the Nation: A Global Imperial History," in *After the Imperial Turn: Thinking with and through the Nation*, ed. Antoinette Burton (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 45.

metropole's cities, external threats, and industrial decline.⁸ The South African conflict facilitated discussions about the benefits of "modernity" and reinvigorated sentimental conversations regarding the relevance of traditional values. The struggle further overrode continued governmental neglect of persistent domestic social issues. Women's participation in the war effort, on both the British and Boer sides, intensified popular debates over gender roles and suffrage. Welfare activists protested excessive spending on a colonial endeavor when poverty and other homeland issues remained relatively ignored. Radical left-wing opponents lamented the numerous problems the war revealed about the state of English affairs under the Conservative government and campaigned for political change. Socialist Keir Hardie decreed that "the man who is pro-Boer is the true patriot and the best friend of England."⁹

The uncertain post-war role of black Africans and the Coloured population complicated British plans for a united, white-dominated South Africa. Imperialists had long recited the ostensible Victorian obligation to "civilize and Christianize barbarians" by educating them in the ways of Western society. Many non-white Africans viewed the Boer conflict as an opportunity to agitate for lost freedoms. They participated in a myriad of ways, from actual fighting to transporting supplies and delivering information, in the hopes of attaining some semblance of post-conflict social validation. Thus, after the war, the British government could no longer pay lip service to any seemingly benevolent imperial purpose. But instead of bending to non-whites' increasing demands for political and economic rights, British colonial leaders sought reconciliation with the Boers to build a white Union of South African without black enfranchisement. Those officials often

⁸ See Keith Surridge, "'All you soldiers are what we call pro-Boer': The Military Critique of the South African War, 1899-1902," *History* 82, no. 268 (October 1997): 583.

⁹ *The Labour Leader*, March 17, 1900.

referenced emerging social science arguments for biologically based race to justify non-whites' exclusion from political participation. The British treatment of blacks following the South African War reinforces their post-struggle commitment to white control and the increasing mobilization of racial ideology to rationalize segregationist policies.

British army veteran J.F.C. Fuller romanticized the Anglo-Boer conflict as the “last of the gentleman’s wars.” Yet his exaggerated depictions of gallant cavalry charges downplay the diverse strategies and new technologies utilized with varying degrees of success by the combatants. Ian Beckett’s categorization of the war as a “transitional military conflict” is more appropriate than Fuller’s grandiose nostalgia.¹⁰ The Boers lacked a formal military structure, but their territorial familiarity allowed them to deploy guerilla tactics successfully. They were unwilling to restrict themselves to a conventional army doctrine.¹¹ Their decentralized methods prolonged the fight as a struggle of attrition and highlighted the inadequacy of the British forces’ increasingly obsolete Napoleonic tactics — line and column formations, mass infantry attacks, bayonet charges, short distance musket fire — in rural South Africa. In the conflict’s waning days, the British army responded to commando attacks by “scorching the earth” and interning Boer women and children in ill-supplied, unsanitary concentration camps. The latter policy foreshadowed future total wars by “blurring the distinction between civilians and combatants;” in that respect, the indiscriminate incarceration of white families echoed “the ‘politically modern’ intensification and expansion of war, which transformed the

¹⁰ Beckett further argues that the British army itself was entering a transitional phase during the South African War. See Beckett, *The Victorians at War* (London: Hambledon and London, 2003); Howard Bailes, “Technology and Imperialism: A Case Study of the Victorian Army in Africa,” *Victorian Studies* 24, no. 1 (Autumn 1980): 83-104; et al.

¹¹ See Andre Wessels, ed., *Lord Kitchener and the War in South Africa, 1899-1902* (London: Sutton Publishing Ltd., 2006), 6.

entirety of a population...into the legitimate targets of violence.”¹² The British government justified its relentless pursuit of victory in the name of imperial security. George Wyndham, Chief Secretary for Ireland, identified South Africa as “the keystone of that great arc which [we have] traced on the map of the world...It was for this [we] had fought, for this [we will] continue to fight” by whatever means necessary.¹³

Railroads and telegraph cables expedited the transport of troops, the shipment of supplies, and most significantly, the dissemination of war information back to the metropole. The expanding English popular press played a critical role in that final process. The South African War was the first imperial conflict in which there was a “substantial press corps attached to the British field force.”¹⁴ Newspaper correspondents delivered firsthand battlefield accounts and established direct contact with war participants. Those journalists faced frontline perils and constant disease threats alongside professional soldiers and sometimes gave their lives in pursuit of their objective.¹⁵ Professional and amateur photographs reproduced the conflict visually before the eyes of the distant domestic public. For example, *The Illustrated London News* supplemented its impressively detailed drawings with photo collages during the war.

The increasingly literate English population eagerly awaited news from South Africa. Press barons scrambled to take financial advantage of readers’ demands for exciting war stories by dispatching dozens of journalists to the battlefield. All reporters

¹² Aidan Forth, “Britain’s Archipelago of Camps: Labor and Detention in a Liberal Empire, 1871-1903,” *Kritika* 16, no. 3 (Summer 2015): 668-669. See also David Bell, *The First Total War: Napoleon’s Empire and the Birth of Warfare as We Know It* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2007).

¹³ *The London Daily Mail*, October 25, 1901.

¹⁴ Donal McCracken, “The Relationship Between British War Correspondents in the Field and British Military Intelligence During the Anglo-Boer War,” *South African Journal of Military Studies* 43, no. 1 (2015): 99.

¹⁵ Imre Kiralfy, *Military Exhibition, 1901: Earl’s Court, S.W.: Official Guide and Catalogue* (London: J.J. Kelihier & Co., 1901), 83.

were supposed to be officially licensed, but credentials were inconsistently distributed, and there was no one centralized list of war correspondents, making it challenging to keep track of them and edit their dispatches.¹⁶ Chief Cape Town Press Censor Lord Edward Stanley defined the reporters' mission as "to conform, without a murmur, to every reasonable restriction it may seem desirable to put on them," and make certain "that the last thought they have in their minds is in any way to go contrary to military regulation or to write or telegraph anything detrimental to the national interest."¹⁷ Thus, according to the liberal *Manchester Guardian* on April 24, 1901:

Anyone who is still following the war closely has learnt by experience that if he wants the truth he must never take the surface meaning of a telegram, but must poke about until he finds it in a subordinate clause or an adjective, or in an implication that is unexpressed.¹⁸

The journalists frequently seeded their commentaries with subtleties and subtext to evade censors and awaken their readerships to the truth regarding both South Africa and the broader imperial situation. Additionally, the delays involved in relaying information back to London, along with the press's relative monopoly over war news distribution, afforded influential newspapermen the opportunity to manipulate their coverage. This thesis investigates the motivations and actions of English South African War correspondents for the purpose of analyzing the late Victorian popular press's impact on Edwardian era imperial policymaking.

Newspapers were not simply the public's main information source for the war. As Paula Krebs asserts, Members of Parliament (MPs) often based their arguments in the

¹⁶ McCracken, "British War Correspondents in the Field," 104. Additionally, McCracken describes "wealthy hangers-on," who "masqueraded as journalists but who were only interested in witnessing front-line action."

¹⁷ Qtd. in Jacqueline Beaumont, "The British Press and Censorship during the South African War, 1899-1902," *South African Historical Journal* 41, no. 1 (1999): 282.

¹⁸ *The Manchester Guardian*, April 24, 1901.

House of Commons on information obtained straight from the morning dailies.¹⁹ This study examines correspondents' attempts to initiate imperial reforms and impact political decision making through coverage of significant South African War events, including British troops' May 1900 relief of besieged Mafeking (an event analyzed in detail later in this thesis). The siege's conclusion unleashed an outpouring of domestic patriotic rejoicing. Those celebrations earned an historical reputation as supposed jingoistic displays of long-standing imperialist pride. However, British cultural scholars, including Krebs, recast the post-Mafeking merriment as a press creation. Pro-war editors encouraged their writers to craft a vision of uniform imperial zeal by actively disseminating a portrait of solidarity and encourage popular support for the cause. Yet such yellow journalism consisted of exaggerations, distortions, and misinformation. It bore "only a rough approximation to the reality" and constituted "a sugarcoated version [of empire], designed to be palatable" to the people.²⁰ In reality, Mafeking's significance was minimal, its relief did not mean the war's end, and the town's siege lasted far longer than expected.

As they penned glorified propaganda pieces, imperially minded writers refused to fully conceal their concerns about the British army's mismanagement and began agitating for military reforms. Meanwhile, the more vocal liberal journalists used their coverage of events such as the Mafeking siege and its relief as mouthpieces through which to express their opposition to the empire's current overseas behavior and shift the focus back to the

¹⁹ Paula Krebs, *Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire: Public Discourse and the Boer War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 36.

²⁰ Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society, and Culture in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 312.

domestic social arena.²¹ Such efforts comprise the first analytical section of this thesis. Secondly, this paper assesses how journalists exploited anti-war representations, from organizations to publications to Samuel Cronwright-Schreiner's 1900 speaking tour, in order to highlight the rising necessity of addressing social problems in the metropole. Finally, this study examines newspaper depictions of the May 1902 Treaty of Vereeniging, which ended the South African War with an unconditional Boer surrender. While peace settlement coverage displayed both a unanimous relief with the British victory and a preoccupation with the army's actions during the conflict, Vereeniging also rejuvenated debates about the practicality of maintaining a free-trade system while European economic competition increased. Imperial preference and tariff reform became popular topics for discussion well beyond the immediate post-war years.

Kenneth Morgan correctly asserts that the South African War significantly impacted the media and its future representations of war in general.²² This thesis utilizes English newspaper correspondents' dispatches to better clarify the complex relationship among the press, the domestic public, and the government. This study also examines those correspondents' identification and foreshadowing of critical focal areas for British post-war policy changes. Those issues are early twentieth-century military reforms, addressed prominently by the 1904 Esher Report; the question of a federated empire, particularly in regard to colonial free trade and tariff reform; and liberal-minded social reforms, including the acts championed by David Lloyd George.

²¹ The English liberal press, like the Liberal Party itself, was characterized by disunity during the South African War. The *Manchester Guardian*, the liberal case study used in this paper, mainly represented the more radical leftist perspective. Those writers tended to be the most vocal of liberal journalists regarding the war, and their political ally David Lloyd George was instrumental in the development of many of the post-war social reforms for which *Guardian* writers advocated.

²² Kenneth Morgan, "The Boer War and the Media (1899-1902)," *Twentieth Century British History* 13, no. 1 (2002): 1.

Wartime embarrassments and anxieties fueled English journalists' attempts to mobilize public agitation for change. Correspondents recognized that patriotism — defined as love for one's country or empire — required a willingness to identify bad imperial choices.²³ The empowered reporters' commitment to that enterprise contributed to the commencement of numerous post-conflict reform efforts, although certainly not all were successful, enduring, or fully implemented. In the correspondents' eyes, the primary goal was to ensure their empire's survival and not allow it to fracture in the foreseeable future. As Chamberlain famously declared, "England without an Empire! England in that case would not be the England we love."²⁴

The thesis posits a relationship between the correspondents' attempts to influence domestic wartime attitudes and overall public opinion on imperial policies. Nevertheless, that conclusion must be qualified. Numerous other factors besides newspaper coverage shaped popular political thought in late Victorian and Edwardian England. Andrew Thompson cites multiple conflicting and intersecting identities in turn-of-the-century Britain, including locality, nation, gender, class, and others that were vying with empire to captivate the public's imagination and sway domestic mindsets in complex ways.²⁵ Reporters themselves wore many hats, from "imperialist" to "liberal" to "patriot," donning and doffing them during the war based on their political agenda at that

²³ See Mark Hampton, "The Press, Patriotism, and Public Discussion: C.P. Scott, the *Manchester Guardian*, and the Boer War, 1899-1902," *The Historical Journal* 44, no. 1 (March 2001): 192.

²⁴ Qtd. in C.C. Eldridge, *England's Mission: The Imperial Idea in the Age of Gladstone and Disraeli, 1868-1880* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1973), 254.

²⁵ Andrew Thompson, "The Language of Imperialism and the Meanings of Empire: Imperial Discourse in British Politics, 1895-1914," *Journal of British Studies* 36, no. 2, Twentieth-Century British Studies (April 1997): 168.

moment.²⁶ While their commentaries may not have transformed popular perceptions on their own, correspondents deserve credit for bringing considerations of identity and empire to the domestic forefront.

HISTORIOGRAPHICAL SURVEY

Since the 1960s, much “new” imperial historical scholarship has rightfully advanced the argument that the British homeland was “saturated, shaped, and constituted” by empire.²⁷ Although not every Briton received the same information, filtered imperial happenings through the same lenses, or even defined imperialism in the same manner, the empire was tightly interwoven into the domestic mindset of late Victorian and Edwardian Britain. Duncan Bell maintains that British imperial and national studies cannot afford to be isolated historically. What happened in the far corners of the empire ultimately impacted political, economic, and social developments and decision-making in England. Such “new” scholarly arguments are plentiful and persuasive.²⁸ This study aligns with that recent historiography by situating itself at the cultural crossroads of colony and metropole.

²⁶ For additional analysis of the British press and political motivations, as well as the transformation of imperial identities during the South African War, see Simon Potter, *News and the British World: The Emergence of an Imperial Press System, 1876-1922* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003).

²⁷ Lara Kriegel, “The Pudding and the Palace: Labor, Print Culture, and Imperial Britain in 1851,” in *After the Imperial Turn*, 230. See also Annie Coombes, *Reinventing Africa: Museums, Material Culture and Popular Imagination in Late Victorian and Edwardian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Context* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Tim Barringer and Tom Flynn, eds., *Colonialism and the Object: Empire, Material Culture, and the Museum* (New York: Routledge, 1998), et al. Despite the plentiful fruit that such new scholarship bears, Richard Price reminds historians not to sacrifice study of the empire’s political and economic dimensions on an altar of imperial culture. See Price’s “One Big Thing: Britain, Its Empire, and Their Imperial Culture,” *Journal of British Studies* 45 (July 2006): 602-627.

²⁸ Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860-1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 24.

Works such as Antoinette Burton's *After the Imperial Turn* (2003) link nation and empire in a global framework to examine the contentious spaces in which imperial developments and their effects on the homeland were discussed and disputed. In *The Trouble with Empire: Challenges to Modern British Imperialism* (2015), Burton offers a counter-perspective to the traditional "Pax Britannica" image by citing "perpetual insecurity" and dissent as the empire's defining characteristics.²⁹ This study expands such arguments by arguing that discord, challenge, and resistance were essential to shaping Edwardian policymaking. However, where Burton focuses on colonial protests, this paper accentuates the imperial relevance of domestic debates generated by war correspondents specifically during the South African conflict.

Historical deliberation continues regarding the relevance of class in the formation of popular opinions during the late Victorian and Edwardian periods. Some studies suggest that public convictions remained dictated by the upper and middle classes and that those beliefs were then transferred "much lower down the social scale."³⁰ According to such arguments, as imperial ideas increasingly permeated upper- and middle-class British society during the late nineteenth century, the working masses also were increasingly exposed to such cultural productions, albeit versions first filtered by higher-ranking Britons. From literature to advertisements, popular imperialism certainly was more accessible to the average worker by the South African War. But how the lower

²⁹ In *Ruling Minds: Psychology in the British Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), Erik Linstrum addresses the emergence of imperial insecurities by evaluating psychologists and scientific research. Psychological studies, much like newspaper commentaries, were supposed to justify and support the empire and its projects abroad, but, as Linstrum argues (and as this paper contends in regard to war correspondents), such efforts actually ended up exposing imperial problems. The "science of the mind" could unhinge traditional understandings of empire instead of strengthening them and serve to "dramatize...the tensions of imperial ideology." See Linstrum, *Ruling Minds*, 22.

³⁰ For example, see Glenn Wilkinson, *Depictions and Images of War in Edwardian Newspapers* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 3.

classes internalized and interpreted that information and to what degree they successfully differentiated fact from fiction is a far more complicated matter to untangle. It is unlikely that they unquestioningly accepted a trickle-down imperial perspective instead of reshaping it to fit their own worldviews. As the “new” historiography asserts, no one in the metropole could fully avoid imperialism’s influences, but the people had to determine for themselves what they believed about it.

Bernard Porter instead argues that each social class determined its own imperial attitudes in his work *The Absent-Minded Imperialists* (2006). According to Porter, the 1890s and early 1900s constituted years of “great material hardship” for the majority of England’s working classes. In his argument, imperial developments ranked behind the more pressing priority of how those laborers would obtain their next meal.³¹ The reality of worker attitudes regarding the empire was further distorted by jingoistic journalism. Porter concludes that the working classes developed a relatively unique political culture rather than accepting one passed down to them by their social superiors or crafted by imperial propagandists.³² Domestic workers lived and interacted with the empire in different ways than those of other societal ranks. However, popular imperialism was not constrained by fabricated social boundaries. The masses felt the weight of imperial culture as strongly as Britons above them, although they may have responded differently to the clarion call depending on their personal quotidian demands.

Additionally, generically glossing over the English working classes with a veneer of imperial indifference fails to acknowledge their complexity. For example, while most

³¹ Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists*, 219-220.

³² Ibid., 224. Bill Nasson raises similar points about the empire’s purported pivotal role in the every-day lives of Britons. See Nasson, *Britannia’s Empire: A Short History of the British Empire* (Stroud: Tempus, 2006).

domestic workers did not demonstrate publicly as members of “jingo crowds,” they often offered solidarity and support to their comrades who bravely took up arms in South Africa. Their allegiances were more to their brothers, neighbors, and friends rather than explicitly to the broader empire per se. In general, the working classes could only afford to allocate but so much energy to the war’s public spectacle in England, as they lacked the free time and financial resources necessary to deeply devote themselves to a political cause. Pundits and propagandists sought to coax out increased jingoism from the workers by dint of multiple methodologies.³³ But that does not mean such beliefs did not already exist among the working classes.³⁴ War correspondents had to remain wary of their readerships’ social rankings and complex identities when attempting to garner support for post-war reforms, although clearly popular imperialism penetrated the lives of all domestic residents in some way by the commencement of hostilities in South Africa.³⁵

No consensus existed concerning how British people interpreted their empire, both in the ways they fashioned or understood it themselves, and whether they thought it should be defended, extended, reformed, or excised.³⁶ While the South African War did not directly affect the day-to-day existence of all domestic Britons regardless of class, they certainly received a healthy dose of information regarding the conflict from the popular press. As the “new” historiography has successfully demonstrated, imperial issues, even when not dominating the headlines, constantly lurked in the shadows of late

³³ For information concerning the use of patriotic and imperial rhetoric to stimulate working-class support for empire, see Bernard Semmel, *Imperialism and Social Reform: English Social-Imperial Thought, 1895-1914* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1968) and the discussion of that book in the historiography section of this thesis.

³⁴ See the commentary on Richard Price’s *An Imperial War and the British Working Classes* in footnote 57.

³⁵ For additional reading, see Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).

³⁶ Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists*, 252.

Victorian and Edwardian British society, although their influences were not always blatantly apparent to or understood equally by the metropole's residents.

The influential works of Bernard Semmel, including *The Rise of Free Trade Imperialism* (1970) and *Imperialism and Social Reform: English Social-Imperial Thought, 1895-1914* (1960), discuss the pressure felt by British leaders to modernize their empire's economic and social canons during the time of the South African War if they hoped to uphold the nation's global preeminence. Semmel traces the development of "social imperialism," which he defines as the process of utilizing the domestic working classes as the foundation for sustaining that system. He suggests that maintaining the empire would have been impossible without such a base.³⁷ To ensure their political backing, British workers had to be further awakened to the benefits of patriotic pursuits and pacified with social benefits. Reading a pamphlet or viewing a public exhibition was one thing, but social imperialists such as Sir Halford Mackinder believed the average worker needed additional motivation to take formal political action.

Semmel identifies the post-war Liberal governments as the driving force in the endeavor to combine imperialism, capitalism, and social reform. Those administrations ironically rose to power via "the mobilization of all the traditional leftwing, liberal-radical forces against imperialism."³⁸ Yet Semmel's emphasis on "the Liberals" somewhat downplays the importance of conservative journalists such as *London Times* correspondent Leo Amery, who played significant roles in contributing to those efforts in the post-war years. However, as Semmel reminds readers, the working classes ultimately

³⁷ Semmel, *Imperialism and Social Reform*, 226.

³⁸ Eric Hobsbawm, "Reviewed Work: *Imperialism and Social Reform*," *Science and Society* 26, no. 2 (Spring 1962): 241. For additional reading on the constantly transforming liberal arguments put forth by "anti-imperialists," see Bernard Porter, *Critics of Empire: British Radical Attitudes to Colonialism in Africa, 1895-1914* (London: MacMillan, 1968).

chose Liberal free trade imperialism over Amery's Unionist ally Chamberlain's protectionist plans. Semmel's treatment of J.A. Hobson, the famed *Guardian* correspondent and prolific radical writer, focuses almost exclusively on the ramifications of the journalist's influential post-war economic manifesto *Imperialism: A Study* rather than his wartime reporting. Liberal reporters such as Hobson merit more analysis concerning the ways they used their positions to illuminate imperial problems during the Boer conflict and to encourage reform projects by questioning the meaning and purpose of imperialism in Britain. In Semmel's works, newspapers receive relatively scant mention as an important resource in disseminating social-imperialist propaganda. Furthermore, while he unites the often disparate concepts of imperialism, nationalism, and socialism to create a more nuanced account of late Victorian and Edwardian Britain, Semmel omits any significant discussion of military reforms, which helped to feed the development of the modernizing National Efficiency movement, educational improvements, and transformative social and economic policies. This thesis seeks to fill those lacunae by interweaving correspondents' stories into the reform narrative and linking post-war military developments with social-imperialist projects.

Semmel showcases how the Edwardian years' ubiquitous imperial sentiment was exploited by propaganda campaigns designed by those who sought to popularize social improvements "untinged with the charge of radicalism or socialism."³⁹ British cultural historian John MacKenzie has extensively explored the attempted permeation of imperial propaganda into domestic life and how various parties undertook that endeavor for

³⁹ Allen Warren, "Citizens of the Empire: Baden-Powell, Scouts and Guides and an Imperial Ideal, 1900-40," in *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, ed. John MacKenzie (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), 233.

diverse causes, such as military and social reforms.⁴⁰ However, in MacKenzie's edited *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (1986), Allen Warren argues that additional scholarship is necessary to bridge the gaps between colonial researchers and domestically focused British scholars. Following the trend of the "new" imperial historiography, this study seeks to narrow such divides by using the Edwardian period as a case study. Historians, including Warren, have identified that critical time period as patriotic, reformist, and reflecting "introverted and defensive aspect[s]" of imperial outlooks in England after the South African War.⁴¹

The conflict in South Africa coincided with the arrival of a new century and British monarch, creating multiple strong motivators to initiate change. Imperial historian G.R. Searle contends that such transitions afforded the opportunity for "re-testing antiquated political ideas" so that "whatever was irrelevant to twentieth-century circumstances might be speedily discarded."⁴² The stories of Edwardian politics and empire are closely bound. However, as Bell diagnoses in *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860-1900* (2007), the historiography of imperial policy developments suffers from "a lack of attention paid to the assorted contexts — political, social, cultural...and scientific — in which [imperial] debates...were

⁴⁰ See MacKenzie's *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1984), as well as his edited volumes *Imperialism and Popular Culture, Popular Imperialism and the Military, 1850-1950* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), and *The Victorian Vision: Inventing New Britain* (London: V&A Publications, 2001); Chandrika Kaul, ed., *Media and the British Empire* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006); Chandrika Kaul, *Reporting the Raj: The British Press and India, 1880-1922* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), et al.

⁴¹ Warren, "Citizens of the Empire," 233, 235.

⁴² G.R. Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency: A Study in British Politics and Political Thought, 1899-1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 53.

situated.”⁴³ By engaging those disciplines in turn, one can gain a better comprehension of post-war reform efforts.

Numerous tomes offer sweeping overviews of the South African War. Amery’s *The Times History of the War in South Africa* (beginning in 1900) and Major-General Sir Frederick Maurice and Captain Maurice Grant’s *History of the War in South Africa* (beginning in 1906) are multi-volume accounts published relatively contemporarily to the conflict. Thomas Pakenham’s *The Boer War*, penned in 1979, offers a broad narrative summary and was one of the first important works published after the war had been historiographically revived following decades of disregard. Additionally, other recent edited volumes successfully reassess the conflict’s historical relevance by unearthing previously buried issues regarding gender, race, and popular culture. Notable publications include Greg Cuthbertson, Albert Grundlingh, and Mary-Lynne Suttie’s *Writing a Wider War: Rethinking Gender, Race, and Identity in the South African War* (2002), Donal Lowry’s *The South African War Reappraised* (2000), and most recently, David Omissi and Andrew Thompson’s *Impact of the South African War* (2016), which features chapters by such esteemed British and South African historians as Searle, John Darwin, Bill Nasson, Iain Smith, and Peter Cain. As Peter Donaldson argues, more current overviews have transitioned away from “high political and military assessments” in favor of studies focused on popular understandings of the conflict.⁴⁴

Historians acknowledge the South African struggle as a driving force behind British military, economic, and social policy changes prior to World War I. Robert J. Scally argues that by 1914, the South African experience had become an important factor

⁴³ Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain*, 20-21.

⁴⁴ Peter Donaldson, *Remembering the South African War: Britain and the Memory of the Anglo-Boer War, from 1899 to the Present* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), 1.

in the development of diplomatic and battlefield strategy.⁴⁵ Jay Stone and Erwin A. Schmidl agree, contending that the conflict taught British soldiers how to be flexible and adapt to a variety of terrains and tactical scenarios.⁴⁶ However, scholars must be careful not to fall into the trap of a triumphant, progressive, and overly simplistic narrative, in which the South African struggle saved a misguided British army and rapidly transformed it into a highly formidable fighting force by the dawn of the First World War. Searle even asserts that as a result of the Anglo-Boer conflict experience, reformers often embraced “measures that later proved to be irrelevant, if not positively harmful.” Furthermore, the “mobile, open war” in South Africa did not provide the best preparation for the battlefields of northern France and Flanders.⁴⁷

Nor did any press institution conduct a propaganda campaign that yielded a domestic population of mindless, imperially devoted drones. John Galbraith reminds readers that “[t]he pamphleteer did not determine public opinion in the Boer War nor did the newspaper or the public speaker;” rather, all influenced British viewpoints in diverse ways, and none can be neglected from historical inquiry.⁴⁸ Yet few book-length evaluations sufficiently explore the English war correspondent’s role in that process.⁴⁹

John Darwin argues for a correction of that deficiency in his oft-referenced article

⁴⁵ Robert Scally, *The Origins of the Lloyd George Coalition: The Politics of Social-Imperialism, 1900-1918* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 17-18.

⁴⁶ See Jay Stone and Erwin A. Schmidl, *The Boer War and Military Reforms* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1988).

⁴⁷ Qtd. in M.A. Ramsay, *Command and Cohesion: The Citizen Soldier and Minor Tactics in the British Army, 1870-1918* (Westport: Praeger, 2002), 109.

⁴⁸ John S. Galbraith, “The Pamphlet Campaign on the Boer War,” *The Journal of Modern History* 24, no. 2 (June 1952): 125. Galbraith’s article is a positive step in the attempt to evaluate print media during the South African War, but he focuses on pamphlets rather than newspaper correspondents.

⁴⁹ For partial treatments, see Cuthbertson, Grundlingh, and Suttie, eds., *Writing a Wider War: Rethinking Gender, Race, and Identity in the South African War* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002); Lowry, ed., *The South African War Reappraised* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000); Krebs, *Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire* (1999); Paul Moorcroft and Philip Taylor, *Shooting the Messenger: The Political Impact of War Reporting* (Lincoln: Potomac Books, 2008) et al. This thesis challenges a number of the arguments made in these works.

“Imperialism and the Victorians,” in which he asserts that the “lobbying and counter-lobbying waged through newspapers, ‘pamphlet wars’ and professional networks to influence domestic opinion” must be “more fully integrated into the larger picture of imperial expansion.”⁵⁰

Searle’s impressive volume of works, including *The Quest for National Efficiency* (1971) and *A New England?* (2004) analyze the tumultuous socio-political scene in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain and underscore the South African War’s critical relationship to post-conflict domestic developments. His analyses help to emancipate the era’s historical scholarship from its overdose of party politics (by emphasizing, for example, the National Efficiency movement’s ability to transcend partisan lines). However, Searle mentions war correspondents only ephemerally and thus devalues the essential role such men played in initiating conversations that helped post-war reform initiatives to coalesce. Amery is the only journalist who receives any significant treatment. Furthermore, Searle’s classification of an “efficiency group” seems too constraining, as non-group members such as Hobson also argued for imperial improvements and a more efficient government, albeit with different underlying motives dependent on their personal political inclinations. Additionally, Searle’s declaration that at the start of the war, “a quite irrational mood of confidence held sway...among the Fleet Street pundits” that made the subsequent disappointment “all the more bitter” represents too broad a generalization and focuses on the propaganda that the correspondents were

⁵⁰ John Darwin, “Imperialism and the Victorians: The Dynamics of Territorial Expansion,” *The English Historical Review* 112, no. 447 (June 1997): 642. Darwin further states that “some valuable pioneering work has been done” in that area, but he only references one publication (and refers to it as “an early study”): Galbraith’s “The Pamphlet Campaign in the Boer War” (1952).

encouraged to pen in lieu of their actual viewpoints.⁵¹ This thesis argues that many reporters expressed grave concerns regarding the conflict, as evidenced by their private communications and through a closer inspection of their newspaper commentaries.

Andrew Porter, who has written extensively on the South African War, assesses the struggle and its domestic impact in Lowry's *The South African War Reappraised*. The author takes his cue from Searle's *The Quest for National Efficiency* by underscoring how the conflict promoted discussion concerning "Britain's entire political and administrative arrangements and the liberal values underpinning them;" therefore, the war could "be appealed to by reformers of different interests who shared a feeling of dissatisfaction at the functioning of their 'modern liberal state'."⁵² Porter intuitively asserts that the post-war army reform efforts did not focus on correcting the specific problems experienced on the veldt. The lessons learned in South Africa were geared to guarantee victory on future colonial battlefields, not in major European conflicts.⁵³ Porter emphasizes the uniqueness of the opponent, terrain, and fighting style of the struggle and its consequential inability to serve as a template for future military strategizing.

According to Porter:

By demonstrating...the extent of imperial limitations and the empire's vulnerability, South Africa was of less significance on its own account than it was for opening more eyes to the wider [imperial] problems and offering an additional spur to their solution.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency*, 34.

⁵² Ibid., 50.

⁵³ Bill Nasson, *The South African War, 1899-1902* (London: Arnold, 1999), x.

⁵⁴ Andrew Porter, "The South African War and Imperial Britain: A Question of Significance?," in *Writing a Wider War*, 297. See also Edward M. Spiers, "Between the South African War and the First World War, 1902-14, in *Big Wars and Small Wars: The British Army and the Lessons of War in the 20th Century*, ed. Hew Strachan (New York: Routledge, 2006), 21-35. Spencer Jones argues that there were valuable tactical lessons to be learned in South Africa. See Jones, *From Boer War to World War: Tactical Reform of the British Army, 1902-1914* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013).

His arguments merit further exploration, as his speculations that an imperially driven war actually diverted attention away from the empire and refocused it on “the makeup and constitution of Britain itself” add an intriguing dimension to the historiography regarding the conflict’s relationship to imperialism. Richard Koebner and Helmut Schmidt initially probed such a theory in their seminal 1965 volume *Imperialism*.⁵⁵ This study seeks to use Porter’s refreshing analyses as a catalyst to investigate the ways in which war correspondents mobilized their coverage of the conflict to voice concerns regarding Britain’s future as a nation *and* empire.

An Imperial War and the British Working Class, Richard Price’s frequently referenced 1972 examination of wartime worker opinions, remains one of the only books that directly addresses the relationship between popular periodicals and domestic war perspectives.⁵⁶ Furthermore, Price’s analysis emphasizes pamphlets and club organizations to the neglect of newspapers. In *Popular Politics and Society in Late Victorian Britain* (1968), Henry Pelling contends (like Price in *An Imperial War*) that despite “whatever...spontaneous and temporary enthusiasm” may have emerged during the South African War, he can locate no evidence to corroborate “direct continuous support for the cause of Imperialism” among the working classes.⁵⁷ In the context of the

⁵⁵ Ibid., 300. Koebner and Schmidt observed that “[a]gitators against imperialism were apt to idealize the Boers” -- not so much because they were concerned with the nature of their opponents but because they were worried about the “future character of the Empire and of Britain” itself. See Richard Koebner and Helmut Dan Schmidt, *Imperialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 233.

⁵⁶ Price’s *An Imperial War and the British Working Class: Working-Class Attitudes and Reactions to the Boer War, 1899-1902* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972) remains one of the few works to examine British domestic public opinion by utilizing print media during the conflict. Price argues that the Conservative “khaki” election victory of 1900 did not signify the presence of a uniform, pro-war population in the metropole; rather, he sees “the overwhelming feature” of the election to be “voter apathy.” Additionally, he asserts that many workers may have harbored an innate patriotism that often simply was not outwardly expressed. Rose, in his *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, quotes a young Glasgow man who recalled that during the South African War, “[m]y patriotism was of the subconscious variety—I just believed Britain was the best country.”

⁵⁷ Henry Pelling, *Popular Politics and Society in Late Victorian Britain* (London: MacMillan, 1979), 99.

“new” historiography and this paper’s prior examination of scholarship regarding class and empire, Pelling’s conclusion of domestic workers’ imperial indifference seems difficult to accept. Additionally, he chooses to focus on other cultural representations, including religion and the development and politicization of the Labour movement, while devoting comparatively little text to newspaper coverage.

Imperial novelist G.A. Henry’s extensive bibliography of wartime novels, such as 1901’s *With Buller in Natal: A Born Leader*, made the war more accessible to a keen popular reading audience, but such works rightly have been dismissed historically as Anglocentric. Furthermore, as Glenn Wilkinson argues, “[t]o suggest that images of warfare can be so tidily summarized” by one simple story or by one person’s career “is rather simplistic...too brief and too narrow.”⁵⁸ F. Lauriston Bullard’s *Famous War Correspondents*, which appeared at the outbreak of World War I in September 1914, only sought to patriotically “celebrate” the journalists. More recent war reporter studies usually have constituted popular treatments that seek to examine a lengthy time frame but similarly fail to provide a comprehensive evaluation of original pieces printed in newspapers.⁵⁹ Thus, the historiography regarding the South African War and newspaper correspondents suffers from a dearth of investigation into actual dispatches written by the journalists during the conflict. Evaluations instead center on post-war memoirs and individual biographies of the writers. *Times* correspondent Amery published three autobiographical volumes of *My Political Life* beginning in 1953, in which he discusses his war experiences in detail but predictably emphasizes his private correspondences over his newspaper articles. Max Beloff’s assessment of Amery also leans heavily on the

⁵⁸ Wilkinson, *Depictions and Images of War*, 3.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

journalist's diary entries.⁶⁰ MacKenzie, author of *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960* (1984) and editor of *Popular Imperialism and the Military: 1850-1950* (1997), laments that war correspondents' published memoirs, often penned decades after the cessation of hostilities, have received far more historical inspection than their newspaper reports and calls for an extension of research involving the latter source. MacKenzie also speaks to the lack of sufficient study concerning "the ways in which the successes and failures of colonial warfare were evaluated and used in publicity, propaganda, and policy-making."⁶¹ As this study demonstrates, correspondents' writings penned fresh from the front can provide sharper insight into their immediate thoughts regarding South Africa than what they attempted to recollect in the years to come. The two sources also can be scrutinized in a comparative analysis to generate a more nuanced portrait of the reporter in question. Again, this thesis tackles the arduous task of filling some of those critical gaps.

Stephen Badsey, in his writings on print culture and the South African conflict, dissects and evaluates the term "media war." He argues that the phrase provides a suitable medium for uniting "what should never have been separated...military history on one side, and political, cultural and social history on the other."⁶² Clearly, colonial battlefield developments and the reporting of such by on-site journalists affected domestic politics, economics, and society. Badsey asserts that additional scholarship is warranted to assess such changes in a broader British imperial framework. Evaluations

⁶⁰ See Max Beloff, "Leo Amery: The Last Imperialist," *History Today* 39, Vol. I (1989): 13-26. For additional evaluations of Amery's diaries, see John Barnes and David Nicholson, eds., *The Leo Amery Diaries, Volume I: 1869-1929* (London: Hutchinson, 1980).

⁶¹ MacKenzie, *Popular Imperialism and the Military*, 221.

⁶² Stephen Badsey, "A Print and Media War," in *Recording the South African War: Journalism and Official History, 1899-1914*, ed. Craig Wilcox (London: University of London Press, 1999), 5.

regarding the role of the media in warfare need to be liberated from their oft-restrictive classification as communication or cultural studies and interwoven more tightly into historical scholarship.

British scholars need to further explore the ways in which influential journalists manipulated their war reporting to propagate the need for imperial reform. Wilkinson's *Depictions and Images of War in Edwardian Newspapers, 1899-1914* (2003) represents a significant starting point for revision. In his work, Wilkinson evaluates the period's press with the goal of unearthing "a great deal about not only aspects of militarism," but also whether the damaging consequences of the conflict were showcased "in ways that countered the more positive perceptions associated with the conduct of war."⁶³ Andrew Porter identifies a common thread running through imperial historical writing to be the study of how soldiers affected the civilian world to which they returned post-war but then ponders, "What, one may also ask, of returning journalists and war correspondents?"⁶⁴ This thesis corrects that research deficit by analyzing English newspaper writers' attempts to initiate change in British society following their South African tenures.

The role of official and self-imposed censorship complicates studies of war correspondents, and the historiographical envelope has not been pushed sufficiently regarding the efforts those journalists made in order to circumvent such roadblocks.⁶⁵ In *The Culture of Secrecy: Britain, 1832-1998* (2001), David Vincent describes "blockages of communication" habitually implemented by politicians in an attempt to direct public opinion in the direction that was most advantageous to the censor. Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky's "propaganda model" expounds on the employment of media "filters"

⁶³ Wilkinson, *Depictions and Images of War*, 6.

⁶⁴ Andrew Porter, "Journalism," in *Recording the South African War*, 3.

⁶⁵ Wilkinson, *Depictions and Images of War*, 12.

when communicating sensitive information and evaluates newspapers' ability to "manufacture consent" in times of crisis.⁶⁶ Such efforts made the task of influencing popular opinion more difficult for war journalists, as they fought to dispel the sanitized images dispensed from the press censor's office. However, as Wilkinson correctly identifies, when examining the relevance of information suppression in historical inquiry, an evaluation that scrutinizes the depictions and disseminations of war imagery in print media "is not handicapped by the issue of censorship" because it is the information on the pages that reveal true outlooks and opinions of warfare, rather than the ones omitted.⁶⁷ The significance of this thesis lies in unearthing the ways in which war correspondents *did* evade censors and examining the messages that made it to the printed page, as those commentaries were the ones that reached readers and offered the potential to sway domestic minds.

South African War historiography must engage further with the struggle's potential classification as a "total war" and the role newspaper correspondents played in affording it that label. Beckett, in his *The Victorians at War* (2003), argues persuasively that in multiple ways, the conflict typifies the totality delineated by Arthur Marwick's analytical framework. Marwick's "four-tier model of total war" defines such a battle to be:

One in which there was enhanced destruction and disruption on an unprecedented scale; the emergence of a testing challenge to the existing social or political structure of [the state]; greater participation in the context of the total mobilization of the state's resources; and a cataclysmic, socio-psychological impact upon existing attitudes and values.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ See Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York: Pantheon, 1988).

⁶⁷ Wilkinson, *Depictions and Images of War*, 12.

⁶⁸ Beckett, *The Victorians at War*, 215-216.

This study seeks to tackle Beckett's assertions by dissecting the war's totality through the lens of its domestic war correspondents.

The conflict with the Boers lasted longer and cost far more lives and British pounds than most English people ever imagined. It revealed pressing problems with the army and amplified imperial preference's attractiveness. The war raised difficult questions regarding the purpose and morality of imperialism, the neglect of domestic social issues, and the rights of British women, among other disenfranchised groups. The South African War yielded a plethora of problems but also the opportunity to learn and correct such mistakes. English newspapermen clearly contributed to that process. Both conservative and liberal writers used the conflict to expose imperialism's "dark underside" with a shared goal of reform, albeit for different reasons. The imperial correspondents were well-respected individuals whose words resonated loudly among the politically conscious, as those reporters' dispatches often were cited by both domestic British politicians and those in South Africa.⁶⁹ War correspondents' mobilization of socio-political networks and personal communications with influential government leaders afforded the former group a valuable opportunity to shape post-war reform efforts.

In the years immediately following the South African War, the journalists kept imperial tribulations relevant in public discourse. They prioritized the empire in print with the goal of devising fresh strategies for pursuing British endeavors in the new century. They stressed that imperialism, or support thereof, did not imply the same thing to everyone. George Bernard Shaw famously declared on the eve of the 1900 general

⁶⁹ Startt, *Journalists for Empire*, 214.

election that “voters should make up their [own] minds what Imperialism means;” as Thompson argues, “the terms ‘empire’ and ‘imperialism’ were like empty boxes that were continuously being filled up and emptied of their meanings.”⁷⁰ Koebner and Schmidt cast the South African War as a vital pivot point in the span of global imperialism, arguing that the conflict transformed the term into both an “international slogan” and an economic and political theory to fuel deliberation across the media spectrum and in the halls of Parliament.⁷¹

The government’s willingness to engage in a distant colonial war given the abject state of their army and with their global reputation on the line speaks to the importance of imperialism to the British political psyche. Consequently, imperial terminology constantly was refashioned to meet the needs of liberal and conservative Britons alike during the conflict. In Koebner and Schmidt’s words, “The expression of our political vocabulary...[is] unavoidably ambiguous: their meaning is in perpetual movement.”⁷² Seemingly simple questions, such as what it meant to be a good imperial citizen, yielded starkly different answers depending on when and to whom the inquiries were posed. By reexamining concepts such as “patriotism,” “imperial reform,” and “duty to empire,” historians can better flesh out the motivations of those who reported on the war and how their understandings of such language influenced post-war reform efforts.

War correspondents recognized that often the truest embodiment of British patriotism involved challenging “unpatriotic” or theoretically harmful government pursuits and decisions. As this study subsequently discusses, the so-called “pro-Boers”

⁷⁰ Thompson, “The Language of Imperialism,” 147.

⁷¹ Koebner and Schmidt, *Imperialism*, 248-249. The authors also argue that the mobilization of the word “imperialism” by non-Britons “gave rise to the world-wide misinterpretation of the Boer War as a capitalist plot.”

⁷² Ibid., xv.

identified themselves as the real imperial servants. Radical Liberals disapproved of the seemingly excessive expansionistic policies endorsed by the Conservatives. From that perspective, as described by *Westminster Gazette*'s W.H. Kent, genuine patriotism and the "new" (late Victorian) aggressive imperialism were "mutually destructive," with "the one being the love of our own country, the other [an avaricious] lust for the lands of others."⁷³ Hugh Cunningham's "The Language of Patriotism" claims that in an era of unchecked colonial expansion, "it was impossible to demarcate a patriotism of the left," but that argument neglects to address the South African War's polarizing effect on such terminology.⁷⁴ This thesis argues that multiple liberal-minded correspondents sought to promote their own unique perspective on patriotism that sharply contrasted with the traditional ideology. Factions at both ends of the political spectrum used the term "patriot" in varying contexts to define and redefine who appeared to have the best interests of the empire at heart. Left-leaning journalists endeavored "to exert a certain liberal restraint on imperialism." In their eyes, the process should only continue if it remained loyal to the liberal principles that undergirded the British nation.⁷⁵ Such writers often challenged the government and sought to discredit its ostensibly patriotic goals. In doing so, they complicated the definition of patriotism by pressing the domestic population to reevaluate the meaning of such loaded vocabulary during the South African conflict.

Additionally, as Paul Ward contends, "[t]he formula that acceptance of the legitimacy of the state leads to an adherence to patriotism is axiomatic [but]...also

⁷³ Ibid., 232. Many radical liberals and socialists shared that belief.

⁷⁴ Hugh Cunningham, "The Language of Patriotism, 1750-1914," *History Workshop Journal* 12 (1981): 8-33; Paul Ward, *Red Flag and Union Jack: Englishness, Patriotism and the British Left, 1881-1924* (Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 1998), 7.

⁷⁵ Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists*, 241.

inadequate.”⁷⁶ Patriotic rhetoric can be deployed in challenge to a particular government and its policies while still avowing loyalty to one’s nation. If the state’s political leanings eventually realign more closely with a previously dissenting faction, then the latter may (or may not) jettison its former claims of oppositional “patriotism” in favor of a maxim supporting the new governmental situation. As Benedict Anderson observed, “The nation must be ‘imagined’ in some form [as] to be worthy of affection.”⁷⁷ In that vein, Stephen Yeo investigates the relationship between the government and socialism in his “Socialism, the State, and Some Oppositional Englishness,” while Miles Taylor has examined “radical” patriotism’s relationship to the left.⁷⁸ J.H. Grainger identifies the presence of multiple, often conflicting patriotisms during the Edwardian era.⁷⁹ Such studies have added an intriguing aspect to the “new” historiography in regard to the widespread and diverse mobilization of such language to garner imperial support. But historical scholarship requires additional analyses concerning how war correspondents exploited loyalist vocabulary during the South African War in the name of imperial salvation.

Domestic war journalists had to pen sensational articles to appease their respective press barons’ desires to boost sales in the competitive late Victorian popular press network. *Mail* content manager Kennedy Jones answered the question “What sells a newspaper?” emphatically with “war first and foremost,” ahead of “a State Funeral” and

⁷⁶ Ward, *Red Flag and Union Jack*, 8.

⁷⁷ Qtd. in Ibid., 2. See also Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

⁷⁸ Ward further critiques Yeo’s essay in *Red Flag and Union Jack*, p. 8-9. On p. 59, Ward states, “[When] most of the left opposed the war, they did so from positions of radical patriotism, using an oppositional nature of [true] Englishness.” See also Miles Taylor, “Patriotism, History and the Left in Twentieth Century Britain,” *The Historical Journal* 33, no. 4 (1990): 971-987; and Geoffrey Field, “Social Patriotism and the British Working Class: Appearance and Disappearance of a Tradition,” *International Labor and Working Class History* 42, Tradition and the Working Class (Fall 1992): 20-39.

⁷⁹ See J.A. Grainger, *Patriotisms: Britain, 1900-1939* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986).

“a First-class Murder.”⁸⁰ Increasingly literate Britons enjoyed reading exciting imperial tales for amusement; whether they responded to such cultural manifestations of empire with political action in the pre-war years was another story. Multiple correspondents seized upon the opportunity to carefully craft wartime coverage into personal testimonies exposing imperial problems and emphasizing the need for improvements. They acknowledged that the best way to support the British imperial dream might be to publicly reveal its flaws and then seek the necessary fixes. In those respects, war reporters made the South African conflict critical to the reforming and redirecting of British imperialism in its final century.

⁸⁰ Qtd. in Caroline Playne, *The Pre-War Mind in Britain: A Historical Review* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1928), 113.

1. THE PRESS, THE NEWSPAPERS, AND THE CORRESPONDENTS

THE PRE-WAR IMPERIAL CONTEXT

By the South African War's commencement, British imperial policy emphasized consolidation over expansion. Successful laissez-faire trade practices and increased overseas investments had allowed Britain to disassemble its protectionist system and facilitated its economic domination during the mid-nineteenth century.⁸¹ The British recognized that continued extensive territorial expansion would be financially unprofitable and unsustainable. Government leaders began to secure their established global holdings while heightening efforts to defend their colonial prizes from foreign threats that could potentially subvert Britain's overseas interests in the future.⁸² During the mid-1800s, imperial politicians gradually began granting responsible administration privileges to their white settler dominions. The British government generally avoided excessive direct involvement in their colonies' management, with the British Raj in India being a glaring exception, and pursued a "splendid isolation" European foreign policy. But escalating threats to valuable Eastern trade routes forced formal imperial intervention in Egypt, the Sudan, and eventually, South Africa.

By the 1890s, an economically dynamic Germany, bolstered by recent Bismarckian industrial and military development, set its sights on coveted overseas markets and its own colonial empire. British leaders harbored legitimate concerns regarding their nation's ability to maintain its global imperial supremacy in the face of increased foreign competition. London prided itself on being the world's financial capital

⁸¹ P.J. Cain and A.J. Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688-2000* (New York: Longman, 2001), 649.

⁸² Darwin, "Imperialism and the Victorians," 631.

and the heart of international investment. Elite City gentlemen became wealthier by mobilizing government support and dominating foreign exchange. But Britain's domestic industrial progress had stagnated since mid-century, and the nation's early Victorian manufacturing reputation as the "workshop of the world" was in jeopardy. In his *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit* (1981), Martin Wiener argues that the persistence of aristocratic dominance during early British industrialization promoted the development of a capitalist system that was not "entrepreneurial or productive."

Therefore, the aristocracy's resulting relationship with the rising bourgeoisie was one of accommodation and passivity on the latter's part, as the former group sought to reshape the industrial middle classes in its image.⁸³ That environment fostered a lack of initiative in technological development and a decreased emphasis on production output, and the British traditions of free enterprise and political liberalism further restrained industrial expansion in the late 1800s. Consequently, Marxist historian Tom Nairn argues that the cost of such an economic system was "the containment...of capitalism within a patrician hegemony which never...actively favoured the aggressive development of industrialism or in the general conversion of society to [industrial] values and interests."⁸⁴

During the 1870s, cheap imports of Russian and American grain sent agricultural prices spiraling, and with no protective legislation to safeguard their yields, British farmers experienced a debilitating depression. As Porter affirms, "The mid-Victorian consensus based around a vision of a liberal, laissez-faire political economy was rapidly

⁸³ Martin J. Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850-1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 8-9.

⁸⁴ Qtd. in Ibid., 10. See Tom Nairn, *The Breakup of Britain: Crisis and Neonationalism* (London: New Left Books, 1977).

breaking down.”⁸⁵ Long before Chamberlain’s tariff crusade, MPs questioned whether an imperial preference policy could fix such problems, but they took no formal action to challenge free trade. The British economic system needed attention if it was to compete with Germany and the United States, nation-states that possessed both the resources and the drive to steal the imperial spotlight from Britain.

When appraising war and the empire in the late Victorian period, one discovers a time frame “fraught with anxieties and crises” over issues ranging from politics, economics, and the empire to religion, race, and women’s rights.⁸⁶ The dismal state of the British army also constituted a considerable underlying governmental concern. Within Parliament, debates raged over the state’s role in prospective reform efforts and most significantly, how to finance such projects. Privately, political officials expressed grave concerns regarding military inadequacies prior to the South African conflict.

During the 1860s and 70s, the average domestic Briton remained isolated from and thus ignorant of the army’s true status primarily because of insider efforts to mask its weaknesses from the public. MP John Holms observed in 1878 that the army “appears to be the only institution in the kingdom which is outside of the people,” for “[t]hey know nothing of it” and therefore could not formulate an informed opinion on how to improve it.⁸⁷ Liberal philosopher John Stuart Mill feared the alarming implications of public obliviousness concerning such matters at a pivotal moment when Britain appeared to be, from his perspective, “drifting to the disintegration of Empire.”⁸⁸ When word of the British army’s precarious status became common knowledge, Mill dreaded the

⁸⁵ Porter, “The South African War and Imperial Britain,” 298.

⁸⁶ Wilkinson, *Depictions and Images of War*, 5-6.

⁸⁷ Stephen Miller, *Volunteers on the Veld: Britain’s Citizen-Soldiers and the South African War, 1899-1902* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 21.

⁸⁸ Qtd. in Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain*, 40.

impending backlash. The deficiency in common knowledge was not rectified by honest efforts to inform Britons of military problems but instead was offset with propaganda crusades. Those campaigns often began in public schools and later were undertaken by the emerging popular press with the goal of injecting a militaristic ideology into the late Victorian public consciousness while keeping most citizens carefully insulated from the reality.

In actuality, as far back as the 1850s, the army had experienced a significant decline in the number of men enlisted from rural areas along with a simultaneous increase in urban recruits, the latter of whom were physically weaker and often undisciplined. Since the Crimean War, most government-directed reform projects had yielded minimal improvements, although the public schools, in tandem with growing youth organizations, enhanced the cultural appeal of military service to the empire's boys.⁸⁹ The 1870s Cardwell reforms made short service a reality, which actually heightened the existing recruiting problem by stimulating an increased turnover of enlisted men. Even with the implementation of short service, soldiers' military commitments (in terms of time served) were still longer than in many other fields of employment, thus making the former occupational choice seem more akin to a type of indentured servitude than a freely-entered contract between employer and employee in a conventional work environment.⁹⁰ Overall, Cardwell's reforms did not result in any substantial improvements, as they failed

⁸⁹ For more on "popularizing military service," see John Springhall, *Youth, Empire, and Society: British Youth Movements, 1883-1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984).

⁹⁰ See Anne Summers, "Militarism in Britain before the Great War," *History Workshop* 2, no. 1 (Autumn 1976): 108.

to accurately define strategies, establish priorities, identify deficiencies, or, most glaringly, “organize the army on any basis of likely military needs.”⁹¹

Officers grumbled that recruits constituted “the scum of the cities — sons of infirm parents, brought up in vice and crime, breathing foul air, [and] morally and physically inferior,” in Stephen Miller’s assessment, “Tommy Atkins was hardly someone to invite over for dinner to meet the family.”⁹² Major-General Maurice complained, “[N]o nation was ever yet for any long time great and free when the army it put into the field no longer represented its own virility and manhood.”⁹³ Unfortunately, that force found itself handicapped in its attempts to attract more respectable troops, largely because persistent funding woes meant that recruits could not be satisfactorily compensated for their work. Thus, higher-quality candidates generally pursued other employment opportunities. In the past, an army volunteer equipped himself with his own pocket money, based on the idea that he chose to sacrifice his time to the service of his country and therefore it was his responsibility to purchase his supplies and “the weapon[s] served out to him.”⁹⁴ But the impoverished condition of many potential soldiers meant they could not afford equipment, forcing the government to dole out additional precious pounds to compensate or else watch their military population further decline.

Secretary of War Edward Stanhope, in his 1888 Memorandum, sought to elucidate the army’s domestic and expeditionary commitments. The document provided

⁹¹ Edward Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army, 1868-1902* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 24.

⁹² Alan Skelley, *The Victorian Army at Home: The Recruitment and Terms and Conditions of the British Regular, 1859-1899* (London: Croom Helm, 1977), 293; Miller, *Volunteers on the Veld*, 21.

⁹³ Qtd. in Davin, “Imperialism and Motherhood,” 15.

⁹⁴ Qtd. in John K. Dunlop, *The Development of the British Army, 1899-1914: From the Eve of the South African War to the Eve of the Great War, with Special Reference to the Territorial Force* (London: Methuen, 1938), 222-223.

for two corps specifically dedicated to homeland defense but also declared that military authorities must “aim at being able” to send those troops abroad.⁹⁵ Stanhope’s plan succeeded in providing an explanation of military purpose and offered previously lacking clarification on issues such as aid to civil power. The post-war Elgin Commission applauded the memorandum’s ability to assist in the army’s mobilization for South Africa within a few months of the conflict’s commencement. However, Stanhope’s plan would prove insufficient to address the strains of a modern war and lacked the ability to adapt to the rapidly-changing imperial situations. Thus, his efforts were not enough to deliver a rapid, decisive victory against the Boers a decade later.

Stanhope also could not improve the physique or skill of the average recruit. At the outbreak of the war, the British government was forced to turn away hundreds of potential soldiers because of their poor physical health or lack of qualifications. While celebrating the departure of the London City Volunteers for South Africa in January 1900, the *Mail* noted with dismay that although “[t]housands of applications for service have been received in London and at the various Yeomanry headquarters throughout the kingdom,” only a “very small percentage of the applicants passed the necessary shooting and riding tests...[a]nd there can be little doubt that so far the [overall] results have been very disappointing.”⁹⁶ Pall Mall-based recruiter Mr. Wynne told the newspaper plainly that “[u]nless a man is a good rider and a good shot...he cannot be accepted...When an order is given [he] must be able to immediately obey it, or the whole company is thrown into confusion.”⁹⁷ Early in the struggle, a *Mail* editorial pondered, “Why is it that so

⁹⁵ *The Manchester Guardian*, July 23, 1901.

⁹⁶ *The London Daily Mail*, January 15, 1900.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

many men have been rejected?” The paper answered its own query by blaming War Office mismanagement and the overall poor state of the domestic urban population.⁹⁸

While thousands of men showed up to volunteer following the disastrous “Black Week” early in the conflict, only a small fraction would be deemed acceptable for combat. Men faced disqualification for being “too small...or too slight, or with heart trouble, weak lungs, rheumatic tendencies, flat feet, or bad teeth.”⁹⁹ The *London Times* quoted one Yeomanry private who lamented, “Every night’s train...takes back to London men who have been rejected as being unlikely to become [capable] soldiers.”¹⁰⁰ According to that newspaper, the majority of potential recruits could quickly develop into eligible entrants if facilities such as shooting ranges were made available for training.¹⁰¹ In the absence of such accommodations, countless applicants had to be summarily turned away. Yet, as the *Mail* informed its readers, if “barracks were [only] thrown open...there would be no difficulty...in getting ten thousand excellent men,” for “a week’s practice would suffice to make most of the rejected candidates efficient.”¹⁰²

The failures regarding the volunteer call did not end with physical disqualifications and inadequate preparatory centers. The January 20, 1900 *Mail* reported that “[t]ransport difficulties have arisen” because of Admiralty disorganization, and it would now be impossible to prepare new troops for South Africa before late February.¹⁰³ Yeomen privates complained that even qualified volunteers lacked sufficient ammunition, and “what little they have is so bad that they have to use the 600 yards

⁹⁸ Ibid., January 16, 1900.

⁹⁹ Davin, “Imperialism and Motherhood,” 15.

¹⁰⁰ *The London Times*, January 11, 1900.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² *The London Daily Mail*, January 16, 1900.

¹⁰³ Ibid., January 20, 1900.

sighter when firing at 200 yards.” Soldiers recruited into the East Kent contingent were “housed in huts which have been condemned for years,” despite “ample room elsewhere in the barracks,” and the roofs “let the rain through in copious showers.”¹⁰⁴ Often, the military boss was responsible for feeding and housing his soldiers, an arrangement which placed the recruit in a position of “subservience, dependence, and even terror, which at law could not exist in other walks of life.”¹⁰⁵ Despite legislation to the contrary, punishment continued to border on barbaric.

The army’s officer corps remained elitist and relatively indifferent to the myriad problems facing the average British soldier under their direction. Upper-class military leaders feared the potential intrusion of “unworthy types and suspect mores” into their exclusive domain and fought to sustain their social superiority and homogeneity.¹⁰⁶ The army doled out most promotions based on birth rather than merit and, problematically, a favorable social standing did not always (or often) equal a brilliant military mind. Correspondent Amery complained that such a system excluded not only poorer men but “the majority of those who were conscious of their ability and wished to give it scope,” which meant often “[t]he Army did not get the best brains of the country.”¹⁰⁷ The Elgin Commission later validated Amery’s assessment when they concluded that during the South African conflict, “the deleterious effects of a system based upon a passed-away mode” of warfare and promotion were particularly apparent in regard to the higher-ranking officers.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Summers, “Militarism in Britain,” 108.

¹⁰⁶ Surridge, “The Military Critique,” 586.

¹⁰⁷ Qtd. in Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency*, 45.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 46.

The vast chasm between “elite” and “non-elite” was not exclusive to the military. It mirrored the state of late Victorian society itself. In the decades preceding the war, British policymakers had attempted to isolate the lower classes from political developments, casting the latter group as incapable of fully comprehending imperial policymaking. As Porter accurately observes, government men “preferred not to share the empire” with British workers. Consequently, once those politicians acknowledged the inherent problem with encouraging the imperial ignorance of those deemed socially inferior, particularly in regard to the heightened imperial threats of the late 1800s, such a mistake “had already had years...to bed down in.”¹⁰⁹

Political leaders also worried about the haphazard, inefficient organization of the War Office. In 1884, Chamberlain himself confided to Liberal politician Sir Charles Dilke, “I have the lowest opinion of Army administration.”¹¹⁰ The statesmen themselves constituted a significant part of the problem. Such officials repeatedly rejected outside offers for expert advice regarding their forces, deflecting such perceived challenges to their leadership and preferring to restrict their conceptions of the military system and its workings to familiar, yet increasingly ineffective, traditional frameworks. External assistance was rarely solicited and only sporadically accepted. When the 1890 Royal Commission Report on the Administration of the Military and Naval Departments identified discord between the duties of the executive and consultative branches, future Liberal Party leader Henry Campbell-Bannerman balked at the group’s recommendation for the establishment of a Chief of the General Staff. He feared that such a principal could be “tempted to justify his own existence by embroiling governments in avoidable

¹⁰⁹ Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists*, 225-226.

¹¹⁰ Qtd. in Peter Marsh, *Joseph Chamberlain: Entrepreneur in Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994, 482.

wars.” He further argued that “[t]he meddling of departmental ‘experts’ in questions of *policy* seemed to represent an infringement on the principles of constitutional [rule].”¹¹¹

That refusal proved costly during the South African conflict by hindering the War Office’s ability to knowledgeably manage the war effort and led to post-struggle accusations of amateurish leadership.

Prior to the Boer struggle, both Liberal and Conservative politicians worried that in their current state, outmoded British land forces could not defeat a strong European opponent on any battlefield. Victoria’s army lacked supplies, financial support, updated weapons, effective administration, and proper training. Yet Parliament pursued no real beneficial reforms for numerous reasons including insufficient funds, officer opposition to altering traditional military strategies, and misplaced confidence that naval supremacy could offset army weaknesses indefinitely. The British people had long prided themselves on their sea dominance, but even Admiral Sir Richard Hugh Spencer Bacon admitted that by the late 1880s, royal maritime forces were performing at “the lowest efficiency...since the middle of the eighteenth century.”¹¹²

As the war progressed, the urgent need to continue mobilizing as many troops as possible meant the army could no longer afford to reject so many men, irrespective of their health or fitness for battle. Consequently, frail fighters frequently fell victim to disease before firing a shot at their opponents. Poor medical treatment at the front needlessly escalated the British death toll. Pre-existing internal squabbles among generals’ “rings” of loyal soldiers also intensified during the war. The Wolseley ring’s feuds with the Roberts ring hindered the army’s ability to cooperate and fairly promote

¹¹¹ Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency*, 23-24.

¹¹² Qtd. in G.R. Searle, *A New England? Peace and War, 1886-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 244.

officers in South Africa. Embarrassing early losses framed war correspondents' portraits of the need to modernize an antiquated, unprepared British army. Lamented *Mail* correspondent Edgar Wallace after several months of fighting, "The discovery that our Army is not, as we were led to believe by its chiefs, ready 'to go anywhere and do anything' has been one of the most unpleasant, if not almost the worst, of the features which have confronted us" since the war began.¹¹³ Such surprising failures encouraged reporters in the combat zones to voice their anxieties to their readerships as loudly as press censors would allow.

British leaders endeavored to protect their imagined imperial infallibility by seeking to cultivate a unified, patriotic domestic population. They pushed English newspapermen to dispense jingoistic print in order to garner public support for empire during the dark days of the early South African campaign. If politicians could no longer hide the army's problems from the masses, they would try to soften the blow with misleading propaganda crusades. Thus, they sought allies in the media, particularly the English "penny dailies," which had become ubiquitous by the 1890s.

The popular press's roots had first sprouted in the form of Sunday papers such as *News of the World* and *Lloyd's Weekly News* in the 1840s. However, the publications did not reach their heyday until the century's concluding decade, when the government declared its support for a less elite, independent English media that catered to mass consumption. British newspapers no longer bore the restrictive stamp taxes that they had carried for nearly two centuries. The subsequent price reductions meant that the expanding press could "emancipate [itself] from Treasury domination" and "satisfactorily

¹¹³ *The London Daily Mail*, December 20, 1899.

perform [its] ‘true’ function:” ostensibly, “the voicing of public opinion.”¹¹⁴ Cheaper papers meant easier accessibility to news, more publications in circulation, a larger readership, and, consequently, a better opportunity for information manipulation.¹¹⁵ However, an increasingly literate population becoming familiar with imperial realities would not uniformly accept propaganda ruses. As Wilkinson asserts, “The press had previously been the conduit through which [political] leaders conveyed their ideas to the nation.”¹¹⁶ But by the late 1800s, that relationship was beginning to shift.

Imperially minded MPs used their established social networks to connect with English press barons throughout the 1890s. The meetings between government officials and newspaper owners and editors often included prominent journalists. Inside members-only London gentlemen’s clubs, wealthy Englishmen sought to negotiate mutually beneficial relationships between Parliament and the press as war loomed on the horizon. During such discussions, Conservative and Unionist politicians solidified hasty assurances of government backing, while reporters such as Amery received a window into imperial policymaking.¹¹⁷ According to Darwin, both correspondents and representatives vied for public influence in metropolitan enclaves that he deems “domestic bridgeheads.” Those bridgeheads represented “composite[s] of conflicting ideas, preoccupations and material concerns” and forced participants “to find collaborators and struggle to exert their influence in an indifferent, occasionally hostile

¹¹⁴ Arthur Aspinall, *Politics and the Press, c. 1780-1850* (London: Home & Van Thal Ltd., 1949), 203.

¹¹⁵ Stephen Koss, *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain: Volume I: The Nineteenth Century* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 1.

¹¹⁶ Wilkinson, *Depictions and Images of War*, 7.

¹¹⁷ Conservative (and religiously minded) historian Maurice Cowling hypothesizes that a small number of influential, well-educated, elite men possessed most of the political power in modern England. Those Britons fraternized at gentlemen’s clubs, formed alliances, and dominated government as the key decision makers regarding domestic and imperial policies. See Cowling’s trilogy of works on the “politics of British democracy:” *1867: Disraeli, Gladstone and Revolution* (1967), *The Impact of Labour* (1971), and *The Impact of Hitler* (1975).

terrain.”¹¹⁸ Both sides showed no qualms about manipulating and deceiving the other in order to achieve their ultimate ends.

As the press penetrated partisan ranks, political parties became “reservoirs from which newspaper investment could be drawn.”¹¹⁹ By the South African War, any alleged separation between the government and printed media was an illusion. A journalistic presence permeated the halls of Parliament as multiple editors and correspondents served terms as MPs. Kennedy Jones even fantasized about “pass[ing] a decree that no man [would be] competent to occupy an editorial chair until he had sat in the House of Commons for at least one Session,” and conversely, “no man [would be] eligible for a seat in the House...unless he had filled an editorial [seat] for twelve months.”¹²⁰

The intimate relationships between the press and the government were well established and substantially complex before the South African War’s outbreak. Colonial Secretary Chamberlain was in regular communication with the *Times*’ editors, and his speeches frequently appeared on the paper’s pages. In November 1897, Chamberlain declared at the University of Glasgow, “[T]he fixity of purpose and strength of will which are necessary to...complete and maintain that splendid edifice of our [imperial] greatness...will be supplied by...[our] national patriotism.”¹²¹ His speech was printed in its entirety with glowing commentary in the *Times*. Conservative Prime Minister Lord Salisbury discussed military developments regularly with the *Mail*’s Lord Northcliffe, further dispelling the existence of some “independent, largely self-contained ‘official mind’... deciding, without undue pressure or constraint, where, when, and how to

¹¹⁸ Darwin, “Imperialism and the Victorians,” 642.

¹¹⁹ Koss, *The Rise and Fall*, 10.

¹²⁰ Kennedy Jones, *Fleet Street and Downing Street* (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1920), 329-330.

¹²¹ *The London Times*, November 4, 1897.

intervene overseas.”¹²² On the eve of the South African conflict, newspapers were mobilized regularly to help articulate party platforms, execute political schemes, and realize private ambitions.¹²³ Collaborations between print media outlets and the government held the potential to redefine the political geography of Parliamentary representation.

Press propaganda often appealed directly to Victorian cultural values, such as national pride, muscular Christianity, and innate British superiority. Heightened literacy expanded the public sphere and allowed the media increased access to more working-class Britons. New publications and advertising strategies aimed to promote passion for the empire. By the time of the South African War, British society was bombarded regularly by imperial propaganda, as the government hoped that positive news pieces would solidify war support. Imperially minded press barons endeavored to pacify domestic fears with false optimism during a time when “[t]he shibboleths of Victorian self-confidence” appeared to many to be “under unremitting assault.”¹²⁴ However, as this thesis contends, war correspondents fought to prevent such information manipulation from successfully distorting reality.

Politically, the formerly dominant Liberal Party split in 1886, largely over the issue of Irish home rule. Chamberlain and Lord Hartington formed the breakaway Liberal Unionist faction and established a coalition with Salisbury’s Conservative government, which assumed power in the 1890s. Those deep political fractures signified the breakdown of the previously mentioned mid-Victorian consensus. Throughout the South

¹²² Edward Berenson, *Heroes of Empire: Five Charismatic Men and the Conquest of Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 3.

¹²³ Koss, *The Rise and Fall*, 1.

¹²⁴ Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain*, 27.

African War, the Liberals remained bitterly divided. The Liberal Imperialists, dominated by Lord Rosebery and H.H. Asquith among others, generally supported the war and believed that their Party needed to connect with “the new Imperial spirit” to remain politically relevant.¹²⁵ The radical, left-wing Liberals, personified by Lloyd George, often embraced the pro-Boer label in their quest for peace and their hostility toward imperial aggression. Campbell-Bannerman, by now Leader of the Opposition in Parliament, represented the more mainstream, middle ground faction, which recommended pragmatism and caution in South Africa, mainly because its followers opposed Liberal Imperialist ideology but did not want to appear anti-empire in Parliament. Feuds among the groups often played out during adversarial dinner parties, which were comically described as “war[s] to the knife and fork.”¹²⁶

As the nineteenth century waned, Chamberlain feared the Boer Republics’ increasing wealth and the threat it posed to British economic control in southern Africa. The Conservative government manipulated the relatively minor issue of British *Uitlander* (“foreigner”) rights into a grave injustice and proceeded to pressure the Dutch colonists into negotiations. When discussion and ultimatums failed to resolve the dispute diplomatically, war commenced in October 1899. As the struggle began, Hobson and other left-leaning journalists warned political leaders that the war would finally reveal embarrassing military truths. They denounced Chamberlain’s accusations against the Boers as baseless and argued that the consequences of fomenting a colonial conflict would be unpleasant. Amery and other pro-war reporters hoped for the best but were just as frazzled by the impending conflict. Regardless of political leaning, newspaper

¹²⁵ H.C.G. Matthew, *The Liberal Imperialists: The Ideas and Politics of a Post-Gladstonian Elite* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 134.

¹²⁶ Qtd. in Semmel, *Imperialism and Social Reform*, 57.

correspondents took up the mantle of responsibility to help their beloved British Empire untangle itself from the twisted web of military mismanagement, economic concerns, and social problems in which it had become entwined.

THE RISE OF THE POPULAR PRESS

The English popular press expanded largely because of increased domestic literacy rates during the late nineteenth century. The 1870 Forster Act, which facilitated compulsory mass education and public school reform, played an instrumental role in that process. The British government hoped that polished, well-read young gentlemen would mature into informed voters and good imperial citizens. Concerned politicians supported a patriotic school system designed to combat ostensible “national deterioration,” both physical and mental. English public schools became exceptional centers for molding British youths into devoted servants of the empire. Such establishments transitioned from “institutions of scholarship” to centers focused disproportionately on character development and the fostering of a “relationship with the concept of a ‘nation in arms’.”¹²⁷ As a result of such efforts, the 1890s were marked by unwavering crown loyalty, a proclivity for hero worship and muscular Christianity, and escalating racial pride.¹²⁸ Such characteristics undergirded the popular image of imperial culture at the close of the nineteenth century.

¹²⁷ Wilkinson, *Depictions and Images of War*, 6. See also J.A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School: The Emergence and Consolidation of an Educational Ideology* (London: Routledge, 2012).

¹²⁸ See MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*, 2-10.

In the years preceding the South African War, British educators spent substantial time conveying imperialist beliefs to the nation's youth.¹²⁹ Stanley Winslow identifies virile masculinity as the "prized ideal" in late Victorian public schools, where eager boys internalized the discipline and integrity necessary to lead the empire in the future.¹³⁰ Within the walls of Eton and Harrow, teachers prepared their students for patriotic service; H.D. Blanch observed that "the ethos of teaching was often militaristic and emotive."¹³¹ The sons of the gentry and, increasingly, young men of upper-middle class backgrounds, absorbed imperial values and departed school better equipped to serve queen and country. As Conservative Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli had declared, "We are not a military nation, but we are [becoming] a martial race."¹³² Politicians believed nationalism could be fostered by an enhanced emphasis on militarism, so the latter was cultivated, with varying success, across the late Victorian socio-cultural scene and transmitted via the popular press. The mass-circulation penny papers frequently were employed to spread imperialist sentiments to their burgeoning readerships.

By the 1890s, the rotary press had rapidly increased the printing rate, geographic circulation, and sheer number of English news publications. Newspapermen could connect more quickly with a wider array of readers. Press barons claimed a commitment to "new journalism," which was supposedly grounded in credibility, accountability, and accurate reporting. However, it was their correspondents who sought to protect readers from falsified information. Those writers prided themselves on their declared ability to

¹²⁹ For additional reading, see H.D. Blanch, "The Boer War and British Society," 1906. National Army Museum Archives, accession no. 7904-109.

¹³⁰ Stanley Blakely Winslow Jr., "A Boy's Empire: The British Public School as Imperial Training Ground, 1850-1918," (PhD dissertation, UVA, 2010), 209.

¹³¹ M.D. Blanch, "British Society and the War," in *The South African War: The Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902*, eds. Peter Warwick and S.B. Spies (Harlow: Longman, 1980), 226.

¹³² William St. John Brodrick, Earl of Midleton, *Records and Reactions, 1856-1939* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1939), 74.

objectively detach from the incidents they wrote about, thus allowing them to produce more factual articles.

Editors imprinted their personal imperial perspectives on their newspapers when possible. They generally hired writers who shared the same political convictions as their employers. But, ultimately, press barons prioritized selling papers and making money over accuracy and sentiment. Such men further claimed to be reflecting their readerships' viewpoints in their papers, a departure from the earlier perceived function of the newspaper as one of "instructing" the population and encouraging popular debate. However, that newly-avowed purpose actually assumed reader passivity, discouraged public discussion, and afforded editors "the responsibility to decide which opinions or interests of the people needed to be represented."¹³³ Thus, editors felt confident to determine for themselves what domestic Britons should know and what slant those consumers should receive on such material. Mark Hampton links that shift to the electorate's expansion and the subsequent rise of mass readership, which "undermined elite optimism" concerning "the desirability of including all readers in the continuing journalistic 'discussion'."¹³⁴

The Victorian popular press scene was crowded and competitive. Editors knew that dramatized print generally yielded more repeat customers and revenue than drier, fact-based reports. Press leaders' avaricious natures and the increased public demand for news resulted in a rapid-fire dispensing of information from a media with no time or patience for the truth. When the South African War commenced, editors wanted talented correspondents, who could get the scoop on combat activities before competing papers'

¹³³ Hampton, "The Press, Patriotism, and Public Discourse," 179.

¹³⁴ Hampton, "Understanding Media: Theories of the Press in Britain, 1850-1914," *Media, Culture & Society* 23, no. 2 (2001): 213.

reporters and provide exciting commentaries that would boost sales by playing off of the war's entertainment value. Accordingly, the journalist's duty was to report the war "vividly and acceptably" and to "expedite his copy" so that it would reach readers before others' dispatches, elevate his publication's reputation, and maximize profits. In the more blunt assessment of the *Mail*'s Wallace, battlefield correspondents were tasked with "retouch[ing] the spotty negatives of disasters and mak[ing] quite pretty pictures of them."¹³⁵

During the conflict, reporters faced repeated censorship in their efforts to make their voices heard. Multiple high-ranking British military officials, including Lord Herbert Kitchener and initial Commander-in-Chief of the Forces Lord Garnet Wolseley, treated war journalists with disdain and resented their presence on the battlefields.¹³⁶ But neither pro- nor anti-war correspondents could ignore the pressing need for imperial reform and army reorganization after their experiences in South Africa. Often, potential solutions clashed with traditional Victorian practices, such as tempered government spending and laissez-faire capitalism. Change would require a reassessment of values, policies, and strategies in multiple arenas.

By the beginning of South African military engagements, the domestic press, the British government, and public opinion were becoming entwined. Prominent politicians such as Chamberlain consulted correspondents both for governmental guidance and the popular promotion of their ideas. War journalists reveled in such opportunities, venturing

¹³⁵ Roger Stearn, "War Correspondents and Colonial War, c. 1870-1900," in *Popular Imperialism and the Military*, 144; *The London Daily Mail*, June 19, 1901.

¹³⁶ See McCracken, "British War Correspondents in the Field," 108-109. However, not all British military leaders treated correspondents in the same manner. McCracken asserts that later Commander-in-Chief of the Forces Lord Frederick Roberts often "pandered to" the journalists in his camp and "sweethearted" the press corps in efforts to enhance his reputation and influence censorship campaigns.

“boldly into the political fray” during the colonial conflict.¹³⁷ Such writers heeded the call and mobilized their newfound responsibilities to shape readers’ consciences and beliefs regarding British imperialism.

On many levels, the empire was struggling to sustain itself when imperial soldiers stumbled unprepared into South Africa. Correspondents found themselves uniquely poised to expose such failings. Their opinions were valued because they had the tools of Fleet Street and their well-established socio-political connections at their disposal.¹³⁸ During the conflict, war journalists utilized their myriad resources to emphasize and disseminate military concerns, such as inept leadership, physically compromised troops, and woefully substandard British artillery. But those reporters also used their dispatches to illuminate broader imperial anxieties to the domestic population. Their efforts afforded the print press a revered position in the framework of early twentieth-century mass media development.¹³⁹ This thesis assesses that advancement in the context of Edwardian era reform efforts.

THE NEWSPAPERS, THE CORRESPONDENTS, AND THEIR MOTIVATIONS

The London Times was the centerpiece of nineteenth-century British media.

Founded in 1785, the newspaper earned the respect of its traditionally elite readership for

¹³⁷ See Koss, *The Rise and Fall*, 2-8.

¹³⁸ According to Jock Macleod (regarding correspondents’ socio-political networks), the South African conflict amplified “the emotional energy of belonging to a radical [or even anti-government] group” and helped “to forg[e] friendships that impacted not just on issues of the war and imperialism, but [the development of] culture and politics” post-war. For further analysis, see Macleod, *Literature, Journalism, and the Vocabularies of Liberalism: Politics and Letters, 1886-1916* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), 108.

¹³⁹ See Vincent Kuitenbrouwer, *War of Words: Dutch Pro-Boer Propaganda and the South African War (1899-1902)* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), 16.

its accuracy and its innovative war coverage, particularly W.H. Russell's reports on the Crimean War. However, by 1890, shaky finances — mainly the result of increased competition from penny dailies — nearly spelled the paper's demise. New managing director/editor Charles Moberly Bell sought to rejuvenate the *Times*. George Buckle maintained his executive editor title, but Bell became the newspaper's face in the subsequent decade and particularly during the war. Bell boosted the number of overseas reporters and endeavored to publish exciting stories to rescue the *Times* from readers' complaints of dullness. Such efforts allowed the *Times* to remain Britain's preeminent newspaper, particularly when judged by Koss's criteria for a distinguished publication: "the gratitude it receive[s] from those whom it praise[s], the resentment it incur[s] from those whom it censure[s], and, above all...the number of lesser journals that duplicate...its contents."¹⁴⁰

Bell compromised accuracy during the South African War to boost sales. His personal imperialist perspective coalesced nicely with his economic endeavor. Born in Egypt and educated in English public schools, Bell returned to his native Alexandria as the Egyptian correspondent for the *Times* in 1875. His experiences abroad nurtured a passion for colonialism and belief in imperial superiority. After taking the helm of the *Times*, Bell hired esteemed journalist Amery as his superstar war correspondent, confident the reporter would provide coverage that would boost the *Times*' readership. Amery marveled at how Bell seemingly "radiated energy and vitality;" the journalist

¹⁴⁰ Donaldson, *Remembering the South African War*, 9.

declared in his memoirs that even his editor's limp "seemed to reflect [a] dynamic determination to get there as quickly as possible."¹⁴¹

Bell decreed that his paper would provide news "fearlessly without regard to either party or self-interest."¹⁴² But he still maintained personal pro-war beliefs, and he needed to regain lost readers and revenue to offset the penny papers' rising popularity. Using the newspaper as his rudder, Bell sought to steer public opinion according to his own political inclinations and rapacious aspirations. His print promotion of the South African conflict helped to safeguard the *Times* from further financial losses. He reasoned that erring on the side of dramatized journalism offered the potential to bring back lost readers by appealing to their Victorian imperial pride. Convincing Amery to toe the line would prove more challenging.

The *Times* justified its reputation for comprehensive wartime coverage by sending more than a dozen correspondents to South Africa. Besides Amery, its representatives included chief correspondent Lionel James and Richard Davis, the latter of whom endured the siege of Ladysmith and spent time with both the British and Boer armies.¹⁴³ Bell showed no lack of desire in his commitment to making the war his rebuilding campaign's centerpiece and refused to be outdone by the penny dailies. In his mind, the

¹⁴¹ Leo Amery, *My Political Life: Volume One: England Before the Storm, 1896-1929* (London: Hutchinson, 1953), 93.

¹⁴² C.F. Moberly Bell to P.E. Doble, May 25, 1904, London, *The Times* Record Office, Moberly Bell Papers.

¹⁴³ Beaumont provides an insightful overview of James's tenure as chief war reporter for the *Times* in her essay "The Making of the War Correspondent: Lionel James of the *Times*," in *Impact of the South African War*, eds. David Omissi and Andrew Thompson, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 124-137.

Times constituted a branch of the British political tree, a “perpetual committee of the legislature.”¹⁴⁴

Bell ensured his reporters’ presence at as many battles in South Africa as possible. He equipped them with notebooks and cameras and encouraged them to interact with British soldiers and officers. Military men sometimes used such impromptu interviews to surreptitiously inform Amery and his fellow *Times* correspondents about the persistent lack of supplies, administrative mismanagement, and rampant disease at the front. Some combatants even disclosed respect for the passionate Boer fighters and disillusionment with the British army’s embarrassing early war performance. However, most comments deemed “anti-empire” were excised from the formal record by press censors and failed to reach *Times*’ readers. Angus Hamilton, the paper’s more liberal-minded correspondent in Mafeking, found his dispatches repeatedly suppressed. But Amery, James, Davis, and other *Times* reporters recognized the fallacy of overlooking military weaknesses. Preaching jingoism served no beneficial purpose. They embraced their challenging, self-imposed tasks of advocating army reforms without appearing anti-Britain or straying too far from Bell’s propaganda venture.

At the war’s outset, *Times* editorials and correspondents’ dispatches often reflected Bell’s saccharine embellishments. Amery’s first articles romanticized the troops’ chivalry on the veldt. Mrs. Rochfort Maguire’s “hero-worshipping diary” was reprinted in the paper — and evaluated positively by Amery — as a worthy portrait of British diamond magnate and South African colonial politician Cecil Rhodes. Mrs. Maguire’s heartfelt yet misguided belief in Rhodes’ avowed benevolent desire to glorify

¹⁴⁴ George Boyce, “The Fourth Estate: The Reappraisal of a Concept,” in *Newspaper History from the Seventeenth Century to the Present Day*, eds. George Boyce, James Curran, and Pauline Wingate (London: Constable, 1978), 39.

the empire mirrored executive editor Buckle's personal admiration of the former Cape Colony Prime Minister. As a publication, the *Times* generally upheld its imperialist, pro-war leanings throughout the conflict. But Bell's individual reporters exploited their influential positions to draw public attention to the need for imperial improvements and government action. The *Times*' editors finally admitted that "[o]ur columns bear ample witness every day to the crying need for inquiry and discussion," which constituted unachievable goals if one unquestioningly printed political propaganda.¹⁴⁵

Amery, the *Times*' most famous correspondent in South Africa, typified the English war journalist. Born in India, the upper-middle class Amery was raised in England by a devoutly Protestant mother and enjoyed academic and athletic success during his tenure at Harrow. He then studied classics at Oxford's Balliol College, where he was bestowed with multiple honors for his language skills, gymnastics, and cross-country running. While in London in the 1890s, he belonged to a circle of young journalists known as the geopolitical imperialists, who expressed concerns pre-war regarding Britain's military capabilities and diplomatic position and were particularly preoccupied with the threat posed by Germany.¹⁴⁶ Amery's prolific language skills made him the ideal candidate for a *Times* foreign reporter, and he represented the newspaper from the battlefields during the South African conflict.

Amery observed the British army's frontline blunders firsthand. His coverage displayed no lack of imperial praise, and he complied with Bell's wishes to publish a pro-war *Times*. But Amery also carefully constructed his wartime articles to advocate for military improvements. He argued that disastrous early war failures stemmed not from

¹⁴⁵ *The London Times*, July 3, 1903.

¹⁴⁶ Marsh, *Joseph Chamberlain*, 524.

inborn imperial flaws but from fixable mistakes, such as the poor choices of a few incompetent men. For example, Amery repeatedly criticized the decisions of General Redvers Buller, the initial overall commander of British forces in South Africa. Amery complained that Buller's ineptitude had facilitated a string of fiascos, particularly the losses at Magersfontein and Stormberg during the humiliating "Black Week" of December 1899. Amery's repeated complaints about Buller's missteps contributed directly to the general's removal from command. Amery led a successful press campaign against Buller, a crusade that political leaders did not dissuade.¹⁴⁷ The reporter's critiques continued throughout the war. Amery bemoaned the general's "sheer lack of determination" among other alleged failings and conveniently provided a valuable scapegoat for the British government, a proxy selected by the press and "ripe for sacrifice to public opinion."¹⁴⁸ Wolseley encouraged the mobilization of that witch-hunt, declaring, "Our men and Regimental Officers have done splendidly. Our Generals so far have been our weak point."¹⁴⁹

War correspondents and politicians alike offered up Buller for public sacrifice as the face of military disaster in South Africa. To fan the flame further, the *Guardian* helped circulate the rumor that in 1901, army officials unsuccessfully tried to force Buller to revise the reports on his Spion Kop failure before they were published so that "a lie

¹⁴⁷ Geoffrey Powell, *Buller: A Scapegoat? A Life of General Sir Redvers Buller VC* (London: Leo Cooper, 1994), 203. Initially, British censors sought to hide Buller's apparent bungling of late 1899 South African War battles in order to prevent the public from losing faith in the government who endorsed Buller's leadership of British forces. However, after Amery's expose, Buller became a convenient scapegoat to shoulder the blame and distance the government from angry public accusations and frustrations.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 197.

¹⁴⁹ Qtd. in Stephen Miller, *Lord Methuen and the British Army: Failure and Redemption in South Africa* (London: Frank Cass, 1999), 165.

might be told for the advantage of the Government.”¹⁵⁰ Amery’s virulent attacks in the *Times* regarding the general’s mistakes at Colenso and Ladysmith drove an irate Buller to deliver an angry rebuttal at Westminster in late 1901 in which he complained, “The *Times* has attacked me. It has published a letter by ‘Reformer’ [Amery]. He may be a penny-a-liner, he may be the greatest man in the world.”¹⁵¹ Buller’s removal from overall command in early 1900 and Secretary of State for War John Brodrick’s demand for the general’s full resignation in October 1901 (in response to his caustic speech) showcase the ability of Amery and his fellow journalists to incite action in response to military bumbles.

Buller testified at multiple post-war hearings, seeking to clear his muddled name. At one inquiry, he told the commissioners, “I was in the position of a man who had never been consulted at all, and whose advice had virtually been rather curtly, and not very politely, refused.”¹⁵² His suggestions to concentrate British troops in safer positions closer to the African coast and deemphasize the frontier regions had fallen on deaf ears. During the conflict, Buller had emphasized the war’s non-traditional nature and thus the need for amended tactics, but to no avail. His assessment of the struggle as similar to the American War of Independence proved accurate and actually provided appetizing food for thought for war journalists when crafting their reform recommendations. Buller described a fight “against a civilized enemy” in “an uncivilized country” and understood

¹⁵⁰ *The Manchester Guardian*, December 16, 1901.

¹⁵¹ Qtd. in *The Liberal Magazine*, Vol. IX: Forming a Political Record for the Year 1901 (London: The Liberal Publication Department, 1902): 566.

¹⁵² *Report of His Majesty’s Commissioners appointed to Inquire into the Military Preparations and Other Matters connected with the War in South Africa, Volume I* (London: Wyman and Sons, 1903).

what many people did not — that victory would necessitate “a long and arduous struggle, requiring all of Britain’s resources.”¹⁵³

Amery’s actions regarding Buller underscore the press’s ability to influence army policy. Cloaking wartime failings in patriotic propaganda hurt the war effort and threatened the empire’s future military chances. As an anonymous British officer assessed post-war, “[T]he force of public opinion at home, directed into wrong channels, not infrequently exercises an unfortunate influence over the conduct of operations in the field.”¹⁵⁴ To fight back, Amery deployed the rhetoric of imperial pride and national duty in his publications while also mobilizing his established political connections and forging new ones. As Koss observes, many such allegiances “originated in the dark days of the Boer War, when the issues were clear and alignments fast.”¹⁵⁵ Amery’s overall methodology reflected the *Times*’ professed mission statement: “We are trying to get away from the abstract, to escape from the tyranny of phrases, to set aside stereotyped deductions from ‘principles’ which are dead and buried...to look at things as they are, and to fit our policy to the conditions in which we live.”¹⁵⁶ That maxim appears much more applicable to war correspondents than financially motivated press barons.

Amery and other *Times* journalists in South Africa understandably experienced conflicting emotions when penning their dispatches. They wanted to satisfy their editors’ commercial goals in order to maintain employment and encourage domestic support for their empire. Yet pro-war correspondents could not disregard the repeated early losses to

¹⁵³ Miller, *Lord Methuen and the British Army*, 78.

¹⁵⁴ A British Officer, “The Literature of the South African War, 1899-1902,” *The American Historical Review* 12, no. 2 (Jan. 1907): 302.

¹⁵⁵ Stephen Koss, *Fleet Street Radical: A.G. Gardiner and the Daily News* (London: Allen Lane, 1973), 24-25.

¹⁵⁶ *The London Times*, July 11, 1903.

the Boers, and the reporters' coverage allowed "the savagery of the fighting" to reach English readers.¹⁵⁷ Amery and his *Times* comrades walked a fine line between an external averred pledge to their bosses' propaganda pushes and an internal commitment to revealing the stark realities unearthed by their personal war experiences. They opposed the senseless dispensing of inaccurate, jingoistic discourse, but they did not seek to foster anti-war sentiments, contribute to wartime defeats, or appear seditious. In the tumultuous wartime political climate, "one person's patriot was another's traitor."¹⁵⁸ From Amery's perspective, the domestic population had a civic responsibility to stop blindly ascribing to government propaganda and start challenging imperially harmful decisions. With intense organizational reform, Amery and his fellow *Times* correspondents believed the army could overcome its problems and become a formidable opponent in future European conflicts.

Before the colonial struggle ended, Amery began detailing his battlefield experiences in his seminal seven-volume *Times History of the South African War*.¹⁵⁹ Amery declared that he wrote with confidence because he had experienced much of the conflict alongside the soldiers. He defined his ultimate mission in writing to be "secur[ing] the reform of [the] Army in preparation for coming dangers."¹⁶⁰ He claimed to strive for accuracy and create a relatively unbiased account by collecting as much information as possible from multiple sources before undertaking his own edits. Amery received assistance with his book from members of the vast English political networks to which he was connected. Amery corresponded frequently with High Commissioner and

¹⁵⁷ See Morgan, "The Boer War and the Media," 4.

¹⁵⁸ Cunningham, "The Language of Patriotism," 9.

¹⁵⁹ The other major early publication on the war was Sir Frederick Maurice and Maurice Grant's previously mentioned 1906 *History of the War in South Africa* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1906).

¹⁶⁰ Qtd. in Amery, *My Political Life*, 39.

Governor of the Cape Colony Lord Alfred Milner. The journalist welcomed additional advice from War Office officials; Unionist MPs; and multiple members of Commander-in-Chief of the Forces Lord Frederick Roberts's staff, particularly assistant military secretary Henry Wilson, who served as a Light Brigade General during the war. In his final draft, Amery examined the diverse ways in which the war had "transmuted the complacent arrogance and contempt of other nations begotten of long years of peace and prosperity to a truer consciousness both of our strength and of our defects" while awakening "an earnest desire to make those defects good."¹⁶¹ According to Maurice, Amery displayed tremendous fortitude in his willingness to publicly address the army's problems at a time when it was easier, and more fashionable, to cast blame indiscriminately on "our 'ignorant generals' [or] our 'stupid soldiers'."¹⁶²

Amery expanded his military reform efforts in the post-war years. In 1903, he published *The Problem of the Army* (1903), in which he contended that Britain needed a "Regular Army of high quality, highly trained and mobile, so that it could be dispatched to any threatened point."¹⁶³ He further pressed for the continued integration of colonial soldiers into the British forces, a modification that would tighten the bonds of unity among the empire's disparate parts and potentially establish the foundation for a federated empire. Amery's Edwardian financial assessment, *The Fundamental Fallacies of Free Trade*, reached readers in 1906. He continued to play a prominent role in politics, campaigning for tariff reform and joining the Round Table movement to support the

¹⁶¹ Leo Amery, *Times History of the War in South Africa, Volume I, 1899-1900* (London: Low Marsten, 1900), 11.

¹⁶² Maurice and Grant, *History of the War in South Africa*, 206.

¹⁶³ Amery, *My Political Life*, 39-40. Milner's "Kindergarten" was a group of British South African civil servants who supported the creation of a post-war Union of South Africa and the establishment of an imperial federation.

imperial federation campaign. As an honorary member of Milner's "Kindergarten," Amery discussed integrating the metropole, the dominions, and the colonies into a more uniform empire that could stand united on vital issues such as foreign affairs and capital investment.¹⁶⁴ He particularly valued his close relationships with Milner, the latter himself being a former journalist for the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and Chamberlain, who spearheaded the tariff crusade after the war. Chamberlain later returned Amery's loyalty by helping the correspondent obtain a seat in the House of Commons for Birmingham in 1911. Amery's South African War reporting and involvement in post-war policy development embodies the shifting the power dynamics between the government and the English press.

Times correspondent Perceval Landon, the grandson of an Anglican High Church clergyman, matured in a devoutly religious household. He studied art, law, and the classics at Oxford's Hertford College before opting to indulge his fascination with exotic travel by accepting the reporting position in South Africa. During the conflict, Landon befriended many British military men, including Roberts, and learned firsthand about the army's poor health, lack of supplies, and often incompetent leadership. As the war progressed, Landon's initial exaggerated tales of heroism transitioned into qualified critiques of military failures. Bell censored Landon's more blatant complaints, but the journalist frequently couched his concerns in pro-imperialist language.

Landon and Amery promoted reform in various manifestations, but both correspondents harbored conservative political ideologies. The *Times*' Mafeking correspondent Hamilton possessed liberal leanings and attempted to provide English

¹⁶⁴ For additional information, see Julian Amery, "Introduction," in *The Leo Amery Diaries, Volume I: 1869-1929*, eds. John Barnes and David Nicholson (London: Hutchinson, 1980).

readers with a balanced depiction of the town's besiegement by Boer forces. For example, Hamilton's honest assessments that "Mafeking was not really under [total] siege" and that "the Boers were lethargic...in their prosecution of the attack" were heavily edited.¹⁶⁵ Bell also objected to Hamilton's reports because the editor deemed them boring and counterproductive to sales. Reluctantly, Hamilton occasionally embellished the degree of danger to appease Bell's demands for exciting print. On October 25, 1899, the journalist described an ostensibly harrowing existence in the trenches, where he and the British soldiers lived "with our rifles in our hands...existing upon food of the roughest kind...[and] peering over sandbags as [Boer] shells burst overhead."¹⁶⁶ However, he attempted to qualify such statements with assurances that the town was in little actual peril and subtle suggestions that the British army consider directing its troops elsewhere.

The *Times* also employed Flora Shaw, the first woman to hold professional status for the newspaper and its first and only Colonial Editor.¹⁶⁷ Shaw trained at the *Pall Mall Gazette* in the 1880s under the tutelage of liberal pro-Boer editor W.T. Stead before being hired by the *Times* and reporting on South Africa throughout the 1890s. Shaw faced rebuke for her alleged complicity in the planning of the failed 1895 Jameson Raid, but her journalistic integrity never wavered. Personally, she remained relatively silent on the issue of imperial reform. Her articles reflected her adulation for Cecil Rhodes, whose

¹⁶⁵ Qtd. in Raymond Sibbald, *The War Correspondents: The Boer War* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1993), 130.

¹⁶⁶ *The London Times*, October 25, 1899.

¹⁶⁷ For additional reading, see Donal Lowry, "Introduction: Not Just a Teatime War," in *The South African War Reappraised*, 5-6.

goal of “nothing less than the governance of the world by the British race” she highlighted in her writing.¹⁶⁸

The *London Daily Mail* was the brainchild of Alfred Harmsworth, more famous as Lord Northcliffe. Eager to reach a broad audience, Northcliffe helped pioneer the popular press in Britain with the *Mail*’s debut in May 1896. He priced his publication at a halfpenny rather than the penny cost of London’s other tabloid dailies. He hoped to expand the British print media’s appeal beyond “the educated and the fastidious” and reconnect the newspaper world with English commercial life.¹⁶⁹ His periodical’s motto was “Explain, Simplify, Clarify.” Yet he often bragged that “we [press leaders] can cause the whole country to think with us overnight whenever we say the word.”¹⁷⁰ Northcliffe sought to craft the *Mail* into a journalistic representation of British imperial prowess.¹⁷¹ But his underlying goal in dispensing propaganda was to exploit the war’s financial potential. During the conflict, he subverted censorship campaigns and tried to expose War Office secrets in the name of political transparency and profit. Northcliffe’s empathy for the troops, employment of quality journalists, and willingness to personally acknowledge military and political concerns earned him a respectable post-war

¹⁶⁸ Qtd. in Dorothy O. Helly and Helen Callaway, “Journalism as Active Politics: Flora Shaw, *The Times* and South Africa,” in *The South African War Reappraised*, 62-63. Shaw continued to support her idol Rhodes even in the face of “more general condemnation” by most war correspondents and “after evidence that he had planned an uprising in Johannesburg.”

¹⁶⁹ Sydney Brooks, “Lord Northcliffe and the War,” *The North American Review* 202, Vol. 717 (August 1915): 185.

¹⁷⁰ Ralph Blumenfeld, *The Press in My Time* (London: Rich & Cowan, 1933), 49.

¹⁷¹ Chandrika Kaul further probes Northcliffe’s motives in establishing the *Mail* in her article “Popular Press and Empire: Northcliffe, India and the *Daily Mail*, 1896-1922,” in *Northcliffe’s Legacy: Aspects of the British Popular Press, 1896-1996*, eds. Peter Catterall, Colin Seymour-Ure, and Adrian Smith (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 2000).

reputation, as he demonstrated that he — and the *Daily Mail* — could be responsible in the face of British suffering.¹⁷²

Northcliffe utilized his role as press baron to manipulate the intensifying relationship between the public and the media.¹⁷³ Early in the war, the halfpenny paper brought print news and imagery into closer contact with lower-middle and working-class audiences. Northcliffe's dramatized coverage also yielded high profits. Despite heightened competition from other imperialist periodicals such as the *Daily Express* (whose founder Arthur Pearson declared, "Our policy is patriotic; our policy is the British Empire"), more than one million issues of the *Mail* reached the hands of London readers during the war, a substantial circulation for such a young paper.¹⁷⁴ Northcliffe recognized that the South African War offered fertile ground for rumor and exaggerations, and he capitalized on that opportunity. As his *Mail* colleague Jones attested, "[W]ar not only creates a supply of news but a demand for it...a paper has only to be able to put on its placard 'A Great Battle' for its sales to mount up."¹⁷⁵

Many of the *Mail's* South African correspondents were or would become distinguished British writers and reporters. Northcliffe's war journalists included esteemed novelist George Steevens, who died in besieged Ladysmith from enteric fever; London newspaper veteran Charlie Hands; and Lady Sarah Wilson, the daughter of the Seventh Duke of Marlborough John Spencer Churchill, Winston Churchill's aunt, and the paper's first female correspondent. Ralph Hellawell, who was captured at Mafeking,

¹⁷² See Richard Bourne, *Lords of Fleet Street: The Harmsworth Dynasty* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990), Chapter 1.

¹⁷³ Ibid. See also Colin Seymour-Ure, "Northcliffe's Legacy," in *Northcliffe's Legacy: Aspects of the British Popular Press, 1896-1996*, 22.

¹⁷⁴ Qtd. in Semmel, *Imperialism and Social Reform*, 47; Seymour-Ure, "Northcliffe's Legacy," 10.

¹⁷⁵ Qtd. in Wilkinson, *Depictions and Images of War*, 11. See David Welch, "Winning Hearts and Minds: The Changing Context of Reportage and Propaganda, 1900-2003," in *War and the Media: Reportage and Propaganda, 1900-2003*, eds. Mark Connelly and David Welch (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), x.

received repeated praise from his editors for “getting his dispatches through when others failed.”¹⁷⁶ Famed American reporter Julian Ralph offered a foreign perspective as a part-time contributor. Future crime novelist Wallace, unlike his privileged counterparts, rose from impoverished beginnings to pursue imperial service, first as a soldier and then as a chief war correspondent for the *Mail* by 1900. His knack for dodging censorship bullets and transmitting accurate war news, often through surreptitious methods and back channels, made him somewhat of a press hero.

The *Manchester Guardian*, which began circulation in 1821, provided the main English liberal opposition to the conservative penny papers during the South African War. Editor C.P. Scott, who headed the *Guardian* for fifty-seven years, steered the publication toward the radical political left in the late 1880s after the Liberal Party split. By 1900, the paper had become a nationally renowned liberal paper known for its deep suspicions of British imperial policies.¹⁷⁷ Scott consistently endeavored to cultivate a wider readership and focused on drawing an audience that included working-class Britons, socialists, former Gladstonian Liberals, and women.

During the war, while also serving as a Liberal backbencher for Leigh, Scott made the *Guardian* the most prolific anti-war, pro-Boer publication in England. He mainly objected to the war’s financial prioritization over domestic social concerns, such as women’s suffrage and urban unemployment, but he also protested the conflict’s alleged immorality. Scott mobilized his political connections, including a close friendship

¹⁷⁶ *The London Daily Mail*, November 16, 1899.

¹⁷⁷ J.L. Hammond, *C.P. Scott of the Manchester Guardian* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1934), 81; Simon Potter, “‘The Dark Stream of Shameless Falsehood’? The British Press and News Gathering Strategies During the Boer War,” in *Recording the South African War: Journalism and Official History, 1899-1914*, 20.

with Lloyd George, to argue that “welfare reform, not overseas glory, should be [England’s] main priority” and “only with the rapid end of the war and total change of [imperial] policy” could such change be realized.¹⁷⁸ He feared that the Anglo-Boer conflict could undermine British liberalism because in his mind, the struggle “seemed to create an environment in which willingness to acquiesce in a government line became a test of one’s loyalty to country.”¹⁷⁹

Scott led a push to redefine patriotism. Pro-war newspapers declared themselves to be unwaveringly loyal to empire. However, radicals contended that such publications’ “partial, passionate and brutal tone[s]” wreaked havoc with England’s good name and often hurt more than helped the war effort.¹⁸⁰ Paul Ward defines radical patriotism as “the political uses to which love of country was put by those who did not simply accept government/state as being synonymous with the nation.”¹⁸¹ For Scott, that meant speaking out against the government’s behavior when he deemed it unbecoming of the empire. Like-minded writers and organizations concurred. *Morning Leader* correspondent and future Liberal MP J.M. Robertson contended that “[t]he men who prate most of patriotism and ‘the Empire’ ...are as a rule conspicuous for their indifference to the well-being of the mass of their fellow-country-men” and for “the virulence of their ill-feeling toward those of another way of thinking in politics.”¹⁸² The liberal National Reform Union (NRU) argued during the war that “the Imperialism [and]...patriotism... which is now made the badge of a party and the war-cry of a section

¹⁷⁸ Kenneth Morgan, “Lloyd George, Keir Hardie and the Importance of the ‘Pro Boers’,” *South African Historical Journal* 41, no. 1 (1999): 297.

¹⁷⁹ Hampton, “The Press, Patriotism, and Public Discussion,” 189.

¹⁸⁰ Playne, *The Pre-War Mind in Britain*, 116.

¹⁸¹ Ward, *Red Flag and Union Jack*, 4.

¹⁸² J. M. Robertson, *Patriotism and Empire* (London: Grant Richards, 1899), 36. In the early 1890s, Robertson edited the *National Reformer*, a radical atheist publication, before traveling to South Africa to report for the anti-war *Leader* on the British use of martial law.

is synonymous with ascendancy and aggrandizement and the curtailment of liberty at home and abroad.”¹⁸³

Scott’s paper lashed out at the overtly jingoistic war coverage saturating the popular press. In March 1900, radical Liberal MP James Bryce told the *Guardian* that the wartime images disseminated by most conservative English newspapers had often been “so much coloured by prejudice, or passion, or party interest as to convey very little idea of the real facts,” and “[s]eldom has any nation been worse served by the bulk of its daily and weekly press than we have been all through this crisis.”¹⁸⁴ The pro-Boers viewed themselves as well-intentioned “trouble-makers” (in the words of A.J.P. Taylor) and the empire’s true advocates.

Left-leaning liberal journalists such as Hobson, L.T. Hobhouse, and Charles Montague saw the South African War as an opportunity to discredit the “new” imperialism. The radical reformist definition described patriots as “opponent[s] of corruption” and “defender[s] of the ‘ancient constitution’;” again, it was not uncommon for opposing factions to validate their platforms via patriotic rhetoric.¹⁸⁵ Robertson declared that “the maxim ‘our country right or wrong’ is but the wording of a sentiment” which is acted upon “without thinking that any formula is necessary,” and when “our polity turns largely on the ideals or principles which we hold in common with burglars and bullies, our society will continue to exhibit plain phases of the predatory and brutish stages of civilization.”¹⁸⁶ By mobilizing such language to agitate for reforms, radical

¹⁸³ *The Manchester Guardian*, March 11, 1902.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, March 17, 1900. Bryce, a hardcore radical, wrote *Impressions of South Africa* after a visit to the colonies just prior to the war’s commencement. His tome was popular among liberal readers.

¹⁸⁵ David Eastwood, “Robert Southey and the Meanings of Patriotism,” *Journal of British Studies* 31, no. 3 (July 1992): 266-267.

¹⁸⁶ Robertson, *Patriotism and Empire*, 37.

newspapermen diversified the meaning of imperial “duty” to fit their political, economic, and social agendas. As Koss contends, “To impugn the patriotism of the dissidents — men the caliber of [John] Morley, Scott, Lloyd George” would be “as reprehensible as to assert that Milner and Chamberlain were [actually] perpetrating a capitalist plot on behalf of Rhodes.”¹⁸⁷

Scott hungrily sunk his teeth into the South African War, seeking to both satiate his financial appetite and mobilize his radical liberal publication to counter-balance conservative commentaries. Within the *Guardian*’s pages, his correspondents contested and protested what they saw as an attempted jingoistic coup d’état of public opinion by pro-war papers. Scott envisioned a nation of critical and active news consumers, who resisted the temptation of propaganda before it became a dangerous addiction. He endeavored to create an inquisitive readership that would not easily be swayed by government manipulation.

The *Guardian*’s unpopular take on the South African War necessitated that both Scott’s home and the paper’s offices come under police protection. Pro-war periodicals touted Scott’s publication as traitorous and threatening. For the editor, the *Guardian* was “the realistic, truth-telling organ in an era of mendacity and self-delusion” and represented a counterweight to London’s “capitalist-controlled newspapers.”¹⁸⁸ Scott remained steadfast in the face of criticism and censorship of his newspaper. He urged his readers to publicly demonstrate the Victorian values that he felt made Britain an exemplary empire. In the *Guardian*, he asserted that “[o]ur combatant forces will not discredit us, and we only hope that as much may be hoped of our non-combatants.at

¹⁸⁷ Koss, *The Rise and Fall*, 395.

¹⁸⁸ Krebs, *Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire*, 25; Hampton, “The Press, Patriotism, and Public Discussion,” 192.

home... That is the chief service that patriotism requires of public writers and speakers just now.”¹⁸⁹ Scott and his fellow pro-Boers provided a spark that lit the fire under disheartened radicals and helped to birth the New Liberalism movement that would take off after the Party returned to power in 1906.

Scott sent multiple correspondents to South Africa, including Hobson and Mafeking reporter Filson Young; as *Guardian* proprietor John Taylor queried, “from the Cape, where so much hangs in the balance, who is going to tell the truth if we do not?”¹⁹⁰ Scott’s prize reporter Hobson enjoyed a privileged upbringing, like many of his pro-war counterparts. Educated in classics and literature at Derby and Oxford’s Lincoln College, the Anglican-raised Hobson became obsessed with England’s urban poverty and economic inequality. His theory of under-consumption and lengthy critical analyses of both capitalism and imperialism frequently relegated him an outcast among his peers. Hobson eagerly agreed to cover the war for the liberal *Guardian* and made it his objective to tell the Boers’ story, as he felt the British side had been “grossly and often mendaciously overstated to the British public.”¹⁹¹ He sought to publicize his personal view of an unjust conflict fomented by greedy British mining magnates seeking to elevate their wealth at the expense of local labor. He further judged “capitalist aggressors” guilty of diverting essential focus away from pressing domestic socio-economic issues.

Hobson cast the Boers as victims of “Jewish capitalism” because many of the British *Uitlanders*, whose lack of legal rights in the Republics ostensibly started the conflict, were Jews. Hobson also castigated imperialist media in general, pronouncing, “That a corrupt and reptile press exists, not only on the Continent, but in Great Britain

¹⁸⁹ *The Manchester Guardian*, October 16, 1899.

¹⁹⁰ Potter, “The Dark Stream of Shameless Falsehood,” 20.

¹⁹¹ *The Manchester Guardian*, March 17, 1900.

and its colonies,” in which “false and biased matter is inserted by means of proprietary compulsion or outside bribery, is indisputable.”¹⁹² In his 1901 *The Psychology of Jingoism*, he defined that phenomenon as an example of “inverted patriotism...whereby the love of one’s own nation is transformed into the hatred of another nation.”¹⁹³ Hobson further ranted that the pro-war English press had used deception and manipulation to become “the chief source of public opinion,” and that a “conjunction of the forces of the press, the platform, and the pulpit” had both corrupted the British public mindset and propagated policies that ran counterintuitive to the interests of the empire.¹⁹⁴ He believed the South African War to be a convenient and timely channel through which to redirect the flow of imperial policy. The reporter’s extreme frankness and radical ideas made him an ideal mouthpiece for Scott’s pro-Boer publication. Hobson later published *War in South Africa* (1900) and *Imperialism: A Study* (1902), the latter of which argued that economic motivations — mainly the search for new markets and overseas investment opportunities — drove unchecked expansion.

Hobson himself was not an imperial enemy. His primary objections concerned the “new” imperialism, which, from Hobson’s radical perspective, was far from “a noble crusade taking up the white man’s burden.”¹⁹⁵ He cast the current system as inimical to social reform and contended, like multiple left-leaning liberal thinkers, that excessive imperial pursuits “drained the public purse” of valuable funds that could have been earmarked for domestic improvements.¹⁹⁶ Hobson even hypothesized that the creation of

¹⁹² J.A. Hobson, *The Psychology of Jingoism* (London: G. Richards, 1901), 114.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁹⁴ Taylor, “Patriotism, History and the Left,” 975; Hobson, *The Psychology of Jingoism*, 138.

¹⁹⁵ Qtd. in Morgan, “Lloyd George, Keir Hardie and the Importance of the ‘Pro Boers’,” 296-297.

¹⁹⁶ J.A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (New York: James Pott & Company, 1902), 146; Porter, *Critics of Empire: British Radical Attitudes*, 223.

a pre-war imperial federation system might have halted the conflict's commencement by giving the dominions the opportunity to cast their votes against it.

Hobson received praise in radical circles for his clear, blunt, and generally accurate war reports. Bryce lauded the journalist for repeatedly "get[ting] to the bottom of the many controverted questions to present an honest view of the facts," actions viewed by liberals as a breath of fresh air amidst the congestion of propaganda. The *Guardian* emphasized Bryce's subsequent testimony that "in the points where I can test [Hobson's] statements by the evidence of thoroughly well informed and firsthand witnesses I have found him both fair and accurate."¹⁹⁷

As the war concluded, Scott's paper reprinted the entirety of welfare advocate Emily Hobhouse's reports on the Boer concentration camps. Hobhouse, an Anglican preacher's daughter and the sister of radical *Guardian* journalist and social liberalism advocate L.T., devoted her life to improving conditions for English women and the poor prior to her tenure in South Africa. Her graphic depictions of unsanitary, undersupplied camps coupled with her membership in the anti-war South African Conciliation Committee made her an easy target for the pro-war press and political scorn. Nonetheless, Hobhouse's writings forced the government to investigate her claims and address increasing public concern with the army's wartime conduct, a subject under much scrutiny in the conflict's immediate aftermath. Following the struggle, Hobhouse initiated aid campaigns to assist needy Boer women with the goals of helping the reconciliation of South Africa's two white races and attacking gender inequality at home.

¹⁹⁷ *The Manchester Guardian*, March 17, 1900.

L.T. Hobhouse and Montague were not battlefield correspondents for the *Guardian*, but they both penned a significant number of articles denouncing the Boer struggle for the paper. Montague eventually became assistant editor and helped to direct the periodical when Scott was away in the House of Commons. Hobhouse supported his sister's activism and joined her in condemning the concentration camps. He was also instrumental in the development of his Party's New Liberalism platform, which emphasized the need for government intervention and collective action in order to adequately address social problems and allow rational individuals to reach their full potential. He argued in his 1911 tome *Liberalism* that the ideology in its late nineteenth century form had "the air of a creed that [was] becoming fossilized."¹⁹⁸ From the perspective of Hobhouse and other like-minded thinkers such as Lloyd George, a revitalized "interventionist" state could provide the tools necessary to secure individual liberties by attacking poverty, unemployment, and other societal ills that had arisen from unchecked capitalism. Once the Liberals reunited and the Party regained power in 1906, they used Hobhouse's "social liberalism" ideas to initiate reforms that would lay the foundation for the English welfare state.

The *Times*, the *Mail*, and the *Guardian* are the main newspapers evaluated in this thesis. However, a myriad of other publications and news organizations from across the British Isles and the colonies sent politically diverse correspondents to cover the South African War. The London-based Reuters news agency sent dozens of representatives, whose reports were frequently reprinted in English dailies. Radical, well-respected journalist and social advocate Henry Nevinson endured the siege of Ladysmith while

¹⁹⁸ L.T. Hobhouse, *Liberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 110.

employed by the left-leaning *Daily Chronicle*; he would later publish his diary of the siege. Nevinston, who had joined the Social Democratic Foundation in 1889, had publicly protested the British government's emphasis on *Uitlander* enfranchisement while many domestic British men and all women still lacked the vote. His dispatches regarding Boer females' treatment in the internment camps shocked his readers and helped to enhance domestic cries for women's rights and even gender equality post-war. Nevinston's additional concern with the civil rights of black African peoples was exceptionally unusual for the time. The liberal *Westminster Gazette*, under the leadership of young editor J.A. Spender, sent J. Adams and H.C. Shelley to the battlefield. Despite lacking a large popular readership, Spender's paper was respected for providing a more balanced perspective on the South African conflict, and his personal commitment to Liberal Party unity earned him the regard and friendship of both Campbell-Bannerman and Rosebery.

Morning Leader special correspondent E.W. Smith, already a prolific figure in British journalism, interviewed weary soldiers at Ladysmith and later provided graphic coverage of the farmhouse burning campaign. Young aristocrat and future Prime Minister Winston Churchill rose to prominence with his coverage for the Unionist *Morning Post*. After escaping capture by Boer forces, Churchill joined the South African Light Horse. He continued to record his personal war observations and published both *London to Ladysmith via Pretoria* and *Ian Hamilton's March* in 1900. A proud patriot, Churchill nonetheless recognized that excessive propaganda and military arrogance were dangerously downplaying Boer strength and causing the British army to let down its guard with dire consequences. After the Boers' multiple early victories, Churchill warned

domestic readers that “it would be foolish to laugh at any of [the enemy’s] ambitions.”¹⁹⁹

In 1904, Churchill temporarily shed his Conservative skin out of frustration with Chamberlain’s tariff campaign and joined the Liberals, becoming President of the Board of Trade under Asquith’s government and assisting in the formulation of social legislation such as the National Insurance Act.

By June 1900, over sixty English war correspondents had traveled to South Africa; by the end of the war, that number would well exceed one hundred.²⁰⁰ Throughout the conflict, the domestic press fostered a cult of the battlefield journalist. He (or she) was personified as an intrepid protagonist in the harrowing narrative of warfare and venerated for risking life and limb to get the scoop from the front. While on the job, reporters witnessed the unvarnished status of their army and unearthed undeniable maladies plaguing their military. For many of them, as well as for many of their counterparts in arms, South Africa came to constitute a microcosm of everything the journalists hated about the metropole. As a group, their wartime writings generally reflected “no periods of editorial silence, no failure to pursue the issue[s] fully...no hesitancy to probe into detail or into matters of history or into sophisticated levels of argument,” and significantly, “no tendency to elevate concerns of circulation over those of political commentary.”²⁰¹ They seized the opportunity to amplify the volume of reform concerns to a decibel that the British government and domestic population could not tune out.

¹⁹⁹ Winston Churchill, *London to Ladysmith via Pretoria* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1962), 18.

²⁰⁰ It is impossible to obtain an accurate total number of English (not to mention non-English) South African war correspondents; historians even remain divided over what constituted a “war reporter,” as many unlicensed journalists and “stringers” provided dispatches for publication during the conflict. See Badsey, “War Correspondents in the Boer War,” in *The Boer War: Direction, Experience and Image*, ed. John Gooch (London: Frank Cass, 2000), 187-202.

²⁰¹ Startt, *Journalists for Empire*, 58.

While on the battlefield, correspondents crossed paths with other professional writers, including prominent English authors who had put down their pens to fight for the empire. Imperialist poet and novelist Rudyard Kipling wound his way from the Cape to Bloemfontein, interviewing British military men and soliciting insights from newspaper correspondent colleagues such as Landon and H.A. Gwynne. Disillusioned with initial Boer successes and British military mismanagement, Kipling hoped that his army's embarrassing losses would provide "no end of a lesson for the British Empire and its vaunted reputation."²⁰² Throughout the war, the "White Man's Burden" author continued to critique what he defined as the misplaced priorities of domestic denizens, particularly the landed gentry. In his January 1902 poem "The Islanders," Kipling castigated elite Britons' ostensible lack of commitment to the war effort, proclaiming, "So? And ye train your horses and the dogs ye feed and prize? How are the beasts more worthy than the souls, your sacrifice?"²⁰³ Kipling also argued for national compulsory military service and urban poor assistance. His texts, as pieces of easily accessible popular literature, were widely consumed by diverse readerships.

Sherlock Holmes creator Sir Arthur Conan Doyle experienced much of the South African War inside the walls of a British field hospital, from which he lamented the poor sanitation and high death rate. His lengthy tome *The Great Boer War* (1900) and pamphlet "The Cause and Conduct of the War," the latter of which sold more than 300,000 copies in Britain alone, both included intense criticisms of British behavior during the conflict. Doyle's pervasive literary popularity afforded him a valuable chance

²⁰² Qtd. in Morgan, "The Boer War and the Media," 3.

²⁰³ Qtd. in *The London Times*, January 4, 1902.

to impart his military reform recommendations, including the “introduc[tion] [of] heavier artillery, rifles rather than swords for the cavalry, and a more democratic army backed by a national militia based on initial training in rifle clubs.”²⁰⁴ Doyle’s fellow crime author Erskine Childers served as a member of the City Imperial Volunteers but became disillusioned by his experiences in South Africa and transformed from an ardent imperialist to a radical Liberal and supporter of Irish home rule.

Increasingly media-literate British colonial politicians such as Milner also initiated connections with correspondents. The High Commissioner recognized the English press’s escalating power over imperial politics and public thought, and he tried to clarify confusions and inaccuracies by providing his own testimonies directly to war journalists.²⁰⁵ Milner counted a number of Fleet Street’s finest among his close friends, including Buckle and Amery. The latter newspaperman and Milner exchanged frequent correspondence both during the South African War and in the years that followed. In the heat of the conflict, Amery became a conduit through which Milner could communicate his observations and opinions.

In 1901, *Sell’s Dictionary of the World’s Press* boldly asserted, “Our Parliamentary institutions seem to...be in the process of weakening,” and determined that the main force “modif[ying] their influence and check[ing] their authority has been the Press, which is now...rising...to the position of the First, not the Fourth, of the Realm’s Estates.”²⁰⁶ By the end of the South African conflict, correspondents had secured political and public acknowledgement of their newfound empowerment. Northcliffe praised his

²⁰⁴ Beckett, *The Victorians at War*, 85.

²⁰⁵ For additional reading, see Stephen Badsey, “The Boer War as a Media War,” in *The Boer War: Army, Nation and Empire*, eds. Peter Dennis and Jeffrey Grey (Canberra: Army History Unit, 2000), 3-4.

²⁰⁶ Qtd. in Starrt, *Journalists for Empire*, 13.

Mail journalists and predicted that the newspaper as a media product was poised to become “one of the future forms of government.”²⁰⁷ War reporters dealt with battlefield dangers; repeated censorship; constant pressure to sensationalize print for their employers’ financial gain; and internal struggles between appearing unpatriotic and their commitment to journalistic accuracy. Startt’s words accurately sum up the legacy of such writers:

Neither governmental pressure nor commercial influence interfered [to a high degree] with the shaping or presenting of their opinions...The record of their work on the Empire is proof of the fact that [much of] their writing was dignified, truthful...informed...[and] embodied the will of men who wrote with the courage of their beliefs and who were willing to be relentless in their pursuit of cause when necessary.²⁰⁸

As correspondents advocated for imperial amendment in their South African commentaries, they set the stage for a plethora of attempted military, economic, and social reforms in Edwardian Britain.

²⁰⁷ Piers Brendon, *The Life and Death of the Press Barons* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1982), 121.

²⁰⁸ Startt, *Journalists for Empire*, 58, 212.

2. THE SIEGE OF MAFEKING, ARMY BLUNDERS, AND POST-WAR MILITARY REFORM

EARLY MISTAKES

The South African War began on October 11, 1899, when the Boer Republics declared war on Britain after the British government refused to remove its troops from the Transvaal border per SAR President Paul Kruger's ultimatum. Conservative politicians laughed at what they viewed to be brazen behavior by a band of upstart farmers. The English press responded to Kruger's actions with contempt and disbelief, but not with overt concern. The *Times* dismissed the "uprising" as an "extravagant farce."²⁰⁹ The *Mail* and the *Daily Telegraph* both marveled at Kruger's apparent audacity in poking the bear and assured their readerships that the British army would have no trouble quickly subduing Boer forces.

However, not all correspondents were so convinced. Prior to the outbreak of hostilities, Amery had expressed significant worries about his nation's military weakness. He shared his misgivings with Milner immediately after being dispensed to South Africa as a *Times* correspondent in August. In his memoirs, Amery recalled the unease he felt upon realizing "not only the great numerical preponderance of the forces which the Boers could put in the field at the outset, but their even greater superiority in the art of war" under local conditions.²¹⁰ After conversing with Boer political leaders, Amery wondered "whether it was not my duty to tell the *Times* that we were in the wrong and deliberately

²⁰⁹ *The London Times*, October 11, 1899.

²¹⁰ Amery, *My Political Life*, 100.

forcing a war for which there was no sufficient excuse.”²¹¹ He labeled the army “nothing more nor less than a gigantic Dotheboys Hall” and “largely a sham” owing to its “deadening peacetime routine, make-believe maneuvers, and the absence of any scientific study and planning for war.”²¹² Such pre-war anxieties flowed from Amery’s pen to the lips of a few concerned politicians. In Parliament, Lloyd George warned, “The way these poor hunted burghers have been driven to self-defence to forestall us, aggravates our crime. There is something diabolical in its malignancy.”²¹³ Meanwhile, Conservatives sought alliances with the imperialist press to make the impending war more palatable when negotiations stalled in September. When the first shots were fired, English readers possessed little trepidation regarding military inadequacies. However, concerned journalists sought to prevent jingoism from monopolizing domestic wartime mindsets. Martial law would not be imposed in the Cape Colony until January 1902, and there were no formal censorship regulations in place for war correspondents, making it easier for them to transmit their unedited concerns to domestic readers.²¹⁴

Guardian reporters accused the government of secretly wanting a war to take complete control over the Boers’ gold mines. Hobson contended that by undermining negotiation efforts, British leaders could foment an armed conflict and then achieve their endgame following battlefield victory. On October 20, just days after the conflict’s onset, the *Guardian* claimed:

That the war, whatever its issue, is indeed a disaster Mr. Chamberlain admits

²¹¹ Ibid., 104.

²¹² Qtd. in Searle, *A New England?*, 301; Qtd. in Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army, 1868-1902*, 316.

²¹³ Qtd. in Morgan, “Lloyd George, Keir Hardie and the Importance of the ‘Pro-Boers’,” 292.

²¹⁴ McCracken, “British War Correspondents in the Field,” 105-106. Natal had been under martial law since the start of the war, and General Buller had been given a “free hand to deal with the press [there] as he pleased.” However, he and Roberts struggled to establish uniform regulations and often could not agree on what information should be passed along.

when he declares that he has [ostensibly] striven with all his power to avert it...[We] have looked on at the diplomacy of the last months [and] the means taken to preserve peace have seemed so perfectly adapted to ensure war that those who know how often wars have been carefully sought after, like the Franco-German war of thirty years ago, by Ministers who seriously believed that a war would at the moment do their country more good than peace have been at a loss to know whether Mr. Chamberlain was pursuing the policy of a Bismarck or of a Gladstone...whether he was feinting for a good first grip in a desired fight or striving to gain certain legitimate ends in peace.²¹⁵

Scott and his fellow radicals accused Conservative politicians of paying lip service to mediation attempts while manipulating the situation to ensure a fight in which they initially felt confident of success. The *Guardian* further informed its readership that “three times over in the course of negotiations a peaceful settlement had been within the reach of any competent and zealous diplomacy bent on reaching it,” and that each of those times, “Mr. Chamberlain had let the chance pass.”²¹⁶ In such commentaries, Hobson accused the government of aggravating a diffusible situation and deliberately inhibiting diplomatic solutions.

The British military forces dispatched to South Africa lacked the capacity to deliver a rapid knockout punch to their Boer opponents. The late Victorian army was disorganized, unprepared, underfunded, and often lacking in discipline. Before the conflict’s commencement, *Times* correspondent Hamilton alerted readers that “the lack of reliable artillery is scandalous” and unless “guns of a caliber which is in a true proportion to the importance of the positions which they will command arrive upon the scene,” then “uncertain will be the results of any actual contact between our forces in their present deplorable condition and those of the African Republics with whom we are so soon to be

²¹⁵ *The Manchester Guardian*, October 20, 1899.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

at war.”²¹⁷ Amery and other *Times* correspondents met with Wolseley and his advisors to discuss those concerns. Such journalists prophesized that the combat could escalate into “the most serious war England has ever had, when the size of our Army to be engaged and the distance of the seat of war from England are taken into consideration” and feared that the government was “flying blind” in regard to military capabilities.²¹⁸ Chamberlain admitted to Amery on the eve of war that “our troops, unlike the Boers, cannot mobilise with a piece of biltong and a belt of ammunition, but require...enormous quantities of transport and impediment.”²¹⁹

Yet the War Office continued to perpetuate the fallacy that its troops could easily defeat the Boers. The British government heaped disproportionate praise upon the departing soldiers and cultivated propaganda campaigns to reflect its ostensible but unfounded confidence in a rapid victory. Correspondent Wilson, pressured into early war propagandizing, told *Mail* readers that the men sailing south from England constituted “the strongest, the best appointed, and, it was hoped, the best led force that had ever left our shores.”²²⁰ Buller, tasked with the command of 47,000 men, publicly bragged that his army corps was in much better shape than the “feeble” forces that fought the Crimean War forty-five years earlier. However, such distortions only served to mask the true face of his army at the start of the South African struggle.

When a swift victory did not occur — and worse, the British suffered humiliating early losses — Queen Victoria and her court officials demanded answers and accountability. In January 1900, Liberal MP Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice responded to his

²¹⁷ J. Angus Hamilton, *The Siege of Mafeking* (London: Methuen, 1900), 40.

²¹⁸ Qtd. in Halik Kochanski, “Wolseley and the South African War,” in *The Boer War: Direction, Experience and Image*, 59-60.

²¹⁹ Qtd. in Marsh, *Joseph Chamberlain*, 472.

²²⁰ *The London Daily Mail*, October 20, 1899.

sovereign by expressing regret “at the want of knowledge, foresight, and judgment displayed by your Majesty’s advisers alike in their conduct of South African affairs since 1895 and in their preparations for the war now proceeding.”²²¹ The *Guardian* passed such statements of remorse on to its readers. During the ensuing Parliamentary debates, the *Times* described how First Lord of the Treasury and Leader of the House of Commons Arthur Balfour “did not despair [solely] of the military situation of the present war” and deemed it pressing to determine “an answer to the question...as to the responsibility of the Cabinet in the matter of the deficiency of our preparations.”²²² Unionist Secretary of State for War Henry Petty-Fitzmaurice (Lord Lansdowne), the leader of the War Office, took significant heat from Amery for handling the Boers with kid gloves pre-war. Amery accused Lansdowne of maintaining a hesitant policy of non-intervention while becoming distracted by internal squabbles with Wolseley and failing to provide sufficient colonial logistical support, even when armed conflict became a very real possibility. In his January 30 address in Parliament, the Duke of Somerset professed his hope that the conflict would “open the eyes of the nation...to the faults in the existing administration of the War Office, and to the real requirements of our Army,” and declared that “when we get breathing time in which to do so, the country will require a complete review of that system.”²²³

English reporters feared that early defeats would cause domestic war support to wane. *Morning Post* correspondent Churchill warned from the battlefield, “A democratic Government cannot go to war unless the country is behind it, and [unless] it has general

²²¹ *The Manchester Guardian*, February 2, 1900.

²²² *The London Times*, February 4, 1900.

²²³ The Duke of Somerset, “Address in Answer to the Queen’s Speech,” 30 January 1900, in *The Parliamentary Debates (Authorised Edition), Fourth Series Volume LXXVIII 1900* (London: Wyman and Sons, Ltd., 1900), 7.

support must not place itself in a position whence, without fighting, there is no retreat.”²²⁴

Hiding army bungles from the English people would injure the war effort if and when such failings escaped containment. War journalists recognized that exposing the facts was essential to establishing trust with the domestic population and hopefully initiating a turnaround in army performance.

While serving as the *Times* correspondent on the Boer side during the conflict’s opening months, Amery became further convinced that without military improvements, his beloved Britain could possibly lose the entire war. Lamented Amery in late 1899, “All I saw during those [beginning] weeks left on my mind an ineffaceable impression of the incapacity of many of our senior officers,” not to mention “the uselessness of most of our...army training for the purposes of modern war” and “the urgent need of complete, revolutionary reform of the Army from top to bottom.”²²⁵ In a letter to Sir Valentine Chirol in October, Amery asserted that his nation possessed “not half enough mounted men...a very poor intelligence department,” and an artillery that was “hopelessly outranged” and “almost useless.”²²⁶ He likened the commanding officers to “babies, absolutely helpless, planless and undecided, at the same time very disdainful of any suggestions made by colonials.”²²⁷ Liberal Chief Whip and the future first Governor-General of South Africa Herbert Gladstone echoed the journalist’s concerns. William Gladstone’s son secretly wrote to Campbell-Bannerman in November that, “as the

²²⁴ Churchill, *London to Ladysmith*, 6.

²²⁵ Qtd. in Amery, *My Political Life*, 118.

²²⁶ Ibid., 30-31.

²²⁷ Ibid.

country now sees, we were utterly unprepared for the war.”²²⁸ The Leader of the Opposition concurred, affirming in a late 1899 speech to Parliament:

It [is the Government’s] duty without menace to provide for the defence of the Empire. That duty they failed to undertake, and we, the Opposition, express our unanimous condemnation of the failure to carry out the primary duty of the Government, viz., that of seeing to the safety of the Empire.²²⁹

Initial flops, including the Battle of Modder River that same month, confirmed those angsts as painful reality. In his *Times* reports, Amery critiqued Field Marshal Lord Paul Methuen’s performance in that mêlée, blaming the latter’s inability to converse adequately with his troops and thus emphasizing the need for better communication channels between officers and their men. Additionally, Amery held the War Office and its Director of Military Intelligence Major-General Sir John Ardagh responsible for the Modder missteps, asserting the organization’s incapability to provide Methuen with a signal corps and adequate location data prevented the Field Marshal from relaying the exact position of Boer forces to his waiting artillery. Methuen blamed poor reconnaissance, admitting candidly to his superiors, “[I] didn’t know the enemy was there.”²³⁰ In August 1900, Amery blamed recent “reverses” on “our Intelligence Department, whose information [has] throughout [been] defective.”²³¹ Amery later testified to the post-war Royal Commission on the War in South Africa that “[w]e did not

²²⁸ Herbert Gladstone to Henry Campbell-Bannerman, November 3, 1899. The Herbert John Gladstone Papers, BL 45987. Gladstone was a radical Liberal political force who helped restore his father’s Party to power in 1906 by signing the Gladstone-MacDonald Pact with the Labour Representation Committee and thus preventing a split of the anti-Conservative vote. He also supported the New Liberalism reforms while serving as Home Secretary from 1905-1910.

²²⁹ Qtd. in Thomas R. Buchanan, “Address in Answer to the Queen’s Speech,” 30 January 1900, in *The Parliamentary Debates (Authorised Edition), Fourth Series Volume LXXVIII 1900*, 197.

²³⁰ Qtd. in Julian Symons, *Buller’s Campaign: The Boer War and His Career* (London: Cresset Press, 1963), 110.

²³¹ *The London Times*, August 9, 1900.

spend nearly enough money, or send enough [intelligence] officers...they were fewer [in number] than the men I employed myself as 'Times' correspondents anywhere.”²³²

News of such early errors did not remain shielded from the domestic population because of correspondents' efforts and their refusal to deny the truth in print. A letter to Milner following the October Nicholson's Nek disaster described “the newsboys at the corners...shouting ‘Terrible Reverse of British Troops—Loss of 2,000,’ and “the rush for papers as we all stood about the streets—regardless of all appearances, reading the telegrams with breathless anxiety.”²³³ The domestic population's prior exposure to patriotic propaganda made the revelation of military disasters all the more shocking and unacceptable.

In his *Times* dispatches, Amery condemned Methuen's paralleling of the train tracks on his trek toward Kimberley prior to the Modder loss. The correspondent argued that Methuen had let the railroad's presence “completely paralyse” his movements. Amery even insinuated laziness on the part of army leaders in general, for “to improvise other transport requires thinking out [critically] and afresh,” and “[if] it [is] not in the original programme...it [just] isn't done.”²³⁴ He was further mystified by Methuen's decision to rest his troops at the river instead of pressing onward. The journalist complained in the *Times* that the Field Marshal “sacrificed [his] moral and strategical advantages” with heavy repercussions. He reminded domestic readers that “[t]he indefinable psychological impression produced on an enemy by an army in motion” and “the paralyzing sense of uncertainty” constituted “assets in strategy that are thrown away

²³² Qtd. in McCracken, “British War Correspondents in the Field,” 103.

²³³ Qtd. in Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency*, 34-35.

²³⁴ Leo Amery to Valentine Chirol, December 19, 1899, in Barnes and Nicholson, eds., *The Leo Amery Diaries, Volume I: 1869-1929* (London: Hutchinson, 1980).

the moment that army comes to a prolonged standstill.”²³⁵ Amery’s observations illuminated the need for better communication and innovative strategizing, issues which military officials would discuss at length post-war.

In the *Guardian*, Hobson labeled the army’s early blunders “embarrassing and troublesome.”²³⁶ He alleged that “the War Office publishes [far] less than it knows,” and the facts revealed a dramatic increase in “the Government estimate of the military difficulties to be surmounted.”²³⁷ In a lengthy *Guardian* dispatch, Hobson declared himself to be “first of all a patriotic Englishman (though of course I have been lately denounced as a traitor).”²³⁸ He urged his readers not “to think that I am anything but a lover of my country, though I cannot see why that should prevent me from protesting if I think that Englishmen are being misled.”²³⁹ Churchill proclaimed in the *Morning Post* that “a fierce, certainly bloody, possibly prolonged struggle [lies] before the army of South Africa.”²⁴⁰ In one particularly critical *Times* commentary, Amery labeled “the conduct of affairs...most feeble and insufficient.” He boldly asserted that if the conflict restored regional unity and “if it also breaks the back of the War Office,” it would “confer...two incalculable benefits on the Empire.” The reporter deemed Tommy Atkins to be “brave but painfully slow to move and difficult to feed sufficiently, without natural military instinct and a sheep without his officers.”²⁴¹ Amery hoped that the silver lining amidst the dark clouds of British military mistakes would be the war’s potential to showcase such flaws on a grand scale and spur politicians to action.

²³⁵ Qtd. in Miller, *Lord Methuen and the British Army*, 125.

²³⁶ *The Manchester Guardian*, December 2, 1899.

²³⁷ Ibid., December 5, 1899.

²³⁸ Ibid., December 22, 1899.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Churchill, *London to Ladysmith*, 7.

²⁴¹ Amery, *My Political Life*, 31.

During the so-called “Black Week” of December 1899, the British suffered devastating losses at Colenso, Magersfontein, and Stormberg. Hobson admitted that in regard to imperial humiliation, precedents had been quoted from the days of the Crimean War and of the Indian Mutiny.²⁴² The *Annual Register* deemed the week the “[highest] concentration of misfortune and failure for British arms” in the entire nineteenth century.²⁴³ The shocking trio of disasters resonated with a far wider swath of Britons than just newspaper correspondents and encouraged soldiers to begin vocalizing complaints regarding their experience at the front. Demoralized combatants confided in their diaries that “[we] never see any results,” and that “[t]he joke now is whenever anybody talks of having gained a victory ask if he saw a dead Boer!”²⁴⁴ Concerning the enemy fighters’ inexplicable ability to conceal themselves from advancing British soldiers, Colonel Neville Lyttelton recalled that “at Colenso, I never saw a Boer all day till the battle was over and it was our men who were the victims.”²⁴⁵ Director-General of the Ordnance Sir Henry Brackenbury cast Black Week as evidence of Britain’s futile attempt to “maintain the largest Empire the world has ever seen” with “armaments and reserves that would be insufficient for a third-class Military Power.”²⁴⁶ Multiple British combatants wrote anonymously to London newspapers, intent on quietly sharing their insights regarding the nature of a modern war on strange terrain. Privates and officers exploited “grey areas” in censorship regulations and had “letters” printed in domestic

²⁴² *The Manchester Guardian*, December 22, 1899.

²⁴³ Qtd. in Arthur Davey, *The British Pro-Boers, 1877-1902* (Cape Town: Tafelberg Publishers Ltd., 1978), 52.

²⁴⁴ Private Papers of Major General John Headlam, Reference 12297, 5/18/2.2.

²⁴⁵ Qtd. in Kochanski, “Wolseley and the South African War,” 68.

²⁴⁶ Qtd. in Searle, *A New England?*, 302.

publications that were actually “thinly disguised press dispatches.”²⁴⁷ Soldiers experienced cynicism, frustration, and depression from the stresses of a conflict that did not fit the traditional style of European fighting. Some men suffered personal crises of confidence concerning the struggle’s morality and began to question their purpose in pursuing the fight at all.

Black Week rattled the cages of domestic Britons. The stark depictions presented for public consumption by the correspondents finally escalated military reform to the status of a society-wide concern. Former Treasury official Sir Edward Hamilton confessed that “[w]e have been living in a fool’s paradise,” and “I never remember to have seen London more depressed.”²⁴⁸ According to Stanley Peel of the Imperial Yeomanry, “Few who were in England at the time will forget the gloom of that black week,” when the news of Magersfontein, Stormberg and Colenso “followed hard upon each other till the triangle of misfortune was complete.” Peel believed domestic Britons would now find it difficult to go about their daily lives because they knew “something had to be done — new men and measures must be devised.”²⁴⁹ Ms. Bertha Synge confided to Milner, “In my lifetime, this state of tension is unique. The War affects all, rich and poor alike. All have friends and relations in it and it is no exaggeration to say that we are all plunged in gloom.”²⁵⁰ Londoners experienced a communal melancholy after the tripartite South African fiascos, but now their eyes were open to the army woes from which they had been sequestered.

²⁴⁷ McCracken, “British War Correspondents in the Field,” 105.

²⁴⁸ Qtd. in Porter, “The South African War and the Historians,” 634-635.

²⁴⁹ Stanley Peel, *Trooper 8008 I.Y.* (London: Edward Arnold, 1901), 1.

²⁵⁰ Qtd. in Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency*, 34.

Black Week heightened popular anxiety that such losses could be indications of broader imperial deterioration. However, Ambassador to the United States Cecil Spring-Rice offered a more optimistic perspective by arguing that the British might now “be the better” because “we were perhaps too fat and prosperous, and now the chastisement has come.” London Bishop Mandell Creighton admitted, “We have been for a long time much too arrogant and insolent, and we must repent and learn humility.”²⁵¹

Correspondents made their readerships aware of the disturbing notion of a suffering empire, but they also offered up potential prescriptions to facilitate healing. Without some measure of support from the domestic population and like-minded politicians, however, such efforts would have been for naught.

War journalists devoted significant print space to discussing their Black Week frustrations and more importantly, the lack of preparedness that placed the British army in such unfortunate situations. Hobson described General William Gatacre’s defeat at Stormberg as partially due to erroneous reconnaissance and a lack of sufficient manpower. However, he identified the main problem to be Gatacre’s underestimation of the Boer military competences, which was the same mistake the government had continued to make since the war began.²⁵² Amery criticized Methuen’s misjudgment of the Boer position at Magersfontein while simultaneously admiring the Boers’ skillful use of trench warfare. The correspondent praised the enemy’s fieldworks as “one of the boldest and most original conception[s] in the history of war.”²⁵³ Overall, Black Week errors led W. E. Cairns to label the conflict “an absent-minded war.”²⁵⁴

²⁵¹ Ibid., 41.

²⁵² *The Manchester Guardian*, March 17, 1900.

²⁵³ Qtd. in Miller, *Lord Methuen and the British Army*, 134.

²⁵⁴ Qtd. in Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency*, 47.

Liberal MPs spoke out with similar sentiments against their Conservative counterparts regarding Black Week. Campbell-Bannerman gave multiple speeches blaming the government for its inadequate pre-war preparation as well as for decades of army stagnation and neglect. Brackenbury wrote directly to Lansdowne and demanded that military mismanagement be discussed in the Cabinet. In his memorandum, Brackenbury argued that Black Week humiliations had revealed troubling realities concerning “armaments and reserves of guns, ammunition, stores and clothing” as well as “the power of output of material of war in an emergency, which is, in my opinion, full of peril to the Empire.”²⁵⁵ By the end of 1899, Amery began toying with the idea of penning a war encyclopedia. However, he privately confided to Chirol, “I could write it all myself which for me would be easier but perhaps less appropriate for the *Times*—unless it were anonymous, otherwise people might scoff at my military criticism.”²⁵⁶ Amery and his fellow correspondents acknowledged that they could only push the censorship envelope so far.

Amery reiterated in the *Times* that the days following Colenso were disheartening to all Britons. He worried that British forces “seemed to have lost all initiative and offensive power,” and with the army scattered in defensive positions across South Africa, and “nothing to stop the victorious Boers investing them or by-passing them in their advance into the [Cape] Colony,” how could his nation’s fighters possibly regain the offensive position?²⁵⁷ When British soldiers attempted to launch forward advances,

²⁵⁵ Qtd. in Dunlop, *The Development of the British Army*, 87. Brackenbury’s memorandum so concerned the Cabinet that they formed a secret interdepartmental committee under Permanent Secretary to the Treasury Sir Francis Mowatt to quietly make recommendations regarding military reforms. See Dunlop, *The Development of the British Army*, 87-88.

²⁵⁶ Amery, *My Political Life*, 31-32.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 119-120.

ineffective intelligence and the unfamiliar terrain, in addition to the sophistication of Boer weaponry, impeded their progress.²⁵⁸ Amery further complained, “Our warfaring hitherto may be summed up as composed of periods of timid unintelligent inertia varied by blind rushes like those of a bull at a gate.”²⁵⁹ Napoleonic-style tactics belonged to another time and place. They lacked applicability in the context of the South African struggle. Amery recognized that the army would make no headway in future conflicts even in different locations without a revamped, updated game plan.

Correspondents remained careful to divorce their war criticisms from their treatments of soldiers’ individual characters. They maintained their respectable “support our troops” declaration while averring that they did not equate such a slogan with unequivocal backing of the government or the war’s conduct. The imperialist *News of the World* commended British soldiers throughout the war for “outdoing each other in heroism and self-sacrifice.” Journalists emphasized that battlefield failures did not result from “any lack of bravery on the part of those who made it,” for the “conduct of [such] men, under the withering fire to which they were exposed for so many hours, was, indeed, beyond praise.”²⁶⁰ Trumpeted *Daily Telegraph* correspondent Bennet Burleigh, “As the gladiators marched proud and beaming to meet death, so the British soldiers doomed to die salute” and then step forward “to do their duty — glory or the grave.”²⁶¹ Imperial support meant standing behind Britain’s brave fighting men but not necessarily the overall mission.

²⁵⁸ Martin Cassidy, *The Inniskilling Diaries, 1899-1903* (Barnsley: Leo Cooper, 2001), 36.

²⁵⁹ Amery, *My Political Life*, 32.

²⁶⁰ Qtd. in Wilkinson, *Depictions and Images of War*, 32.

²⁶¹ Qtd. in Phillip Knightley, *The First Casualty: The War Correspondent as Hero and Myth-Maker from the Crimea to Iraq* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 76.

Black Week placed the British army under a microscope to be dissected and analyzed by correspondents, who delivered their difficult findings to a news-hungry England. The *Mail* lamented the already insufficient manpower stretched thin across a region larger than France and Germany combined. According to Wallace, a poor military setup, particularly given those vast distances, meant that “we were dependent on single lines of railway for food supply, guns, ammunition, horses, transport animals, and hospital equipment.” Along those lines, “bridges, and culverts had been destroyed in many places, and rails were being constantly torn up.”²⁶² The *Guardian* decreed that the current catastrophes placed British generals face to face with the problem of “dislodg[ing] an enemy of equal if not superior numerical strength, strongly entrenched [in familiar territory], armed with modern rifles and guns,” and inspired by “a courage which requires no further proof.”²⁶³ Correspondents and politicians alike feared that if their army proved unable to subdue the relatively unorganized force of tenacious farmers, the British military would stand little chance against the likes of a militarily advanced adversary such as Germany.

Somewhat surprisingly, during the war’s opening months, several newspapers — particularly the *Times* — sanctioned the explicit printing of war critiques. Such transparency would heighten public faith in Fleet Street and provide valuable information for potential army reformers. Those allowances run contrary to the traditional propagandist press narrative that permeates the historiography. Post-Black Week, the *Times* allowed Davis to inform its readers, “The experience of the last three weeks has

²⁶² *The London Daily Mail*, February 9, 1901.

²⁶³ *The Manchester Guardian*, December 22, 1899.

shown the enemy to be not only numerically superior, but also possessed of arms which outrange anything that we can bring against them.” As proof, Davis rattled off statistics:

We have thirty-six guns of the best-manned artillery in the world, but at the very outside, however well served our guns may be, they have not an effective range above 4,500 yards. Against this the Boers have brought into the field guns fitted with the latest telescopic sights, and having range of 7,000 to 8,000 yards.²⁶⁴

Amery disclosed that every time his nation’s artillery took the field, it was “so outranged by the fire of the enemy guns that it has been impossible to formulate a movement that would give us the advantage necessary to initiate a forward move.”²⁶⁵ The expansive gap between British and Boer armament technology further evidenced the obsolete, inadequate status of the former’s forces. Making it public knowledge was the first step to overcoming past denial and setting a course for improvement.

British military shortcomings were not limited to artillery weapons. The *Times*’ James determined that the Boers’ Mauser rifles were better weapons with a greater range than the majority of British firearms, including the Lee-Metford and the Lee-Enfield rifles. In his mind, with simply “a good pair of glasses and a Mauser,” it was possible to achieve “tolerable practice at 3,000 yards,” whereas no British foot soldier had ever been trained for such distances.²⁶⁶ Assessing the situation from Mafeking in late 1899, Hamilton warned that when the Boers brought their big guns “to within 2,000 yards and sap...us until [their] trenches command our rifle pits at 500 to 600 yards, [they] will be able to do great damage to life and limb.” During the town’s siege, the correspondent repeatedly reminded *Times*’ readers, “We have been under fire every

²⁶⁴ *The London Times*, December 20, 1899.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, December 26, 1899.

²⁶⁶ *The London Daily Mail*, December 20, 1899.

day.”²⁶⁷ The Boer prowess with long-distance, small-bore, smokeless powder rifles frequently rendered British frontal assaults futile. Parliamentary question sessions further revealed that multiple shipments of improperly constructed firearms had been sent to the troops. MP James Weir asked Under-Secretary of State for War George Wyndham if the recent batch of Lee-Enfields had even been tested prior to transport and sought an inquiry to identify those “responsible for having passed weapons with faulty backsights.”²⁶⁸

The *Mail*’s correspondents directly called out the War Office, which had previously “refused the offer of large mounted contingents from the colonies” because “unmounted men were preferred” but continued to disallow such forces from being recruited and trained in England.²⁶⁹ Wallace expressed confusion at that refusal, particularly considering the British army was not just “inferior in numbers to the enemy” but also struggling in cavalry charges and overall “badly handled.”²⁷⁰ Only after word of Black Week’s failures reached the metropole did the Office seriously consider addressing such blatant problems. Bemoaned the *Guardian*, “We may hope that some measure of wisdom has been purchased by [this] bitter experience.”²⁷¹

The early fiascos in South Africa forced correspondents and their political counterparts to imperially contextualize their diatribes. The war was no longer a minor squabble easily concluded by Christmas; the possibility of a lengthy struggle with no guaranteed victory posed ramifications for the entire empire. While evaluating a speech made by future Liberal Prime Minister Asquith in November 1899, the *Guardian* warned

²⁶⁷ *The London Times*, December 26, 1899.

²⁶⁸ Weir, “Questions,” 6 February 1900, in *The Parliamentary Debates (Authorised Edition), Fourth Series Volume LXXVIII 1900*, 709.

²⁶⁹ *The London Daily Mail*, October 11, 1901.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, October 11, 1901.

²⁷¹ *The Manchester Guardian*, January 16, 1900.

that the current situation had become “something much wider and deeper than a mere question of asserting and maintaining our position in South Africa. It [is] the title to be known as a world power which is now upon trial.”²⁷² Former Liberal Imperialist Prime Minister Rosebery, whose speech at Glasgow University received significant attention in multiple papers, forecast that the upcoming century would “be a period of keen, intelligent, almost fierce, international competition” and intimated that Britain would need to fight, in more ways than one, to maintain her global preeminence.²⁷³ In December, the *Guardian* published a letter from Balfour to colleague Lord Haddington in which the politician urged the wealthy Haddington to help finance a fund for war equipment. In his concluding remarks, Balfour reiterated the need to secure South Africa for the empire’s stability, emphasizing that, with Haddington’s assistance, “something material [could] be accomplished toward bringing to a speedy and decisive end a war in the successful issue of which our national honour and our national interests are equally involved.”²⁷⁴ Later that year, Hobson claimed that “[u]nless or until the intentions of the Government are further defined,” the world could view the conflict “as a sheer war of conquest, in which the greatest Empire of the world is [trying to] beat...to its knees a population which could easily be packed into a provincial town.”²⁷⁵ An anonymous “Appeal to Lord Salisbury” printed in the *Westminster Review* cautioned, “The longer this war continues, My Lord, the more will [Germany], Russia, and France too—[all] possible enemies of England—be emboldened to carry out schemes of theirs dangerous to

²⁷² Ibid., December 18, 1899.

²⁷³ Qtd. in Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency*, 40.

²⁷⁴ *The Manchester Guardian*, December 21, 1899.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., March 15, 1900.

your country.”²⁷⁶ Neither correspondent nor politician could ignore the potential imperial fallout from the South African War.

Lloyd George, as reported in and praised by the *Guardian*, analyzed how military commitments to South Africa forced the rapid relocation of troops and consequently left other British colonies less militarily secure. He sarcastically declared that “in China British missionaries had to be defended during the [1900] Boxer uprising by a Buddhist power.”²⁷⁷ By the war’s conclusion, the British army totaled approximately 800,000 men. However, with more than half of those forces occupied in southern Africa, only a skeleton crew remained behind to protect not only the home islands but also the rest of the empire. Privately, War Office officials such as intelligence officer W.R. Richardson disclosed concern with the uneven distribution of British forces and that policy’s likely inability to provide adequate defense for other imperial possessions should an opportunistic enemy choose that moment to attack.

H.W. Moss, the militaristic headmaster of Shrewsbury School during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, begged the government to reevaluate its capacity to defend its multitude of global territories during the current war. Moss’s speeches merited quoting in multiple London newspapers, including the *Times*, as the school administrator counted Amery as a friend and confidant. In the headmaster’s “National Defense” talk, he asked pointedly, “Do we wish to retain our Empire, even at the cost of much trouble, or are we completely indifferent whether it holds together or is wrested from us, or drops away from our nervous grasp?”²⁷⁸ In the midst of so many heavy

²⁷⁶ Anonymous, “An Appeal to Lord Salisbury,” *The Westminster Review* 157 (February 1902): 121.

²⁷⁷ Qtd. in Morgan, “Lloyd George, Keir Hardie and the Importance of the ‘Pro-Boers’,” 294.

²⁷⁸ Qtd. in J.A. Mangan, “The Grit of Our Forefathers: Invented Traditions, Propaganda and Imperialism,” in *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, 119.

questions, the *Daily Telegraph*'s Garner simply wondered, "Will Britain [l]ast the [c]entury?"²⁷⁹ According to *Lloyd's*, the South African War's value lay its ability to erode the popular sense of security and reveal "the [astounding] degree to which the 'great heart' of the Empire had been suffering 'from fatty degeneration'."²⁸⁰

In early 1900, Balfour and his fellow Conservative politicians faced an inquiry regarding the war losses. During January and February meetings of Parliament, the House Leader was bombarded with complaints, concerns, and suggestions. War Office management and its Department of Military Intelligence bore the brunt of the criticism. Sir E.T. Gourley complained that Parliament "ought to apply the pruning-hook" to the organization's permanent officials, whom he blamed for sending "supports consisting entirely of infantry" to South Africa, and "when [additional] artillery was found to be required, it was [deployed] by the slowest transports that could be obtained." Gourley argued that shipping out those additional forces more rapidly and on faster ships would have "made all the difference in the battle of Colenso."²⁸¹ Representative Fitzmaurice cited the words of an "able writer in the *Edinburgh Review*" when he blamed the Cabinet for "suddenly thrust[ing] upon the War Office by embarking them in a great war in South Africa...general objects for which your War Office was not organised, is not organised, and never has been organised."²⁸² MP Emerson Bainbridge interrogated Balfour regarding the potential utilization of Indian troops because the campaign had now "assumed a grave relation to the important [query] of the maintenance of the [entire]

²⁷⁹ Qtd. in Searle, *A New England?*, 302.

²⁸⁰ Qtd. in Wilkinson, *Depictions and Images of War*, 53.

²⁸¹ Sir E.T. Gourley, "Army (Supplementary) Estimates," 13 February 1900, in *The Parliamentary Debates (Authorised Edition), Fourth Series Volume LXXVIII 1900*, 1429.

²⁸² Sir Edmond Fitzmaurice, "Address in Answer to the Queen's Speech," 30 January 1900, in *The Parliamentary Debates (Authorised Edition), Fourth Series Volume LXXVIII 1900*, 117.

British Empire.”²⁸³ The *Times* and the *Guardian* published accounts of the ensuing Parliamentary debates, in which Balfour acknowledged that the government had not fully comprehended the war’s severity. He hoped that “pressure on the point would help them to a proper realization of their responsibility” to ensure that “such reverses should not occur again.”²⁸⁴ In his reports, Amery warned that further inaction would cost the government valuable popular support for the war. After the conflict, the *Westminster Gazette*’s Spender recalled in his “A Short History of Our Own Times” that when the year 1900 arrived, “it was doubtful whether the British Public were angrier with the Boers for having defied the power of Great Britain, or with the Government which had landed itself and the country in such a position.”²⁸⁵

Correspondents questioned the applicability of traditional military tactics and army leaders’ refusal to abandon outmoded practices. Amery believed that British generals often lacked innovativeness and imagination, which was largely the result of an inflated deference to customary rank and protocol. Consequently, “[t]he penchant for precision drill, close-rank formations and firing in volley dominated...military operations in the opening months of the war with disastrous results.”²⁸⁶ Amery confided such concerns in Roberts, who in turn (according to the former gentleman) released communications evidencing that “under modern conditions the old cavalry maneuvers were dead.” The horse’s new task in warfare was “to transport the rifleman most swiftly

²⁸³ *The Manchester Guardian*, February 2, 1900.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁵ J.A. Spender, *A Short History of Our Own Times* (London: Cassell Ltd., 1934), 44. Qtd. in Dunlop, *The Development of the British Army*, 121.

²⁸⁶ Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency*, 45-46.

to the tactically effective firing point or to enable him to ride rapidly through a zone of fire.”²⁸⁷

South Africa presented unique geographic challenges for foreign soldiers. The *Mail* pointed out that the non-familiar, vast, and sparsely populated veldt “rendered it difficult to move and concentrate rapidly according to the European standard of what should be possible in war.”²⁸⁸ Furthermore, according to Wallace, engaging the enemy was complicated by Boer generals’ determination to undertake guerrilla warfare following their troops’ defeats on the battlefield. Declared the correspondent, “the non-compliance of the Boers with the recognized custom of war which compels combatants to wear a distinctive uniform” made it easy for the armed colonial farmers “to pose as peaceful agriculturists one day and to take part in the active hostilities on the next.”²⁸⁹ Customary British fighting strategies needed refreshing for a new century of new battlefields and opponents. While reflecting on the Boer conflict in his *War and the Arme Blanche* (1910), Childers denounced the cavalry’s overall performance and advocated for the replacement of lancers with mounted infantry wielding short-barreled carbines. After the struggle ended, army reformers continued to debate the future role of such forces with traditional military leaders such as future World War I commanders Douglas Haig and John French, who, according to Amery, remained convinced “that only the old knee to knee cavalry charge with lance or sword would decide the wars of the future.”²⁹⁰

²⁸⁷ Amery, *My Political Life*, 131.

²⁸⁸ *The London Daily Mail*, February 9, 1901.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Amery, *My Political Life*, 132. Amery continued to discuss the “old guard’s” challenges to military reform efforts after the war, during which time he felt that “[those men] became practically monomaniacs on the subject, and being successfully in high command at home, enforced their views on the training of the Army and all junior officers.” According to Amery, those plans often delayed reform efforts and cost British lives in World War I.

From Ladysmith, the *Times*' Davis called out the War Office for lengthening the town's siege with ineffective strategies. In November 1899, he proclaimed that the current conflict would "provide infinite study for those experts who may be held indirectly responsible for the present unsatisfactory situation."²⁹¹ Davis argued that if the Ordnance Committee had required "that the Horse and Field Artillery be rearmed with a weapon equal in range to that with which the other Powers were arming," he felt confident that they would not have been "invested by a parcel of farmers."²⁹² Such correspondent advice appeared to have some impact. The 1904 British *Cavalry Training* manual stressed "the importance of the rifle and of dismounted action rather than of the sword and of mounted action."²⁹³ Amery also foreshadowed the post-war creation of an Ordnance Board of munitions experts and advisors to provide the newly established Army Council with weaponry recommendations.

In an attempt to turn the war's tide in late 1899, the War Office pulled Buller and gave Roberts supreme command in South Africa, with Kitchener as his chief of staff. Roberts would eventually replace Wolseley as the last Commander-in-Chief of the Forces in January 1901.²⁹⁴ *The Illustrated London News* applauded the selections, praising Roberts as someone "whom the nation admired and the army adored [for being] clear-sighted and strong-willed" and who "answered at once the call of duty."²⁹⁵ However, the paper warned its readers that the government must take rapid steps to supply him with

²⁹¹ *The London Times*, December 26, 1899.

²⁹² *Ibid.*

²⁹³ Beckett, *The Victorians at War*, 236.

²⁹⁴ Roberts would relinquish overall command in South Africa to Kitchener in November 1900.

²⁹⁵ *The Illustrated London News Record of the Transvaal War, 1899-1900: The Achievements of the Home and Colonial Forces in the Great Conflict with the Boer Republics*, Imperial War Museum London, LBY [O] 82/3293, 18.

“an army worthy of the occasion.”²⁹⁶ Amery wrote that “Kitchener, according to the legend built up for him by the Press, was the embodiment of calculating efficient organization, a taciturn, exacting taskmaker.”²⁹⁷ The arrival of Roberts and Kitchener boosted military morale in the short term, but they struggled under the weight of conducting a campaign on foreign soil with an ill-prepared army. Roberts often failed to grasp the poor conditions of both his men and his horses. He also underestimated the devastating consequences of polluted water on his troops’ intestinal fortitude, particularly regarding widespread deadly enteric fever. Kitchener presented a “front of the ‘great poster’ ...to the British public,” but John Benyon claims that behind the façade, “there lurked a paradox; a man of contradictions who could veer temperamentally between decisions that were devious and direct, kind and cruel, confident and diffident.”²⁹⁸

Amery applauded the new chiefs’ arrival, but he was frequently preoccupied with the army’s future and thus naturally contended that leadership changes alone were insufficient to improve British forces in the long run. In a January letter to Chirol, Amery forecasted that successful reorganization of land forces would constitute not just a “mere matter of detail, of improved artillery and a few alterations at the War Office” but a full-scale “revolution in the whole character of our Army.”²⁹⁹ Roberts expressed severe misgivings regarding the South African situation he inherited and communicated such worries privately to Amery. As the correspondent later recalled, the new commander, upon assuming power, “was astonished beyond measure to hear of our utter

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 18.

²⁹⁷ Amery, *My Political Life*, 124-125.

²⁹⁸ See John Benyon, “The ‘Walkover’ That Wasn’t: ‘Miscalculation’ and the ‘Unnecessary’ South African War,” *South African Historical Journal* 41 (November 1999): 125.

²⁹⁹ Amery, *My Political Life*, 33.

unpreparedness” and asked, “How could this have been prevented? And who is responsible?”³⁰⁰

Wolseley mobilized additional divisions of soldiers, including colonial contingents, and authorized increased domestic recruiting efforts on the heels of Black Week. The War Office had refused multiple offers to raise sufficient recruits or consider utilizing non-regular troops in the months preceding the struggle, thus leaving the army numerically compromised during the early battles. Only after the December humiliations did Lansdowne finally cave to popular pressure and approve the deployment of Auxiliary Forces of yeomanry and volunteers.³⁰¹ *Mail* correspondent Wallace expressed apprehension about the newcomers’ quality but hoped that the additional men’s deployment would constitute a “turning point in the history of Volunteer force” and possibly conclude “the long period of neglect from which it had suffered, not only at the hands of the Government, but of the public.”³⁰² Even Wolseley quietly divulged in private correspondence his own fears concerning the incoming fighters:

I am very anxious to supply the GOC in South Africa with [new troops]...but to go to the highways and byways and pick up any civilians who will volunteer to go to South Africa quite regardless of whether they have ever learnt even the rudiments of discipline, and to form these into companies or battalions is, according to my knowledge of war, a dangerous experiment.³⁰³

Such hesitations had birthed intense government debates that severely delayed the deployment of much needed additional men during the fall of 1899. However, with Black Week’s disasters, the situation escalated to one of emergency. In his proposal to Lansdowne requesting reinforcements, Wolseley admitted, “We are now face to face with

³⁰⁰ Qtd. in Searle, *A New England?*, 301.

³⁰¹ For an in-depth analysis, see Stephen Miller, “In Support of the ‘Imperial Mission’? Volunteering for the South African War, 1899-1902,” *The Journal of Military History* 69, no. 3 (July 2005): 703-704.

³⁰² *The London Daily Mail*, January 8, 1900.

³⁰³ Qtd. in Kochanski, “Wolseley and the South African War,” 67.

a serious national crisis and unless we meet it boldly and quickly grapple with it successfully it may...lead to dangerous complications.”³⁰⁴ War journalists generally lent their support to the volunteers’ mobilization, hoping that the new combatants would help rejuvenate the army. Even radical liberals such as Hobson and Hobhouse sent well wishes to the departing soldiers, and the *Guardian* applauded the government’s willingness to address the insufficient supply of fighters. In one of multiple articles detailing the departure of the new men for South Africa, the paper highlighted the fighters’ zeal. According to Scott’s publication, “half-a-dozen others who had been instructed to be in readiness to take the places of possible defaulters were considerably disappointed that there [were] no [more] vacancies to be filled” in the Manchester Regiment’s 2nd Battalion.³⁰⁵ The *Leeds Mercury* described the scene around the town’s train station as “one to be remembered,” as the arrival of the volunteers soon to be traveling to South Africa “was the signal for an outburst of abnormal enthusiasm.”³⁰⁶

In his socialist *Clarion*, which lost readership over its refusal to take a formal anti-war stance, Robert Blatchford clarified his position on the war to working-class readers. According to the publisher and journalist, “I am a Socialist, and lover of peace but I am also an Englishman...I love England more than any other country. I am not a jingo, I am opposed to the...war [b]ut...my whole heart is with the British troops.”³⁰⁷ Blatchford considered himself to be a true patriot. He declared at the start of the Boer

³⁰⁴ Qtd. in Will Bennett, *Absent-Minded Beggars: Yeomanry and Volunteers in the Boer War* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 1999), 7.

³⁰⁵ *The Manchester Guardian*, December 1, 1899.

³⁰⁶ *The Leeds Mercury*, February 5, 1900.

³⁰⁷ Qtd. in Ward, *Red Flag and Union Jack*, 60.

conflict, “When England is at war...I have no politics and no party.”³⁰⁸ Additionally, while many men proudly departed for the Cape, not all volunteers chose to take up arms out of a sense of passionate imperial duty. Many men simply needed the money. As Eric Hobsbawm asserts, “Patriotism compensated for social inferiority.”³⁰⁹ Compulsory service did not exist in Britain. Therefore, according to Hobsbawm, “the curve of volunteer recruitment of working-class soldiers” during the war merely mirrored the nation’s economy, waxing and waning with the employment situation.³¹⁰

The *Mail* reported with disdain the repeated failures of Buller, whom Roberts had replaced, but who remained in South Africa as a general. Correspondents claimed that the former officer continued to move his men “with extraordinary lethargy” and had been unable to hold the key mountain position at Spion Kop in a futile early 1900 attempt to end the Ladysmith siege. According to Wallace, the general’s repeated failures amplified the “general disquietude” in London.”³¹¹ In Spion Kop’s aftermath, a frustrated Wolseley informed his wife of the recent miscues and lamented, “I am in despair at all our misfortunes. God seems to be with Boers and against us.”³¹² While masquerading under the pseudonym “Reformer” in the *Times*, Amery blamed Buller directly for “[t]he utter failure of Colenso, the unnecessary abandonment of the guns...the want of decision at Spion Kop, the half-hearted attempt at Vaal Krantz,” and “the inexcusable [inability] to pursue a demoralized enemy.”³¹³ The correspondent then asked his readers, “[I]s this the

³⁰⁸ *The Clarion*, October 21, 1899. Unlike many socialists, Blatchford supported the war for the most part. He had a history of military service and respected his comrades in arms. He criticized Labourites who “despis[ed] military glory” but “are yet so eloquent over the marksmanship and courage of the Boers.” See Semmel, *Imperialism and Social Reform*, 217.

³⁰⁹ Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Empire: 1875-1914* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987), 160-161.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ *The London Daily Mail*, October 11, 1901.

³¹² Qtd. in Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency*, 37.

³¹³ *The London Times*, September 28, 1901.

record for which the Government and Lord Roberts, who know all, have chosen the Commander on whom the first shock of the next war may fall?”³¹⁴ After the war, Amery further castigated the general as “the embodiment of the...defects which the British military system tended to produce.”³¹⁵ The *Guardian* criticized Buller while applauding his soldiers’ gallant efforts and unswerving loyalty under such ostensibly weak leadership. On January 8, 1900, the paper’s headline stated “Battle of Tugela River: How General Buller’s Plans Miscarried, Bravery of Our Troops, Heroic Efforts to Save The Guns.” The accompanying article noted that his men “had not lost heart, but smoked, chatted, and sang” although “losses were [very] heavy.”³¹⁶ The general defended himself by citing the distracting, recurring clashes he had with Wolseley over war strategy, his dearth of clear instructions, and his inability to choose his own staff members.³¹⁷ After a private January meeting with Wolseley, Buller complained, “I am in the tightest place I have ever been in and the worst of it is that it is, I think, none of my creating. I don’t know if I [can] get out of it.”³¹⁸

The following month, the British narrowly defeated the Boers at the Battle of Paardeberg Drift. But Amery reported:

The actual carrying out of the attack was, indeed, terribly defective; partly because Kitchener himself had no experience of South African tactical conditions or, indeed, of handling troops on such a scale; partly because he took on himself all the responsibility of command without any directing staff to see to its execution, while those senior officers who had the machinery of control, and were probably better tacticians, were never wholehearted in carrying out a policy of which they disapproved.³¹⁹

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ Amery, *My Political Life*, 301.

³¹⁶ *The Manchester Guardian*, January 8, 1900.

³¹⁷ *Report of His Majesty’s Commissioners appointed to Inquire into the Military Preparations and Other Matters connected with the War in South Africa, Volume I* (1903).

³¹⁸ Qtd. in Miller, *Lord Methuen and the British Army*, 75.

³¹⁹ Amery, *My Political Life*, 126-128.

Amery continually protested the lack of a general staff, which could help train, coordinate, and properly prepare the British army for military engagements; such a body would be established post-war. For the moment, government officials remained hesitant in their actions and tried to temper such concerns for fear of losing further public war support. In a February 1900 speech, Chamberlain assured his audience that “[w]e are finding out the weak spots in our armour and trying to remedy them... The country is in need of guidance and of encouragement from this House — not from one party alone, but from all of us.”³²⁰ However, Major-General Edward Hamilton echoed the sentiments of multiple journalists when he labeled Salisbury and Chamberlain’s policies as “particularly feeble” and possessing “a sort of helplessness [and ineffectiveness]... that angered the people very much.”³²¹

In retrospect, Wallace reminded the *Mail*’s readers that “[t]he opinion of the Press was strongly expressed to the effect that the crisis demanded greater energy.”³²² Fleet Street’s appeals to the government for additional manpower in South Africa had begun weeks prior to the Black Week fiasco. Correspondents contended that a full pre-war military overhaul, particularly in the War Office, might have alleviated many battlefield calamities. Herbert Gladstone, in an early 1900 letter to Campbell-Bannerman, reviewed the press’s assaults, particularly concerning the problems with War Office organization and weapon insufficiency. He then bemoaned the government’s conduct “in working the Transvaal quarrel up to the war-pitch without adequately preparing for war” in the first

³²⁰ *The London Daily Mail*, February 6, 1900.

³²¹ The Edward Hamilton Papers, BL 48676; also see Journals, January 31, 1900: folio 10.

³²² *The London Daily Mail*, October 11, 1901.

place.”³²³ Churchill faulted poor management and insufficient War Office preparation, diverting responsibility for army failures away from the “brave soldiers” at the front. The popular journalist placed additional blame on “those in England...who have scoffed at the possibility of the Boers becoming the aggressors” and “who have represented every precaution for the defence of the colonies as a deliberate provocation to the Transvaal State.”³²⁴ Wartime sieges, such as the one forced upon Mafeking, also provided correspondents with valuable fodder in their efforts to promote army reforms.

THE SIEGES: MAFEKING AND ITS AFTERMATH

The war’s early stages included the Boer sieges of multiple British-held towns, including Ladysmith, Kimberley, and Mafeking. According to the *Mail*, those communities were “invested by the enemy in overwhelming strength” from the conflict’s beginning. British troops either had to retreat, thus abandoning their “baggage and wounded,” or hunker down for besiegement.³²⁵ Prior to the sieges’ commencements, pro-war correspondents had felt the propaganda pressure from their money-hungry editors and cautiously reflected the government’s confidence in a quick victory. In mid-October, Amery reported in the *Times*, “Already three months’ stores have arrived” at Ladysmith, and “in another week the supply arrangements [should] be such that [the town] could stand a four months’ siege.”³²⁶ The War Office seemed confident that “such an eventuality is [not] seriously expected,” but Amery reminded his readers that “in war all

³²³ Gladstone to Campbell-Bannerman, January 12, 1900. The Herbert John Gladstone Papers, BL 45987.

³²⁴ Churchill, *London to Ladysmith*, 17.

³²⁵ *The London Daily Mail*, October 11, 1899.

³²⁶ *The London Times*, October 17, 1899.

things are possible.”³²⁷ Ladysmith’s siege began in November 1899 and was lifted in February 1900, exactly after the four months predicted by the *Times*. But accurate prognosticating did little to ease the inhabitants’ distress throughout that period. As the *Guardian* stressed, “The losses during...the relief of Ladysmith numbered [an intolerable] 2,000.”³²⁸ In Parliament, Lord Saltoun lamented the lack of adequate territorial surveys, informing Lansdowne that “in my judgment, [it is] quite inexplicable, in view of the importance of Ladysmith to us as a great storehouse of food and munitions of war, that there was no map extant showing the correct position of Spion Kop.”³²⁹ The blockade experience left British soldiers drained and disillusioned. Near the siege’s conclusion, *Chronicle* correspondent Nevinson reported:

At a mess where I was to-night, all the officers but one agreed there was not much glory in this war for the British soldier. It would only be remembered as the fine struggle of an untrained people for their liberty against an overwhelming power. The Colonel...stuck to his patriotic protests, but he was alone.³³⁰

Kimberley also was besieged in October 1899 and relieved the following February, creating “a remarkable outburst of enthusiasm” across the Cape, according to the *Guardian*.³³¹ However, correspondents implored their readers not to assume the war’s conclusion was imminent. As late as January 11, the *Mail* was still suggesting that “Kimberley and Mafeking may have to be abandoned to their fate, for as things stand to-day, we have to think, not of rescuing detached garrisons, but of saving the British cause in South Africa.”³³² After the siege was lifted, the *Guardian* quoted from the French

³²⁷ Ibid.

³²⁸ *The Manchester Guardian*, March 17, 1900.

³²⁹ Lord Alexander Saltoun, “South African War Maps and Surveys,” 2 February 1900, in *The Parliamentary Debates (Authorised Edition), Fourth Series Volume LXXVIII 1900*, 404.

³³⁰ Qtd. in John M. Robertson, *Wrecking the Empire* (London: Grant Richards, 1901), xxviii-xxix.

³³¹ *The Manchester Guardian*, February 19, 1900.

³³² *The London Daily Mail*, January 11, 1900.

periodical *Le Figaro*, which urged readers to be cautious in their interpretation of the besiegement's end and pondered, "What will be the sequel to this success?"³³³ The *Guardian* also echoed the concerns of the Austrian *Neue Freie Presse*, with the foreign publication declaring, "The relief of Kimberley is of great importance from a moral point of view, but it is...impossible to say whether it implies a turn of the [overall] tide from a military aspect."³³⁴ Correspondents remained skeptical regarding the army's ability to effectively capitalize on the situation.

Mafeking was a tiny South African town with some strategic significance because of its close proximity to essential railroad junctions. In early October, the *Mail's* correspondents predicted that "sharp fighting" was likely in the area, where Colonel Robert Baden-Powell was "pluckily holding an exposed position."³³⁵ The settlement fell under siege to Boer forces on October 13, 1899 and faced consistent bombardment for 217 days before its relief in May 1900. During that chaotic time, poor communication and censorship meant that news regarding Mafeking arrived in Britain "sporadically and much pruned, [often long] after the events had taken place, and sometimes out of sequence."³³⁶ In January 1900, for example, the *Guardian* printed a Reuter's telegram that stated erroneously, "It is reported on good authority from a Transvaal source, that Mafeking was relieved on the 23rd."³³⁷ Another *Guardian* report in March led with the headline "Mafeking: Relief Expected in a Few Days," while the siege lasted for two

³³³ *The Manchester Guardian*, February 19, 1900.

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ *The London Daily Mail*, October 11, 1899.

³³⁶ Jacqueline Beaumont, "The British Press During the South African War: The Sieges of Mafeking, Kimberley and Ladysmith," in *War and the Media: Reportage and Propaganda, 1900-2003*, 12.

³³⁷ *The Manchester Guardian*, January 24, 1900.

additional months.³³⁸ In nearby besieged Ladysmith, similar complaints regarding the dearth of reliable news had run rampant. Captain William Thwaites complained in late 1899, “We never seem to get any definite news about the Boer movements and they always know all about ours. The best intelligence staff Queen Anne’s Gate can give us is here, and yet we fail in getting information.”³³⁹

Cape-based army censors transmitted carefully edited material back home. They excised details regarding disease, military misconduct, and the lack of actual fighting. According to *Harper’s Monthly Magazine*, the messages deemed acceptable sometimes were laughable in content and worthless as news sources. For example, a correspondent might write: “Heavy Boer attack. Guns rain shellfire on position. Severe losses, both yesterday and today.” However, the message could reach the newspaper’s main office in London as “Heavy rain yesterday and today.”³⁴⁰ Frequently, censors passed along bare-boned dispatches simply declaring “all well.” Such editors tried to crack down on evasion attempts by war reporters. Wallace, who became adept at sidestepping information suppression efforts during his South African tenure, disclosed that correspondents could “break away from beaten paths and say nasty things about Those in Authority, [but] then they receive unofficial hints [to desist with] their Unholy and Abominable ways of life.”³⁴¹ Journalists caught not toeing the censorship line could find themselves disciplined or returned to the metropole.

³³⁸ Ibid., March 15, 1900. The *Guardian* even admitted that “[w]e have no means of checking this news” but “everyone must ardently wish that it may prove well founded.”

³³⁹ The Journal of Captain William Thwaites, November 13, 1899, in *The Defence of Ladysmith and Mafeking: Account of two sieges, 1899 to 1900, being the South African War experiences of William Thwaites, Stewart Binny, Alfred Down and Samuel Cawood* (Houghton: Brenthurst Press, 1983), 50.

³⁴⁰ *Harper’s Monthly Magazine*, July 1900.

³⁴¹ *The London Daily Mail*, June 9, 1901.

As *Guardian* reporters lamented, censors' campaigns in South Africa meant those at home were not exposed to "the [full] squalor and the misery of civil war" mainly because the press censor often "came between the public and the truth."³⁴² Thanks to censorship efforts, English readers frequently received a distorted picture of both events in South Africa and global reactions to the war. Thus, few domestic Britons grasped the reality that their beloved empire was often paraded across the continental press as a relentless bully. In their publications, Europeans had begun to define "new" imperialism as "an inflated and arrogant form of English nationalism...a sentiment peculiar to Britain and dangerous to other[s]."³⁴³ Denizens of the continent frequently equated imperial policies with British aggression and capitalist expansion in order to construct one paramount enemy for early twentieth-century Europe. Britain became a multi-headed hydra in the foreign press, and most average British citizens remained, at least temporarily, underexposed to such classifications.

The War Office encouraged its soldiers to be wary of sharing certain information with journalists, fearing the domestic public's reaction to excessive depictions of war bumbles. Wolseley's *Soldier's Pocket Book* warned, "The English general of the present day is in the most unfortunate position...[of] being surrounded by newspaper correspondents," men who "pander[ed] to the public craze for news" and thus made concealment challenging. However, Wolseley reminded concerned officers that "transport and telegraph will always be in the general's hands, so he can lay an embargo on the mails whenever he wants it."³⁴⁴ Correspondents had to be surreptitious and clever to circumvent such obstacles. They also offered compassion to soldiers in moments of

³⁴² *The Manchester Guardian*, April 25, 1901.

³⁴³ Koebner and Schmidt, *Imperialism*, 243.

³⁴⁴ Qtd. in Badsey, "War Correspondents in the Boer War," 188.

vulnerability in order to penetrate the latter's emotional defenses and extract uncensored battlefield confessions.

Government censorship efforts quelled some of the simmering dissent in the public domain during the Mafeking siege. However, Britons still discussed military concerns with friends and family in private. Excessive propaganda was proving to be increasingly ineffective in silencing popular criticism across the metropole, and skepticism pervaded domestic minds regarding war news accuracy. Furthermore, it was not until March 1901 that the War Office finally issued formal instructions for information suppression in its *Rules for the Guidance of Press Censors in South Africa*.³⁴⁵ During the South African conflict, playing and winning the censorship game involved a constant deployment of new strategies by journalists. Frequently, that task was arduous. According to the *Rules*, all telegrams were to be inspected, personal communications could be edited, and all letters to the press from officers and soldiers were to be intercepted and immediately passed along to the Department of Military Intelligence.³⁴⁶ *Daily Chronicle* editor Henry Massingham, a radical liberal who opposed the conflict, chose to resign his position because he “was peremptorily required to maintain absolute silence on the policy of the Government in South Africa until after the conclusion of the war”, and “[t]hat was impossible.”³⁴⁷

Hobson contrasted the extreme attempts at British information suppression with the lenient Boer press law, the latter of which “was so indulgently administered” that it permitted “violent [print] attacks upon the Government to be repeated day after day.” He

³⁴⁵ *Rules for the Guidance of Press Censors in South Africa* (Pretoria: Government Printing Works, 1901). WO 108/400.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

³⁴⁷ Qtd. in J. Macleod, *Literature, Journalism, and the Vocabularies of Liberalism*, 52.

described several instances in which the Boer governments tried to prevent the publication of wartime periodicals, and the Court, deeming such actions illegal, ruled in the newspapers' favor.³⁴⁸ Hobson's writings stressed the hurdles that British correspondents had to clear in order to expose battlefield truths to the domestic public. Not every army official was a journalist's friend. Reporters received disdainful treatment from a number of high-ranking military personnel, who disliked having their failings exposed or simply felt that reporters got in the way. When frustration mixed with excessive drinking, a common practice for irritated Mafeking soldiers seeking to escape boredom and depression during the siege, the mood sometimes turned violent or even deadly. Lieutenant Murchison, an artillery officer with an affection for drink, killed *Chronicle* correspondent E.G. Parslow in a drunken rage after a barroom brawl in November 1899. Fed up with media mistreatment and censorship burdens, Amery held nothing back in an April 1900 letter to colleague Chirol, proclaiming, "I don't think people at home have sufficiently realized the stupidity of the army is not merely concentrated in the generals but is an all pervading atmosphere."³⁴⁹

The lack of reliable, timely reports from Mafeking delighted Northcliffe, who initially beseeched his *Mail* correspondents to dramatize the struggle as exciting and perilous in order to sell papers. However, his journalists did not always comply with his financially motivated wishes. Hellawell highlighted the incessant ennui experienced by Mafeking's residents while honestly reminding readers that the town was relatively stable, and its people were seldom in real danger. Simultaneously, reporters could not ignore the lack of adequate safeguards in place at Mafeking. At the war's

³⁴⁸ *The Manchester Guardian*, March 17, 1900.

³⁴⁹ Amery, *My Political Life*, 34.

commencement, Wallace admitted that “it is not perhaps altogether fair to call [the town completely] defenceless, for during the past few weeks of tension we have [seen] that the place has been more or less protected,” but only by “sandbags and hastily thrown up earthworks.”³⁵⁰ Wallace further noted that “Mafeking lies entirely in the open, bare on the veldt, which is as flat as a pancake” and thus questioned the army’s ability and strategic decision to protect the town.³⁵¹ Hamilton, writing seven weeks into the siege, observed that “[t]he Boers outnumber us in men and in artillery, and not a day has passed since the siege began that they have not thrown shrapnel and common shell...into the town.”³⁵² Two months later, he revealed that prior to the war, “great quantities of stores” were accumulated at Mafeking, but Boer forces were “so much underrated that it is quite doubtful if [sufficient] provisions was made for a long siege.”³⁵³

Army officers penned similar complaints in their journals. Sub-Commandant Samuel Cawood frustratingly wrote:

While our enemy have more rifles than they know what to do with and ammunition galore, their trenches are [also] connected by telephone with the big gun and head laager so that if we dare move they are ready for us on the instant...They have fruit and vegetables from the surrounding farms; their cattle and horses are as fat as pigs owing to their having the run of the whole country, while ours are dying of starvation through having to be continually cooped up.³⁵⁴

Potential future conflicts would require extensive planning and better strategizing if the British did not want to face the same shortcomings limiting their success in South Africa.

³⁵⁰ *The London Daily Mail*, October 12, 1899.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, October 12, 1899.

³⁵² Hamilton, *The Siege of Mafeking*, 134.

³⁵³ *The London Daily Mail*, December 20, 1899.

³⁵⁴ The Diary of Sub-Commandant Samuel Cawood, January 19, 1900, in *The Defence of Ladysmith and Mafeking: Accounts of two sieges, 1899 to 1900, being the South African War experiences of William Thwaites, Steuart Binny, Alfred Down and Samuel Cawood*, 176.

The siege dragged into 1900 with no conclusion in sight. Evaluating the situation on New Year's Day, Hamilton reflected upon the "score of desperate engagements" that involved "greater loss of life than we have experienced for many years" and showcased "some of the most characteristic defects of the British Army."³⁵⁵ The *Times* warned that although there could be a "general collapse of serious resistance" by the Boers, "we cannot reckon on that, [for] [i]t is by no means impossible that the chapter of our failures is not yet...complete."³⁵⁶ The unsettling thought of continued battlefield trauma left correspondents and politicians alike concerned with the army's future. Amery complained that "[o]ur whole...system wants changing root and branch" because "[o]ur army is rotten with favouritism and antiquated stupidity. Our drill and tactics want revolutionizing."³⁵⁷ His comrade Chamberlain remained relatively reticent about Mafeking's continued besiegement. However, the Colonial Secretary did write in early 1900, "We do not get on very quickly in S. Africa...I sh[ould] like to sleep for a month and then see in regards to what has been done."³⁵⁸

Irritation and anxiety mounted in response to the British military's inability to lift the siege. Thwaites echoed the repeated frustrations expressed in English newspapers, asking, "When is the tide going to turn? When are we going to wipe out the disgraces of the commencement of the campaign?"³⁵⁹ Bemoaned Hamilton:

We were young men six months ago, impressed with the importance of our situation, invigorated with a determination to stick it out; but we have aged considerably since then, and we would willing[ly] send the siege to the devil if

³⁵⁵ *The London Times*, January 24, 1900.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, February 23, 1900.

³⁵⁷ Amery, *My Political Life*, 32.

³⁵⁸ Qtd. in Marsh, *Joseph Chamberlain*, 487.

³⁵⁹ The Journal of Captain William Thwaites, January 28, 1900, in *The Defence of Ladysmith and Mafeking: Accounts of two sieges, 1899 to 1900, being the South African War experiences of William Thwaites, Steuart Binny, Alfred Down and Samuel Cawood*, 80.

we, by way of exchange, were permitted to indulge in the comparative comfort of another form of purgatory.³⁶⁰

In March, *Guardian* Mafeking correspondent Young informed readers that from “their advanced posts the enemy rake the streets and market square” and made it difficult for British soldiers to avoid the Boers’ incessant fire; even the headquarters mess “fares scantily and dangerously in these times.” He further asserted that “[l]ike the saints under the alter, we cry out, ‘How long, O Lord, how long?’”³⁶¹ War reporters feared that the British could be doomed to repeat Mafeking in subsequent wars without more effective preparations. In a February 1900 speech to the socialist Fabian Society, George Bernard Shaw told his audience that “the principal danger to empire did not come from an external attack but from mismanagement from within” and predicted “that if this state of affairs persisted the British empire [could] follow in the footsteps of Rome.”³⁶²

As Britain’s forces fought to end the besiegement at Mafeking, anxiety circulated throughout the British Isles concerning how best to protect and prepare the homeland during the current and in potential future conflicts. The *Times* discussed the merits of sending additional regulars and militia immediately to South Africa, a decision that would leave “the ground clear at home for the creation of an army on a new model, unfettered by traditions” and allow for the “separation of our foreign service and national defense which has been so long advocated.”³⁶³ However, many domestic Britons worried that the dispatching of further supplementary forces would leave the homeland relatively undefended and the empire unequipped to tackle other potential international conflicts.

After the war’s conclusion, the *Guardian* offered its readers the critical words of Indian

³⁶⁰ Hamilton, *The Siege of Mafeking*, 282.

³⁶¹ *The Manchester Guardian*, March 22, 1900.

³⁶² Thompson, “The Language of Imperialism,” 157.

³⁶³ *The London Times*, February 23, 1900.

Staff Corps Major A.B.C. Williams, who labeled the militia “a national danger” and argued that the Cabinet had undertaken an overseas war “knowing that should the regular forces prove insufficient power exists to call upon the militia to reinforce it.”

Accordingly, domestic residents could find themselves “deeply committed to a [conflict] which...is actually taking from [their] shores that so-called national defence force which is the basis of the home defence mobilization.”³⁶⁴ The metropole’s potential vulnerability continued to preoccupy the British public in the early Edwardian years.

The *Times* also supported the initiation of military reforms because, “How do we know that before this war is over we may not be in serious trouble in some other part of the world?”³⁶⁵ Furthermore, if Boer farmers could prove to be such a formidable foe, the journalists feared the results of a battle with a modern militarized enemy. The *Guardian* quoted Parliamentary debates in early 1900:

If there [is] one thing more certain than another it was that in any future war with a Great Power time for muddling at the beginning of the war would not be given us...and if [we] were looking forward to that [we] were looking forward to the certainty of defeat.³⁶⁶

Churchill warned the House of Commons three years later that an armed conflict with a continental opponent given the army’s current state would likely end with “broken hearts and straitened purses,” with “hunger...in our streets...ruin in our market-places...and when it [is] all over, we [may] find our most formidable commercial rivals entrenched in all our old vantage grounds.”³⁶⁷

³⁶⁴ *The Manchester Guardian*, April 13, 1904.

³⁶⁵ *The London Times*, February 23, 1900.

³⁶⁶ *The Manchester Guardian*, February 2, 1900.

³⁶⁷ Qtd. in A.P. Thornton, *The Imperial Idea and Its Enemies: A Study in British Power* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 1959), 135.

Correspondents' commentaries during the Mafeking siege emphasized that British forces were unprepared to handle the Boers on the latter's terrain. A March 24 *Mail* article discussed the extreme difficulty of even getting off an accurate shot at the enemy because Boer fighters knew the whereabouts of numerous hiding places. Reports from Wilson at Mafeking described the Boers lying "closely hidden in their trenches, which are covered over from the top, front and back, only a small hole being left large enough for the men to crawl in and out" while "[o]ur sharpshooters are forced to spend their entire time rifle to shoulder and finger on trigger, and this is terribly trying."³⁶⁸ The British lack of topographical knowledge was compounded by the army's dearth of modern weaponry. Reflecting on the siege, Hamilton recalled:

It may not be generally known that...[o]ur artillery consisted of four old muzzle-loading 7-pounders, which were constantly in the blacksmith's shop undergoing repairs; four Maxims, one Hotchkiss, one Nordenfelt, one old ship gun firing cannon balls, and a homemade howitzer. None of this artillery had more than 8,000 yards range. For eight months the Boers had bullied us with modern artillery and we had to sit dumb.³⁶⁹

When the British did manage to eke out a victory, they lacked the ability — and sometimes, the initiative — to exploit those situations to their advantage. Thus, they afforded the Boers the opportunity to escape or regroup. Hobson complained that in South Africa, "[a] battle sometimes leaves the victors masters of nothing but the battlefield [and] we have fought many such battles in [this] war."³⁷⁰ The British army often failed to capitalize on its rare early successes, overwhelmed by a combination of obsolete weapons and Boer territorial familiarity.

³⁶⁸ *The London Daily Mail*, March 24, 1900.

³⁶⁹ *The London Times*, May 28, 1900.

³⁷⁰ *The Manchester Guardian*, March 21, 1900.

The two combatants attempted peace negotiations, both to end the siege and the war itself, throughout the spring of 1900, but they could not achieve resolution. Amery blamed that failure on the British refusal to compromise and insistence on making excessive demands of the Boers. The *Guardian* questioned the legality of a proposed proclamation in March that demanded “the surrender of arms in the possession of [Boer] residents within a radius of twelve miles from Bloemfontein on pain of confiscation of their property.”³⁷¹ Hobson stressed the basic impracticality of a policy enacted in the Boer Republics that would “extend to depriving the farmers of their rifles.” Furthermore, he asked, “How can the British General, on his own authority, legally ‘confiscate’ anything?”³⁷² Correspondents viewed proposed British requirements for a ceasefire as disproportionately severe and blamed such demands for prolonging the conflict.

Reporters’ observations regarding insufficient weaponry, the lack of supplies, and inadequate manpower reflected the concerns of their military’s leaders. In a January 1900 telegram, Roberts postulated that “to really relieve Mafeking...would, I think, require a [much] larger force that I could muster” and even gaining an additional 300-400 men would not guarantee success because it was useless for him to go to the town unless he could confirm sufficient supplies upon arrival.³⁷³ The *Mail* transmitted his anxieties to readers, declaring that “[l]arge as the force appears to be in South Africa, it has proved all too small for the duties it has been required to perform.”³⁷⁴ Kitchener unloaded his provision frustration on Amery. In their private correspondence, the army officer complained that “[t]he men are carrying...coats [and] blankets...they cannot fight

³⁷¹ Ibid., March 17, 1900.

³⁷² Ibid.

³⁷³ Telegram from Lord Roberts to Colonel Nicholson, 22 January 1900. WO 105/16, T/16/1.

³⁷⁴ *The London Daily Mail*, February 6, 1901.

[properly]...[they] are quite exhausted even after a short march...[and] [t]he water bottles are much too small.”³⁷⁵ In February, Wallace described the problems inherent in British offensive movements across the veldt, identifying the most serious to be poor provisions in “a country ill-supplied with water and stripped of food by the retiring Boers.”³⁷⁶ According to Hamilton, blame for the overall lack of preparedness fell on the shoulders of “the Imperial authorities at home,” which, “in their fatuity, could [never] bring themselves to believe that the war, which South Africa knew to be imminent, would come to pass.”³⁷⁷

The absence of sufficient manpower at Mafeking generated substantial complications. In February 1900, Amery declared that it seemed as if the government had not “looked the facts fully in the face” and “the War Office [was] still waiting to be pushed along...instead of itself giving the lead.” He further observed, “There is much talk of patriotism, [so if] the Boers can raise every male from 15 to 70 when their country calls, then Great Britain, with her 40 millions, ought to be able to afford more than a few thousand Yeomanry and Volunteers.”³⁷⁸ British leaders’ inconsistent responses to that deficiency baffled correspondents. According to the *Guardian* that same month, Colonel Spence’s report outlining the need for additional mounted men cast the Boers as possessing “the ubiquity of cavalry and the rebelling power of [countless] infantry;” however, the British government telegraphed to the colonies “Refuse mounted men” in light of the fighters already available.³⁷⁹ Furthermore, many of Britain’s soldiers were inadequately prepared to fight. In early 1901, Chamberlain admitted to Milner that “one

³⁷⁵ Notes of Lord Kitchener, 26 January 1900. Herbert Kitchener Papers, PRO 30/57/17.

³⁷⁶ *The London Daily Mail*, February 20, 1900.

³⁷⁷ Hamilton, *The Siege of Mafeking*, 138.

³⁷⁸ *The London Times*, February 23, 1900.

³⁷⁹ *The Manchester Guardian*, February 2, 1900.

Boer is worth three or four English” and worried that “professional British troops with maxim guns” could not overcome “untrained Boers twice their number.”³⁸⁰

The Mafeking siege dragged on hopelessly into early spring of 1900. In March, Wilson declared, “Every one is now more or less resigned to an indefinite prolongation of the siege.”³⁸¹ Lamented a discouraged Hamilton:

[I]n the situation itself there is nothing to write about, it so constantly repeats itself until the absolute monotony of the days settles down upon the nerves... The Boers still fire at us, and we still sit tight, nursing our hopes by a sublime confidence in [a] relief column... [b]ut in reality there are but few people who believe in the practical existence of any relief column.³⁸²

The lack of access to additional troops meant that as able-bodied soldiers fell, elderly men, young boys, and even female fighters replaced them.³⁸³ The *Guardian*’s Young reported how “men bowed with age have been seen following with difficulty the line of retreat, how boys of fourteen have been taken, and how women have been found dead in the trenches.”³⁸⁴

The woeful medical care soldiers received in Mafeking and across the colonies distressed correspondents. According to the *Times*, when ambulances filled with injured and ill combatants arrived at field hospitals, the doctors were in so much demand that often patients had to wait hours before being treated.³⁸⁵ Amery told readers that the bulk of complaints he heard concerned “the [insufficient] arrangements provided for the comfort of wounded officers” because accommodations were inadequate and their diet “on too poor a scale for strong and healthy [men] suffering from some purely local

³⁸⁰ Qtd. in Marsh, *Joseph Chamberlain*, 484.

³⁸¹ *The London Daily Mail*, March 20, 1900.

³⁸² Hamilton, *The Siege of Mafeking*, 282.

³⁸³ *The Manchester Guardian*, March 15, 1900.

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

³⁸⁵ *The London Times*, January 26, 1900.

injury.”³⁸⁶ William L. Ashmead Bartlett Burdett-Coutts, an MP observing at a Bloemfontein field hospital, witnessed hundreds of soldiers in the “worst stages of typhoid, with only a blanket and a thin waterproof sheet between their aching bodies and the hard ground, with no milk, hardly any medicines, [and] without a single nurse amongst them.”³⁸⁷ Burdett-Coutts painted horrific pictures of field hospitals, telling readers they were reminiscent of insufficient treatment centers from the Crimean War. His subsequent “startling exposures” in the *Times* and 1900 publication *The Sick and Wounded in South Africa: What I Saw and Said of Them and of the Army Medical System* unleashed a “first-class political storm” and amplified the necessity of improving military healthcare.³⁸⁸

Young feared that the Mafeking garrison would succumb “not so much to its enemies without as to fever and other enemies within.”³⁸⁹ Brodrick echoed similar sentiments in a June 1900 correspondence to Lansdowne, writing, “I got a cable [stating that] the condition of up country hospitals is deplorable, with men dying for want of nursing and perishable comforts” and “[a]s my correspondents at the front are very reliable, I thought it best to let you know.”³⁹⁰ Hamilton exposed the rampant hunger and illness in Mafeking as well as the elevated feeling of hopelessness when an overtaxed Roberts informed the town’s inhabitants that he “expect[ed] them to hold out until the middle of May.”³⁹¹ The reporter accused Roberts of unfairly “ask[ing] us...to maintain an existence in a condition which is already little removed from starvation, at a moment

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

³⁸⁷ Qtd. in Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army, 1868-1902*, 324.

³⁸⁸ Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency*, 37.

³⁸⁹ *The Manchester Guardian*, March 17, 1900.

³⁹⁰ William St. John Brodrick, Earl of Midleton to Lord Lansdowne, June 3, 1900. Qtd. in Wessels, ed., *Lord Kitchener and the War in South Africa, 1899-1902*, 33

³⁹¹ Hamilton, *The Siege of Mafeking*, 225.

when the great majority of the civilian combatants, if not of all classes, are ‘full up’ of the siege.”³⁹² Such reports offered the British public a window into the harsh realities of a besieged settlement and a contrast to the stories varnished by censors and politicians.

The May 1900 relief of Mafeking and the patriotic celebrations that followed the siege’s lifting unleashed a rejuvenated imperial propaganda campaign. After the British army’s initial embarrassing losses, Mafeking’s liberation provided a much-needed morale boost for disheartened Britons. The subsequent jingoistic exhibitions of national pride, discussed later in this thesis, achieved notoriety in early historical scholarship as evidence for uniform popular support for war and empire. In actuality, the English men and women who responded publicly demonstrated relief rather than unrestrained jubilation. Their patriotic outbursts, largely exaggerated by the popular press, were tempered by persistent worries about the army’s fledgling overall performance to date. But Conservative politicians desperately needed their newspaper comrades to mythologize Mafeking’s relief as a glorious achievement that portended imperial military might. The *Guardian*’s commentaries predictably conveyed displeasure at such reveling in the face of continued wartime problems, the *Mail* and the *Times*’ correspondents displayed satisfaction with the siege’s termination while remaining hesitant to predict an imminent conclusion to the conflict.

Pro-war journalists blamed bad individual decisions and government negligence for the dearth of adequate funds and supplies allocated to Mafeking troops throughout the siege. To offset such problems, the correspondents encouraged their readers to help

³⁹² Ibid.

salvage the war effort by making critical financial contributions to the cause. The *Mail* later bragged that in only three months, its subscribers' generosity had procured more than \$500,000 to help supply the troops.³⁹³ Reporters underscored the vital monetary role the British people could play in helping to make military improvements a reality. Birmingham-based *Mail* correspondent George Hale urged his readers to write to their local MPs concerning army blunders and promised them that he would print their complaints.³⁹⁴ On many levels, Mafeking's relief was not cause for jubilation. The siege's lifting left journalists and politicians to debate the complex reasons why the blockade had dragged on so long in the first place.

Left-leaning writers, including Hobhouse, magnified Mafeking's insignificance in order to question the use of British pounds and resources for the relief effort of an "irrelevant" colonial town. Hobson argued that Conservatives' imperial avarice made distant colonists more worthy of British assistance than impoverished residents of the metropole. He and his fellow *Guardian* correspondents emphasized the negative effects on the domestic wartime economy for the average Briton and recognized the social woes that could not continue to go ignored. Lamented Hobson:

[W]hat a wealth of [economic] prosperity and tranquility we were made to turn our backs [on] when the Government headed towards war...In the early stages of a war a passing fillip is given to employment in some...trades, [but] [t]here the profit ends for workman and employer, and all the rest is sheer, almost immeasurable loss.³⁹⁵

War critics on the far political left had erroneously hoped pre-war that the national economic consequences of "new Imperialism" would have raised enough furor among domestic Britons to challenge Conservative leadership.

³⁹³ Qtd. in Brooks, "Lord Northcliffe and the War," 188.

³⁹⁴ See *The London Daily Mail*, December 20, 1899.

³⁹⁵ *The Manchester Guardian*, January 16, 1900.

Immediately after British forces under Colonel B.T. Mahon liberated the town on May 17, 1900, a segment of the home population exhibited excitement through widespread revelries collectively labeled “Mafeking Night.” During the celebrations, the *Times* declared that momentarily, it almost seemed “as if we were developing a new [cultural] capacity for enthusiasm, or...a new boldness in giving it frank expression.”³⁹⁶ However, liberals downplayed the long-term relevance of Mafeking’s relief, casting it as an event worthy of celebration but not indicative of pervasive public support for the war. *Daily Telegraph* journalist Garvin argued that “[t]he pluck and wits of a British handful had [merely] won against the odds,” and that victory had temporarily improved domestic moods.³⁹⁷ In the *Labour Leader*, Labour Party head and prominent socialist Keir Hardie stated what he deemed to be the obvious: “Small wonder...that after hope had almost deserted the British people the news of the relief should have sent all classes [momentarily] mad with joy.”³⁹⁸ The success at Mafeking boosted morale by providing a much-needed positive outcome in a sea of negative war news. But overall, newspapermen sought to remind politicians and civilians who might be ill with post-siege jingo fever that one simple wartime triumph did not alleviate the need for substantial army reforms.

Mafeking Night further earned infamy in historical scholarship for the supposed ubiquitous malicious attacks on anti-war Britons, their homes, and their property that ostensibly took place that evening. However, in actuality, most revelers displayed little interest in perpetuating violence against pro-Boers. One of the few reports that even referenced Mafeking Night-related violence did not even appear in the *Mail* until a week

³⁹⁶ *The London Times*, May 22, 1901.

³⁹⁷ Qtd. in Pelling, *Popular Politics and Society*, 89.

³⁹⁸ *The Labour Leader*, May 26, 1901.

after the siege ended. The article described an attack on a grocery store run by the Messers. Tyrrell, who were erroneously targeted for their alleged but unsubstantiated Boer sympathies. After “bombard[ing] the shop with bricks, bottles, eggs, and other missiles [and] smashing the windows,” the three rioters received minimal punishment in the form of small fines for the mistaken assault, and the situation was easily resolved.³⁹⁹

Liberal correspondents including Nevinson attempted to downplay Mafeking Night as a one-time event by arguing that the public temporarily broke with societal norms to celebrate a glorious but isolated imperial success. According to the *Guardian*, once order was restored, Victorians reverted to their levelheaded personas and could assess Mafeking’s implications more realistically. Other left-leaning reporters labeled some individual outbursts as “irrational” and “bestial” in order to cast those behaviors as “manifestation[s]...of a people in decay.”⁴⁰⁰ Socialist papers decreed that Mafeking Night celebrations merited the “serious attention of all who have the welfare of the nation at heart, as they seem to betoken a loss of dignity and a degeneration of the character of the race.”⁴⁰¹

In the siege’s immediate aftermath, pro-war correspondents abided by their editors’ instructions and fashioned Mafeking Garrison Commander Baden-Powell into a much-needed imperial hero in order to restore public confidence in the war effort. Correspondents initially elevated the colonel to god-like status and thus perpetuated a legend of “Victorian courage in the face of adversity.”⁴⁰² Baden-Powell became a

³⁹⁹ *The London Daily Mail*, May 25, 1900.

⁴⁰⁰ Qtd. in Ward, *Red Flag and Union Jack*, 68.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁴⁰² Sibbald, *The War Correspondents*, 130.

national idol and an unshakeable leader in the face of poor military organization.⁴⁰³ In

Hamilton's words:

Had any man in whom the town placed less confidence been in command, disaster might have befallen Mafeking and if we are able to place the name of Mafeking on the role of the Empire's outposts which have fought for the honour and glory of Britain, it will be chiefly because Baden-Powell has commanded us.⁴⁰⁴

An anonymous scout confided in the *Times* that no other [commander] could have prevented Mafeking's defeat under the same conditions.⁴⁰⁵ The *Mail* cast Baden-Powell as "an excellent officer, a good sportsman, an inimitable entertainer, and a...[man] who fears no amount of danger."⁴⁰⁶ As the siege ended, Wilson asserted that the colonel had earned the confidence of a grateful empire, which "firmly believes that no situation...will prove too much for his resourcefulness and courage."⁴⁰⁷ In the *Times*, he became "the brain who could think for the rest" and an unparalleled motivator capable of "sustaining drooping spirits and keeping hope alive in the most depressing conditions."⁴⁰⁸ The paper's May 19 edition reprinted a telegram dispatched from England to Baden-Powell that declared: "Citizens London relieved and rejoiced by good news just received. Your gallant defense will long live in British annals."⁴⁰⁹ However, questions lingered concerning the siege's long duration, the town's actual strategic value, and the army's questionable behavior during the bombardment. Amidst the post-Mafeking celebrations and his jingoistic copy, Hamilton also theorized that Baden-Powell protected the remote

⁴⁰³ *The London Times*, May 19, 1900.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, December 26, 1899.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, May 19, 1900.

⁴⁰⁶ *The London Daily Mail*, October 12, 1899.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, March 24, 1900.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, May 21, 1900.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, May 19, 1900.

British station not from the Boers but from “the folly, the neglect, and the ignorance of others,” particularly the War Office.⁴¹⁰

Mail correspondents Hellawell and Wilson heralded Baden-Powell as a champion who triumphed despite poor military organization during the siege. The journalists deemed Mafeking the common man’s success and the victory of intrepid fighters over inept management. According to Roberts, instances such as Mafeking — “[one] out of many which might be brought forward” — demonstrated “exactly how severely the troops have been taxed and how admirably they have responded to the call made to them.”⁴¹¹ In newspaper dispatches, soldiers – and sometimes, their officers – became the victims, survivors, and unsung heroes of an ill-conceived British military endeavor. In Hamilton’s words, the siege evidenced “the fundamental grit of the breed, the unanalyzable qualities that have made the Empire, in spite of foolish politicians and blundering generals.”⁴¹² Baden-Powell had become the physical manifestation of the proud British character. The domestic public needed a hero to restore its confidence, and the correspondents provided one. By penning rousing coverage that praised Baden-Powell’s success over multiple “enemies” (mostly non-Boers), reporters further exaggerated the colonel’s gallantry while laying the majority of the blame for battlefield blunders at the feet of domestic policymakers and military officials.

The *Mail* stressed Baden-Powell and the Mafeking soldiers’ determination and fortitude in the face of an obsolete army structure. The paper had acquitted Methuen and his men in similar fashion from significant responsibility during Black Week. For those fiascos, the *Mail* blamed excessively traditional military training along with “the

⁴¹⁰ *The London Times*, May 22, 1900.

⁴¹¹ *The London Daily Mail*, February 9, 1901.

⁴¹² *The London Times*, May 21, 1900.

Imperial Government's lack of material preparation, [overly] conservative conventions in trench design, and insufficient mounted troops."⁴¹³ General Archibald Hunter complained that the outdated maps were "worse than useless," as well as "a positive danger and delusion."⁴¹⁴ Given the persistence of such obstacles, the garrison's relief came as a welcome surprise and a warning. Lauded Roberts:

No episode in the war seems more praiseworthy than the prolonged defence of this town by a British garrison...inferior in numbers and greatly inferior in artillery to the enemy, cut off from communication...with the hope of relief repeatedly deferred until the supplies of food were nearly exhausted. Inspired by their commander's example, the defenders of Mafeking maintained a never-failing confidence... they withstood the enemy's attacks with an audacity which so disheartened their opponents that [before May 12] no serious attempt was [even] made to capture the place by assault."⁴¹⁵

Reflecting on Mafeking, former Major General Harcourt Bengough used the siege as a springboard in his writings to further launch British military missteps into the public domain. He acknowledged that much had recently been said concerning "the failings of our officers, their want of tactical knowledge," and "[their] professional skill," which "leave[s] much to be desired."⁴¹⁶ But, Bengough pondered, "[W]hat else can be expected as long as our army is looked upon [trivially] as a [mere] pleasant occupation rather than as a training school for war? Our officers are what the system makes them."⁴¹⁷ According to Wallace, most of the South African military mismanagement could be traced back to London. The *Mail* correspondent asserted that "it is against those in authority...rather than those in command at the front that we [shall] continue to direct our criticism."⁴¹⁸

⁴¹³ Porter, "The South African War and the Historians," 643. See also Miller, *Lord Methuen and the British Army*.

⁴¹⁴ Qtd. in Miller, *Lord Methuen and the British Army*, 72-73.

⁴¹⁵ *The London Daily Mail*, February 9, 1901.

⁴¹⁶ H.M. Bengough, *Notes and Reflections on the Boer War* (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1900), 45.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

⁴¹⁸ *The London Daily Mail*, December 20, 1899.

Wallace deemed condemnations of soldiers to be “unjust for many reasons” and “in view of the fact that significant communications have reached us from members of both Houses, we are assured that, given proper publicity, due inquiry will arise.”⁴¹⁹ Such explosive accusations shook domestic Britons out of their Mafeking Night stupor and helped to push military anxieties to the vanguard of political and popular debate.

Correspondents’ efforts increased sales, enhanced public war support, and illuminated the army’s numerous shortcomings. They also demonstrated the media’s increasing ability to influence government policy. The *Mail* pointed out that, by late December 1899, “the criticisms of the Press [already] have effected some [changes],” particularly “in the matter of transports.” Wallace was hopeful that such critiques would promote “acceleration in improving the nature of the artillery with which Lord Roberts and Lord Kitchener must be provided if they are to win in South Africa.”⁴²⁰ After Mafeking, Hellawell stressed:

Kitchener must be supported to the utmost, [for] [i]f the raising and training of further reinforcements at home is being delayed in order to avoid depleting the sum which the Treasury still has in hand for the conduct of the war, and thus to postpone the meeting of Parliament, a grave risk is being run...Kitchener must be supplied without delay with the men he wants.⁴²¹

Press pressure pushed the government to deploy essential additional volunteer forces to South Africa later in 1900.

Correspondents had helped to send Baden-Powell on the fast track to national idol, but the commander did not remain immune from criticism as the realities of the siege seeped out. In truth, Baden-Powell deliberately disobeyed orders by bringing his men to Mafeking in the first place. Once entrenched, he vowed to remain and defend the

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

⁴²¹ Ibid., October 2, 1901.

town until its relief. However, his subsequent inaction lengthened the besiegement and wasted supplies. The local *Mafeking Mail*, repeatedly the victim of censorship by the commander and his associates, argued that Baden-Powell purposely prolonged the siege “for the sake of his reputation” and “[brought] upon the town unnecessary damage from Boer shelling.”⁴²² During the bombardment, Hamilton asserted that “[t]here exists no reason which can defend the absence of efficient military stores in the town,” and “[u]pon the termination of the war let us hope that Colonel Baden-Powell will be asked to explain [it].”⁴²³ Furthermore, the blockade offered few opportunities for “positive contact with the enemy,” and “although [the garrison commander] holds out the promises of such a venture, it has been so constantly deferred that we are for the most part becoming incredulous.”⁴²⁴ In February 1900, Baden-Powell boasted that he had arrested forty Fenians accused of treason. However, according to a *Guardian* report, in Baden-Powell’s quest to “[sweep] Mafeking clear of all suspected traitors,” he never directly stated what crimes those prisoners had committed or publicly share any information regarding the treatment they received as POWs.⁴²⁵

Baden-Powell tasked the town’s Baralong population with cattle raiding and sniping during the siege. But when provisions waned, he fed his people preferentially, leaving the natives and “Kaffir” refugees, such as the Shangaans, with substantially less access to food. Baden-Powell even sanctioned, at certain times, shooting on sight any black African caught stealing provisions. The colonel carefully edited most war reports, including Hamilton’s humanitarian objections to those orders. In response, radical

⁴²² Brian Willan, “The Siege of Mafeking,” in *The South African War: The Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902*, 145.

⁴²³ Hamilton, *The Siege of Mafeking*, 127.

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*, 129.

⁴²⁵ *The Manchester Guardian*, February 10, 1900.

correspondents pushed harder to expose such abuses. The *Pall Mall Gazette*'s J. Emerson Neilly graphically described starving Baralong and black refugees "fall[ing] down on the veldt ...too weak to go on their way," and words could not portray the scene of misery."⁴²⁶ In March 1900, the *Guardian* announced:

The natives are in a worse plight than we are...Many of them brave the dangers of the town and wander with gaunt, hungry faces in search of work which will entitle them to obtain a...[small] extra ration of meal—work which, as a rule, they [often] are too weak to carry out.⁴²⁷

Those observations were moderated, but not negated, by censorship efforts. After the conflict, Baden-Powell testified untruthfully before the Royal Commission on the War in South Africa that the Baralong had not participated in any military activities at Mafeking. He falsely claimed that "we tried to make them defend their own town, but on first attack they all ran away, so we [could] not rely on them at all."⁴²⁸ African court interpreter Sol Plaatje responded with disbelief, declaring, "Here we have a [black] man...whom few white men, dead or alive, have ever had greater reason to thank black men for honours received...[now] coolly and deliberately lying" about the behavior and treatment of

⁴²⁶ See J. Emerson Neilly, *Besieged with Baden-Powell* (1900), qtd. in Sibbald, *The War Correspondents*, 150. Revisionist historian Tim Jeal challenges Pakenham's influential argument (and the assessments of multiple other historians) that Baden-Powell mistreated the Mafeking Baralong. Jeal argues that Baden-Powell did not carry out a sustained policy of Baralong starvation during the siege and even established soup kitchens to feed them. Jeal further asserts that Neilly's comments were manipulated by Pakenham and actually applied more directly to "Kaffir" refugees, such as the Shangaans, than to the Baralong. However, it remains indisputable that Baden-Powell gave whites preferential access to food and supplies and was willing to sacrifice black Africans to starvation on occasion if it meant keeping a white soldier alive. Jeal asserts that Baden-Powell repeatedly acknowledged the contributions made by the Baralong to the siege effort. Yet in the colonel's post-war testimonies, Baden-Powell directly claimed the Baralong did not participate in the war effort at all. Jeal's attempted redemption of Baden-Powell's behavior at Mafeking rests on the understanding that blacks were seen by whites as inferior; in that context, argues Jeal, "Baden-Powell's treatment of the blacks in Mafeking does not seem particularly reprehensible" and "the charges against him are unfounded." Such arguments are unconvincing given the historical proof of Baden-Powell's actions. The colonel's treatment of the Baralong at Mafeking cannot be justified simply because most British people possessed racist ideas. Jeal's assessment seems more in line with the old propagandist perspective that praised Baden-Powell as a great imperial hero and overlooked his flaws. For an overview of Jeal's arguments, see Tim Jeal, *Baden-Powell: Founder of the Boy Scouts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 269-277.

⁴²⁷ *The Manchester Guardian*, March 9, 1900.

⁴²⁸ Qtd. in Willan, "The Siege of Mafeking," 160.

African peoples at Mafeking.⁴²⁹ Correspondents' reports of Baden-Powell's deceit forced domestic readers to wonder what else the commander was fabricating about the war.

Despite the Baralong and refugee issues, the colonel retained his imperial hero status in the immediate post-war years and presented a shining patriotic example for British boys to emulate. He disavowed accusations of discord and infighting among bored and frustrated troops. Baden-Powell further decreed that he would be humiliated "if the fame of Mafeking and its heroic defence should be marred by any whisper amongst envious outsiders that there was any want of harmony and unity of purpose among us."⁴³⁰ Yet even the colonel could not in good conscience pay lip service to excessive propaganda nor could he deny the handicaps he faced during the siege because of military mismanagement. At an awards ceremony in his honor in March 1903, as reported by the *Mail*, he admitted that tales of Mafeking's valiant resistance "had been much exaggerated" and that "most of the gallant men under him were not trained soldiers"—many had never even held a rifle before.⁴³¹

Despite Nevinson and other radical correspondents' efforts, news concerning the wartime treatment of non-whites seldom reached domestic readers. Hobhouse's concentration camp reports on suffering white women and children effectively subordinated any substantial concerns for the black Africans' plight. She even detailed the alleged "cruelty of the British military for subjecting Boer women to humiliation at the hands of 'Kaffirs'" and claimed that the "[Boer] mothers were driven like cattle

⁴²⁹ Ibid.

⁴³⁰ Ibid., 145.

⁴³¹ *The London Daily Mail*, March 30, 1903.

through the streets of Potchefstroom by [those] Kaffirs.”⁴³² Most social reformers ultimately wanted to ease the distress of domestic Britons, not colonial blacks, and pro-war correspondents similarly sought a reformed, but white-dominated, British Empire. Reporters recognized and generally ascribed to the influential racial ideologies permeating late Victorian society. Furthermore, creating a racially unified South African union meant nurturing a post-conflict myth of an exclusively “white man’s war.” To justify their planned retraction of black and Coloured peoples’ remaining political rights, the British had to establish those local peoples’ irrelevance. Most correspondents, save a few exceptions such as Nevinson, denied non-white Africans’ contributions to the war effort and maintained total print silence about white-perpetuated mistreatments. English journalists selectively revealed and concealed imperial problems, depending on their personal goals, beliefs, and the current wartime context.

Philip Knightly has bemoaned the persistence of Baden-Powell’s heroic legend as “one of the most serious failures on the part of the war correspondents in South Africa.”⁴³³ Domestic Britons engaged in extravagant post-siege celebrations, unaware of any atrocities committed in the name of liberating a small South African town. But readers’ ignorance of the army’s true Mafeking conduct cannot be blamed entirely on war journalists. As stated, some reporters, including Hamilton, did try to expose black-directed aggression. That behavior, if publicized, could have undercut the supposedly benevolent motivations behind the empire’s “civilizing mission” and prevented the

⁴³² Paula Krebs, “The Last of the Gentlemen’s Wars: Women in the Boer War Concentration Camp Controversy,” *Historical Workshop Journal* 33, no. 1 (1992): 45; Emily Hobhouse, *The Brunt of the War and Where It Fell* (London: Friars, 1902), 219.

⁴³³ Sibbald, *The War Correspondents*, 150.

British from continuing any nonsensical masquerade as the black man's protector from Boer expansion in the region.

Abuses abroad also held the potential to cast domestic social concerns in a new light. The complex, interconnected relationship between colony and metropole ensured that, if exposed, colonial conduct regarding human rights, gender, and race would have repercussions at home. Correspondents held significant sway over the dissemination of such critical information relating to multiple imperial issues. However, the subject of black African rights remained outside most writers' influence or concern.

Beyond their obsessions with Baden-Powell, war journalists revealed British soldiers' personal frustrations with the diverting of valuable resources and manpower to relieve Mafeking. British Captain H.P. De Montmorency grumbled privately about "the use of defending this railway-siding" when troops "might have been better employed...in patrolling frontiers...and in harassing the enemy."⁴³⁴ The *Guardian* shared similar sentiments in March 1900, when an editorial observed that "[p]eople talk of [the town's] important strategic position as a link between Cape Colony and Rhodesia, but one link is useless when every other link in the chain has been broken," and thus Mafeking "ought never to have been held."⁴³⁵ Consequently, according to Young, "the defence of Mafeking was one big bluff," and the siege's conclusion was "remarkable as a [confidence booster] rather than a military triumph."⁴³⁶ Mafeking's relief temporarily lifted public spirits, but its significance in the broader conflict was minimal. Young asserted that the popular excitement in Britain regarding the besiegement's end was

⁴³⁴ Qtd. in Brian Gardner, *Mafeking: A Victorian Legend* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1966), 198.

⁴³⁵ *The Manchester Guardian*, March 24, 1900.

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*, June 18, 1900.

excessive because “the events celebrated were small in practical importance.”⁴³⁷

Montmorency’s complaints and the correspondents’ assessments of Mafeking resituated the siege’s relevance in its ability to expose and address army problems.

War journalists did not seek to encourage anti-imperialist public opinion in print. However, reporters increasingly qualified their propaganda pieces in Mafeking’s aftermath. Multiple *Mail* reports suggested that “[f]rom the point of view of military strategy it was probably a...blunder to defend [the town].”⁴³⁸ Another *Mail* article, penned by Hellowell, reminded readers:

[A]t Mafeking there were no resources, no relief army close at hand, only a single weak column working south over the illimitable veldt...[f]ar off, lonely, forgotten it might seem, Mafeking had to endure its trials with the sad prospect of an almost inevitable surrender to the overwhelming forces of the enemy.⁴³⁹

Conversely, Neilly declared it his responsibility to correct what he deemed to be “some erroneous impressions” regarding the siege. He suggested that “we could have held out for months longer; [t]hat the relief found Mafeking [essentially] a land flowing with milk and honey, even champagne being plentiful; [and] [t]hat in the end there was only a handful of Boers around us.”⁴⁴⁰ However, those more positive assessments made the repeated British missteps during the siege less comprehensible and less palatable. Neilly also admitted that “the rows of white crosses in the graveyard...showed how our force had been reduced” while “[t]he crammed hospitals and convalescent homes, and the almost empty trenches, testified quite as eloquently to our weakness.”⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁷ Ibid.

⁴³⁸ *The London Times*, May 21, 1900.

⁴³⁹ *The London Daily Mail*, March 24, 1900.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid, October 12, 1901.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid.

Hamilton described the lack of actual fighting near the town and the wasteful consumption of resources by relatively idle British soldiers awaiting overdue reinforcements. He often resigned himself to “an indefinite sojourn in Mafeking” and cynically reassured readers during the siege that “at some very remote date, the troops may make their appearance here.”⁴⁴² Wallace even titled an article “The Army That Does Not Fight,” in which he asked his readers:

How would you like to have come six thousand miles on the troop deck of a transport, one thousand miles in a cattle truck, and have done duty by railside and dorp for a year or so, and then, through force of circumstances, be compelled...to admit that you have never seen anything but a take Boer, and had never once been shot at? And yet such is the case with hundreds of troops engaged in South Africa.⁴⁴³

A well-managed army, argued Hamilton, would have done a better job distributing its stores and soldiers to more advantageous locations.

Since inactive troops generally lacked the capability to heighten war interest among domestic Britons, the government often encouraged soldiers to act out simulated combat for the camera or recruited actors to fight fake battles on film.⁴⁴⁴ However, the poor quality of such attempted reconstructions meant the photos commonly failed to pass for legitimate coverage and caused embarrassment when paraded in pro-war papers as actual snapshots. The government also hired “soldier-actors” to mask the battlefield failures with a façade of carefully orchestrated theatrical performances. Such “playlets” were supposed to provide satisfying images of British fighting as surrogates for an often-disappointing reality.⁴⁴⁵ While offering a momentary distraction, such fantasies

⁴⁴² *The London Times*, January 20, 1900.

⁴⁴³ *The London Daily Mail*, October 2, 1901.

⁴⁴⁴ Blanch, “The Boer War and British Society,” 27.

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 29.

ultimately served more to confuse the public and needlessly prolong the divulgence of the truth.

Amery and his fellow pro-war correspondents acknowledged the public's right to finally enjoy a victory after repeated humiliating defeats. Consequently, their Mafeking propaganda pieces sent newspaper sales skyrocketing. Yet interwoven with their incessant praise were the same concerns with the army's negligence, War Office mismanagement, and lack of adequate supplies and manpower. The Mafeking success certainly did not guarantee an easy victory in South Africa, as the post-siege sensationalized media coverage implied. Reporters recognized that domestic support for empire was vital to the British war effort. But those journalists also expressed to rejoicing English readers that one small victory would not negate the need for significant military reform efforts. During the siege, the *Times* reminded its readers that "[w]e have suffered terribly" and "[t]he time is not yet for thinking that all is practically [concluded]."⁴⁴⁶ As the siege drew to a close, the *Guardian* reported:

Many people seem to think that the war...is all over...They forget that this tangible result still lies on the far side of another sea of blood. We are likely to be bitterly disappointed when we come to touch and handle our prize; but whether we think of it now with hope or with loathing, let us at any rate avoid the mistake of thinking that it is already as good as ours.⁴⁴⁷

Following Mafeking's relief, *Mail* correspondents cautioned domestic Britons not to assume that additional victories in South Africa were forthcoming. Wallace warned against blindly trusting government assurances, such as Chamberlain's September 1900 speech, in which he erroneously confirmed that "[t]he war is now practically at an

⁴⁴⁶ *The London Times*, May 6, 1900.

⁴⁴⁷ *The Manchester Guardian*, March 17, 1900.

end.”⁴⁴⁸ Hobson stressed that the British people must commit themselves “to see things as they [are] and not as they would like to see them” because “there is no other safe way out now.”⁴⁴⁹ Young had cautioned his readers earlier in the spring that, independent of potential future triumphs or failures, “we must be fully prepared for losses at least equal to those we have already [endured]” and “[t]hat is a sobering thought which the country would do well to lay to heart in the intoxication of victory.”⁴⁵⁰ Even Queen Victoria expressed her anxiety. In a personal letter to Kitchener after the siege’s conclusion, the long-reigning monarch feared “there [was] still much trouble in store” because an unprepared British army “[must continue to] contend with a most treacherous foe.”⁴⁵¹

A frustrated Kitchener detailed to Brodrick the problems he felt the domestic press created by publishing critical commentaries. In a November 1901 correspondence, Kitchener asserted:

The papers do a great deal towards keeping the war going—[Boer leaders] Steyn and Botha get all the papers almost as soon as I do...If the press really wished the war to end they might I think stop the present system of urging the disheartened [B]oers to still stick it out by pointing out how tired we are of war and what sacrifices it is costing us.⁴⁵²

Earlier that summer, Kitchener had complained to Chief Cape Press Censor Stanley that Boer leaders were thrilled “to have so much fuss made about them” and considered themselves “quite heroes when they see their deeds exaggerated and made much of in our Press.”⁴⁵³ Kitchener’s anxieties were understandable, given his seemingly impossible

⁴⁴⁸ *The London Daily Mail*, October 11, 1901.

⁴⁴⁹ *The Manchester Guardian*, October 5, 1901.

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, March 17, 1900.

⁴⁵¹ Queen Victoria to Lord Kitchener, 30 June 1900. Herbert Kitchener Papers, PRO 30/57/16.

⁴⁵² Kitchener to Brodrick, November 8, 1901. Qtd. in Wessels, ed., *Lord Kitchener and the War in South Africa*, 165. Kitchener feared that Boer military leaders would obtain valuable intelligence from British reporters concerning troop locations, numbers, and movements. See McCracken, “British War Correspondents in the Field,” 100.

⁴⁵³ Qtd. in Beaumont, “The British Press and Censorship during the South African War, 1899-1902,” 286.

dilemma. But journalists recognized that after Mafeking, continuing to embellish and extoll their nation's military prowess, considering that the Boers could witness British army weaknesses for themselves on the battlefield (independent of what they read in popular papers), would not expedite the conflict's resolution.

Throughout 1901, correspondents castigated the British Ministry for jumping the gun with regard to the war's potential termination. Wallace complained that "so sanguine were Ministers and generals, that the return [home] of the army actually began...[a]nd then a strange thing happened. The war blazed up afresh."⁴⁵⁴ According to the *Mail*, the erroneous belief that the struggle was over had so powerfully permeated the War Office that, "though it was now plain that reinforcements were needed, there were none to send."⁴⁵⁵ Hurriedly, Brodrick tried to assemble a new batch of soldiers, but those troops were "raised in haste, dispatched without drill or training," and proved unprepared for the battlefield right away.⁴⁵⁶ According to Amery's assessments, rash decisions, mismanagement, and ill-prepared recruits motivated Boer guerilla forces to keep fighting far more than British newspaper dispatches ever did.

As correspondents relayed, British officers felt militarily paralyzed by the Boers' extensive information networks and seemingly endless resources. Kitchener confided to Brodrick in December 1900 that "[e]very [Boer] farmer is...an intelligence agency and a supply depot such that it is almost impossible to surround or catch them," so "I sincerely hope the people of England will be patient."⁴⁵⁷ Privately, Chamberlain admitted to Milner that "[i]f some progress is not made before long, I think public dissatisfaction may

⁴⁵⁴ *The London Daily Mail*, October 11, 1901.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁷ Kitchener to Brodrick, December 20, 1900. Qtd in Wessels, ed., *Lord Kitchener and the War in South Africa*, 56.

become serious and threaten the existence of the Government in spite of its enormous majority.”⁴⁵⁸ While correspondents could not simply overturn South African failures with a stroke of their pens, they hoped their dispatches would at least prevent political leaders from forgetting the lessons learned so far in the struggle and work toward immediate improvements, provided the war ever ended.

Predictably, the domestic population’s “mass jubilation” was ephemeral. As the war dragged on past Mafeking, optimism dwindled, and impatience permeated the British Isles. *Guardian* reports predicted domestic Britons would forget that success could sometimes be as costly as a loss, and “the War Office returns [revealed] that this [was] literally the truth.”⁴⁵⁹ In retrospect, English doctor R.S. Stewart used criminal activity statistics and surveys as measuring sticks for evaluating the psychological effects of the war. He concluded that, after a brief morale improvement following Roberts’s arrival, that outlook had declined by late 1900. Then, a shift began, and attitudes became “even worse than previously prevailing” early war feelings; such responses would continually become more depressed through 1901.⁴⁶⁰ As high as British citizens rose in jubilation on Mafeking Night, the harder they fell in its disappointing aftermath.

After Mafeking, correspondents and politicians alike found fewer encouraging things to tell the disillusioned public. By the summer of 1900, even Chamberlain feared, “As long as whole detachments of the British Army continue to allow themselves to be mopped up by bands of Boers in different parts of the country...it is impossible to say

⁴⁵⁸ Qtd. in Thompson, “Imperial Propaganda,” 307.

⁴⁵⁹ *The Manchester Guardian*, March 17, 1900.

⁴⁶⁰ R.S. Stewart, “The Mental and Moral Effects of the South African War, 1899-1902, on the British People,” *The British Journal of Psychiatry* 50, Vol. 208 (January 1904): 1-13.

that we are really out of the wood.”⁴⁶¹ As late as March 1902, the *Mail*’s Pretoria correspondent saw no reason why “at this time next year the war should not be bowling along as merrily as ever,” and “this time two years [out] may still find our troops engaged in operations.”⁴⁶² Hobson predicted, “[I]f the Boer race chooses martyrdom...then...a harassing guerilla warfare may carry the war on till the end of the year and postpone final peace for months after that.”⁴⁶³ Reporters fretted over the Boers’ extreme zeal for independence, a devotion that the journalists feared could ultimately force “a war...of extermination,” a prospect Young deemed to be abysmal for both sides.⁴⁶⁴ Hobson dramatically asserted that if the Boers chose a fight to the end for their freedom, then there would be “no limit to the trouble it may give us, no true limit to the mental torture that...this spectacle of a nation...bleeding to death will cause in every Englishman who remains true to the best instincts of the human race.”⁴⁶⁵

Even newspaper editors began pressing the government for answers. The *Times*’ Buckle told Amery during the siege that “though the spirit of the country is admirable, the Government (except perhaps Joe [Chamberlain]) seems nervous and flaccid; and the Prime Minister especially always says the wrong thing.”⁴⁶⁶ Northcliffe publicly criticized the War Office for the army’s outmoded weapons and chronic “official silence and inaction” in response to “the [repeated] discovery of a thousand and one unexpected [new] deficiencies.”⁴⁶⁷ His well-documented war of words with censorship-obsessed Kitchener resulted in the latter’s accusation that the *Mail* had prolonged the conflict.

⁴⁶¹ Qtd. in Marsh, *Joseph Chamberlain*, 492-493.

⁴⁶² Qtd. in *The Lewiston Daily Sun*, March 8, 1902.

⁴⁶³ *The Manchester Guardian*, March 21, 1900.

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, March 17, 1900.

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, March 21, 1900.

⁴⁶⁶ George Buckle to Amery, 23 February 1900, The Papers of Leopold Amery.

⁴⁶⁷ *The London Daily Mail*, February 8, 1900.

According to Kitchener, Northcliffe could “calculate from casualty lists [exactly] what he is responsible for.”⁴⁶⁸ The *Guardian*’s Scott openly protested against the government’s indecision and repeatedly urged during House discussions for the War Office to “make up [its] mind...as to what we are seeking by this war before we can justify to our own hearts and consciences the spilling of all this blood.”⁴⁶⁹ His star reporter Hobson asserted, “That the worst of our military difficulties are political in their origin is well recognized by all who have followed the campaign with any attention.”⁴⁷⁰

The South African War’s unprecedented media saturation magnified English newspapermen’s ability to access and publicize ostensibly confidential information. *Mail* correspondents collectively declared, “[W]e do not think it is possible in these days of the quick transmission of thoughts and opinion that...matter[s] can [and should] be hushed up as it was after the Crimean War.”⁴⁷¹ However, the resulting potential for government-driven public counterattacks on popular newspapers complicated the relationship between politics and the press. Despite being avowedly pro-war, Northcliffe’s periodical suffered both repeated censorship for leaking material and a general news blackout after the editor accused the government of information suppression; he subsequently deadpanned, “Better to lose circulation than to lose the war.”⁴⁷² Political leaders were so concerned about the repercussions of *Mail* dispatches that Brodrick wrote in July 1901, “[That paper] has given to the world statements based on documents purloined from the War

⁴⁶⁸ Qtd. in Beaumont, “The British Press and Censorship during the South African War, 1899-1902,” 287.

⁴⁶⁹ C.P. Scott, “Address in Answer to the Queen’s Speech,” 2 February 1900, in *The Parliamentary Debates (Authorised Edition), Fourth Series Volume LXXVIII 1900*, 501.

⁴⁷⁰ *The Manchester Guardian*, January 16, 1900.

⁴⁷¹ *The London Daily Mail*, December 20, 1899.

⁴⁷² Qtd. in Brendon, *The Life and Death of the Press Barons*, 121

Office,” and in the public interest, “I must...put an end to [this] serious leakage.”⁴⁷³

Failing this, Brodrick feared he would have to “make effective the stoppage of news — either directly or through news agencies.”⁴⁷⁴ When pressed by Brodrick to name his “Parliamentary informants,” Northcliffe cavalierly responded that he could not divulge his sources because “it is the well understood practice of journalists not to give up the names of contributors.”⁴⁷⁵ In August of that same year, Salisbury pacified a concerned colleague by offering his personal assurance that the *Mail* would be on its best behavior concerning the dissemination of war information from that point forward. But the growing network of reporters with inside contacts made concealing war material an increasingly difficult endeavor for politicians.

During the summer following Mafeking, Parliament continued to scrutinize the original decision to militarily engage the Boers. Journalists devoted significant print space to examining British political leaders’ ill-advised pursuit of war and the lack of proper advance planning. Hobson claimed that in the summer of 1899, the government “had before them ample information as to what war would mean. The Prime Minister said they had no information [but] [t]he leader of the House [admitted] they had it in full.”⁴⁷⁶ The *Guardian* highlighted instances of Liberal backbenchers in the House laughing and cheering as the War Office faced accusations of pre-struggle indecision and misdirection. During such debates, left-wing MP Dilke stated that “the Government’s [declared] plan was to defend the frontiers of Natal, but they sent no guns larger than field guns and no engineers to make trenches;” additionally, “they took no precautions to

⁴⁷³ William St. John Fremantle Brodrick, 1st Earl Middleton Papers, PRO 30/67/7-8.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid., PRO 30/67/8.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁶ *The Manchester Guardian*, June 2, 1900.

destroy railway tunnels and bridges so as to prevent the Boers bringing down their heavy [firearms].”⁴⁷⁷ Balfour’s Conservatives fired back by blaming “Parliamentary Opposition” as the reason for inadequate pre-war arrangements.⁴⁷⁸ Neither side wanted to accept responsibility for the conflict’s poor preparations, but correspondents made certain those mistakes would not remain hidden from public view.

The *Mail* highlighted the numerous complaints made by Ladysmith General Sir Archibald Hunter. Concerning Mafeking, Hunter observed, “[T]he Boers “seldom offer a target within the limited range of [our] field artillery,” and when they do, “the accuracy of our fire leaves nothing to be desired as a rule.”⁴⁷⁹ In regard to foot soldiers, Hunter claimed that “[e]verybody knows how Napoleon appraised British infantry, [and] [s]ince then they have not changed.”⁴⁸⁰ Conversely, he acknowledged the Boers’ “superior mobility [and] local knowledge and power of getting over the country” while receiving significant reconnaissance from men and women across the veldt.⁴⁸¹ Hunter complained that any Boer could transform in a moment from a “peaceful farm dweller” into “an active enemy,” with “[his] secret supplies of arms, [his] hardihood and physical training, [his] expert and universal skill with horses, [and] with every resource of the country in [his] favour and denied to us.”⁴⁸² Correspondents also contrasted British weaknesses with Boer advantages to further motivate the government into enacting belated reforms.

Morning Post reporter and future Oxford military history professor Spenser Wilkinson, a close comrade of Roberts, published *Lessons of the War: Being Comments*

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁹ *The London Daily Mail*, February 9, 1901.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid., February 10, 1901.

⁴⁸² Ibid.

from Week to Week to the Relief of Ladysmith after Mafeking as an encapsulation of his military critiques. His work was quoted extensively in the *Guardian* (his former employer) and enjoyed a wide readership. Wilkinson prioritized the sieges in his study, analyzing their excessive length and consumption of valuable resources. He concluded that the force provided to Sir George White at Ladysmith was “haphazard,” and any valuable assessments of the situation by the Military Department were “put aside.” Wilkinson further claimed that “this unbusinesslike way of playing with national affairs and with soldiers’ lives [was] veiled from the Secretary of State’s mind by the phrase ‘political reasons’.”⁴⁸³ He called for close scrutiny of “our political personages” because:

The man in the street might do well to consider whether the great departments of Government, such as the War Office and the Army, should for ever be entrusted to men who have not even a nodding acquaintance with the business which their departments have to transact, the business called War. Success in that as in other business depends on putting knowledge in power.⁴⁸⁴

For forthcoming campaigns, the correspondent emphasized extensive expert input, the need for efficient organization, and improved surveillance as well as better communication among soldiers, army leaders, and the War Office. He criticized the government for shipping out more than ten thousand troops to South Africa based not on a military perspective but from “the civil view that war is a disagreeable business, and that it is to be hoped there will be none of it or...as little as possible.” His major remedy for future conflicts involved “increased control of all the movements of troops before the actual outbreak of war.”⁴⁸⁵ Members of the Elgin Committee would reference Wilkinson’s proposals when they formally evaluated the army following the conflict.

⁴⁸³ *The Manchester Guardian*, March 21, 1900.

⁴⁸⁴ Spenser Wilkinson, *Lessons of the War: Being Comments from Week to Week to the Relief of Ladysmith* (Westminster: Archibald Constable & Company, 1900), 46-47.

⁴⁸⁵ *The Manchester Guardian*, March 21-22, 1900.

The widespread concerns voiced by Wilkinson and his compatriots circulated through the gentlemen's clubs of London and resonated in the ears of member MPs. Within the exclusive walls of conservative Carlton and liberal Brook's, the political elite discussed both their inability to silence correspondents' wartime critiques and to ignore the growing dissatisfaction with the army's performance. In the House post-Mafeking, MPs pressed each other for answers to unresolved questions regarding both soldiers' demands and behaviors. As reported by the *Guardian*, Manchester's William Galloway "asked as to the cause of the delay [in sending] back pay to soldiers on sick furlough" and called for a reinstatement of "the old policy of handing [such payments] of a certain amount in advance."⁴⁸⁶ Other representatives investigated deaths from non-battlefield related causes, the medical treatment currently available for injured soldiers, and the ethical treatment of prisoners. John Bryn Roberts of Carnarvonshire provided evidence "from a [war] correspondent who...stated that he had derived the information from others actively engaged in [combat]."⁴⁸⁷ Roberts' anonymous source had questioned if Brodrick knew that British troops, in execution of orders, had "marched in towards Bloemfontein, burning practically everything on the road, that the troops were followed by about 3,000 head of loot cattle and sheep, and that hundreds of tons of corn and forage were destroyed."⁴⁸⁸

At the time, Roberts questioned whether the systematic destruction of private property was "in accordance with the usages of civilized warfare" and personally inquired as to whether the women and children "inhabiting the destroyed farmhouses

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid., May 25, 1900.

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid.

would be in danger of dying from starvation and exposure in the coming winter.”⁴⁸⁹ He recommended that immediate provisions be made against such a contingency. In response to *Guardian* claims of “wanton destruction [of Boer property] by British troops,” Financial Secretary to the War Office Joseph Powell-Williams replied that “we have no information of the kind suggested in the question.” He claimed evasively, “The Secretary of State has no doubt...that Lord Roberts is conducting this campaign [in a civilized manner], and he does not propose to make the suggested inquiry.”⁴⁹⁰ A 1901 Liberal motion denounced “the wholesale burning of farmhouses...and looting of private property, the driving of women and children out of their homes without shelter or the provision of food,” and “the confinement of women and children in prison camps.”⁴⁹¹ Despite labeling such behavior as “the highest degree disgraceful and dishonouring to a nation professing to be Christian,” the proposal faced rapid defeat in Parliament.⁴⁹² Conservatives stated that even the army’s concerted efforts could not keep civilians and their property out of the fray during military engagements. However, Oppositional MPs, including Scott, insisted that the accepted rules of warfare restricted encroachment onto non-combatants’ land to circumstances in which it was absolutely critical to the conflict’s successful prosecution.

Radical liberal correspondents and anti-war societies alike pressed the government to accept responsibility for army behaviors sanctioned in the name of defeating the Boers. In 1902, the *Guardian* reprinted the NRU’s publications and speeches, as both the periodical and the Union declared their commitment to exposing

⁴⁸⁹ *The London Times*, May 26, 1900.

⁴⁹⁰ *The Manchester Guardian*, May 25, 1900.

⁴⁹¹ Qtd. in Bernard Porter, “The Pro-Boers in Britain,” in *The South African War: The Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902*, 250.

⁴⁹² *Ibid.*, 249-250.

and condemning the alleged “methods of barbarism” utilized in the conduct of the late war. According to the NRU, the War Office should be held responsible for the farmhouse destruction, the internment camps, and the banishment and execution of several Boer leaders. Furthermore, the organization asserted that such efforts “ha[d] proved to be as futile for military ends as they have been prolific in suffering to innocent non-combatants.”⁴⁹³ “Nothing is more calamitous than the divorce of politics from morals,” cautioned Irish political theorist and moderate Unionist privy councilor William Lecky in his 1899 work *Map of Life*, which was quoted in the *Guardian* and the *Daily News*.⁴⁹⁴ In a May 1900 speech to the Conservative Primrose League, a pragmatic Salisbury discussed the radical arguments that “[i]f the Chauvinistic and Jingo parties become predominant” beyond England’s borders, then global “security and progress will become constantly more difficult, our manufacturing supremacy will disappear,” and “‘inevitable’ wars, with their inevitable accompaniments of suffering and poverty, will become the staple of politics.”⁴⁹⁵ The intertwined relationship between correspondents and protest groups, particularly regarding social reform policies, will be addressed later in this thesis.

In Mafeking’s aftermath, radical journalists intensified their assertions that true imperial patriotism meant challenging government policy when necessary and campaigning for imperial change. In Hobson’s words, “The spirit which prompted and dominated the [immoral] actions of the Government in South Africa has been lauded by its supporters...under the specious title of Imperialism;” however, “those who have

⁴⁹³ *The Manchester Guardian*, March 11, 1902.

⁴⁹⁴ William Lecky, *The Map of Life, Conduct and Character* (London: Longmans, 1899), 194.

⁴⁹⁵ Qtd. in Francis W. Hirst, Gilbert Murray, and J.L.Hammond, *Liberalism and the Empire: Three Essays* (London: R. Brimley Johnson, 1900), xiii. While Salisbury clearly recognized the dramatic nature of such a forecast, he acknowledged the increasing lack of “rational morality in international affairs.” See Bernard Porter, *Critics of Empire: British Radicals and the Imperial Challenge* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2008), 91-92.

condemned that spirit and its manifestation have been accused of disloyalty to the Empire and of treason to their country in a time of trial and danger.”⁴⁹⁶ Robertson’s concomitant commentary argued that imperialism in its current form represented “the beginning of the end of Empire.”⁴⁹⁷ The NRU asserted that “the sordid and flashy Imperialism of today” ran contrary to the nobler patriotism of a past that “held it to be its paramount duty to uphold with dignity and pride the position of the British Empire as the champion of the weak and the oppressed, the friend of freedom, the moral guide of the whole world.”⁴⁹⁸ The *Labour Leader*, in summarizing the Independent Labour Party’s mid-war conference reports, touted that organization’s members as heroes who “had kept inviolable the name of their native land” while the government “had thrown away their good name, and their reputation for fair play and for freedom.”⁴⁹⁹

In his *Notes and Reflections on the Boer War*, Bengough admitted that the South African campaign awakened Britain not only to its weaknesses but to “its latent strength,” and “it behooves us now to lay to heart its counsels, and to carry into effect the necessary reforms whilst the people’s heart is warm and the national purse is open.”⁵⁰⁰ Correspondents sought to take advantage of domestic Britons at that vulnerable moment. The reporters endeavored not to dishearten but to motivate. They viewed themselves as intelligent, skilled eyewitnesses who were ideally situated to act boldly and dispense informed opinions for public consumption.

War correspondents highlighted the home population’s minimal celebrations and, in some cases, complete indifference to the British establishment of control over

⁴⁹⁶ *The Manchester Guardian*, March 11, 1902.

⁴⁹⁷ Robertson, *Wrecking the Empire*, xxxvi.

⁴⁹⁸ *The Manchester Guardian*, March 11, 1902.

⁴⁹⁹ Qtd. in Ward, *Red Flag and Union Jack*, 65.

⁵⁰⁰ Bengough, *Notes and Reflections*, 2-3.

Transvaal capital Pretoria in June 1900, just a month after Mafeking Night. When small demonstrations of imperial enthusiasm did commence, the *Times* informed its readers that such festivities “never attained the magnitude of the Mafeking gathering” and “the rest of London at that very moment was going about its daily duties as calmly as if nothing had happened.”⁵⁰¹ The *Guardian*’s Young contended that disillusionment had set in when the town’s relief did not lead directly to the war’s conclusion. Therefore, “few persons are sanguine enough to believe that the fall of Pretoria has brought the war to a close.”⁵⁰² He further observed, “There seems to be much fear [in Parliament]...lest the sieges of Ladysmith, Kimberley, and Mafeking should speedily vanish from the public memory.”⁵⁰³ Despite an increasing number of British victories going forward, correspondents remained leery of the military’s ability to successfully resolve the war imminently. The journalists’ reports on Mafeking and its aftermath forced a significant number of readers to question their army’s viability in South Africa and in future conflicts unless substantial reforms were enacted.

THE KHAKI ELECTION OF 1900

The United Kingdom general “khaki” election of September and October 1900 solidified Conservative government control, with the backing of the Liberal Unionists. Political pundits exploited the results as proof of an imperially minded domestic population and expressed confidence that the war’s successful conclusion was forthcoming. Disappointment reverberated across the liberal movement, as its representatives voiced frustration with the Conservatives’ continued entrenchment in the

⁵⁰¹ *The London Times*, June 8, 1900.

⁵⁰² *The Manchester Guardian*, June 6, 1900.

⁵⁰³ *Ibid.*, June 9, 1900.

political driver's seat. Radical John Ellam, writing in *Justice* post-election, despaired, "Alas! England today is not the England of our forefathers." He claimed the nation's men were not "the same type as those who won for her a proud pre-eminence among the nations as the land of freedom and of staunch independent manhood."⁵⁰⁴ Prior to the polling, Shaw accurately predicted that the election would turn "mainly on the popularity [and popular understanding] of Imperialism."⁵⁰⁵ The increasingly fluid nature of that term meant multiple diverse interpretations and thus, an extensive lack of agreement regarding the empire's future purpose. Coming to a consensus on imperial policies in the early twentieth century proved a substantial and often insurmountable challenge.⁵⁰⁶

The Liberals sought to debunk the popular depiction of a landslide Conservative victory. The incumbents retained their majority by only five percent of the votes over Campbell-Bannerman's Party. As the *Mail* admitted, "[T]he expectations of the government [were] not...fully realized" for the Conservatives had placed their bets on a "khaki boom" which did not happen. Thus, the Opposition concluded that "the nation is not [uniformly] enthusiastic over the [current] Government."⁵⁰⁷

In the election's aftermath, the *Mail* reported:

The country has an easy feeling that the war has not been conducted in the most satisfactory manner, while it knows that the organization of the Army left much to be desired when tested... There has been in the constituencies a general distrust in the vague promises of reform made by Ministers... and [i]t has been felt by thousands of voters that a Cabinet of sexagenarians... is not the best possible governing body for the Empire and the nation in the critical times which lie before us.⁵⁰⁸

⁵⁰⁴ Qtd. in Ward, *Red Flag and Union Jack*, 66.

⁵⁰⁵ Qtd. in Thompson, "The Language of Imperialism," 157.

⁵⁰⁶ In his article, Thompson discusses the use of imperial rhetoric by both Liberals and Conservatives. He concludes that the radicals were unable to "wrest the language of imperialism from the hands of the Conservative Party" and turn the general election of 1900 in their favor because they failed to establish an "alternative vision of empire to which the electorate could have transferred its allegiance." See p. 165-167.

⁵⁰⁷ *The London Daily Mail*, October 18, 1900.

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid.

According to Wallace, the British electorate resented Chamberlain and his fellow politicians' hollow assurances and believed that fresh, younger leadership was needed to successfully guide the empire into the twentieth century. Once identified as a pure propaganda machine, the *Mail* now offered a more balanced assessment of the South African situation. Northcliffe had seemingly shed his jingoistic skin and assumed a press mentality geared more toward reality.

The Conservatives campaigned by accusing their opponents of seditious behavior and claiming that a vote for the Liberals equaled battlefield support for the colonial Dutch farmers. Chamberlain famously decreed that “[e]very seat lost to the Government is a seat gained to the Boers.”⁵⁰⁹ The term pro-Boer swirled in a sea of conservative rhetoric, as war supporters attached the label to anyone with the slightest potentially anti-conflict leanings or connection to the Opposition. In Davey’s words, “When reversals in the field dampened the ardor of the war party they vented their frustrations on the pro-Boers rather than on their own government or on incompetent generals.”⁵¹⁰ Liberals fought back against such mudslinging by refocusing the blame on the government’s mistakes in South Africa. A lengthy *Morning Leader* editorial lamented:

One hears the epithet ‘pro-Boer’ applied to those Englishmen who, clearly seeing their duty and doing it, have sought not to hold up the Boers to public admiration as enlightened and liberal statesmen, but to secure reform...maintain a decent level of honest and plain democracy, to prevent rash violation of covenants into which we have solemnly entered—in short to save England from crime. ‘Pro-

⁵⁰⁹ Davey, *The British Pro-Boers*, 56. During the general election campaigns of 1900, Chamberlain’s face became so ubiquitous that the *Mail* observed, “Whether men like or detest him—and he is the most admired and best hated man in Great Britain—there is no getting away from him for any man who ponders or discusses the immediate affairs of the realm...[T]he South African troubles have pushed him up like a mango sprout in the hands of an Indian juggler.”

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

Boer' we are told this conduct is! Could any conduct be more 'pro-English' upon any sane estimate of the ultimate interests of the country?"⁵¹¹

To radical liberals, pro-Boer denoted patriot. Those correspondents told their conservative counterparts that "[n]othing was to be gained by branding the whole Liberal Party as traitors."⁵¹²

During the election, left-leaning journalists adopted a language of social patriotism, defined by Geoffrey Field as "an inwardly focused" devotion that would utilize domestic societal improvements to create "some kind of new and improved" Britain.⁵¹³ Radical writers could mobilize arguments grounded in national loyalty to encourage support for their candidates' social reformist platforms. They also castigated Chamberlain's witch-hunts and superfluous accusations of treason. As the *Mail* clarified, "Nor is it even true as a general statement that a seat won by the Liberals is a seat sold to the Boers. To [generalize] that [all] such men...are in sympathy with the enemy is ungrateful, as every Englishman knows the services" that some Oppositional leaders "rendered in the hour of crisis."⁵¹⁴ During the campaign, Herbert Gladstone encouraged his press colleagues to remind voters that the main electoral issue was not the supposed sedition of Liberals, but the government's handling of the South African War. The *Mail* quoted the future Home Secretary's warnings that Conservative politicians should pray "the country [has] lost sight of their disastrous mismanagement of domestic and Imperial affairs."⁵¹⁵

⁵¹¹ *The Morning Leader*, October 27, 1899.

⁵¹² *The London Daily Mail*, October 18, 1900.

⁵¹³ Qtd. in Ward, *Red Flag and Union Jack*, 4.

⁵¹⁴ *The London Daily Mail*, October 8, 1900.

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid.*, September 19, 1900.

Prominent radical liberal newspaperman and peace advocate Stead cloaked many of his campaign rants in religious rhetoric, equating the present political struggle with the biblical battle between Cain and Abel. His pamphlet “The Candidates of Cain” praised the pro-Boers and declared that “every elector who puts a cross opposite the name of any candidate who approves and defends the war will stamp upon his own brow the bloody brand which blazed upon the forehead of the first murderer.”⁵¹⁶ To Stead, the colonial conflict constituted a cataclysmic struggle between good and evil. In his Stop-the-War-Committee’s *War Against War in South Africa*, he reminded readers, “The Boers are the Dutch of South Africa, White men, and Protestant Christians like ourselves. They read the same Bible, keep the same Sabbath, and pray to the same God as ourselves.”⁵¹⁷ Stead invoked biblical language (which echoed his personal devotion to Christianity) in an effort to make domestic Britons reconcile their faith with their political beliefs.

During the election, some radical liberals embraced the pro-Boer designation. Transvaal Committee member George W.E. Russell deemed the pro-Boers to be “the true and real patriots” because “we stand for the [true] fair fame of Christian England amongst the civilized nations of the world” while “[t]he advocates of war are prostituting the sacred names of freedom and justice to...justify bloodshed.”⁵¹⁸ The *Morning Leader* welcomed the moniker as “a nickname given to honourable men who cannot sacrifice their convictions to support the present war,” while enigmatic *Daily News* columnist Gilbert Chesterton declared, “I was called a Pro-Boer and unlike some [others], I was

⁵¹⁶ W.T. Stead, *The Candidates of Cain: A Catechism for the Constituencies* (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1900), 2.

⁵¹⁷ *War Against War in South Africa*, January 26, 1900.

⁵¹⁸ Qtd. in Ward, *Red Flag and Union Jack*, 65.

very proud of the title.”⁵¹⁹ The loaded term also penetrated the walls of Parliament. Lloyd George, in an October 1901 speech, labeled his Conservative adversaries “political cockatoos” and asked them rhetorically, “Why...should you say that men who entirely in the interests of their country believe that this war was a mistake—a mistake, a folly, a blunder—why do [you] say that these men are pro-Boers? These men are pro-Britons.”⁵²⁰

The pro-Boers saw themselves as serving their country’s best interests “just as Burke and Chatham had done in the [eighteenth] century when they had warned against the alienation of the American colonies;” thus, to be “a pro-Boer was to have belonged to a band that had withstood calumny and insult for a virtuous cause.”⁵²¹ Even British soldiers admired the dedication and fortitude of Boer forces. Chamberlain famously wrote to future Secretary of State for War and South African War veteran John Bernard Seely that “all of you soldiers are what they call here pro-Boers.”

After the election, Salisbury’s government declared an overwhelming Conservative victory. Yet Blanch’s extensive evaluation of domestic polling statistics offers a slightly different conclusion. His analysis reveals a strong Labour and Liberal vote, mainly located in the skilled laborers’ constituencies. Based on his findings, Blanch hypothesizes that “in so far as [such] people were prepared to consider the ethics of the war, thinking skilled workers in working men’s clubs were happy to listen to pro-Boer speakers, and in some cases to give them their support.”⁵²² Blanch further muses that for many laborers, the election’s importance lay elsewhere. He questions “how [such men] could...be expected to fight for votes for *Uitlanders* when there were still many

⁵¹⁹ *The Morning Leader*, October 18, 1900; Davey, *The British Pro-Boers, 1877-1902*, 159.

⁵²⁰ *The Llanelly Mercury*, October 10, 1901.

⁵²¹ Davey, *The British Pro-Boers*, 10-11.

⁵²² Qtd. in Blanch, “British Society and the War,” 224-225. Also see Price, *An Imperial War and the British Working Class*, Chapter 2.

disenfranchised workers in England?”⁵²³ Laborers often sought out nominees who they believed would shift focus away from the veldt and back to the homeland. The war lit a fire for action under some skilled workers, and the election afforded the opportunity to fan that flame in the national arena. Yet, electoral results did not evidence systematic voting uniformly based on social class or along partisan lines. Many domestic Britons did not or were not allowed to vote. Those who did cast their ballots did so with diverse motivations and often based their decisions at the polls more on personal concerns than on public opinion and government propaganda.

The *Mail* surveyed a number of contenders who lost their campaigns in the general election and offered those candidates substantial print space to discuss why they felt they had been defeated. The majority of those Liberal losers attributed their failure to the electorate’s relative willingness “to leave the settlement of the South African war and the questions arising from it...in the hands of the Government;” in other words, the overall domestic population selected a “simple verdict of ‘As you were!’”⁵²⁴ Other unsuccessful nominees blamed “the divided leadership of the Liberals...[poor] party organization in the constituencies...the absence of any positive programme...khaki...[and] [i]dentification of [the radical left-wing] with so-called pro-Boers.”⁵²⁵ However, despite the myriad of problems that the Opposition faced at the polls in 1900, the *Mail* astutely observed that the contest was “far from abortive as a party educational lecture.”⁵²⁶ The general election offered the Liberals much food for thought in the years following the South African War.

⁵²³ Blanch, “British Society and the War,” 225.

⁵²⁴ *The London Daily Mail*, October 19, 1900.

⁵²⁵ *The London Times*, October 23, 1900.

⁵²⁶ *The London Daily Mail*, October 19, 1900.

POST-WAR MILITARY REFORMS

After returning to England mid-war, Amery recalled, “I had seen...enough [of war] to give me a clear idea of some of the defects of our military system and a keen desire to see them remedied.” The reporter had experienced battlefield struggles firsthand and penned numerous articles, “some at least of which had a definite influence on public opinion.”⁵²⁷ Correspondents breathed a collective sigh of relief with the May 1902 British victory, hoping now they could finally help transform their wartime reform ideas into realities. In September 1903, the *Mail* printed a list of grievances titled “The War Blunders: More Official Evidence of Incompetence.” According to the article, the South African War cost the British people 322,974,000 pounds, making it the most expensive such mission the British had ever undertaken; left 8,590 dead from battle-related injuries; and resulted in 13,352 casualties from disease.⁵²⁸ The Viscount Valentia recalled that the first Yeomanry regiments lacked sufficient staffs and shipped out without any transport, while even Haig admitted that the cavalry was significantly overloaded, particularly with items not necessary for warfare.⁵²⁹ Furthermore, “[t]he reserve supplies in England...prior to the war were based on provision for a force of [only] 40,000 men” (General Clarke), “[o]ut of seven guns that I had up to the relief of Mafeking three only were efficient” (Major-General Plumer), “[t]he Army Service Corps suffered from...a want of non-commissioned officers and artificers [so] [w]e had to take untrained men” (Mr. A.D. Fripp), “[t]here was a great deal of clumsiness in the choice of civilian

⁵²⁷ Amery, *My Political Life*, 140.

⁵²⁸ *The London Daily Mail*, September 1, 1903.

⁵²⁹ *Ibid.*

surgeons” (Lieutenant-Colonel Cowans), and “[t]he ambulance wagons were not sufficient” (Prof. A Ogsten).⁵³⁰

Rudyard Kipling’s poem “The Lesson,” printed in both the *Times* and the *Mail*, emphasized the valuable opportunities for societal improvement afforded by the war that might have otherwise gone unaddressed. The popular author contended:

Let us admit it fairly as a business people should
We have had no end of a lesson: it will do us no end of good...
It was our fault, and our very great fault—and now we must turn it to use
We have forty million reasons for failure, but not a single excuse.⁵³¹

Amery mirrored Kipling’s sentiments in his *Times History*, in which the former credited the repeated disappointments in South Africa with providing lessons “that nothing else could have taught so well.”⁵³² The war’s educational value, underscored by the correspondents, needed to be exploited by initiating post-war military improvements. As the Prince of Wales (the future King George V) declared in his famous December 1901 speech, “Wake up, England!”⁵³³

Looking back on the Boer struggle, British Colonel C.H. Hore-Ruthven recalled:

The war in South Africa was of immense significance in the inner history of the British Empire. From the purely military point of view, it was of importance...because it so nearly proved too much for our military resources...[E]very thinking man in the British Isles asked himself whether our military forces were up to the standard both in strength and efficiency required for our present needs.⁵³⁴

The pressing post-war question remained why widely dispersed bands of rural guerilla farmers had been able to match the military might of imperial soldiers. In the conflict’s

⁵³⁰ Ibid.

⁵³¹ Rudyard Kipling, “The Lesson, 1899-1902 (Boer War),” in *Rudyard Kipling’s Verse* (London: Doubleday, 1922), 344-47.

⁵³² Amery, *Times History of the War in South Africa, Volume I, 1899-1900*, 11.

⁵³³ See Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency*, 40-41.

⁵³⁴ Private Papers of Col. C.M. Hore-Ruthven, Reference 10937, HR 1 (!9/2/1).

final year, the British army failed to prevent the conflict's degeneration into "a chase, a hunt, a tumbling into pitfalls and an evasion of ambushes."⁵³⁵ The war represented "an indictment of the entire army system" and pushed military reform to the front of politicians' immediate agendas.⁵³⁶ Milner identified the struggle's main lesson to be that one simply could not "improvise soldiers" and "that no amount of patriotism, willingness, or devotion [could] save a militarily untrained nation from disaster in any great struggle."⁵³⁷

Shaw foreshadowed that "[w]hatever else this war may do or undo, it at least turns its fierce searchlights on official, administrative and military perfunctoriness."⁵³⁸ While licking their wounds, the British faced a massive reality check, particularly concerning the quality of their recruiting. Surridge theorizes persuasively that the "agencies of modernity" — Britain's urban centers — actually undermined rather than strengthened the empire by luring poor quality recruits into the military ranks.⁵³⁹ Such weakness often was attributed to an increasing dilution of the "British race" facilitated by city slums and immigration. In July 1901, MP and Captain A.H. Lee stated that if army efficiency and imperial safety were to be top priorities, then "we [first] must possess the means of securing a constant and simple supply of first-class recruits" and "I think it cannot be denied by anyone, who has a knowledge of the facts, that the present condition of recruiting is anything but satisfactory."⁵⁴⁰ The maxim "return to the countryside"

⁵³⁵ Playne, *The Pre-War Mind in Britain*, 189.

⁵³⁶ Kochanski, "Wolseley and the South African War," 56.

⁵³⁷ Viscount Alfred Milner, *The Nation and the Empire: Being a Collection of Speeches and Addresses* (London: Houghton, Mifflin & Company, 1913), 189.

⁵³⁸ Qtd. in Lowry, "The Boers were the Beginning of the End?: The Wider Impact of the South African War," in *The South African War Reappraised*, 222.

⁵³⁹ See Surridge, "The Military Critique," 599.

⁵⁴⁰ Captain A.H. Lee, "The Recruiting Question," *The Journal of the Royal United Service Institution* XLV, no. 285 (November 1901): 1287.

emerged as efforts to locate and attract the most able-bodied men for service refocused on rural areas in the Edwardian era.

During the war, Amery discussed with his Parliamentary colleagues the need for a military-social revolution, in which the army would be both democratized and refashioned as an expert force. For the correspondent, “the whole caste system, the whole idea of the Army as a sort of puppet show where smartness, gilt bread and gallantry play the leading role must vanish” in order to construct “something real, something business like.”⁵⁴¹ In his *Times History*, Amery took War Office leaders to task for an obsolete, illogical emphasis on tradition and ceremony to the neglect of more appropriate modern training. Lamented the reporter, “The preserving of mathematically straight lines and fixed intervals, the wheeling of a line of men through an angle with all the precision of a clock dial—this and much other eighteenth-century frippery” problematically has “ruled paramount at inspections and even at manoeuvres.”⁵⁴² Although the South African conflict posed unique strategic challenges that likely would not arise during a future European war, Amery and his fellow journalists recognized that the army’s outmoded tactics would be problematic on any future battlefield.

Wilkinson correctly identifies a heightened interest in military paraphernalia during the Edwardian era as a consequence of the war, which he deems “the disaster narrowly averted.”⁵⁴³ Consequently, the timeframe from late 1900 through 1905 has been crowned the “Period of Attempted Reforms,” in which a myriad of voices joined the

⁵⁴¹ Amery, *My Political Life*, 33.

⁵⁴² Amery, *Times History of the War in South Africa, Volume II, 1899-1902* (London: Low Marsten, 1902), 32.

⁵⁴³ Wilkinson, *Depictions and Images of War*, 6.

chorus on improvement. The British government made army progress its first priority mainly because of the growing threat posed by German militarization.

Kaiser Wilhelm had observed the British army's African humiliation with great interest. By 1900, the Germans exceeded English industrial production. Then, the German government initiated battleship construction to challenge imperial naval dominance. Warned Hore-Ruthven:

During the period of undisturbed and unmenaced expansion, our military system reached its present shape, a shape which in all material respects has remained unchanged for the last 40 years...[H]ave we any reason to expect that a military system framed in the days of our unchallenged naval supremacy to cope from time to time with native risings in India, with Afghans, Zulus, or Sudanese is really calculated to confront the menace of armed coalition between powers [such as Germany] that count their trained soldiers by the million and will soon be counting their Dreadnaughts by the squadron?⁵⁴⁴

Correspondents kept a watchful eye on the German navy's development, reporting on shipbuilding progress and excessive fleet movement or redirection. Such journalists stressed the need to pursue technological reforms that would strengthen "the 'scientific' basis of British society and administration" and afford the empire the necessary skills and weapons to compete in a modern armed conflict.⁵⁴⁵

Reporters may have foreshadowed the need for such post-war changes, but the British needed to prioritize in order to begin that arduous task. Bengough suggested that since "our army system is carried out on an antiquated and unsound basis," then perhaps the way "we can best utilize the experiences of the Boer War is [with] a [widespread] revision of our system" as a whole.⁵⁴⁶ The "quality of military man" issue rose rapidly to

⁵⁴⁴ Private Papers of Col. C.M. Hore-Ruthven, Reference 10937, HR 1 (19/2/10-19/2/13).

⁵⁴⁵ Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency*, 143. See also O.J. Hale, *Germany and the Diplomatic Revolution: A Study in Diplomacy and the Press, 1904-1906* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1931).

⁵⁴⁶ Bengough, *Notes and Reflections*, 37, 46.

the forefront. Assessed Brodrick, “One thing the South African campaign has taught us is that under the existing conditions of war, individual intelligence is of infinitely greater importance than the machine-like soldier” of past conflicts.⁵⁴⁷ Bryce told the House that improving fighters’ physical and mental statuses was essential to restoring the army’s reputation and resettling the system on a solid footing.⁵⁴⁸ Hope for the future rested on the shoulders of forward-thinking politicians and officials willing to tackle such problems without the encumbrance of traditionalist inclinations. Future Secretary of State for War Richard Haldane informed the House of that “[a] new school of officers has arisen” since the South African War, and that group of motivated men desired “to see the full efficiency which comes from new organization and no surplus energy running to waste.”⁵⁴⁹ Such sentiments mirrored the words of King Edward VII, who famously declared, “Readiness for defence is the strongest of the safe-guards of peace.”⁵⁵⁰

Correspondents positively assessed the capabilities of the Boer forces, whose tactics multiple journalists felt could be a lesson to British soldiers. The whole of Britain sought to comprehend why it had cost the nation 250 million pounds to subdue “a Boer male population which did not outnumber that of Brighton” and why an additional 400,000 troops were needed during the war to secure a British victory.⁵⁵¹ Spiers contends that a British soldier simply could not match one Boer, as imperial forces had ignored to their detriment their opponents’ agility, familiarity with the terrain, skilled usage of rifle fire and cover, resilience, and motivation.⁵⁵² From the start, Churchill had emphasized his

⁵⁴⁷ William St. John Fremantle Brodrick, 1st Earl Midleton Papers, PRO 30/67/6.

⁵⁴⁸ *The Manchester Guardian*, February 3, 1900.

⁵⁴⁹ Qtd. in Dunlop, *The Development of the British Army*, 248.

⁵⁵⁰ Private Papers of Col. C.M. Hore-Ruthven, Reference 10937, HR 1 (19/2/18-19).

⁵⁵¹ Thornton, *The Imperial Idea and Its Enemies*, 106.

⁵⁵² Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army, 1868-1902*, 326.

government's uncanny ability to underestimate and belittle the Boers. He concluded that the British could glean military insights from "these ignorant peasant communities" who "have had the wisdom and the enterprise...to utilize the best expert opinion in all matters of armament and war."⁵⁵³ Ignoring the valuable information to be obtained from studying Boer strategies would be wasteful. The *Times*' Hamilton reminded his readers that although "[w]e have despised the Boer [and] contumaciously called him a barbarian," the so-called "nomads of the South African veldt have [dealt] the mighty majesty of England a [blow] which will take her many years to forget."⁵⁵⁴ He believed that the Boers' battlefield tactics afforded valuable military insight and urged British leaders to "let us at least profit by the lessons which are thus afforded to us."⁵⁵⁵

In March 1900, the *Times* provided its readers with a comparison between the Boer and British armies. The evaluation concluded:

The success of the Boers—after all allowances have been made for the extreme difficulty of the task imposed upon us by the natural conditions of warfare in South Africa, the enormous area of operations, the lack of provisions, and the scarcity of water—has been the success of their military system against ours.⁵⁵⁶

The Boers, despite their stereotypical "backwardness," had actually adapted to the challenges of modern combat in ways the British army clearly had not. In the *Times*, Amery reported, "The average British officer...has no tactical knowledge or insight, either natural or acquired by study."⁵⁵⁷ Hamilton lamented that "our system, with its presupposition of unreasoning unintelligent obedience, with its promotion by seniority

⁵⁵³ Churchill, *London to Ladysmith*, 17.

⁵⁵⁴ Hamilton, *The Siege of Mafeking*, 276.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁶ *The London Times*, March 27, 1900.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid.

and not by merit, militates against the development of good generalship.”⁵⁵⁸ Naval Admiral Fisher concurred when he admitted, “One does not wonder at South Africa when one sees every day the utter ineptitude of military officers.”⁵⁵⁹ Bell’s paper went so far as to label British army leadership “a huge complex of organized stupidity” and emphasized that only “[w]ith superior intelligence” comes “superior moral courage.”⁵⁶⁰

The correspondents posed their cases for military reform in their newspapers’ pages and also mobilized their political and social connections to make their voices heard. Amery communicated regularly with Chamberlain, as did the *Birmingham Daily Post*’s William Harris, who knew the Colonial Secretary from the Birmingham and Edgbaston Debating Society and with whom he enjoyed regular dinner engagements. After the war, Chamberlain sought Amery’s counsel regarding countless army concerns, and the honored journalist subsequently honed Chamberlain’s “appreciation of the military dimensions of imperial security.”⁵⁶¹ In a series of exchanges with the Colonial Secretary during 1902 and 1903, Amery discussed the army’s tactical limitations and offered suggestions for reform endeavors, particularly concerning War Office restructuring. He even flattered Chamberlain, as evidenced by a July 15, 1903 letter in which Chamberlain wrote, “I very much appreciate the compliment you do me in asking me to write a few words as an introduction to your article on the Army.”⁵⁶²

Correspondents exploited broad socio-political networks to connect with domestic and foreign military officers, technical experts, and scholarly researchers across the empire in order to instigate a large-scale caucus regarding improvements to army forces. Their

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁹ Thornton, *The Imperial Idea and Its Enemies*, 142-143.

⁵⁶⁰ *The London Times*, March 29, 1900.

⁵⁶¹ Marsh, *Joseph Chamberlain*, 560-561.

⁵⁶² Joseph Chamberlain to Leo Amery, July 15, 1903. The Papers of Leopold Amery, AMEL 2/5/2.

widespread endeavors reflected the pleadings of Salisbury, who reminded the Primrose League in May 1900 that “the defence of the country is not [simply] the business of the War Office or the Government, but the business of the [empire’s] people themselves.”⁵⁶³

Correspondents formulated imperial improvement blueprints in their personal post-war publications and memoirs. In Amery’s *Times History*, he claimed that his wartime experiences constituted valuable schooling in the “whole Imperial problem of which the struggle in South Africa has been but a single phase,” and he fervently hoped that he had made that lesson plain in some fashion.⁵⁶⁴ Amery further asserted:

[T]he great ideal of Empire cannot be sustained by good intentions alone, or even by patriotic improvisation, but only be constant forethought, by sober purposeful striving, and by efficient organization. [After Black Week] the eyes of the nation were opened and it now saw how slight and uncertain was the reserve of military power on which the British Empire, with all its great extent of territory, its population, and its wealth, was based.⁵⁶⁵

The *Spectator*, in reviewing Amery’s tome, applauded his fortitude to publicly pose “one of the most momentous and pressing questions of the day,” mainly “whether a nation which, like our own, has become of recent years ‘absolutely unwarlike’ can ever hope to find...that efficiency in its generals and its statesmen” and “that reserve of military strength in its civil population as a whole, without which we can never survive in the far greater struggles which the future may have in store for us.”⁵⁶⁶ After reading the *Times History*, Roberts admitted to decorated South African War General and War Office Military Secretary Ian Hamilton that Amery’s coverage of the Colenso fiasco was “enough to make a dead man turn in his grave” and noted “the worst of it is that every

⁵⁶³ Qtd. in George Shee, *The Briton’s First Duty: The Case for Conscription* (London: Grant Richards, 1901), ix.

⁵⁶⁴ Amery, *Times History of the War in South Africa, Volume VI, 1899-1902* (London: Low Marsten, 1909), viii.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁶ *The Spectator*, Volume 94, 943.

word of it is true.”⁵⁶⁷ Regarding the long-term consequences of Amery’s publication, fellow war historian Maurice foreshadowed that the book’s influence on the electorate “and both indirectly through them and directly by itself on the House of Commons” would make it difficult for domestic Britons “not to adopt a [new] view of... short service...and of other matters involved in the proposals embodied in the plan of army reform” recommended by the *Times*” and its correspondents⁵⁶⁸

Amery targeted the army’s staff system and its failings as one area in desperate need of attention. He decried that “not only were the Staff in South Africa gravely hampered by a defective distribution of their duties,” but through mismanagement, “the Generals themselves had neither appreciation of the proper use of their staffs nor knowledge how to employ them.”⁵⁶⁹ He recommended that high-ranking officers allow those beneath them to make independent decisions when possible and be willing to adapt quickly under unfamiliar or rapidly changing battle conditions. Amery emphasized that each soldier “should be a picked man capable of looking after himself and of understanding the meaning of a battle.”⁵⁷⁰ Roberts echoed Amery’s ideas in the preface to the military volume *Combined Training*:

Success in war...cannot be expected unless all ranks have been trained in peace to use their wits. Officers are, therefore, not only to encourage their subordinates in so doing by affording them constant opportunities of acting on their own responsibility, but [additionally] break down...the paralyzing habit of an unreasoning and mechanical adherence to the letter of orders and to routine, when acting under service conditions.⁵⁷¹

⁵⁶⁷ Qtd. in Amery, *My Political Life*, 37.

⁵⁶⁸ Sir Frederick Maurice to the War Office, 24 April, 1903. WO 32/4756.

⁵⁶⁹ *The London Times*, May 26, 1903. See also Brian Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College, 1854-1914* (London: Eyre Methuen Limited, 1972).

⁵⁷⁰ Amery, *My Political Life*

⁵⁷¹ Qtd. in Dunlop, *The Development of the British Army*, 236.

The *Guardian* shared similar sentiments. Hobson blamed “the waste of life” during the Boer conflict on the fact that “the War Office made preparations for one kind of war and the Colonial Office got up another kind.”⁵⁷² He concluded, “[t]he only safeguard against a repetition of the divorce between policy and military preparedness is a Cabinet every member of which understands every other’s mind” and which possesses “a Premier who knows how to make the departments of Government subordinate to the general unity of national policy.”⁵⁷³ The *Times* and the *Mail* suggested at different times that the Cabinet had grown too large and needed downsizing or that the Cabinet should delegate certain responsibilities to committees into which “civil servants and other appropriate ‘experts’ could be co-opted.”⁵⁷⁴ Haldane believed the latter plan could help to remedy the lack of effective, informed communication between ministers and advisers.

During the war, correspondents helped sow the seeds of military reform, although the British government faced an uphill climb when attempting to modernize an army so far removed from past victories. In early 1900, *Guardian* reporters covered Parliamentary debates concerning the army’s current performance and had disclosed that “for the first time in our military history we [have] met with a succession of checks or reverses unredeemed by almost a single success.”⁵⁷⁵ According to Hobson, no MP could realistically deny that the net result of the South African events had been “disastrous to the belief of the world in our ability to conduct a war.”⁵⁷⁶ It further seemed to correspondents that House members preferred to pass the buck rather than identify those truly responsible for wartime failures. The newspaper referenced one recent debate in

⁵⁷² *The Manchester Guardian*, March 26, 1904.

⁵⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁴ Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency*, 69.

⁵⁷⁵ *The Manchester Guardian*, February 2, 1900.

⁵⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

which Wyndham declared, “[I]f at any future time this country should be overwhelmed with disaster the Minister for War w[ill] be held responsible,” while Balfour instead “emphasized the point of [full] Cabinet responsibility” for subsequent military blunders.⁵⁷⁷ The *Morning Post*, after summarizing similar discussions later in 1901, asserted, “In spite of the lessons that this Empire should have learnt as to the futility of a policy of optimism, we fail to trace any serious effort on the part of either House...to add to the preparedness of Great Britain in view of possible [forthcoming] dangers.”⁵⁷⁸

In 1900, economist L.L. Price predicted that the war’s ultimate consequence would be “a permanent increase of military expenditure,” a hot button issue for Parliamentary debaters.⁵⁷⁹ The army improvements required to ensure improved battlefield performance would carry a hefty price tag. However, the need to restore domestic confidence in the armed forces also meant justifying increased spending to British taxpayers and assuring that Britons’ financial contributions were not squandered. Haldane reminded Parliament, “Before you can restore public confidence in the Army you must make people feel that they are getting value for their money” and thus ensure that every pound collected was spent on improving fighting efficiency.⁵⁸⁰ However, achieving a workable balance between a national economic burden and quality soldier production remained a sticky problem. The *Guardian* declared that the derisive phrase of “little Brodricks” in public discourse showcased “the connection in the British mind between the demand for quantity and the [resulting] falling off in quality” and explained

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid. The *Guardian* also indicated that the “Opposition cheered” in reaction to this information.

⁵⁷⁸ *The Morning Post*, August 9, 1900.

⁵⁷⁹ L.L. Price, “Some Economic Consequences of the South African War,” *Report of the Seventieth Meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science* 70 (London: John Murray, 1900): 847.

⁵⁸⁰ Qtd. in Dunlop, *The Development of the British Army*, 254.

the popular call for retrenchment in Army expenditure.⁵⁸¹ Yet increased wages were essential to enticing higher-class recruits. Financial enlistment incentives would have to be substantial and would further burden the taxpayer. Improvements were necessary, but not easily constructed and successfully imposed.

Liberal MPs advocated reforms in the area of army preparation. Dilke told Parliament that “great soldiers who have sat in this House over and over again” have pointed out that “there was a complete deficiency in our system of military training” and “taking only the [South African disasters] which affect the Regular Army, in the first ten months of the war...one by one, [we find them] to be the direct result of the defective trainings of the Army for war.”⁵⁸² He further stressed to *Guardian* readers that “one of the strongest charges against the War Office [was] that for years our army had been far worse supplied with field artillery than any other [force] in the world” and concerning cavalry, “our most conspicuous failure was in the mounted branch of our Regular Army.”⁵⁸³ Dilke believed that perhaps some good could come from the South African mistakes, if the war’s lessons resulted in “the proper utilization in preparation, in time of peace, of the military forces of what was called Greater Britain.”⁵⁸⁴ During the conflict, the *Guardian* had published Liberal MP Thomas Hedderwick’s recommendation for “the immediate appointment of a Committee of men of position and experts” to investigate

⁵⁸¹ *The Manchester Guardian*, July 9, 1904.

⁵⁸² Sir Charles Dilke, “Supply—Army Estimates,” 9 March 1903, in *The Parliamentary Debates (Authorised Edition), Fourth Series Volume CXIX 1903* (London: Wyman and Sons, Ltd., 1903), 153-154.

⁵⁸³ *The Manchester Guardian*, February 2, 1903; Dilke, “Supply—Army Estimates,” 9 March 1903, in *The Parliamentary Debates (Authorised Edition), Fourth Series Volume CXIX 1903*, 153-155.

⁵⁸⁴ *The Manchester Guardian*, February 2, 3, 1900.

locally and “report to Parliament upon the defences of the United Kingdom generally, and the character and inadequacy of our garrison artillery in particular.”⁵⁸⁵

Brodrick, initially an advocate for wartime conscription, began pushing forth proposals as early as 1901 to expand the size of the peacetime army by increasing the number of army corps to three. In personal correspondence, he displayed optimism that “we shall be able to satisfy the public in their desire for ‘army reforms’.”⁵⁸⁶ By March 1902, he had expanded his plan to include the creation of volunteer, yeomanry, and militia reserves combined with a broader imperial defense program. His strategy also included financial enticements to make military service more attractive to potential recruits and to provide assurance that “henceforth only officers would be appointed to command in peace who were certified by the military authorities to be fit to [lead] in war.”⁵⁸⁷ Churchill led the opposition to Brodrick’s propositions, not because he disagreed with the need for improvements, but because he opposed the technicalities. The former correspondent asserted that in war with any European power, “three army corps would scarcely serve as a vanguard. They are enough to irritate [but] not...overawe. Yet, while they cannot make us invulnerable, they may very likely make us venturesome.”⁵⁸⁸ The government initially supported Brodrick’s agenda and promised to enact “considerable” military improvements, but his proposed changes were deemed insufficient substitutes for “actual solutions,” namely increased pay for private soldiers and improved physical training.⁵⁸⁹ In 1901, the National Service League (NSL) emerged as a lobbyist group advocating that all British men between the ages of 18 and 30 undergo four years of

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid., February 3, 1900.

⁵⁸⁶ William St. John Fremantle Brodrick, 1st Earl Midleton Papers, PRO 30/67/6.

⁵⁸⁷ *The Lewiston Daily Sun*, March 8, 1902; *The London Daily Mail*, October 11, 1901.

⁵⁸⁸ Winston Churchill, *Mr. Brodrick’s Army* (May 12, 1901). Reprint. (New York: Rosetta Books, 2013.)

⁵⁸⁹ Dunlop, *The Development of the British Army*, 140-141.

compulsory military preparation. Roberts became the organization's leader and main mouthpiece in the war's aftermath, spending considerable time campaigning around England for his cause. Both the *Times* and the *Mail* promoted the NSL's efforts.

In the post-war years, multiple committees were established to evaluate and address military inadequacies. The Butler Commission examined war stores' disposal, while concerns over medical treatment birthed the Royal Commission on the Care and Treatment of the Sick and Wounded During the South African Campaign. English war correspondents' efforts to expose wartime fiascos influenced a thorough post-conflict investigation by Lord Elgin's Royal Commission on the War in South Africa. Beginning in October 1902, the group convened to determine why the British nearly succumbed militarily to a comparably small, decentralized force of farmers and identify the main strategic, tactical, and administrative problems that hindered the army's progress.⁵⁹⁰ The most prominent member, Reginald Brett, the Second Viscount Esher, reported the commission's findings directly to King Edward. Witnesses summoned by the board were instructed to "provide evidence regarding the efficiency of the organization of the Army, and the use of different arms under the conditions of modern warfare."⁵⁹¹ Amery testified before the body in March 1903, when he presented the committee members with intelligence gathered on the battlefield along with his own personal recommendations. Esher recalled that "[w]e had the evidence of that clever little fellow — Amery — today...[and] he has seen a great deal and got a great amount of information from officers" during the war.⁵⁹² Amery's lengthy testimony further validates the close

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid., 11.

⁵⁹¹ *Report of His Majesty's Commissioners appointed to Inquire into the Military Preparations and Other Matters connected with the War in South Africa, Volume I* (1903).

⁵⁹² Amery, *My Political Life*, 40.

connections between war journalists and the government, as the two sides frequently worked in tandem to identify mistakes and initiate improvements. After Amery later addressed Milner personally regarding the difficulty of increasing the number of recruits, Milner encouraged Roberts to pursue the conscription plan. Amery's efforts led directly to the creation of the NSL, which avowed to counteract "the physical and moral degeneracy attendant upon industrial civilization...who believe in the destinies of the British race, in its essential power for good, and therefore in the desirability of its continued leadership among nations."⁵⁹³ Amery gave many public talks regarding army reform and penned a number of Roberts's subsequent speeches to the government and public audiences.

The questions posed by Elgin's Commission were substantial. According to the board's statistics, during the war, the British had employed over 447,000 men. Hore-Ruthven observed:

Our adversaries only numbered 90,000 men...[but] luckily for us, they never made [a sufficient] effort to follow up on their successes and we were given unlimited leisure to retrieve our failures...[w]hy should we ever get off so light again?⁵⁹⁴

Multiple British officers blamed archaic and deficient methodologies that possessed little applicability against the uniqueness of the Boer opponent. Methuen determined that "heeding [Lord] Wolseley's advice of following an infantry success with a cavalry pursuit could no longer secure the decisive victory."⁵⁹⁵ The Field Marshal also questioned the practicality of old-style cavalry units in modern warfare at all and, like Roberts,

⁵⁹³ Qtd. in Summers, "Militarism in Britain," 115.

⁵⁹⁴ Private Papers of Col. C.M. Hore-Ruthven, Reference 10937, HR 1 (19/2/10-13).

⁵⁹⁵ Miller, *Lord Methuen and the British Army*, 97.

argued that a well-trained mounted infantry force could replace them, thus leaving horses to be methods of transportation rather than combat tools.

During his testimony, Amery identified the problematic nature of the army command structure and asserted that many generals had risen in the ranks purely by seniority, making them “nothing more than rather aged regimental officers.”⁵⁹⁶ Weak military discipline and the behavior of incoming soldiers also were pressing issues. While the Commission assessed the Regular Army and reserves as generally satisfactory, it deemed the overall condition of the new recruits to be poor.⁵⁹⁷ A retrospective evaluation written during the 1930s labeled British soldiers in South Africa as “different from [fighters of] today...not nearly so well-behaved, less well educated, rougher.”⁵⁹⁸ Psychological appraisals had further concluded that “[d]iscipline was not always easy to maintain in [British South African] units. The men always half felt that they were on detachment and...therefore what they did mattered less;” furthermore, “[t]hey [generally] would...obey their own officers but had a skeptical attitude sometimes to those of the other units.”⁵⁹⁹ Additional problems abounded regarding military structure and quality leadership. Bengough lamented, “[T]he army has never yet been conducted on business principles, and until it is so conducted, the best men will never come to the top,” meaning “the State will suffer...[as] interest, favouritism, and social considerations [will] still maintain an unwarrantable influence.”⁶⁰⁰ According to Conservative MP Vicary Gibbs, there existed an immediate need “to restore the credit of the House of Commons with the

⁵⁹⁶ Amery, *Times History of the War in South Africa, Volume II, 1899-1902*, 37-38.

⁵⁹⁷ Major Andrew J. Risio, *Building the Old Contemptibles: British Military Transformation and Tactical Development From the Boer War to the Great War, 1899-1914* (USA: Pickle Partners Publishing, 2014), 15.

⁵⁹⁸ Personal Accounts of the Boer War, 1932 or 1933, for the Black Watch Archives. Private Papers of Col. C.M. Hore-Ruthven, Reference 10937.HR 4/1.

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid., HR 4/3.

⁶⁰⁰ Bengough, *Notes and Reflections*, 47.

man on the street” by ensuring the British military stood adequately equipped to successfully engage in future conflicts.⁶⁰¹ The Commission made Wolseley a scapegoat for insufficient pre-war planning, determining that “the preparation of schemes of offensive and defensive operations” was not exercised “in any systematic fashion” and that “no [unified strategy] of campaign ever existed for the operations in South Africa.”⁶⁰² Military experts, the entire War Office, Chamberlain, Salisbury, Campbell-Bannerman, the “Wolseley ring,” and even the British Constitution (which was deemed by Salisbury himself to be unsuitable as an instrument of war) also shouldered blame for South African disasters at varying times during post-war investigations.

The Commission recommended a basic restructuring of the War Office administration, a proposal previously discussed by the Committee on War Office Organization in 1900. In terms of preparing for future conflicts, Elgin’s group reported:

[T]he conditions of modern warfare with long-range arms and smokeless powder involve an immense extension of lines of battle, diminish the power of control by Commanding Officers, and increase the degree of individual intelligence required in each individual private, both in attack and defence.⁶⁰³

Other key issues included a need for improved marksmanship, formal training in battlefield maneuvers, the utilization of more open formations, and an enhanced emphasis on the defensive advantages of barbed wire and trench warfare, particularly the mastering of entrenchment tactics (increased use of cover, intense terrain studies, construction of

⁶⁰¹ *The London Times*, February 2, 1902.

⁶⁰² Kochanski, “Wolseley and the South African War,” 57-58. Kochanski argues that although Wolseley made substantial planning mistakes, his role in the army’s failings “must be considered in the context of what was possible [at the time].” Kochanski asserts that “[d]ecades of financial stringency had left the army undermanned and underequipped” and the government “refus[ed] to provide [Wolseley] with sufficient [preparatory] information.” He concludes that Wolseley should not be blamed for the poor preparation for British military operations in South Africa. See Kochanski, “Wolseley and the South African War,” 56-69.

⁶⁰³ Qtd. in Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency*, 50.

artificial shelters, etc.).⁶⁰⁴ As correspondents had foreseen during the war, the rifle was the mounted man's weapon of the future, displacing the lances and swords of past conflicts.

In July 1903, the Elgin Commission formally submitted its report on South Africa. However, the committee's role was one of recording information rather than actively initiating reforms, and the liberal Esher wanted immediate action. His initial report to the king bemoaned that "the War Office was inefficient, obfuscated, and interfering; that the Army was never given its head; and that the situation of the Commander-in-Chief was nebulous and anachronistic."⁶⁰⁵ During the war, the *Guardian* also had complained about the inefficiency and weakness of the Commander-in-Chief post because the office holder was not "the sole military adviser of the Secretary of War" but simply "a member of the Council."⁶⁰⁶

Esher had severe misgivings about the army's capabilities since the war's outset. After Magersfontein, he foreshadowed that the conflict would do two things, "change our whole military system in England, and alter military tactics throughout the world;" for example, "[i]t is clear that a direct attack with modern weapons against good and brave men entrenched is impossible."⁶⁰⁷ Previously, Esher had utilized connections with *Pall Mall Gazette* journalists to influence British Sudanese policy and solicited battlefield information from former Eton and Cambridge colleagues serving as South African War correspondents. During the latter phase of the Boer struggle, he used his comrades' war

⁶⁰⁴ Risio, *Building the Old Contemptibles*, 17.

⁶⁰⁵ Qtd. in James Lees-Milne, *The Enigmatic Edwardian: The Life of Reginald, Second Viscount Esher* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1986), 142-143.

⁶⁰⁶ *The Manchester Guardian*, January 24, 1900.

⁶⁰⁷ M.V. Brett, ed., *Journals and Letters of Reginald Viscount Esher, Volume II* (London: Nicholson & Watson, 1934), 249.

dispatches to petition newly crowned King Edward's support for army restructuring. In a private letter to the monarch late in the war, Esher described the War Office's tendency "to treat the generals in command as children still tied to the apron strings of the war departments."⁶⁰⁸ In a subsequent correspondence, Esher declared that the army's performance in South Africa "made it almost a crime to [have] embarked on any course of policy which...involved the nation in war."⁶⁰⁹ King Edward tasked Esher with chairing the War Office Reconstitution Committee, which would further investigate military weaknesses and recommend improvements on the administration and structure of that office, while reporting directly to the Prime Minister. The resulting "Esher Committee," under the direction of new Secretary of State for War Hugh Arnold-Forster, included its namesake, Admiral Sir John Fisher, Colonel Sir George Sydenham Clarke, and Lieutenant-Colonel G.F. Ellison, who was personally recommended by Amery. Esher also chaired the Committee of Imperial Defense (CID), a group established to coordinate the policies of the nation's armed forces by facilitating "a free association of the amateur and the expert."⁶¹⁰ Amery had foretold the necessity of such a board during the war, and he had used the *Times* to promote what he hoped would become "an Imperial Advisory Council—as it were, a political General Staff of the Empire...to guide the policy of the Empire as a whole, without interfering in the practical independence of every part."⁶¹¹

Prior to the delivery of Esher's proposals, the Norfolk Commission convened in 1903 to assess "the organization numbers and terms of service of our Militia and Volunteer Forces, and to report whether any, and if any, what changes are required" in

⁶⁰⁸ Qtd. in Lees-Milne, *The Enigmatic Edwardian*, 143.

⁶⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 142.

⁶¹⁰ Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency*, 222.

⁶¹¹ Leo Amery, *The Problem of the Army* (London: E. Arnold, 1903), 134-35.

order to “secure that these forces shall be maintained in a condition of military efficiency and at an adequate strength.”⁶¹² The commission concluded that the militia suffered from insufficient training and was unprepared to lead its wartime forces. Leaders of the latter fighters possessed “neither the theoretical knowledge nor the practical skill in the handling of troops which would make them competent instructors in peace or leaders in war.”⁶¹³ Furthermore, the board determined that both militia and volunteer forces required better management and identified significant disparities between “battalion establishments and actual strengths,” describing “field-artillery units with insufficient transport, equipment, and materiel.”⁶¹⁴ Under the commission, the Regular Army was relieved of home defense responsibilities, thus paving the way for the future creation of an expeditionary force to fight on the European continent.⁶¹⁵

The commission recommended an eight-year enlistment period for militiamen, the reorganization of volunteer forces, and substantial increase of the intensity and length of training periods. They also advocated the creation of firing ranges, athletic facilities, and tactical training schools. The members identified a need for compulsory service, arguing that “a Home Defense Army capable, in the absence of the whole or the greater part of the regular forces, of protecting the country against invasion” can be raised and sustained “only on the principle that it is the duty of every citizen of military age and sound physique to be trained for the national defence, and to take part in it should emergency arise.”⁶¹⁶ In his testimony, Methuen emphasized problems with the Staff College and the officers it produced for the conflict, declaring, “It is essential if a General is to be well

⁶¹² Qtd. in Dunlop, *The Development of the British Army*, 174.

⁶¹³ Qtd. in Miller, *Volunteers on the Veld*, 168.

⁶¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 168.

⁶¹⁵ Risio, *Building the Old Contemptibles*, 16-17.

⁶¹⁶ Qtd. in Dunlop, *The Development of the British Army*, 176.

served, and to have his brain free to think out the general scheme,” he should feel confident leaving the details of the matter to his staff members without worry.⁶¹⁷ He recommended that the college adopt more stringent requirements and only accept well-trained, knowledgeable candidates. He underscored the danger of dependence on unqualified regimental staff officers.

The tripartite Esher Report, published in February and March 1904, aimed to modernize and restructure the British army and the War Office. Esher’s committee sought to construct “a permanent institution charged with the duties and responsibilities of calling the attention of the Prime Minister of the day to strategical problems of defence, etc.”⁶¹⁸ Esher’s plan involved the establishment of the Army Council, a supreme collective body to coordinate policy and administration similar to the Naval Board of Admiralty. To dispel confusion, the Secretary of State for War would serve as the exclusive conduit for communication with the monarchy regarding army issues. The report further endorsed the establishment of a General Staff (much to Amery’s delight) to adequately prepare the army for future armed conflicts. The Commander-in-Chief of the Forces position was abolished and replaced by the Chief of the General (later General Imperial) Staff. Thirdly, Esher called for the rational restructuring of the War Office, particularly in response to criticisms of its disorganization and ineffectiveness. The report recommended the internal decentralization of the War Department, with the Adjutant-General responsible for soldier welfare, the Quartermaster General overseeing all aspects of supply, and the Master-General of the Ordnance in charge of artillery, engineers, and fortifications. Additionally, Esher emphasized further professionalization of the army

⁶¹⁷ *Report of His Majesty’s Commissioners appointed to Inquire into the Military Preparations and Other Matters connected with the War in South Africa, Volume I* (1903).

⁶¹⁸ 1904 War Office Proposals/Committee of Imperial Defense, CAB 37/69/38/2.

through improved officer education.⁶¹⁹ At Esher's encouragement, future Chief of the Imperial General Staff Sir Henry Wilson (a close friend of Amery) and Sir Henry Rawlinson teamed up at the War Office to create the *Manual of Combined Training* and a *Staff Manual*, both significant steps toward the development of a modern military training guide. Esher's proposals reflected Amery's wartime concerns that mere "proficiency in games" would not help "our poor lads much when they have to face the carefully trained and highly educated German officers."⁶²⁰ Overall, Esher's reform efforts helped to modernize his nation's army organization and make the British more capable of competing with Germany on World War I's battlefields.

After the 1906 landslide Liberal political victory, new Secretary of State for War Haldane began his multi-year military reform campaign, which included the implementation of many Esher Report recommendations. His main achievement was the conceptualization and implementation of a large Expeditionary Force, consisting of six fully equipped divisions that could mobilize rapidly if war broke out with a European continental foe.⁶²¹ The *Guardian* summarized Haldane's July 1906 speech to the Cabinet:

Schemes there had been in the past, but [they] had generally been an alteration of army without a scheme and a scheme without an army...and the time seemed to have come, not only in the minds of soldiers, but in the public mind, for a resolute attempt to be made to turn schemes for reorganisation into realities.⁶²²

Haldane reminded the House that the British Isles constituted the heart of an empire covering nearly 12,000,000 square miles and including 400,000,000 people. Therefore, it was the government's responsibility to protect "the distant shores of that Empire from the

⁶¹⁹ Dunlop, *The Development of the British Army*, 203-204; Beckett, *The Victorians at War*, 239-240. See also John Gooch, *The Plans of War: The General Staff and the British Military Strategy, c. 1900-1916* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974).

⁶²⁰ Dunlop, *The Development of the British Army*, 84.

⁶²¹ Qtd. in *Ibid.*, 241, 243.

⁶²² *The Manchester Guardian*, July 13, 1906.

attacks of the invader,” a task which would require a mobile army “capable of rapid transport.”⁶²³ He told the *Guardian* that the South African War had proven that the empire “could fight [overseas] as one [unit] just as a [unified] nation could fight.”⁶²⁴

During the Mafeking siege, both Amery and Chamberlain (the latter with the backing of the *Mail*) stressed the continued importance of quality volunteer soldiers to the British army’s future success. According to Chamberlain, the war had revealed “the enormous defensive power possessed by Irregular [and] Volunteer troops,” and he hoped that “splendid material which is always at our disposal in this country” could be transformed into “the most effective defensive force that the world has ever seen.”⁶²⁵

Haldane’s second major reform project addressed those issues with the establishment of a new Territorial Force based on county associations. Maurice applauded reorganizing “the inchoate mass of Yeomanry, Militia and Volunteers” — which lacked higher commands, transport and basic necessities that allowed troops to confidently take the field — into a “modern Territorial Army.”⁶²⁶ Such recommendations culminated in 1907’s Territorial and Reserve Forces Act, which created new infantry and cavalry divisions to be raised by local jurisdictions. Haldane additionally played a fundamental role in the foundation of the Officers’ Training Corps, enacted by Army Order 160 in 1908, which established “Junior Divisions” in public schools and “Senior Divisions” in universities to prepare boys and young men for future military commissions. He drew inspiration from Fabian Society leader Sidney Webb, who recommended the need for War Office reforms “to

⁶²³ Qtd. in Dunlop, *The Development of the British Army*, 249-250.

⁶²⁴ *The Manchester Guardian*, July 13, 1906.

⁶²⁵ *The London Daily Mail*, February 6, 1900.

⁶²⁶ Qtd. in Dunlop, *The Development of the British Army*, vii.

introduce a system of scientific fighting to replace soldiering.”⁶²⁷ In 1909, an Imperial Defence Conference agreed to the reorganization of all Imperial forces based on the same standards and established the Imperial General Staff to obtain and distribute news and intelligence across the empire while also constructing specific defensive strategies. The staff would provide recommendations on training, soldier schooling, and military forces’ organization in wartime without infringing upon the autonomy of the self-ruling Dominions.⁶²⁸

During the South African War, New Liberalist MP and future Foreign Secretary Edward Grey had told *Guardian* reporters:

[The British nation is] looking for a serious review of the current [military] situation, a serious statement as to the needs of the future, for a manly and free acknowledgement of the mistakes that [have] been made, and a statement that the Government were most conscious of those mistakes, and [are] prepared to draw from the past the lessons of experience which [are] necessary to redeem the future.⁶²⁹

War reporters forced that admission of errors by bringing the army’s shortcomings to the forefront through their dispatches, pushing their way past government denials and censorship campaigns. In Wallace’s simple evaluation, “The war correspondent is the pest of the Army.”⁶³⁰ Those pesky journalists consistently enlightened the domestic public about significant military changes crucial to the maintenance of Britain’s world power status in the twentieth century. Maurice and fellow writers reminded politicians, “You have got a nation to save.”⁶³¹ Correspondents stressed the government’s need to both restore national credibility and act rapidly to improve their empire’s combat

⁶²⁷ Scally, *The Origin of the Lloyd George Coalition*, 52.

⁶²⁸ Dunlop, *The Development of the British Army*, 296-298.

⁶²⁹ *The Manchester Guardian*, February 2, 1900.

⁶³⁰ *The London Daily Mail*, June 19, 1901.

⁶³¹ Qtd. in Summers, “Militarism in Britain,” 112. The Committee on Physical Deterioration will be discussed in detail later in this thesis.

capabilities. According to Grey, a government whose reputation had been damaged must be willing to address criticism, and in order to redeem its character, it must “meet that criticism in a better spirit than had yet been shown” in 1900.⁶³²

Discussions continued throughout the Edwardian era concerning the best way to properly train an army for modern warfare. Reformers emphasized the need to overcome the “failure of imagination” in British society, or the apparent inability of ostensibly intelligent men to construct new methods of action applicable to modern, difficult circumstances.⁶³³ Baden-Powell argued that established strategies could still trump technological advancements and cited shock tactics and night marches as effective options. Others, including esteemed Polish martial theorist Jean de Bloch (a close friend of Stead), believed that the only way to overcome modern military firepower might be to escalate army enrollment into the millions and prepare for wars characterized by entrenchment and lengthy stalemates. His predictions foreshadowed the trench warfare that defined World War I’s western front.

Alternatively, Bloch campaigned for greater emphasis on building soldiers’ characters. In 1909, the *Field Service Regulations* and *Training and Manoeuvre Regulations* concluded that “moral force in modern war [often] preponderates over physical force.”⁶³⁴ Amery had offered similar observations in South Africa. Upon returning to England, the journalist asserted that contemporary war conditions “ha[d] enormously increased the value” of combatants’ ethical qualities.⁶³⁵ Amery felt that a

⁶³² *The Manchester Guardian*, February 2, 1900.

⁶³³ T.H.E. Travers, “Technology, Tactics, and Morale: Jean de Bloch, the Boer War, and British Military Theory, 1900-1914,” *Journal of Modern History* 51, no. 2 (June 1979): 285.

⁶³⁴ *Ibid.*, 274.

⁶³⁵ Amery, *The Problem of the Army*, 181.

recruit educated in morality and personal values would be more likely to humanize his enemy and less likely to ignore the understood rules of civilized warfare.

Correspondents' graphic depictions of unfit soldiers and flourishing disease in South Africa amplified concerns about domestic health problems and physical fitness, as well as the need for overall improved medical care. At the conflict's conclusion, Conservative MP John Gorst identified the prevalence of sickness, frailty, and poor vision and hearing in Britain's elementary schools.⁶³⁶ Since physically weak military men often were graduates of such institutions, it became apparent that the whole health system needed revamping and should begin with the youngest Britons, as correspondents across the political spectrum had emphasized during the war. Chief Medical Inspector Arthur Newsholme wanted to focus on continued advances in preventative medicine. He rationalized that disease cost more than its deterrence because "prevention would always be cheaper than a policy of unconditional debts which relieved the symptoms of illness and destitution without getting at their root cause."⁶³⁷ Correspondents had discussed such issues with politicians during the South African War; after Steevens died of enteric fever at Ladysmith, his editor Northcliffe encouraged his political colleagues to push for better regulations over and access to clean water for soldiers on the battlefield.

The army's humiliations in South Africa revealed the poor physical state of many British soldiers, but also illuminated the shameful healthcare options available to the domestic working classes, from which most recruits were culled. According to researcher A. Watt Smyth's 1904 professional assessment:

The deterioration of the physique of the urban poor is attributed to insufficient

⁶³⁶ John E. Gorst, "Mr. Chamberlain's Proposals," *The North American Review* 177, no. 561 (August 1903): 164.

⁶³⁷ Qtd. in Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency*, 64.

and poor quality of food, defective housing, overcrowding...insanitary surroundings...[a] want of thrift, illness, or death of the breadwinner, alcoholic excess, and acquired disease.⁶³⁸

Smyth compiled extensive reports linking that decline to city poverty. Overall, he felt that schools should prioritize the general health of children, from physical education to “the care of the sight, the hearing, and the cleanliness of the mouth and teeth.”⁶³⁹ He also endeavored to increase the influence of various social, municipal, and philanthropic agencies to promote healthy bodies and healthy minds, which would positively impact individual self-esteem. Increasing recruits’ salaries might temporarily yield a better quality of soldier, but an overreliance on that tactic would have little positive impact on the army’s overall health.

In 1902, the Annual Report of the Inspector-General of Recruiting reinforced the military’s extreme anxiety regarding the working classes’ deterioration. Methuen asserted, “[I]f you get a wretched set of men like that, you may be perfectly certain that if they get into a right corner they will not face it.”⁶⁴⁰ A healthier, more efficient army was less likely to succumb to illness on the battlefield. British leaders targeted the sickly domestic city populations as a military reform focal point. According to Labourite writer Walter Meakin, the impoverished masses represented “the real danger” to Britain’s future and contended that every urban man given the ability “to bring up a strong and healthy family which has received the full benefit of the ordinary facilities of education [would

⁶³⁸ A. Watt Smyth, *Physical Deterioration, Its Causes and the Cure* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1904), 14-15.

⁶³⁹ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

⁶⁴⁰ *Report of His Majesty’s Commissioners appointed to Inquire into the Military Preparations and Other Matters connected with the War in South Africa, Volume I* (1903).

be] a most valuable asset to the Empire.”⁶⁴¹ During the war, Amery and other correspondents had suggested that country living would produce healthier soldiers, who matured in the fresh air and open fields as opposed to the unsanitary backstreets of urban slums. Edward Davson argued in the *Empire Review* that the backbone of army recruiting must be rural dwellers — “the yeomen, the bowmen, the lads of dale and fell,” — and their “practical extinction” from the forces was having devastating consequences on the physique and power of Britain’s military.⁶⁴² Increased efforts began to “repeople” the countryside, a movement everyone from Hardie to Amery had recommended following the war’s conclusion. However, simply shifting the geographic focus of military recruiting did not alleviate the health problems plaguing English city dwellers.

The 1904 Committee on Physical Deterioration sought to improve domestic health conditions for all Britons and establish enhanced medical care options. After sharing the Committee’s disappointing findings, MP Gorst told Parliament, “[We cannot] carry on this great Empire, if [we] allow...causes [that] affect...the physical condition of the people to continue to operate, and thus prevent [our] having soldiers and sailors fit to serve” for Britain’s protection.⁶⁴³ Subsequent measures provided food to poor children, allowed youngsters to have regular check-ups, and even offered financial rewards for babies who survived their first twelve months of life. The Royal Commission on Physical Training in Scotland recommended that children participate in at least three hours of exercise per week as long as it did not detract from traditional schoolwork. In England, the Council of the Royal College of Surgeons stressed the need to promote “the health,

⁶⁴¹ Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists*, 190; Walter Meakin, *The Life of an Empire* (London: T.F. Unwin, 1907), 170-171.

⁶⁴² Edward Davson, “Britain’s Duty to British Labour,” in *The Empire Review, Volume I*, ed. C. Kinloch Cooke (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1901), 332, 338.

⁶⁴³ Qtd. in Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency*, 235.

growth, and general physical development of the young soldier by improving his environment” and by taking “special care in the selection of the kind and quality of his food.”⁶⁴⁴ The 1907 creation of the School Medical Service, birthed from the Education (Administrative Provisions) Act, afforded local governments the right to set up health services for British youth. Additional voluntary societies for societal improvement related to hygiene concerns multiplied in the years following the conflict, including the National League for Physical Education and Improvement; the National League for Health, Maternity and Child Welfare; and the Women’s League of Service for Motherhood. Social reformists drove the financing and campaigning for such groups and continued to forge alliances with liberal newspaper correspondents in order to publicize the latter’s post-war reform ideas. Journalists had utilized the South African conflict to initiate a dialogue regarding physical decline, both on the battlefield and in British cities. Their concerned commentaries foreshadowed the social legislation that characterized later Edwardian England under Liberal leadership, which will be discussed later in this study.

Baden-Powell, still heralded by many as the embodiment of Victorian heroism, founded the Boy Scout movement in 1908 and penned the handbook *Scouting for Boys*. His organization championed physical prowess and civilian leadership while saturating British youngsters, particularly from the lower classes, with imperial patriotism. Haldane praised the former Mafeking idol’s efforts, declaring, “I feel that this [youth association] of yours has so important a bearing upon the future that probably the greatest service you can render to the country is to devote yourself to it.”⁶⁴⁵ Baden-Powell repeatedly expressed his belief in “[a] fit, alert, working-class soldiery, able to draw on knowledge

⁶⁴⁴ Smyth, *Physical Deterioration*, 19.

⁶⁴⁵ Qtd. in Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency*, 66.

of the countryside.”⁶⁴⁶ He believed such a force was Britain’s best hope in future clashes with continental powers. Throughout the Edwardian era, Baden-Powell’s writings appeared in numerous London newspapers, as he mobilized his celebrity status to connect with press barons. His articles advocated social corporatism and the repetitive use of nationalist language in public school instruction. He also sanctioned government-sponsored propaganda campaigns to inform young Britons of the benefits associated with healthy lifestyles and the negative consequences of debauchery.

As the war concluded, Lieutenant-Colonel May of the Royal Artillery sought to reinvigorate the British “military instinct” and innate “love of sport and of country life which distinguishes our race.”⁶⁴⁷ During the South African conflict and in the years that followed, British schools continued to tout physical strength, masculinity, and military discipline as important imperial cultural values. Balfour’s controversial 1902 Education Act restructured the English schooling system in the name of promoting “national efficiency,” the previously mentioned platform upon which “politicians and pundits” across partisan lines “called for a more businesslike approach to politics, [economics], imperialism, social welfare, and the conduct of war.”⁶⁴⁸ So loud were the cries of National Efficiency advocates that the *Times* declared in October 1904 that it had become “fashionable” and “a sort of mark of intelligence” to associate one’s self with the movement.⁶⁴⁹

⁶⁴⁶ Surridge, “The Military Critique,” 599.

⁶⁴⁷ E.S. May, *A Retrospect on the South African War* (London: Low Marsten, 1901), 1-9; 39-41.

⁶⁴⁸ Surridge, “The Military Critique,” 599. See also Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency*. Balfour received praise for the plan’s recommendations to place more experts and advisors in the British school system. Lloyd George led the “nonconformist” Liberal opposition to the bill, a plan which he declared would “put Rome on the rates.” The bill contributed to polarizing political debates that helped the Liberals win the general election in 1906. Qtd. in Morgan, “Lloyd George, Keir Hardie and the Importance of the ‘Pro-Boers’,” 293.

⁶⁴⁹ *The London Times*, October 16, 1902.

Amery applauded the increased inclusion of military instruction and athletic competition in teaching curriculums, pointing out in the *Times* that in order “to have an efficient defence we must have a nation interested in defence” as well as men physically ready and eager to compete.⁶⁵⁰ However, he recognized that too much emphasis on sport could neglect essential training in increasingly relevant expert fields, such as science and technology. During the war, Rosebery wrote to the Incorporated Association of Headmasters that “[s]ome of our finest schools are content to turn out lads of admirable character and temper, I admit, but equipped for the keen competition of our modern world with [only] a thin varnish of dead languages.” Such knowledge, argued the former Prime Minister, dissipated from men’s minds very quickly, “leaving little to show as the intellectual result of the educational springtime.”⁶⁵¹ Amery’s testimony before the Elgin Commission referenced such schooling deficiencies and particularly struck a chord with Esher, who emphasized the importance of professional training and technological education in his report. The viscount felt that “[o]ur difficulty is that our lawyers and physicians are professional men, but until quite lately our soldiers have been amateurs—and soldiering a pastime and not a business.”⁶⁵²

Regardless of party leanings, writers and journalists also expressed concern with the alleged “amateurishness” of British politicians and worried about the future of a political system led by traditional elites who lacked appropriate education, expert advice, and modern insights. Moderate journalist Sidney Low, in a 1904 study of British politics, boldly assessed, “Government in England is government by amateurs. The subordinates,

⁶⁵⁰ Qtd. in Scally, *The Origins of the Lloyd George Coalition*, 131.

⁶⁵¹ Rosebery to the Incorporated Association of Headmasters, 31 January 1900, The Rosebery Papers, MSS.10001-10216. Box 76.

⁶⁵² Brett, *Journals and Letters of Reginald Viscount Esher*, 183-184.

in their several grades, are trained; the superiors, the persons in whom rest responsibility and power are untrained.”⁶⁵³ Social and political reformists thus made professionalizing the military *and* political systems a priority.

The National Efficiency movement spanned the decade, culminating in Lloyd George’s People’s Budget of 1909. The crusade sought to alter customary thinking on English government and infuse the political system with new dynamism. By blending “the ethic of the civil servant, the imperial bureaucrat, and the self-made man with the ambition of talent without means,” the efficiency doctrine became the hallmark of what socialist-minded author H.G. Wells labeled “the revolt of the competent.”⁶⁵⁴ Proponents praised Germany as the exemplification of efficacy and educational ideals. In Stead’s words, “The Germans are governed by skilled experts; we by ill-informed aristocrats.”⁶⁵⁵ Consequently, according to the October 1903 *Quarterly Review*, “the manufacture of brains into a highly finished and [refined] product” should be the primary objective of British society.⁶⁵⁶ Efficiency activists expressed frustration at the increasing age of high-ranking politicians, particularly in the Cabinet, and argued that younger leaders should dominate the new political climate. The *National Review* asserted:

An assemblage of sexagenarians, most of whom have little knowledge or conception of the problems to be solved, who are bound by the shibboleths of a bygone era...who are blind to the salient tendencies of modern life...is not the body to reorganize the nation.⁶⁵⁷

⁶⁵³ Sidney Low, *The Governance of England* (London: Unwin, 1911), 197.

⁶⁵⁴ Scally, *The Origins of the Lloyd George Coalition*, 10.

⁶⁵⁵ W.T. Stead, ed., *Coming Men on Coming Questions* (London: 1905), 314.

⁶⁵⁶ Henry E. Armstrong, “The Reign of the Engineer,” *Quarterly Review* 198, no. 396 (October 1903): 462.

⁶⁵⁷ “An Englishman: Reconstruction or Catastrophe,” *National Review* 36 (November 1900): 331.

Naturally, the movement was not without its share of criticism. A number of radical Liberals, including John Morley, and staunch Conservatives such as Salisbury opposed the program's objectives, fearing that a cult of expertise would undercut traditional values and further divide the British people. Hobson worried that efficiency could destroy "the 'creative' element in work" by transforming the working masses into "physically [productive] but mentally inert...machines."⁶⁵⁸ Newspapers such as the reformist *Speaker* argued against the movement on mainly political grounds. In the eyes of the movement's radical opponents, representative democracies, individual rights, popular will, and social contracts were not "discredited or outdated catcheries," but comprised a collection of valid truths that transcended both time and circumstance.⁶⁵⁹ Such Britons viewed efficiency as threatening to the very concept of liberal values.

Social deterioration, military weakness, and economic concerns all related to the state of the English education system. Liberal journalist A.G. Gardiner, in his 1903 year-in-review article for the *Blackburn Weekly Telegraph*, determined that America possessed the world's commercial crown because its leaders understood a nation's most valuable asset to be its children and that fully investing in their education ensured a strong, prosperous future.⁶⁶⁰ Meanwhile, England lagged far behind academically, and the war had served to expose such English school failings. Witnesses testified before the Elgin Commission that soldiers' mental capacities and basic knowledge was far inferior to those of soldiers from countries that prioritized public education, particularly

⁶⁵⁸ Qtd. in Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency*, 102. See also Hobson, "Scientific Management," *Sociological Review* 7 (April 1914): 99-125.

⁶⁵⁹ Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency*, 101.

⁶⁶⁰ Qtd. in Koss, *The Pro-Boers: The Anatomy of an Antiwar Movement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 256.

Germany. British recruits lacked a strong academic foundation and thus were often incapable of comprehending the complexities of military instruction.

In a July 1903 speech regarding education and empire, Balfour called for:

[A] great alliance of the greatest [instructional] instruments in the Empire...not merely for training the youth which was destined to carry on the traditions of the British Empire, but also to further those great interests of knowledge, of scientific research, and culture without which no Empire...could really say that it is doing it share in the progress of the world.⁶⁶¹

On the heels of his 1902 Education Act, he recommended additional significant reforms to the British school system, including a departure from the classical education approach and an emphasis not just on instructing students but on “influencing and impressing moral and intellectual characteristics” on those under the schoolmaster’s tutelage.⁶⁶² A 1903 National Education symposium reported that “the supreme lesson of our experience” is the dramatic need to reform British academic organization and administration.⁶⁶³ That conclusion did not fall on deaf ears with the Liberal government that took power three years later. The previously referenced 1907 Administrative Provisions Act increased the power of Local Education Authorities and expanded the Free Place System while also creating new scholarships so needy pupils could continue their studies. To safeguard juvenile bodies and minds, the government passed the Children and Young Persons Act in 1908, legally protecting children from abuse at home and in the workplace.

Transitioning the Victorian emphasis on instilling British youths with strong imperial values into the Edwardian era involved the continued cultivation of a fiercely nationalistic socio-political consciousness. J.A. Mangan identifies the principles

⁶⁶¹ *The Manchester Guardian*, July 11, 1903.

⁶⁶² Ibid.

⁶⁶³ Laurie Magnus, ed., *National Education: A Symposium* (London: 1901), 21-2.

undergirding that ideology as “selfless service to the state...a sense of racial superiority...imperial chauvinism, waxing and waning in reaction to imperial crises” and “uncritical conformity to the [philosophy] of the group,” beliefs which bore a striking similarity to the later ideologies of Nazi Germany.⁶⁶⁴ Fabian socialists recommended offering financial enticements for having children in order to improve the birth rate and encourage the rearing of healthy, working-class youth. Wells emphasized Britons’ duty to reproduce for the state and its future; he argued that by helping the population grow, parents would be providing the empire with a valuable commodity and would deserve monetary compensation “just as much as if they built a bridge or raised a crop of wheat.”⁶⁶⁵ Such arguments were dispensed as propaganda in domestic newspapers as natural extensions of wartime concerns and constituted, in the words of Milner, a concerted effort “to raise the well-being and efficiency of the more backward of our people.”⁶⁶⁶

Fabian socialist Webb argued that the nation could not meet the empire’s needs without a robust, disciplined population. In that regard, educational, social, and military reforms became closely intertwined. As Anne Summers accurately argues, social improvement efforts “could be safely assimilated to a context in which the nation was seen as a fighting unit” because in the Edwardian period, “civil society...required regeneration, and it was *through*, and indeed *for* the army that the process of renewal was to take place. Society was to be militarized.”⁶⁶⁷ The longer domestic Britons clung to traditional principles and emphasized bravery over competency, the longer they would

⁶⁶⁴ Mangan, “The Grit of Our Forefathers,” 116.

⁶⁶⁵ H.G. Wells, “Socialism and Family Life,” *Independent Review* XI (Nov. 1906): 172.

⁶⁶⁶ Milner, *The Nation and the Empire*, 161.

⁶⁶⁷ Summers, “Militarism in Britain,” 112.

fare poorly on modern battlefields.⁶⁶⁸ Germany had become both the shining example for Britain to follow and the greatest continental threat to the empire. In 1903, the *Mail* vilified the Germans as a “secret and insidious enemy” and prophesized “inevitable and imminent war” with the British.⁶⁶⁹ An anonymous contributor to the *Fortnight Review* pondered, “[I]f we are not fit enough to repel an invasion by a rabble of peasants in Africa without making a pig’s ear of it, how are we going to cope when Germany invades us?”⁶⁷⁰

The National Efficiency movement addressed a myriad of societal issues and successfully, if only temporarily, traversed party divides. The Coefficients, a non-partisan “Brain Trust” and “Shadow Cabinet” of experts masquerading as a supper club, was formed in 1902 and helped to drive the program forward.⁶⁷¹ The organization’s members included politicians such as Haldane and influential war journalists including Amery, who strove to “permeate the state” in order to restructure its political agenda.⁶⁷² Amery thought it was possible to create a durable program that successfully mingled imperialism with socialism. He believed that a blurring of party lines was possible and envisioned an eventual uniting of Liberal Imperialists with “the more progressive wing” of the Unionist Party.⁶⁷³ The Coefficients’ efforts did help Liberals and Conservatives — albeit for a short moment — suppress their differences to address dissatisfaction with current policies and replace ineptitude with intelligence. However, the group fragmented over tariff reform, and the inability to sustain cross-party harmony on that volatile issue prevented

⁶⁶⁸ Searle, *A New England?*, 304.

⁶⁶⁹ Qtd. in Playne, *The Pre-War Mind in Britain*, 112.

⁶⁷⁰ Qtd. in Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists*, 287.

⁶⁷¹ Scally, *The Origins of the Lloyd George Coalition*, 79.

⁶⁷² Searle, *A New England?*, 304.

⁶⁷³ Amery, *My Political Life*, 222-223.

the club from maintaining its original goals or keeping its original members. In 1904, Amery helped establish the Compatriots to carry on the Coefficients work as a Unionist-based, politically vibrant group that also utilized a “Brain Trust;” however, unlike their predecessors, the latter organization worked directly on formulating tariff policy. The Compatriots emphasized their youthful passion and vitality in contrast to inflexible elderly statesmen, defined themselves as educators, and drew much of their power and support from their connections to the press and extra-governmental organizations. Compatriot members represented a variety of newspapers, from Amery’s *Times* to Gwynne’s *Morning Post*, and hoped to formulate a comprehensive policy with which to establish “the strongest unified voice in the political press.”⁶⁷⁴ The organization delivered a heavy dose of militarism and propaganda regarding social improvements and tariff reform. In his article “Imperial Defence and National Policy,” Amery argued that “defence need not be a diversion of the national energies from higher and better aims...but can be used as a motive power and a stimulus in the development towards a higher form of national [cooperation].”⁶⁷⁵

Overall, most military reforms during the Edwardian era were necessary but not radical in nature. Correspondents and government leaders did not seek to delete all of the conventional strategic plans from the British army’s playbook. Through a complex process of negotiation and compromise, the empire ended up with a well-established fighting system that was tactically modernized for the new century. Journalists’ dispatches and commentaries during the South African War demonstrated a clear recognition of army problems and presaged the important developments that did transpire

⁶⁷⁴ Scally, *The Origins of the Lloyd George Coalition*, 120.

⁶⁷⁵ Qtd. in *Ibid.*, 128.

post-struggle, such as improved infantry training, more effective reconnaissance strategies, artillery coordination, concealment skills, and the concerted efforts to improve the physical health of recruits. Journalists such as Amery, Wallace, and Hobson exploited their positions to commence an ongoing dialogue among the press, the public, and Parliament with regard to army problems and potential solutions. Their efforts helped to restore British faith in their forces and convert an obsolete fighting force into an intimidating World War I adversary.

3. DOMESTIC ANTI-WAR ACTIVITY, PRO-BOERS, AND SOCIAL REFORM

ANTI-WAR ORGANIZATIONS AND DEMONSTRATIONS

Before South African correspondents began uncovering military flaws from the battlefields, English anti-war organizations and protests already had begun to undermine the myth of a united, pro-war domestic population. Participants in those activities represented all social classes and harbored diverse justifications for opposing the colonial conflict. During the struggle, pro-Boer radicals lamented that valuable funds in South Africa were desperately needed to finance social programs at home. In Parliament, Lloyd George warned the British people that “every lyddite shell on the veldt carried away an old age pension.”⁶⁷⁶ As previously stated, Hobson dramatized the conflict as an immoral capitalist plot, designed to flaunt imperial might and extend aristocratic wealth and prestige. He asserted that “[t]he vast expenditure on armaments, the costly wars, the grave risks and embarrassments of foreign policy, the stoppage of political and social reforms within Great Britain” directly served the economic interests of only a few specific industries and people.⁶⁷⁷ Even the pro-war *Times* and *Mail* cautioned against diverting excessive pounds to South Africa at the expense of the metropole.

Socialists challenged the Conservative government’s push for war with the same economic arguments. Labourite Hardie deemed the conflict “a Capitalist war, begotten by Capitalists’ money, lied into being by a perjured mercenary Capitalist press, and fathered by unscrupulous politicians, themselves the merest tools of the Capitalists.” He

⁶⁷⁶ Qtd. in Morgan, “Lloyd George, Keir Hardie and the Importance of the ‘Pro Boers’,” 297. See also J. Grigg, “Lloyd George and the Boer War,” in *Edwardian Radicalism, 1900-1914: Some Aspects of British Radicalism*, ed. A.J.A. Morris (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), 15.

⁶⁷⁷ Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study*, 176.

contrasted aggressive “un-English” Britons with the pastoralist Boers, whose “Republican form of Government bespeaks freedom, and is thus hateful to tyrants.”⁶⁷⁸ Hardie sensationalized the war as a vicious struggle against British capitalism gone awry and challenged *Labour Leader* readers to remember what England’s free farmers were like in the seventeenth century because their lifestyle was comparable to that of the Boers.⁶⁷⁹ Hardie’s socialist colleagues contrasted their British identities with those of rich urban financiers, who the Labour leader believed did not truly reflect the ideals of the nation’s people. Even Campbell-Bannerman wrote privately to a pro-Boer MP, “I am very much in harmony with your views, although I am not at liberty to speak out quite so freely.”⁶⁸⁰

Irish and Welsh MPs tended to be vocal about their war opposition in Parliament. One representative from Ireland offered up the names of some “fine old English gentlemen for whom the British Empire is going to war...nearly all millionaires and leading Uitlanders.” He then asked the House, “I wonder how many of these millionaire masters of Her Majesty’s Government are now at the front with your soldiers to face the music?”⁶⁸¹ Lloyd George, the only British Prime Minister of Welsh descent, refused to concede that the conflict erupted over *Uitlander* suffrage. He famously declared that the South African struggle was a question of wanting “45% dividends” from the Boer gold field stock certificates.

Peace advocates deemed the idea of unwavering domestic war support to be a façade, citing a growing opposition movement. They believed that “[w]hen the present

⁶⁷⁸ Qtd. in Lowry, “The Wider Impact of the South African War,” 206.

⁶⁷⁹ *The Labour Leader*, March 17, 1900.

⁶⁸⁰ Qtd. in Koss, *The Pro-Boers*, xxvi.

⁶⁸¹ Qtd. in Koebner and Schmidt, *Imperialism*, 228.

storm is over,” there would be a widespread backlash against “avaricious, ambitious, supercilious jingoism,” and “rough-shod imperialism,” which many radicals felt had brought the nation into a “present state of pride and reckless humanity, which none deplore so much as those who love and honor England most.”⁶⁸² Yet most liberal thinkers did not lobby for an immediate cessation of hostilities or lash out against the government with anti-capitalist diatribes. No Briton wanted to appear traitorous or lose the war, regardless of how they felt regarding its commencement or course. Even in strongly pro-Boer constituency Holfmirth and other radical districts, Liberal Council representatives advocated ending the conflict only once the enemy had been forced back to their Republics and an acceptable settlement was achieved.

The pro-Boers were not a cohesive faction. In fact, they were characterized *by* their diversity and disunity. However, many protestors derived their “inspiration and organization, and even more of their rhetoric, from a fervent Christianity.”⁶⁸³ They painted British imperialists in an immoral light and self-identified as the true Christian patriots. Those anti-war Britons argued that their misguided brethren’s behavior would not only defame their country’s international reputation but also threaten the latter’s access to eternal salvation. Anti-war newspapers picked up on the religious undertones and kept their readers updated on such protests. Two weeks before the conflict’s beginning, the *Guardian* reported a statement made by the Evangelical Free Church Council that avowed “for two Christian nations to resort...to hostilities would be a scandal upon Christianity, a deep and widespread injury to religion, and a source of enduring racial bitterness and animosity.” Therefore, the Council appealed to “every

⁶⁸² “Opposition in England to the South African War,” *Advocate of Peace* 62, no. 2, February 1900 (Boston: American Peace Society, 1899): 29.

⁶⁸³ Koss, *The Pro-Boers*, xiv.

method [that] negotiation and arbitration can devise to prevent the nations being plunged [further] unto war that [is] calamitous and patricidal to both...powers.”⁶⁸⁴ Peace activist and pro-Boer newspaperman Stead, in an October 1899 speech at Westminster, pacified parishioners by affirming, “[W]e shall not have long to wait before we shall find that God is not dead, neither is He asleep; and...I believe, He loves this England of His, and this people of His, although but a small remnant are still faithful to Him.”⁶⁸⁵ Stead, who later penned the previously discussed “Candidates of Cain” pamphlet, believed he was uniting his version of patriotism with Christianity to properly define Englishness, a classification that in his eyes did not apply to warmongers.

Radical liberals sympathized with the Boers, whom they defined as brave fellow whites forced to shield their homeland from an unjustified invasion and deserving of an honorable peace. Left-leaning journalists exchanged commentaries and concerns with their Parliamentary counterparts. MP Sir Wilfrid Lawson, in a letter reprinted in the *Guardian* in January 1900, balked at the Liberal Federation’s notions that the government “had no option” but to keep fighting and urged his fellow representatives to stop “canting about religion and civilization.”⁶⁸⁶ In Parliament, he declared, “I know that the ‘war-at-any-price party’ says, ‘Go on fighting, with more expenditure and with more disgrace to this country.’ Well it is a disgrace...I do not believe that the sword can settle this South African question.”⁶⁸⁷ Lawson and like-minded thinkers felt that the best way for the empire to save face was to conclude, as soon as was feasible, what they deemed to be

⁶⁸⁴ *The Manchester Guardian*, September 28, 1899.

⁶⁸⁵ Qtd. in Koss, *The Pro-Boers*, 32.

⁶⁸⁶ *The Manchester Guardian*, January 24, 1900.

⁶⁸⁷ Sir Wilfrid Lawson, “Address in Answer to the Queen’s Speech,” 7 February 1900, in *The Parliamentary Debates (Authorised Edition), Fourth Series Volume LXXVIII 1900*, 886-888.

“one of the most disgraceful [conflicts] in which this country has ever been engaged.”⁶⁸⁸

Anti-war protestors argued that pro-war Britons eventually would realize the harm they allegedly were inflicting upon their nation by prolonging the battle in South Africa.

Liberal MP Henry Labouchere declared, “I have great faith in the good sense of my country-men...they may be fooled for a short time, but not for long.”⁶⁸⁹ After the conflict, Hobson and the pro-Boers continued to agitate for social reforms, asserting that the struggle had “cast a powerful searchlight upon the nature of the...crowd which we call the British nation” and that the resulting illumination was unsavory.⁶⁹⁰

Correspondents’ descriptions of an unprepared, struggling army and excessive loss of British lives made multiple domestic Britons across all social levels question the value of continuing the fight.

The South African Conciliation Committee (SACC) drew its members predominantly from London’s exclusive gentlemen’s clubs. However, the organization expanded to include a women’s branch under Emily Hobhouse’s leadership. Veteran Liberal MP Leonard Courtney organized SACC to restore amicability between the Dutch and the British in South Africa and to lobby for a satisfactory peace settlement. SACC’s members agreed that warfare should be engaged only when external forces threatened the empire. Courtney identified himself and his followers the true patriots. In a speech to the SACC in early 1902, he declared:

If a man was a patriot—if he had any respect for the character of his country...and saw the bulk of his fellow-countrymen running into error, and embarking upon a policy which must bring mischief upon themselves,

⁶⁸⁸ *The Manchester Guardian*, January 24, 1900.

⁶⁸⁹ Qtd. in Porter, “The Pro-Boers in Britain,” 239.

⁶⁹⁰ Hobson, *The Psychology of Jingoism*, 49.

degradation of their own characters, deterioration of their own condition, and inflict uncalled-for injustice upon those outside our nation—that man, the more patriotic he was, the more necessary did he find it to speak.⁶⁹¹

Participants distributed pamphlets, organized public speeches, and held meetings across the city. They exploited their political connections to advocate for the cessation of hostilities and repudiate misrepresentations of the war in London newspapers. The SACC worried that British aggression would continue after the Boers were effectively subdued and cautioned that excessive violence against Dutch colonists could tarnish their empire's reputation. Members urged compromise and conciliation to promote a lasting peace based on trust and respect between the two parties. In a January 1900 letter to the *Guardian's* editor, a SACC representative gave the following warning under the pseudonym "Peace With Honour":

However blundering the diplomacy, however unfortunate the campaign which preceded and accompanied our [nation's] action[s], and whatever heart-burning may have been caused to our beloved country, we must not forget the character we have acquired and must maintain as a Christian nation...It is a grand opportunity of giving the world an object-lesson in self-restraint and magnanimity and of healing the division between the [white] races in South Africa.⁶⁹²

The Increased Armaments Protest Committee (IAPC) argued against the sizeable amount of money being spent on the war effort. They enjoyed the support of many liberal journalists, such as Hobson and Robertson. The organization printed and distributed numerous pamphlets including *Empire, Trade and Armaments: An Exposure*, in which IAPC leaders claimed to counteract "the Jingo, militarist and sham patriotic sentiment which at present exerts almost unrestrained influence on the public mind."⁶⁹³ Radical President Robert Spence Watson viewed the empire as being "of no benefit to the mass of

⁶⁹¹ Qtd. in Koss, *The Pro-Boers*, 259.

⁶⁹² *The Manchester Guardian*, January 24, 1900.

⁶⁹³ Qtd. in Thompson, "The Language of Imperialism," 164.

the population, for whom it had domestic penalties in the form of higher taxes, the diversion of [valuable] capital abroad, and the prevention of important social reforms.”⁶⁹⁴

W.T. Stead utilized his prominent press position to encourage anti-war demonstrations. He nearly bankrupted his own non-partisan paper, the *Review of Reviews*, by refashioning it into a staunchly pro-Boer mouthpiece. Stead additionally printed a widespread pamphlet entitled “Shall I Slay My Brother Boer?” and published the *War Against War in South Africa*, a radical periodical that appealed to Boer sympathizers. He stood firmly behind what he claimed should be the Liberal Party’s platform: pure imperialism, common sense, and the Ten Commandments. Stead protested that “[a]ll our money is wanted for bloodshed and devastation... another instance of the difference between Jingo and anti-Jingo Imperialism.”⁶⁹⁵

In November 1899, Stead’s Stop-the-War Committee declared its radical goals to be independence for the Boer Republics and the total withdrawal of all British forces from South Africa. In the organization’s December 1900 booklet *How Not to Make Peace*, Stead emphasized, “What I attack...[is] not the individual soldier, but the policy which he was compelled to carry out.”⁶⁹⁶ Stead placed blame for wartime blunders on political policymakers and urged his readers to protest the alleged atrocities being perpetuated abroad in Britain’s name. He dramatically declared, “The Empire, stripped of its armour, has its hands tied behind its back and its bare throat exposed to the keen knife of its bitterest enemies.”⁶⁹⁷ During the struggle’s final year, Stead called for a complete

⁶⁹⁴ Ibid., 164.

⁶⁹⁵ Qtd. in Koebner and Schmidt, *Imperialism*, 229.

⁶⁹⁶ Qtd. in Krebs, *Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire*, 97.

⁶⁹⁷ Qtd. in Lowry, “The Wider Impact of the South African War,” 203.

post-war reevaluation of military policy, particularly concerning the use of concentration camps and farmhouse burning.

Like his radical journalist counterparts, Stead used his publications to emphasize the need for dramatic reforms in an effort to rescue the empire from what he deemed to be moral decay. As Krebs contends, “It was because [Stead] expected so much of his country...that he held it to such high standards and refused to sanction what he saw as its betrayals of true British values.”⁶⁹⁸ Stead felt that baring British brutalities was an acceptable first step on a long road to imperial redemption. In April 1901, he produced *The War in South Africa: Methods of Barbarism: The Case for Intervention*, which included intensive coverage of court-martial trials, where British soldiers faced rape and assault accusations (although the majority of the charges were summarily dropped, regardless of their validity). A year later, Stead mobilized his *Review of Reviews* to condemn the concentration camps:

[T]he work of slaughtering the fighting men goes on steadily but slowly, while the massacre of the children proceeds with unabated rapidity. The death-rate of these slaughter camps has scared even Mr. Chamberlain, who evidently feels uneasy at having to answer before the House of Commons for having done to death 11,000 children as a result of his humanitarian effort to minimize the inevitable consequences of our policy of devastation.⁶⁹⁹

Stead communicated his disgust with the camps to both Hobson and Lloyd George, who shared the editor’s perspective on multiple war issues. The Liberal politician took the other gentlemen’s concerns to Parliament. In July 1900, Lloyd George told the House, “[Y]ou have...turned women and children in the depth of winter from their own homes into the African desert” and “you call that restoring British prestige in South Africa. On

⁶⁹⁸ Krebs, *Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire*, 96.

⁶⁹⁹ W.T. Stead, “Our Death Camps in South Africa,” *The Review of Reviews* XXV (January 1902): 8.

the contrary, British prestige has suffered, and no one will deny that this great war has done nothing more than to multiply grief and poverty.”⁷⁰⁰

Anti-war advocates organized discussion groups to debate the very nature of imperialism. The Rainbow Circle brought together prominent liberal, radical, and socialist writers and statesmen, including Hobson and future Labour leaders J. Ramsay MacDonald and Sir Charles Trevelyan, to question imperial policies and formulate social reform plans. Within the Circle, left-leaning journalists traded ideas with like-minded politicians. The two groups collectively identified themselves as “the intellectual spearhead of a new progressive politics,” which they believed would provide England with “a philosophy suited to the demands of the age.”⁷⁰¹ The Circle members’ primary goal was to “bring a New Radical order out of ideological chaos.”⁷⁰² However, those men did not seek to wipe the slate totally clean when crafting their political creed. They tweaked liberalism to fit the context of modern democracy, in which government interference in socio-economic affairs was increasingly necessary to tackle the needs of a new century.⁷⁰³

Left-leaning correspondents used their South African coverage to support domestic anti-war organizations and garner backing for such groups from the public. The numerous peace demonstrations across Britain, including the noteworthy protest in

⁷⁰⁰ Qtd. in Koss, *The Pro-Boers*, 144. In January 1902, the *Spectator* discussed the *Daily Chronicle*’s reports on potential libel levied against the British army concerning their actions in the concentration camps. The *Chronicle* claimed to have traced accounts of maltreatment back to Stead’s “British Atrocities in South Africa” and thus accused Stead of fabrication and exaggeration. According to the *Spectator* of January 11, 1902, such “foul and filthy lies” are “in their origin neither German nor American [origin]. Calumny, like charity, too often begins at home.”

⁷⁰¹ Porter, *Critics of Empire: British Radical Attitudes*, 164-165, 168.

⁷⁰² Ibid.

⁷⁰³ See Peter Weiler, *The New Liberalism: Liberal Social Theory in Great Britain, 1889-1914* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1982) and Mark Rathbone, “The Rainbow Circle and the New Liberalism,” *Journal of Liberal History* 38 (Spring 2003): 24-28.

Trafalgar Square, provided those writers with the ammunition to shoot down propagandized portrayals of a pro-war domestic population. At the encouragement of radical journalists, MP Edmund Robertson presided over a wartime gathering of the League of Liberals Against Aggression and Militarism. At the meeting, he discussed social issues alongside the *Morning Leader*'s Robertson and other pro-Boer MPs, including F.A. Channing, Hardie, and Thomas Burt. Hobson personally invited Samuel Cronwright-Schreiner to lecture to domestic Britons during the war, and the *Guardian* helped fund the South African peace advocate's speaking tour of England and Scotland.⁷⁰⁴ The newspaper regularly reported on meetings of the Stop-the-War Committee and highlighted to readers that the organization's members came from multiple walks of life and social backgrounds. Before a Committee gathering in late February 1900, the *Guardian* declared, "It is expected that a large number of [MPs] and Nonconformist ministers will take part...[including] Mr. Lloyd-George."⁷⁰⁵ In December 1901, the Liberal politician was forced to flee an anti-war speaking engagement disguised as a policeman after rioters became violent. However, Blanch argues that while many Britons participated in victory celebrations such as Mafeking Night, the majority of them did not play an active role in disrupting such meetings.⁷⁰⁶

Anti-war groups failed to end the conflict quickly or establish an organized national protest movement. Small bands of pro-war demonstrators and their threats interrupted or prematurely cancelled the majority of peace gatherings. Overall, most Britons remained consistently pro-war throughout the South African struggle. But left-leaning correspondents used the protests and organizations as evidence that many in the

⁷⁰⁴ Cronwright-Schreiner's speaking tour will be discussed at length later in this thesis.

⁷⁰⁵ *The Manchester Guardian*, February 26, 1900.

⁷⁰⁶ Blanch, "British Society and the War," 220.

more politically aware British public were willing to challenge government policy. Empowered by their increasing ability to influence imperial decision making, those writers encouraged all classes of Britons to join their quest for post-war social reforms.

Cronwright-Schreiner's speaking tour piqued the attention of correspondents at both ends of the political spectrum. According to the *Mail*, the activist was "a simple, straight-forward honourable man."⁷⁰⁷ The husband of prominent South African author and peace advocate Olive, Cronwright-Schreiner also had pacifist convictions and endeavored to inform the British domestic populace about the true nature of the conflict. He embarked on a lengthy trip through England and Scotland in early 1900 to discuss the war in public forums. The SACC and Stop-the-War Committee were instrumental in devising his itinerary, as was his chief backer, the *Guardian*, which praised him as "an Englishman and a Colonial who comes to this country to tell us what his fellow-colonists are thinking of the war and its effects."⁷⁰⁸ In the *Times*, Amery trumpeted Cronwright-Schreiner's "fearless advocacy of the cause of peace and the right of free speech."⁷⁰⁹

With the February 1900 relief of Ladysmith, the pacifist faced increased antagonism at his speeches. Pro-war university students turned hostile at a March 6 meeting in Glasgow. Cronwright-Schreiner recalled the distressing outcome:

[The imperial protestors] struck no one and injured no one, but gradually worked up to the man with the flag, pulled him off the chair...seized the flag, and tore it in shreds...[t]he shreds of the flag were passed to the platform, where they were received with deafening cheers as they were victoriously waved. May the flag of England ever find such men to rescue it from dishonor!⁷¹⁰

⁷⁰⁷ *The London Daily Mail*, November 18, 1899.

⁷⁰⁸ *The Manchester Guardian*, March 15, 1900.

⁷⁰⁹ *The London Times*, May 21, 1900.

⁷¹⁰ Samuel Cronwright-Schreiner, *The Land of Free Speech: Record of a Campaign on Behalf of Peace in England and Scotland in 1900* (London: New Age Press, 1906), 71.

The speaker departed the meeting along with Lloyd George and the other pro-Boers, disgusted that so-called imperial supporters could publicly destroy their own sacred symbol.

Cronwright-Schreiner never made it to the meeting hall in Edinburgh on March 7, as war backers succeeded in prematurely breaking up the gathering. Additional riots broke out in Scarsborough on March 12 and on May 20 in Aberdeen. The recent relief of Mafeking amplified the latter outburst. Cronwright-Schreiner returned to South Africa in July, disillusioned by what he deemed to be the British people's ignorance and reluctance to recognize the problems of waging an imperial war. The *Guardian* blamed government propaganda for encouraging the outbursts and exaggerating the extent of resistance to the peace advocate's speeches. In Scarsborough's aftermath, *Guardian* reporters asserted, "[I]t does not suit the war party that anything should be known about this [conflict]...If once the cool, calm voice of reason began to be heard, who is to answer for the consequences? Accordingly, the mob is let loose on Mr. Schreiner and anyone who invites or entertains him."⁷¹¹ Hobson offered the following assessment:

The war fever has carried the country a long way but we do not believe that it is prepared to acquiesce not merely in the breaking up of public meetings but in attacks on the person and property of those who refuse to shout with the crowd. Such attacks...show an underlying weakness in the side which employs them, since men who can argue do not break windows...[T]o tolerate them would be a national disgrace [and] [t]hat they should be so frequent and...have gone so far that Mr. Schreiner is prevented even from addressing private gatherings is a signal...of the reaction of the war spirit upon internal liberties.⁷¹²

Anti-war dissenters and radical journalists who displayed solidarity with Cronwright-Schreiner continued to question the definitions of patriotism and imperial

⁷¹¹ *The Manchester Guardian*, March 15, 1900.

⁷¹² *Ibid.*

servant. As argued previously, pro-Boer MPs also problematized the meanings of those loaded terms. An anonymous representative theorized that if imperialism was defined as “sober pride in the great Empire we control [and] a most earnest desire to knit together the bonds of friendship [among] the various populations that belong to it, then there is no one more of an Imperialist than I am.”⁷¹³ However, he continued, if it meant dismantling “the old and honoured tradition of this country... then it is the duty of every honest citizen of this country to destroy that spirit, because otherwise that spirit is certain to destroy us.”⁷¹⁴ The concept of imperialism had acquired multiple meanings and been co-opted by various parties during the war for their own purposes. Yet regardless of how one defined the term, everyone’s ultimate goal remained the empire’s stability and security. Reflecting on his speaking tour, Cronwright-Schreiner, who viewed himself as a genuine British patriot, sadly lamented that “[n]o healthy nation would have tolerated what [happened to me] in England and Scotland during the South African [W]ar.”⁷¹⁵

The *Guardian* printed numerous letters to the editor and war questions sent over private wire regarding the behavior of pro-war demonstrators toward peace advocates. In one report, Cronwright-Schreiner and correspondent Hobson stewed over “the outrageous treatment” they received, despite the fact that the former was “an English colonist of strong Imperialist leanings—precisely the type we are now all supposed to love.”⁷¹⁶ Given that Cronwright-Schreiner was once confronted at a small get-together in a private residence — not at a public meeting — and in his personal rail carriage, the *Guardian* wondered what defense the Home Secretary could offer of such unprovoked attacks on a

⁷¹³ Qtd. in Porter, “The Pro-Boers in Britain,” 252.

⁷¹⁴ Koebner and Schmidt, *Imperialism*, 230.

⁷¹⁵ Cronwright-Schreiner, *The Land of Free Speech*, 74.

⁷¹⁶ *The Manchester Guardian*, March 15, 1900.

British subject or “if the local authorities who allowed them to take place without any interference” would face retribution.”⁷¹⁷ The harder pro-war rioters tried to silence domestic opposition, the louder pro-Boers clamored to display their oppositional patriotic attitudes toward the South African War.

THE CONCENTRATION CAMPS, THE BACKLASH, AND CENSORSHIP

War correspondents’ coverage of the British concentration camps for Boer women and children reawakened debates over the civilized treatment of non-combatants and foreshadowed the post-war push for domestic gender rights, particularly enfranchisement. As women in the combat zone became “factors to be taken into consideration,” so too did women at home. As Eliza Riedi accurately argues, “[I]t should...be clear that imperial and gender history cannot be divorced in considering the social impact of the war,” for the South African conflict “provid[ed] new arguments for women’s suffrage and [brought] home to anti-war women [in particular] the weakness of their political position without direct parliamentary representation.”⁷¹⁸ The goals of the English women’s rights movement frequently dovetailed with pro-Boer ambitions, providing a golden opportunity to connect wartime developments to domestic social concerns.

As the conflict neared its conclusion, journalists recognized the fallacy of press censors’ attempts to hide or lie about camp details. By 1901, Emily Hobhouse’s

⁷¹⁷ Ibid.

⁷¹⁸ Eliza Riedi, “Teaching Empire: British and Dominions Women Teachers in the South African War Concentration Camps,” *The English Historical Review* 120, no. 489 (2005): 1316; Krebs, “The Last of the Gentlemen’s Wars,” 51.

dispatches about the detainment centers appeared regularly in the *Guardian*, which conveniently employed her brother L.T. as a columnist. She also produced *The Brunt of the War and Where It Fell* (1902), which, according to the *Guardian*, was the one publication “of all the books yet written on the war” that English people “[could] least afford to neglect” because of its broader imperial social implications.⁷¹⁹ When British women read about Hobhouse’s campaigns to improve internment camp conditions, some expressed annoyance that reformers seemed focused on assisting the enemy’s females to the neglect of homeland gender concerns. In a letter to the *Mail*, one reader declared, “It is time for the women of England to speak. Why should the Government be at the expense of sending out ladies to the concentration camps? Let the ladies of this commission stay at home and visit the fatherless and the widow.”⁷²⁰ In the author’s eyes, Englishwomen should reserve their empathy for their widowed British brethren, not for the nameless wives of the enemy. Other domestic Britons disagreed. Organizations such as the National Union of Women Workers and the Women’s Liberal Federation castigated the use of concentration camps and petitioned for the humane treatment of Boer women and children. The *Times* and the *Mail* could not stem the avalanche of angry letters from readers condemning the detentions, while the *Guardian* rushed to distribute the news of alleged government “barbarism” for popular consumption.

The utilization of racially based internment contradicted Britain’s supposed devotion to inclusive liberalism. Understandably, individual rights were restricted by states of emergency and martial law declarations during the war. But the increased “classifying impulses” facilitated by the emerging social science fields led to the

⁷¹⁹ *The Manchester Guardian*, November 21, 1902.

⁷²⁰ *The London Daily Mail*, July 27, 1901.

categorical delineation of certain peoples as “a collective threat by virtue of [their] group membership.”⁷²¹ A racial heartbeat pounded beneath both the battlefields and the concentration camps of the veldt. In the *Mail*, then-Unionist MP Arnold-Forster reminded readers that unless something was done to permanently and amicably settle together “upon the soil of South Africa...men and women of Anglo-Saxon race and of Anglo-Saxon sympathies we would have fought the war in vain.”⁷²² The arguments were just as strong from the liberal side. Hobson complained that “race-hatred” of the Boers had developed in South Africa, and it could take generations to overcome such attitudes.⁷²³ In a prior editorial, the *Guardian* deemed ethnically motivated incarceration “repugnant to the conception of equal treatment without regard to distinctions of race on which the British Empire has [supposedly] been built up.”⁷²⁴

Correspondents provided mixed responses to the internment camps and Hobhouse’s dispatches. In late December 1901, Wallace reported to the *Mail* that “[t]he Ladies Commission...has been careful to inquire into the specific charges laid against the British troops by Miss Hobhouse” and “[is] quite prepared to endorse any of [her] recommendations.”⁷²⁵ However, Wallace also admitted that during the war, Boer women had played “not so much the part of the heroine as of spy” and thus their detentions could be justified on occasion.⁷²⁶ Conversely, *Guardian* reporters repeatedly gave their blessings to Hobhouse’s cause. Her brother L.T., in his coverage of her June 1901 speech at Oxford, informed the paper’s readers that “Miss Hobhouse [believes] a message of

⁷²¹ Forth, “Britain’s Archipelago of Camps,” 679.

⁷²² *The London Daily Mail*, October 19, 1901.

⁷²³ *The Manchester Guardian*, July 26, 1900.

⁷²⁴ *Ibid.*, March 25, 1901.

⁷²⁵ *The London Daily Mail*, January 20, 1902.

⁷²⁶ *Ibid.*

sympathy from Englishwomen to the Dutch women would do more for the pacification of South Africa than the British army or the Government could do” and emphasized the “cordial vote of thanks” that was given to the activist for her efforts.”⁷²⁷ The *Guardian* prioritized Hobhouse’s reports and told readers, “Whatever [your] opinions on the general politics of the [war] question might be, it [will] be felt by everyone whom [those] statements reach...that this sort of thing [cannot] possibly go on.”⁷²⁸

The exposes posed questions about women’s treatment in both South Africa and metropole while also sparking debate over gender equality and social improvements.⁷²⁹ Krebs accurately contends that the ability of imperial developments to address reform challenges helped to reestablish the empire’s stability at a key transitional moment.⁷³⁰ The *Guardian* applauded the large turnout for the October 1900 Conference of the National Union of Women Workers. During the meeting, President Mrs. A.T. Lyttelton pressed her audience:

[Are] we to look back upon the whole episode [of the war merely] with a sense of relief that it [is] over, and return to our comfortable lives again, or [are] we to try and remain at the higher level to which we [have] risen, to hold fast to the self-devotion, the strengthened and quickened interest? For we [are] at the parting of the ways, and unless the good which the war [has] called out [is] held and confirmed [with social improvements] the dangers which it [has] also called forth [will] predominate, and there [will] be a deterioration of the [empire’s] moral fibre... We must once again put forth our strength if we [are] to be equal to the [post-war] task ahead before us.⁷³¹

The South African War constituted an imperial crossroads. The path the empire chose to take at that juncture was fundamental to its future direction.

⁷²⁷ *The Manchester Guardian*, June 26, 1901.

⁷²⁸ Ibid.

⁷²⁹ *The London Daily Mail*, January 20, 1902 and August 13, 1901.

⁷³⁰ Krebs, “The Last of the Gentlemen’s Wars,” 39.

⁷³¹ Qtd. in Koss, *The Pro-Boers*, 174-175.

Hobhouse drew direct parallels between English and Boer women in her campaign to encourage better treatment for both groups. In a 1901 Birmingham speech, she highlighted similarities in their use of old remedies. For example, she recalled that while “[t]he Boer women...[sometimes] imagined that a drop of blood from a dog’s ear was a cure for measles,” some Devonshire women “pinned their faith in the efficacy of seven wood-lice ground to a powder and taken in a little jam.”⁷³² In her public talks, Hobhouse described the Boer wives’ desire to communicate their strife to their English counterparts and to appeal for assistance in the name of international womanhood. According to the activist, the Boer women simply wanted to make the ladies of England “think a little, and try and know and understand” the hardships of the concentration camps.⁷³³

Unable to defeat the persistent Boers with European battlefield maneuvers, the exasperated British responded late in the war by utilizing a scorched earth policy and burning enemy farmhouses under new Commander-in-Chief of South African forces Kitchener’s direction. The army erected blockhouses to protect British supply lines and incarcerated civilians in the previously discussed internment camps. British Lieutenant Crossman, a part of Kitchener’s campaign, remembered his mission as brutal and disturbing. The troubled officer declared post-war, “I hate it...I never came into the Army to do that sort of thing.”⁷³⁴ Captain Montmorency remarked that “[t]he spectacle of a column of smoke rising to the skies from every point of the compass inspired me with a yearning to quit this hateful task of making war upon a people fighting to defend their

⁷³² *The London Daily Mail*, July 12, 1901.

⁷³³ *The Manchester Guardian*, June 26, 1901.

⁷³⁴ Qtd. in Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army*, 311.

hearts and homes.”⁷³⁵ Newspapers were quick to pick up on the soldiers’ reluctance. The fighters’ responses to their orders humanized them and often demonized the originators of such policies. The *Morning Leader* shared the unsettling words of a Scottish volunteer soldier who recalled, “We visited a farmhouse, where the daughter played on the piano to us. We took the father to the General...and by evening the smoke and fire of that farmhouse was ascending the clouds to heaven.”⁷³⁶ Methuen, in private correspondence with Campbell-Bannerman, wrote that a victory attained by such means would be “only the beginning of a long agony of constitutional strife” and post-war investigations.⁷³⁷

Neither Briton nor Boer denied that the rules of the game had changed concerning civilian rights and acceptable military behavior in modern warfare. Hobson acknowledged that if one engaged in armed combat, he “[would] have to face squalor, brutality, and inhumanity...[for] that is the essence of war.”⁷³⁸ However, the correspondent reminded readers “there are degrees even there” and urged the government to consider “the unwisdom of these fire-raising and of all their attendant abomination,” particularly in light of “the resentment that is being accumulated in the mind of every Dutch-speaking man and woman in South Africa.”⁷³⁹ Multiple reporters judged the army’s actions as beyond what was considered tolerable in times of war. Childers declared, “[T]o me...morally, if not legally, these people are fair-and-square belligerents, who have fought honestly for their homes, and treated our prisoners humanely. [C]onfiscation of farms seems [a] hard measure...and I hope more lenience will be

⁷³⁵ Captain H.P. de Montmorency RFA, “The Boer War.” WO 108/185.

⁷³⁶ Qtd. in Robertson, *Wrecking the Empire*, xiii.

⁷³⁷ Qtd, in G.B. Pyrah, *Imperial Policy and South Africa, 1902-1910* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), 62-3.

⁷³⁸ *The Manchester Guardian*, November 19, 1900.

⁷³⁹ Ibid.

shown.”⁷⁴⁰ The press raised such uproar that Kitchener was forced to moderate his policy so that no farm would be destroyed except as punishment for a clearly defined treacherous act and then only with the direct written consent of the commanding officer.⁷⁴¹

Lloyd George, with assistance from the Cadbury family, obtained control of the *Daily News* in 1901 and transformed the paper into a liberal champion. He then used the publication to castigate the army’s comportment in morally questionable situations. Before Parliament, Lloyd George asserted, “[I]n this war we have gradually followed the policy of Spain in Cuba,” referencing the internment camps and violent practices of Spanish General Valeriano “Butcher” Weyler during the island’s 1896 rebellion against foreign rule.⁷⁴² The MP’s sentiments increasingly rang true to many correspondents, regardless of their political leanings. As the *Mail* noted, political cartoons and posters frequently depicted Chamberlain “with a tail, horns, and a single hoof, as the man behind every scene in recent English history...down to the sacking and burning of the sacred and arcadian homes of [the] Boers.”⁷⁴³ Robertson, working under the pseudonym “Scrutator,” penned dozens of articles for the *Morning Leader* regarding those army actions. He warned that British military conduct in South Africa would “create a passionate unity of racial antagonism to everything English, such as never could have been accomplished by the most zealous Dutch propaganda” and concluded that “[t]his is empire wrecking *par*

⁷⁴⁰ Erskine Childers, *In the Ranks of the C.I.V.: A Narrative and Diary of Personal Experiences with the C.I.V. Battery in South Africa* (London: Smith, Elder & Co. 1900), 184.

⁷⁴¹ See Elizabeth van Heyningen, *The Concentration Camps of the Anglo-Boer War: A Social History* (Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2013), 60.

⁷⁴² Qtd. in Lowry, “The Wider Impact of the South African War,” 206.

⁷⁴³ *The London Daily Mail*, October 8, 1900.

excellence.”⁷⁴⁴ Journalists astutely informed their readers that extraneous brutality against the Boers could subvert government plans for post-war reconciliation and further damage Britain’s global reputation.

A letter to the editor of the *Guardian*, written by a Ms. Corps from inside one of the camps, depicted the horrific conditions for the paper’s readership:

The English think that the men will surrender if their families are made to suffer, and we women are absolutely helpless...The people here have nothing. Last week I saw a woman with a dirty old skirt and a sack showing under it as petticoat...[T]he meat [served to the detainees] would be refused by a dog. They have to lie on the bare ground, only a few having a box or chair to sit on. But what good does it do to tell you all this? No pen can describe the condition of these people.⁷⁴⁵

As the *Times* lamented, “Our own folly and willful blindness has already given us enough to answer for.”⁷⁴⁶ The *Guardian* ended its review of Hobhouse’s book by posing a difficult question for British leaders: “How are we to characterize warfare which attempts to make life impossible outside our lines and at the same time disowns responsibility for non-combatants?”⁷⁴⁷ Many correspondents feared that the military would revive their questionable practices in subsequent conflicts if change did not occur.

British behavior in South Africa cast a poor light on the people whom Rhodes had declared to be “the best...in the world, with the highest ideals of decency and justice and liberty and peace.”⁷⁴⁸ Fair or not, domestic Britons were judged by their military’s actions, and the more questionable the soldiers’ conduct, the more the average citizen was characterized as immoral, indifferent, and antagonistic. Radical liberal author Robert Buchanan claimed that English society had distanced itself from “those humanitarian

⁷⁴⁴ Robertson, *Wrecking the Empire*, x-xi.

⁷⁴⁵ *The Manchester Guardian*, September 2, 1901.

⁷⁴⁶ *The London Times*, March 15, 1900.

⁷⁴⁷ *The Manchester Guardian*, November 21, 1902.

⁷⁴⁸ Qtd. in van Heyningen, *The Concentration Camps*, 322.

traditions that appeared to open up to men, in the time of my own boyhood, the prospect of a new Heaven and a new Earth. He accused the government of “repudiating the Enthusiasm of Humanity altogether” and trading it for “the worship of physical force and commercial success in any and every form...a Hooligan Imperialism.”⁷⁴⁹ The British people had been cast as avaricious jingoes, despite the fact that it was largely a false assessment. Following the war’s conclusion, French historian Elie Halevy assessed that much of the anti-war advocates’ remaining satisfaction was in “the bitter, proud [feeling] of being an elite straying in the midst of a crowd in delirium.”⁷⁵⁰ Correspondents saw army reforms and moral behavior as the keys to casting off widespread characterizations of an obsolete, bellicose military backed by an insensitive domestic population.

Complaints in print and in Parliament over such actions at the front did not go unnoticed. By the end of the war, the British army had conducted a staggering 10,012 general courts-martial and more than 5,000 district courts-martial.⁷⁵¹ The questionable methods deployed by the British in South Africa sparked the amending of international law, particularly concerning civilian treatment during combat. Liberal MPs did not withhold their criticisms, as many radicals felt the Boers had suffered more during the war than any other peoples in historical memory. The *Guardian*’s Scott pressed Brodrick unsuccessfully for the total death toll in each camp, while Hardie told the House, “War upon men is, in all conscience, bad enough; but war upon women and children by means of concentration camps” constituted “an outrage which no civilised nation in these days

⁷⁴⁹ Qtd. in Porter, *Critics of Empire: British Radical Attitudes*, 91.

⁷⁵⁰ Qtd. in Playne, *The Pre-War Mind in Britain*, 189.

⁷⁵¹ See Stephen Miller, “Duty or Crime? Defining Acceptable Behavior in the British Army in South Africa, 1899-1902,” *Journal of British Studies* 49, no. 2 (April 2010): 318.

should be guilty.”⁷⁵² One unidentified representative asserted “without fear of contradiction that this policy of shutting up women and children in prison camps is entirely without precedent in modern times.”⁷⁵³

Liberals held out hope that substantial modifications could prevent such situations in future conflicts. To that end, the *Guardian* endorsed reform at the policymaking level and sought to absolve individual soldiers of blame. According to the paper, the strategy of scorched earth and concentration camps was “in itself an un-English policy, and “to set [our] troops to execute it was unfair to them.”⁷⁵⁴ Hobson blamed partisan orators for “confus[ing] an attack on policy with an attack on the instruments of the policy,” but claimed that such ruses “deceive...no one except those who wish to be deceived.”⁷⁵⁵

Government leaders including Chamberlain attempted to justify the camps’ establishment as a military necessity because Boer wives left free on the veldt could provide valuable intelligence to their fighting husbands. Conservative politicians insisted that the camps offered protection and food to ostensibly abandoned women and children who were supposedly at the mercy of black Africans. When viewed through that lens, Chamberlain could almost spin the detention facilities as charitably providing essential wartime services to non-combatants. The *Times* reported the government’s claims that Boer fighters, “on account of their proverbial domesticity,” despised being separated from their families for long periods of time. According to that theory, those men would

⁷⁵² C.P. Scott, “Questions,” 11 July 1901, in *The Parliamentary Debates (Authorised Edition), Fourth Series Volume XCVII 1901* (London: Wyman and Sons, Ltd., 1901), 781; Keir Hardie, “Finance Bill,” 17 July 1901, in *Ibid.*, 755-756.

⁷⁵³ Qtd. in S.B. Spies, *Methods of Barbarism? Roberts and Kitchener and Civilians in the Boer Republics, January 1900-May 1902* (Cape Town: Human and Rousseau, 1977), 295.

⁷⁵⁴ *The Manchester Guardian*, May 26, 1902.

⁷⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

be more willing to surrender if they learned their families had been incarcerated.⁷⁵⁶ Yet Hobhouse's interviews with camp detainees told another story. Her studies revealed the determination of Boer women, who declared that "[n]othing would move them or alter their attitude" and encouraged their husbands to keep fighting at all costs. As one incarcerated Boer wife asked pointedly, "If we did not give up last year when we had suffered so little, is it supposed we will give up now, when we have suffered so much?"⁷⁵⁷

The official Circular Memorandum distributed by the British Army in 1900 deemed their current directives the most efficient way to combat the guerilla fighters. The statement claimed that the men and women left on farms would provide weapons and information to Boer soldiers. Furthermore, given "the unprotected state of [many] women now living out in the districts," the army's current course was "[allegedly] desirable to ensure their not being insulted or molested by natives."⁷⁵⁸ Publicly, Chamberlain declared that necessity trumped the law and even morality in wartime — *Inter arma enim silent leges*. Yet even the Colonial Secretary privately expressed reservations about the incarcerations. In a letter to Milner, Chamberlain confessed that if they had forsaken the policy in favor of another more preferable strategy, "we should have had something to say for ourselves," but "we seem to have accepted the mortality as natural and many good people are distressed at our apparent indifference."⁷⁵⁹ As the correspondents foreshadowed, the issue of civilian treatment during war remained a contentious issue throughout the twentieth century.

⁷⁵⁶ Qtd. in Spies, *Methods of Barbarism?*, 188.

⁷⁵⁷ Qtd. in *The Manchester Guardian*, June 26, 1901.

⁷⁵⁸ Circular Memorandum No. 29, December 21, 1900. Qtd. in Wessels, ed., *Lord Kitchener and the War in South Africa, 1899-1902*, 61.

⁷⁵⁹ Joseph Chamberlain to Lord Milner, 5 November 1901, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC 13/1/198.

Liberal MPs and their similarly minded newspaper colleagues deemed Chamberlain's internment rationalizations invalid. In March 1901, Irish representative John Dillon asked the House of Commons, "What civilized Government ever deported women? Had it come to this, that this Empire was afraid of [females]?"⁷⁶⁰ Hobhouse was infuriated with the government's use of the more benign term "refugee" when describing the camps' occupants. She complained that "[t]heir line generally is to...make out the people are glad of their protection," but "[i]t is absolutely false. [Boer families] are compelled to come and are wholly prisoners."⁷⁶¹ Hobhouse focused additional press attacks directly on Kitchener, whom she initially assessed as a "great organizer." Now she believed the title was inaccurate, arguing that he was actually so unprepared "that thousands of people [found] themselves dumped down in strange places where there [was]s nothing ready for their reception."⁷⁶² Anti-war publications spoke often of "death camps" in the war's later days, at which time even the local colonial governors admitted that the camp system should not be utilized in future British military conflicts.

Many Boers, not unlike their German counterparts during the Treaty of Versailles, maintained that their army did not lose the war. Instead, the Dutch colonists believed that unscrupulous British tactics such as the farmhouse burning and women's detention forced their hand. In essence, the British cheated. Schalk Burger, author of the official record regarding the Vereeniging peace negotiations (discussed later in this thesis), asserted that "it was not the arms of the enemy that...compelled us to surrender." Instead, the Boers declared that they capitulated because of "another sword that [the British] had stretched

⁷⁶⁰ Qtd. in Krebs, "The Last of the Gentlemen's Wars," 42.

⁷⁶¹ Ibid., 45.

⁷⁶² Qtd. in Spies, *Methods of Barbarism?*, 200.

out over us — the sword of hunger and nakedness, and what weighed most heavily of all, the awful mortality amongst our women and children in the Concentration Camps.”⁷⁶³

The internment centers were a way to dehumanize the enemy and to establish power over an alien colonial landscape.⁷⁶⁴ To take the Boers’ land and incarcerate their women, the British had to mentally rebirth their opponents as non-humans, a status that would help suppress remorse or nagging concerns over immorality. Hobhouse offered firsthand testimony to evidence the inhumane treatment Boer women and children received at the hands of their British captors. In the *Guardian*, she stated:

These unfortunate women were told...that on no account would they be allowed to remain [in their homes]; they would be sent to a woman’s camp...Can anyone imagine without indignation the misery of such a place with no privacy, the herding together of young and old, and barely the necessities of life?⁷⁶⁵

Correspondent Nevinson recalled the words of a “serious Tory soldier,” who quietly confided to the journalist, “[I]f English people saw this sort of thing they’d hang that Chamberlain.”⁷⁶⁶

Political theorist Hannah Arendt argues that the Boer detention facilities paralleled concentration camps later established by the Nazi and Soviet totalitarian regimes, which were used to contain “suspects whose offenses could not be proved and who could not be sentenced by ordinary processes of law.”⁷⁶⁷ In South Africa, the accused generally were Boer wives and their young offspring. Labeling those non-combatants traitors provided British military leaders with the necessary justification for incarceration. During their detainment, thousands of Boer women and children slowly

⁷⁶³ Ibid., 284.

⁷⁶⁴ Forth, “Britain’s Archipelago of Camps,” 668.

⁷⁶⁵ *The Manchester Guardian*, November 19, 1900.

⁷⁶⁶ Qtd. in Robertson, *Wrecking the Empire*, xxix.

⁷⁶⁷ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, 1968), 440.

starved or died from rampant disease because of insufficient supplies and improper sanitation. According to Hobhouse in the *Guardian*, more Boers died in camps than on the battlefield. She went on to declare, “A truth so startling cannot but be the central fact of the whole war, reducing all others to relative insignificance, and to anyone who has the courage to look it in the face it must suggest questions of the deepest import in ethics and politics.”⁷⁶⁸ In addition to her government reports printed in the *Guardian*, Hobhouse held strategic meetings with Liberal politicians Lloyd George and Campbell-Bannerman and newspaper editors such as Scott, Gardiner and Spender in order to make sure her voice was heard.

Hobhouse used her camp coverage as a platform for social change in both South Africa and England. Encouraged by her persistency, the Colonial Office dispatched inspection committees, including an all-female team headed by Millicent Fawcett, to observe and evaluate the camps by the same guidelines with which poorhouse and factories were appraised in the domestic setting. In the Cape Colony, Milner sought the advice of numerous inspectors because he viewed camp detainees as a “social analogue to Britain’s slum-dwelling dangerous classes” that had “endured the unsanitary conditions of [the] new urban industrial centers, not to mention the coercive indignities of the workhouse.”⁷⁶⁹ Meanwhile, Hobhouse fashioned the concentration camps into a “women’s issue.” That characterization sparked the creation of the Ladies Committee and encouraged British women to work in the camps as teachers and nurses, mingling with captive Boer wives and children. Hobhouse hoped that expanding opportunities for

⁷⁶⁸ *The Manchester Guardian*, November 21, 1902.

⁷⁶⁹ Aidan Forth, “The Birth of the Concentration Camp? British Imperialism and the Origins of Modern Detention,” *Perspectives on Europe* 43, no. 2 (Autumn 2013): 57.

women in British colonies would translate into increased opportunities for domestic English women.

Late in the war, British censors aggressively sought to mask camp abuses and keep the jingoistic propaganda flowing from the domestic press. Correspondents who did not echo the company line often faced disciplinary action. The *Globe*'s Earl De La Warr had his war reporting license revoked by press censors, who castigated him for penning supposedly false reports, making allegedly traitorous statements, and deliberately ignoring information suppression protocols. *Mail* journalist Wallace received a letter from the Johannesburg Censor's Office in 1902 stating that "in consequence of your having evaded the rules of censorship" by continuing to sneak information on the Vereeniging peace talks back to the *Mail* after a warning was issued, "you will not in future be allowed to act as a War Correspondent, and further, that you will not be recommended for [a] medal."⁷⁷⁰ A disheartened Wallace submitted the correspondence for publication in his own paper along with a letter to the editor in which he lamented, "One scarcely knows whether to be amused or saddened by the puerility of the War Office. Or perhaps one ought to experience a glow of pride for this great national department which, while engaged in questions of vital importance, can turn aside to notice so humble an individual as myself."⁷⁷¹ Wallace further asserted that efficacy, "even though it only be the efficiency of a journalist who does his duty to the public, must necessarily jar upon the sensitive nerves of [the censorship office], so I rather think sadness—the sadness begat of sympathy—must be my attitude."⁷⁷² Wallace's attempts to provide reliable testimony regarding wartime army behavior did not go unnoticed. The

⁷⁷⁰ *The London Daily Mail*, July 24, 1902.

⁷⁷¹ *Ibid.*, August 19, 1902.

⁷⁷² *Ibid.*

Mail subsequently touted his guest-of-honor appearance at the Savoy Hotel, where more than fifty journalists and wealthy men gathered to laud Wallace for his honesty and ability to skirt repressive censorship laws. Correspondents became heroes in South Africa not only for their battlefield bravery but also for their willingness to expose the truth to a British public accustomed to deception.

War journalists took a stand against Kitchener's vigorous censorship campaigns. The *Times*' James insisted, "[S]omething [must] be done about this muzzling of the Press. At the present moment news is being deliberately suppressed...so severe[ly] that I do not attempt to do anything. I am certainly not going to just send what I am told to send."⁷⁷³ Left-leaning English papers deemed it essential "that the British public should know the full facts, however unpleasant they may be and however much they may be at variance with the official reports that are issued from the War Office and the Colonial Office."⁷⁷⁴ In late 1901, the *Morning Post*'s Gwynne decreed, "Censorship is now purely a formality and means to kill the correspondent."⁷⁷⁵ Yet neither the war journalists nor their contentious words could be fully stifled, despite massive editing efforts. As *Harper's Monthly Magazine* pointed out, the tremendous volume of material to revise and send home often overwhelmed the press censors. Such backlogs in official channels allowed correspondents to dispense private telegrams and communications that were not censored.⁷⁷⁶ Additionally, a journalist who was determined and willing to dodge government revisionists by traveling to distant outposts and through enemy lines could

⁷⁷³ Qtd. in Beaumont, "The British Press and Censorship during the South African War, 1899-1902," 284-285.

⁷⁷⁴ J. Ramsay MacDonald, *What I Saw in South Africa: September and October 1902* (London: The Echo, 1902), 91.

⁷⁷⁵ Qtd. in Beaumont, "The British Press and Censorship during the South African War, 1899-1902," 286.

⁷⁷⁶ *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, July 1900.

eventually get his dispatches back to London. Therefore, often the best the censors could do was temporarily and sporadically conceal army actions, which only elevated the public shock and anger when the truth finally surfaced. Correspondents helped to soften the blow and offered hope for a better future, but only if British citizens were willing to commit themselves to action.

POST-WAR SOCIAL REFORMS

Anti-war movements dovetailed nicely with demands for domestic social reform during the war. Radicals and socialist writers frequently charged the government with squandering precious funds on what they deemed to be unwarranted, antagonistic overseas pursuits while neglecting the needs of the English people. By the time of the South African War, the home population had grown frustrated with the persistently unaddressed “condition of England question” that their fathers had ignored in past quests for imperial greatness. Radical Liberal C.F.G. Masterman surveyed the social status of the Edwardian state in his 1909 book *The Condition of England* five years prior to his leadership of Britain’s War Propaganda Bureau (Wellington House) during World War I. The politician and good friend of Lloyd George had a long history of urban reform publications, and his critical commentaries often merited substantial print space in the *Guardian*. While campaigning for the People’s Budget, Masterman contended, “Languid indifference to the condition of our big cities, refusal to grapple with housing reform or temperance reform, a crying of peace at home where there is no peace” and “boisterous arrogance abroad—what fruit but dead sea apples can grow from such a tree?”⁷⁷⁷

⁷⁷⁷ Qtd. in Koss, *The Pro-Boers*, 169. Patrick Deer roots Masterman’s “reformist vision of an inclusive national spirit” at Wellington House in the politics of New Liberals such as Hobson, L.T. Hobhouse, and

The NRU fought for metropolitan social improvements while laying the blame for societal ills on an ostensibly indifferent Conservative government. Union leaders drew a direct parallel between increasingly restricted local liberties and limited welfare legislation on one hand and heightened infatuation with imperial pursuits in far-flung colonies on the other. The NRU's motto of "Peace, Retrenchment, and Reform," as publicized by both the *Guardian* and the *Daily News*, translated into a laundry list of liberal proposals. Union recommendations included improvements to urban housing, reassessed land tax values, and a further reorganized public education system, as well as bolder ambitions such as "the removal of every bar to the possession of the franchise by all duly qualified citizens" and the "abolition of the legislative powers of the House of Lords."⁷⁷⁸

In the British political arena, the war had spawned a coalition between radical Liberals and skilled workers, who embraced the pro-Boer nickname and would play a valuable role in the formation of the formidable British Labour Party. The *Times* took a conservative stance on the issue, asserting that an attempted partnership between Labourites and Liberals reflected a "mendacity" that could shame the Liberal Party.⁷⁷⁹ Nevertheless, many left-leaning politicians continued to work with Labourites. The two factions' reform goals often overlapped, and they shared a mutual distaste for Tory politics.

Furthermore, liberal journalists tried to rally working-class support for social projects by couching their imperial reform agendas in domestic rhetoric. Worker actions

the "Little Englanders" who supported Irish Home Rule and "critiqued the popular imperialism and jingoism of the Boer War." See Deer, *Culture in Camouflage: War, Empire, and Modern British Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 37.

⁷⁷⁸ Qtd. in Davey, *The British Pro-Boers*, 265-266.

⁷⁷⁹ *The London Daily Mail*, April 23, 1903.

generally were directed by local rather than imperial concerns, given that the metropole's "value-systems governed [those] people's perceptions of *their* empire" and defined "*their* imperialism."⁷⁸⁰ Rather than emphasizing the recovery of imperial glory abroad, radical politicians and writers stressed to the English masses the ways in which solving urban societal problems would help strengthen the empire, the backbone of which they declared should be its devoted laborers. By endeavoring to establish domestic social reforms as an essential component of twentieth-century imperialism, reformers made their platforms more palatable to overburdened workers who perceived the empire "through British-tinted spectacles."⁷⁸¹

Contrasting Boer and British societies was another valuable weapon in reform-minded correspondents' arsenals. Anti-war activists, such as the Cronwright-Schreiners, had highlighted the peaceful, pastoral lifestyle of the Dutch colonial farmer. The *Guardian* propagated an image of devoted, free-spirited Boers, who valued hard work, religion, and family. For social activists, the colonists' seemingly idyllic existence contrasted sharply with the poverty, crime, and filth that plagued English urban centers. If British leaders were to earn popular support for their efforts to provide the Boers with socio-economic aid during the post-war years, they would simultaneously have to address the plight of the domestic poor.

Hobhouse's camp reports showcased Boer women's capacity to endure hardship, a strength that earned them heroine status in many Englishwomen's eyes. Gender anxieties increased with the graphic descriptions and photographs of starving Dutch mothers dispatched home by correspondents. If British men demonstrated indifference

⁷⁸⁰ Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists*, 227.

⁷⁸¹ Ibid.

toward – or worse, contributed to – the suffering of white women in South Africa, how would soldiers behave toward domestic females upon the army’s homecoming?

Meanwhile, the National Efficiency movement emphasized an increasingly significant role for female Britons as the guardians and nurturers of an imperial “race” and backed women’s efforts to politically emancipate themselves.⁷⁸²

Scott’s *Guardian* gave Hobhouse a forum in which to demand domestic social change. She successfully networked with liberal journalists including Hobson and her brother L.T., and she associated regularly with numerous left-leaning politicians through her connections with the Rainbow Circle, radical socialists, and members of the National Liberal Club. Anti-war reporters frequently referenced her publications in their printed denouncements of army mistreatments. In the spring and early summer of 1901, Hobhouse consolidated her findings into a formal manifesto (eventually the previously mentioned 1902 book *The Brunt of the War and Where it Fell*), which circulated through Parliament and initiated intense political debate.

In a notable June 1901 speech, Campbell-Bannerman famously admonished the “methods of barbarism” he claimed were being perpetuated by the British in South Africa. The Liberal leader asked:

What is [our] policy? That now that we had got the men we had been fighting against down, we should punish them as severely as possible, devastate their country, burn their homes, break up their very instruments of agriculture, sweep—as the Spanish did in Cuba; and how we denounced the Spaniards! – the women and children into camps.⁷⁸³

His speeches validated Hobhouse’s journalistic efforts and foiled Conservative plots to silence, as Kitchener labeled her, “that bloody woman.” Milner confessed to Chamberlain

⁷⁸² See Searle, *A New England?*, 381.

⁷⁸³ Qtd. in John Wilson, *C.B.: A Life of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman* (London: Constable, 1973), 349.

that “[i]f the present discouraging phase of the war had been realized at home—I cannot hope but feel it would have had a mischievous effect on public opinion.”⁷⁸⁴ Milner’s fears came to fruition, as Hobhouse’s exposes quickly penetrated the public psyche. She also helped rejuvenate liberal social reformers in the years preceding their Party’s electoral victory.

Before the war, left-leaning writers and politicians already were bothered by the injurious consequences of urban existence on the health of the British working classes. Maurice claimed that a fourth of the English population was impoverished, despite the widely disseminated yet erroneous image of relative prosperity on all levels of society. Liberals insisted that social reforms could help alleviate class struggles by easing the uncertainty and unpredictability that characterized laborers’ lives.⁷⁸⁵ Radical MPs such as Thomas Macnamara advocated inexpensive housing and free transportation for workers and declared that an “[e]mpire cannot be built on rickety and flat-chested citizens.”⁷⁸⁶ A healthier domestic population meant a stronger, more formidable Britain. Such issues frequently dominated the pages of the *Guardian*, the *Daily News* and the *Morning Leader*.

The war clearly served as a catalyst for societal improvement efforts. The colonial conflict provided a strong impetus for initiating a “social-imperialist” doctrine based on efficacy and stability. Liberal correspondents such as Nevinson and Montague lamented the transfer of resources to South Africa when government money could be waging war

⁷⁸⁴ H.H. Hewison, *Hedge of Wild Almonds: South Africa and the Quaker Conscience, 1890-1910* (London: J. Currey, 1989), 122.

⁷⁸⁵ See Searle, *A New England?*, 405.

⁷⁸⁶ Qtd. in Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists*, 190-191.

on malnourishment, disease, poverty, and “the penury of old age.”⁷⁸⁷ In their articles, they detailed:

The unhealthy aspects and dwarfish forms of the thousands of weary workers...who swarm in the smoke-begrimed factories, mills, and evil-smelling workshops...whose miserable lives are an unceasing round of daily toil from year’s end to year’s end; who pass a joyless existence in the endeavor to earn a wage barely sufficient to keep themselves and their families from starvation.⁷⁸⁸

Reporters argued that domestic English people’s ills and grievances merited more attention from government leaders than the complaints of a few *Uitlanders* thousands of miles from the metropole.

Fabian leader Webb responded with a detailed plan for social reforms grounded in national efficiency that would hopefully encourage the “breeding of even a moderately [healthy] Imperial race” to replace the “stunted, anaemic, demoralised denizens of our great cities.”⁷⁸⁹ His proposed National Minimum wage established an immobile baseline below which no British citizen could descend financially. Shaw argued that uniform minimum pay would result in “a much handsomer [saving] in national soundness and reduced disease bills, crime bills, and inefficiency bills.”⁷⁹⁰ Without such economic changes, Britain stood little chance of improving the status of laborers eking out a living in urban slums. There was also the pressing issue of poor metropolitan worker health, as discussed in Chapter 2. Arthur Shadwell concurred in his industrial comparison of England and Germany, asserting, “The habits of the people! There lies the real reason

⁷⁸⁷ Morgan, “Lloyd George, Keir Hardie and the Importance of the ‘Pro Boers’,” 309.

⁷⁸⁸ Qtd. in Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists*, 190.

⁷⁸⁹ Qtd. in Semmel, *Imperialism and Social Reform*, 63.

⁷⁹⁰ Bernard Shaw, ed., *Fabianism and the Empire: A Manifesto by the Fabian Society* (London: Grant Richards, 1900), 65.

why the German working classes with lower wages, longer hours and higher costs of living yet maintain a superior standard of physique” than most domestic Britons.⁷⁹¹

The post-war Conservatives modestly responded to correspondent concerns by passing the Employment of Children’s Act and the Unemployed Workmen Act in 1905, but neither was effectively or uniformly applied. Prior to the 1906 general election, radicals accused the government of continued indifference to domestic social issues. In December of the previous year, the *Guardian* reported on the campaign for East Manchester, which pitted Liberal candidate Mr. T.G. Horridge against an ironically named Mr. Balfour. The newspaper emphasized how the room filled with incredulous laughter when “Balfour said he hoped that the verdict of history would be favourable to his [Conservative] Government on the ground of the great social reforms which they had carried out during the last ten years.”⁷⁹² Mr. Horridge responded, “What microscopic eyes Mr. Balfour must have if he can find among the blunders of the late Government any small atom of social reform.”⁷⁹³ The *Guardian* highlighted the repeated cheers that rang out when Horridge avowed to aid the unemployed, declared his belief that it was “the duty of the State to provide work for every man who was able and willing to work but could not find employment,” and affirmed his support of women’s suffrage.⁷⁹⁴ Radical correspondents such as Hobson and the Hobhouses had projected such battle cries during the South African War. Their electoral candidates turned up the volume so such anxieties could reach a broader audience and encourage legitimate, lasting reforms.

⁷⁹¹ Arthur Shadwell, *Industrial Efficiency: A Comparative Study of Industrial Life in England, Germany and America, Vol. II* (London: Longmans, 1906), 250-251.

⁷⁹² *The Manchester Guardian*, December 15, 1905.

⁷⁹³ Ibid.

⁷⁹⁴ Ibid.

Lloyd George viewed the press as the best tool with which to garner public support for liberal political and social change. The politician frequently debated his proposals with journalist friends L.T. Hobhouse and Gardiner. During the South African conflict, Lloyd George took a cue from Hobson and criticized the government for its commitment to ostensibly fight for *Uitlanders*' rights while remaining unwilling expand the franchise domestically. He characterized the government as "in shambles" and condemned Chamberlain as "[the] tin Caesar" of "this electro-plated Rome" bent on aggressive imperial pursuits to the detriment of English domestic needs.⁷⁹⁵

The *Guardian* celebrated the Liberal electoral triumph in 1906 as the culmination of a campaign for social reforms that had been stirred by the South African War and supported by its correspondents. Lloyd George, in a victory speech quoted in the paper, decreed:

It is not a question whether this Government is going to be successful...but whether democracy is going to be a success in the government of this land. The people can win victories, they can make great insurrections against wrong, they can show indignation against muddle, mischief, injustice. [But] [a]re they capable of a sustained effort?⁷⁹⁶

He later called upon the Labour Party for support of his reform plans, proclaiming, "[We] all agree...that the State must concern itself with the care of the sick, of the aged and above all, of the children."⁷⁹⁷ Even the more conservative *Times* showed respect for Lloyd George. After the election, the editors contended, "Mr. Winston Churchill, though possessed of many striking qualities, has not done anything to command the confidence

⁷⁹⁵ Qtd. in Morgan, "Lloyd George, Keir Hardie and the Importance of the 'Pro-Boers'," 292, 309.

⁷⁹⁶ *The Manchester Guardian*, June 25, 1906.

⁷⁹⁷ *The London Times*, October 12, 1906

of men of business, which is so largely given to Mr. Lloyd George” in the new government.⁷⁹⁸

In the wake of the Liberal victory, Webb’s Fabian Society continued its push for social improvements, and many of the organization’s ideas found their way, albeit in varying permutations, into political legislation during the period of New Liberalism. Scally accurately defines the Fabians’ role concerning the Edwardian government to be that of a “guiding Brain Trust” for social policies.⁷⁹⁹ Since the South African War, Webb and his followers had recommended increasing tax revenue by “streamlining the machinery of collection and administration” and providing a basic reassessment plan to recoup funds lost to military expenditures.⁸⁰⁰ They sought to eliminate inefficiency and bring about overdue improvements in education, housing, factories, physical fitness, and the military. Liberal League leader Rosebery echoed the Fabian platform in his renowned December 1901 Chesterfield speech, during which he professed, “My watchword if I were in office at this moment would be...the word ‘Efficiency.’ If we have not learned in this war that we have lagged behind in efficiency we have learned nothing.”⁸⁰¹ The following day, Northcliffe showcased his admiration for the Liberal Imperialist with several glowing *Mail* articles. The editor hoped that Rosebery’s policy would unite “every man in the reputable section of the Opposition” and “attach the most progressive

⁷⁹⁸ Ibid., April 13, 1908.

⁷⁹⁹ Scally, *The Origins of the Lloyd George Coalition*, 54.

⁸⁰⁰ Ibid., 52.

⁸⁰¹ Qtd. in Ibid., 56. Rosebery’s inconsistent support of Webb’s plans frustrated the Fabians and led Beatrice Webb to declare, “Having done our best to stimulate [those] Limps into some kind of conviction and having most[ly]...failed we now return [devotedly] to our own work.” See Scally, *The Origins of the Lloyd George Coalition*, 59-61.

elements among those of the Government's adherents who are dissatisfied with the flabbiness of the existing Ministry.”⁸⁰²

Following the Liberal electoral victory, new Prime Minister Campbell-Bannerman fought for moderate social improvements, particularly the revitalization of English cities. In a 1907 speech, he asserted that the continued excessive concentration of Britons in poor urban environments meant perpetual suffering and the “gradual destruction” of the masses.⁸⁰³ Campbell-Bannerman then pondered, “What is all our wealth and learning and the fine flower of our civilisation and our Constitution... if the men and women on whose labour the whole social fabric is maintained,” are doomed “to live and die in darkness and misery in the recesses of our cities?”⁸⁰⁴ Amery and his fellow correspondents had expressed the same sentiments in regard to metropolitan ill health and its detrimental effects on the English people, particularly workers, soldiers, and children. Campbell-Bannerman also echoed Hobson's frustrations with prioritizing a colonial conflict over the outstanding needs of domestic Britons. According to the PM:

We may undertake expeditions on behalf of oppressed tribes and races...but it is our own people, surely, who had the first claim upon us...the air must be purified...the sunshine must be allowed to stream in, the water and the food must be kept pure and unadulterated, the streets light and clean.⁸⁰⁵

Correspondents had helped lay the foundation for such urban improvements while the war in South Africa raged.

After Campbell-Bannerman's resignation in spring 1908, Lloyd George succeeded new Prime Minister Asquith as Chancellor of the Exchequer and began

⁸⁰² *The London Daily Mail*, December 18, 1901. The Liberal League, originally established by Liberal Imperialists who opposed Campbell-Bannerman, fizzled out over debates regarding Lloyd George's reforms and League President Rosebery's condemnation of the People's Budget.

⁸⁰³ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁴ Qtd. in John Wilson, *C.B.: A Life of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman*, 588.

⁸⁰⁵ Ibid.

working on innovative social welfare amendments in the name of New Liberalism. His achievements included poor assistance funding; an eight-hour workday; trade boards for “sweat shop” industries; a Housing and Town Planning Act to demolish derelict buildings and construct new homes; and unemployment insurance. He supported the National Committee of Organised Labour on Old Age Pensions to secure crucial money for the elderly and the Old Age Pensions Act, applicable to those over 70, became law in 1908. The Cadburys, the family who had collaborated with Lloyd George to purchase the *Daily News* in 1901, provided significant funding for the Committee’s projects. The Liberal leader had become the face of domestic social reform and embodied “the new radical progressivism of the Edwardian age.”⁸⁰⁶

Lloyd George’s 1909 Finance Act, more commonly referred to as the People’s Budget, aggressively taxed the wealthy to fund the developing English welfare state. In the Exchequer’s words:

This is a war Budget...for raising money to wage implacable warfare against poverty and squalidness. I cannot help hoping and believing that before this generation has passed away, we shall have advanced a great step towards that good time, when poverty, and the wretchedness and human degradation which always follows in its camp, will be as remote to the people of this country as the wolves which once infested its forests.⁸⁰⁷

His capstone 1911 National Health Insurance Act provided benefits such as compulsory healthcare coverage for indigent workers, maternity care, paid sick leave, and unemployment pay. Lloyd George underscored the importance of the budget’s land clauses, including complete property valuation, which he believed would “eventually destroy...the selfish and stupid monopolies which now so egregiously mismanage land”

⁸⁰⁶ Morgan, “The Boer War and the Media,” 8.

⁸⁰⁷ Qtd. in Derek Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State: A History of Social Policy Since the Industrial Revolution* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 145-46.

and overcome the present system of ownership that he believed “hamper[ed] and embarrasse[ed] trade and industry.”⁸⁰⁸

Lloyd George had used the South African War to condemn the Conservative prioritizing of imperial economic pursuits over metropole issues. He and Hobhouse also utilized the conflict as an opportunity to refashion classical Gladstonian ideology into the social betterment campaign that became the hallmark of New Liberalism. Lloyd George’s dedicated efforts to pursue domestic reforms linked him directly to the establishment of British welfare capitalism. “It is time we did something that appealed straight to the people,” he declared during the People’s Budget’s formulation.⁸⁰⁹ His social transformations expanded the scope and size of the civil service and facilitated a more complex interaction between the government and the public by narrowing the gap between the state and society.⁸¹⁰ Lloyd George used his Budget to affirm that the ill and impoverished were worthy of aid and that providing them with government assistance would result in a more efficient British society overall.

In their war coverage, liberal journalists had foretold Lloyd George’s reform goals by forcing politicians to recognize social struggles and begin acknowledging the government’s responsibility to its constituents. In 1901, Fransjohan Pretorius had argued for the “repeopling” of the countryside by relaxing land taxes and encouraging poor urban dwellers to settle rural areas and engage in agriculture. He reasoned persuasively, “Every social reform that assists in bringing about a more healthy existence and in raising the standard of life of the lower classes is a long step towards the creation of those living

⁸⁰⁸ *The Manchester Guardian*, November 24, 1909.

⁸⁰⁹ Qtd. in Searle, *A New England?*, 371.

⁸¹⁰ See *Ibid.*, 390-391.

forces which alone can secure [the empire].”⁸¹¹ Maintaining a strong imperial system meant investing in England’s people as its most valuable resource.

The *Guardian* applauded Lloyd George’s efforts as the culmination of its wartime emphasis on social improvement. The paper’s editorials assured readers that “[it] doesn’t really matter [if] we take twelve or fourteen millions of money from the rich this year” to assist the needy “because that doesn’t really injure [the status of the wealthy] in this country.”⁸¹² Under such a plan, radicals theorized that the impoverished could improve their financial situations without excessively squeezing affluent Britons’ bank accounts. The *Guardian* praised the Exchequer’s land tax proposals and quoted his declaration that “[n]o class of the community will...feel greater joy at the triumph of the Budget than the men engaged in putting their best quality of mind and *morale* into the building up of the commercial greatness of this country.”⁸¹³

The *Times* remained hesitant to outright endorse Lloyd George’s reforms, mainly because of the same land duty recommendations. Editors believed that import tariffs might offer a greater potential for economic growth and provide necessary additional funding for domestic developments. Chamberlain’s tariff reformers concurred and viewed Lloyd George’s free-trade ideology as the antithesis of protectionism. Scott acknowledged the need to address those current economic issues, but he was weary from fighting the House of Lords’ repeated attempts to veto Liberal legislation. He reminded *Times* readers that maintaining a laissez-faire system would force the government to

⁸¹¹ Fransjohan Pretorius. “The Army and the Empire,” in *The Empire Review, Volume I*, 189-190.

⁸¹² *The Manchester Guardian*, October 25, 1909.

⁸¹³ *Ibid.*, November 24, 1909.

shoulder the financial burdens of a modern nation without utilizing the potential benefits of tariff restructuring.⁸¹⁴

At the *Mail*, Northcliffe petitioned the House of Lords to reject the Budget and force a dissolution in order to explore tariff reform. When Lloyd George presented his plan to the House of Commons, Home Under-Secretary Herbert Samuel described the legislature's response as "frightened satisfaction, the kind of feeling one has on being launched down an exhilarating, but steep and unknown toboggan run."⁸¹⁵ Ultimately, the Conservative-dominated House of Lords did not accept the initial draft of the People's Budget. However, following the 1910 general election, the Lords agreed to approve Lloyd George's plan without the land tax clauses. The intense debate surrounding the issue culminated in the seminal 1911 Parliamentary Act, which effectively abolished the Lords' traditional veto power over the Commons.

Overall, the Lloyd George reforms yielded uneven results after facing multiple restrictions and roadblocks. The House of Lords vetoed many Liberal legislative proposals while they still possessed the authority to do so. Few Britons lived to age 70 and thus qualified for the old age pension. Only wage earners could apply for free medical care. However, the initiatives succeeded in reducing urban poverty levels and bettering conditions for children and the infirm. Such changes not only paved the way for the British welfare state but also reflected the concerns of correspondents, who had used South Africa effectively to bring social problems to the forefront.

⁸¹⁴ See Bruce K. Murray, "The Politics of the 'People's Budget'," *The Historical Journal* 16, no. 3 (Sept. 1973): 556.

⁸¹⁵ Qtd. in *Ibid.*, 565.

War journalists and politicians habitually couched their reform concerns in racial as well as national and imperial rhetoric. Socialists, liberals, and conservatives may have been motivated by diverse factors, but they all shared the same devotion to creating a stronger, pure British stock. Roseberry famously remarked that “[a]n Empire is but little use without an Imperial race.”⁸¹⁶ Campbell-Bannerman believed that the determinant of social reforms’ successes would be “the measure of the arresting of the terrible powers of rac[ial] degeneration which is going on in the countless sunless streets.”⁸¹⁷ Fabians argued that imperialism and socialism were further mutually reinforcing based on a shared goal of “secur[ing] such personal tastes regarding beauty and strength as to guarantee that the race is being propagated by healthy and comely men and women.”⁸¹⁸ But Smyth reminded domestic readers of a more disturbing, prophetic question: “[I]f [a] large proportion of the community is [racially] unfit for military service, what is to become of those rejected? For what occupation *are* they fit?”⁸¹⁹

When imperially minded thinkers agitated for working-class assistance and increased state planning, they also declared a self-imposed responsibility to preserve the “British race” and restore its virility. However, those goals became increasingly infused with ideas co-opted from the growing field of eugenics. Eugenist thinker Dr. Caleb Saleeby invoked imperialist discourse when he avowed that the history of nations and empires “is determined not on the battlefield but in the nursery, and the battalions which

⁸¹⁶ Qtd. in Smyth, *Physical Deterioration*, 294.

⁸¹⁷ Qtd. in Wilson, *C.B.: A Life of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman*, 588.

⁸¹⁸ J. Ramsay MacDonald, *Socialism and Government*. Qtd. in Davin, “Imperialism and Motherhood,”

18.

⁸¹⁹ Smyth, *Physical Deterioration*, 14.

give lasting victory are the battalions of babies.”⁸²⁰ Socialist author (and brother of Gilbert) Cecil Chesterton concurred, asserting that “all progress, all empire, all efficiency, depends upon the kind of race we breed [from birth] for “[i]f we are breeding the people badly neither the most perfect constitution nor the most skillful diplomacy will save us from shipwreck.”⁸²¹ In Smyth’s *Physical Deterioration: Its Causes and the Cure*, he argued, “The more carefully the facts lying at the root of the physical unfitness admitted to exist among the youth of the country are examined, the more clearly does it appear that the matter is one of vital importance to the future of the race and of the nation.”⁸²² To such thinkers, a weak physique was increasingly threatening to the maintenance of racial superiority. Repeated articles appeared in the *Guardian* concerning “Biology and Moral Education.” By 1908, the study of eugenics was deemed appropriate and essential for public school students’ educations.⁸²³ Another commentary from that same year discussed the prospect of dispensing financial gifts to “genetically worthy” couples, a slippery slope practice that could open the door for labeling other human specimens unfit to reproduce.⁸²⁴

Racial classification and purity had been central tenets of Victorian society, and Edwardian eugenists merely carried those arguments further toward their logical conclusions. As Coombes asserts, such scientists accelerated the debate regarding deterioration versus degeneration. Therefore, while the results of studies on the working classes’ poor physical condition provided a beneficial impetus for preventative health

⁸²⁰ Qtd. in Caleb Saleeby, *Parenthood and Race Culture: An Outline of Eugenics* (New York: Moffat, Yard and Co., 1911), 285.

⁸²¹ Qtd. in Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency*, 61.

⁸²² Smyth, *Physical Deterioration*, 294.

⁸²³ *The Manchester Guardian*, September 30, 1908.

⁸²⁴ *Ibid.*, October 15, 1908.

programs, they also “provoked a public campaign for the surveillance and categorization of those considered racially degenerate and unfit.”⁸²⁵ The broader trend toward the medicalization of social policy befitted eugenists’ arguments, as numerous social problems — including race, criminality, hereditary illness, alcoholism, poverty, and sexual deviance — became “biologized.”⁸²⁶ The era’s newspapers did not create racism, but they did little to challenge such ubiquitous beliefs and often disseminated those ideas directly to their readers. According to Playne’s foretelling words, “[a]t a time when the mass is perturbed and obsessed and intoxicated, the Press must cater for perturbed and obsessed and intoxicated minds.”⁸²⁷

The post-war efforts at social reform yielded mixed results. Regardless of partisan leanings, correspondents dreamed of a healthier, more efficient England populated by a genetically superior British race. Multiple liberals asked difficult questions about the ignorance of urban poverty and unchecked illness while precious funds leaked out to South Africa. Radical journalists and activists debated the government’s apparent willingness to support *Uitlanders*, and even offer assistance to Boer families in British-established internment camps, in the absence of similar initiatives for poverty and women’s rights, particularly concerning the vote (which British women did not earn until after World War I). Most anti-war movements and organizations failed to alter public opinions and certainly did not terminate the war prematurely. But with a concerted push from the correspondents and their allies during the South African conflict, social reform

⁸²⁵ Coombes, *Reinventing Africa*, 56. See also Davin, “Imperialism and Motherhood.”

⁸²⁶ See Searle, *A New England?*, 385.

⁸²⁷ Playne, *The Pre-War Mind in Britain*, 112.

became a major focus of the Edwardian period, and its achievements set England on its course to becoming a twentieth-century welfare state.

4. THE TREATY OF VEREENIGING, THE FALLOUT, CHAMBERLAIN, AND ECONOMIC REFORM

THE WAR'S CONCLUSION, TREATY NEGOTIATIONS, AND REACTIONS

The Treaty of Vereeniging officially ended the South African War on May 31, 1902. The Boers accepted unconditional surrender and relinquished short-term control of their Republics to the British. Furthermore, the English language received equal footing in the local schools with Dutch and Afrikaans. Now that their enemy was weakened and humbled, the British could proceed with their next objective: the consolidation of white power in South Africa. Yet the victory seemed hollow in light of the army's consistently embarrassing performance. In the heat of political debate during the conflict, Dilke recalled the Crimean War: "on the night of the illuminations which closed that [conflict], passing a house which was displayed as illumination" and thinking [that] "[t]his is mourning for a war disgracefully conducted." He then asserted that "the present war has been even more disgracefully conducted."⁸²⁸ Dilke was not alone in his conclusions. The American Peace Society, among other radical organizations, wondered how "such an immense material and moral calamity could have come about in our time through the deliberate purposes and acts, or even through the blindness and carelessness, of men professing to be enlightened and Christian."⁸²⁹ In the eyes of pro-Boers, the army won the war at the high cost of tarnishing its good name and international reputation. Economic issues also weighed on domestic Britons' minds, and correspondents utilized their late conflict coverage to debate the merits of free trade versus a system of imperial preference

⁸²⁸ *The Manchester Guardian*, February 2, 1900.

⁸²⁹ "Lessons of the South African War," *Advocate of Peace* 64, no. 7, July 1902 (Boston: American Peace Society, 1902):129.

and protective tariffs. The pressing concern became whether safeguarding and bolstering domestic production should involve tightening the economic connections with the empire's far-flung, disparate pieces.

By Vereeniging, correspondents had pulled back the curtain to reveal a paltry military effort, a lagging domestic economic system, and a plethora of unaddressed social concerns. More terrifying was the prospect that other empowered nations also recognized British struggles. Irish syndicalist James Connolly, who typified the "Boer fever" that permeated Ireland during the conflict, had claimed, "This great, blustering British Empire...of truculent bullies, is rushing headlong to its doom. Whether they ultimately win or lose, the Boers have pricked the bubble of England's fighting reputation. The world knows her weakness now."⁸³⁰ While observing Queen Victoria's funeral procession in early 1901, Ms. Elinor Glyn lamented, "It was impossible not to sense...the passing of an epoch, and a great one."⁸³¹ The war was over, but a long road to British redemption lay ahead.

In a toast to Kitchener's wartime heroism at a mid-1902 Johannesburg banquet, Milner acknowledged "the stupendous difficulties" of the Commander-in-Chief's task and declared that "only a will of steel, only an untiring energy grappling day by day with a mass of complicated details, such as have seldom been crowded into any human brain, only indomitable persistence and stoical courage, could have brought him through it all to his present complete success."⁸³² However, Kitchener's assignment proved so taxing largely because of his inability to end the guerilla war rapidly; his refusal to accept

⁸³⁰ Qtd. in Lowry, "The Wider Impact of the South African War," 224.

⁸³¹ Qtd. in Samuel Hynes, *The Edwardian Turn of Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 17.

⁸³² Milner, *Nation and Empire*, 60.

anything less than unconditional surrender; the opposition to his concentration camp and scorched earth campaigns; and army mismanagement and disorganization. The Fabian Society declared that the war clearly exposed “the seemingly boundless depths of ineffectiveness [that] both bureaucracy and armed services could reach.”⁸³³ Webb and his fellow socialists argued that the South African conflict exposed an alienated Britain with no shortage of potential foes. The organization’s manifesto, *Fabianism and the Empire*, recommended the application of reforms “in the same way that a doctor might prescribe a sedative to alleviate the worst effects of a disease.”⁸³⁴ Fabians wanted to maintain the empire’s international preeminence by securing new imperial trade connections and making sure it possessed a strong, well-funded army equipped to defend British global holdings. By proposing an increase in the legal age for part-time employment, Webb hoped to provide young Britons with extra imperial preparation through a “combination of physical exercises, technical [instruction], education in civil citizenship...and field training in the use of modern weaponry.”⁸³⁵ He believed that “a reformed Empire was a desirable thing, and certainly better than no Empire at all.”⁸³⁶ Anti-war colleagues concurred.

The British government had consented to negotiations with the Boers before Vereeniging, but peace talks had proven ineffective. Milner stood firm behind his demand for a total surrender, and the Boers repeatedly refused such a concession. That requirement prolonged the war and further agitated an enemy that the British would need

⁸³³ Semmel, *Imperialism and Social Reform*, 74.

⁸³⁴ Ibid.

⁸³⁵ Ibid., 62.

⁸³⁶ Porter, *Critics of Empire: British Radical Attitudes*, 116. Webb often was critical of “classic” Liberals such as Morley for their emphasis on Gladstonian individualism and their opposition to imperialism.

as a postwar ally. Buller argued in both the *Times* and the *Daily News* that insisting on absolute capitulation misinterpreted the Boer thought process. The Boers were not interested in the capture of what the British deemed to be strategically valuable cities because the former group drew their strength from rural homesteads and would not surrender their land. Milner's ultimatum motivated his enemies to continue the fight, guerilla-style, on their precious veldt indefinitely. Robertson told domestic Britons that they should not be surprised at the Boers' tenacity, asserting:

Imperialists have apparently lost all memory of the greatest Englishman of their breed, he who, when they were bringing calamity on the Empire over a century ago, declared in the House of Peers: 'If I were an American as I am an Englishman, while a foreign troop was landed in my country, I never would lay down my arms—never, never, never!'⁸³⁷

The Boers had co-opted such a maxim, and now the British had to craft an effective response.

During the final months before Vereeniging, Amery and other like-minded journalists had fought for a rapid resolution to the fight. In late 1901, a Johannesburg-based reporter assured readers, "Most of the Boers know...that life under good English administration is no worse than it is under their own," and "when the struggle is over the British nation will earnestly strive to make their sufferings forgotten."⁸³⁸ The *Mail* respected the Boer delegates' insistence on maintaining a "formal and constitutional character" once the peace proceedings began.⁸³⁹ According to Hobson in the *Guardian*, British negotiators would be dealing "not with a loosely organised collection of armed bands," but with men who possessed a "persistently civil habit of mind" and [an] ingrained respect for law and the forms of law," qualities which constituted "the best

⁸³⁷ Robertson, *Wrecking the Empire*, xix.

⁸³⁸ *The London Times*, December 16, 1901.

⁸³⁹ *The London Daily Mail*, May 3, 1902.

auguries for the future.”⁸⁴⁰ Apparently, in Hobson’s eyes, once the Boers agreed to surrender their independence unconditionally, the two sides somehow would evolve into amicable partners. The same argument defined another *Guardian* editorial about Boer tenacity. The report claimed the Boers highly valued legality and justice and they likely would be amenable to formulating a stable, long-lasting reconciliation if presented with acceptable terms.⁸⁴¹

During the treaty’s creation, censors clamped down hard on newspaper coverage. Multiple *Guardian* articles regarding Vereeniging began with sentences such as “[t]he Government had no information which they were willing to give in reference to the negotiations” and “[t]here is little probability of anything authentic...being permitted to leak out until the Government...[decides] to make a definite announcement.”⁸⁴² Amery acknowledged that once peace was formally confirmed, “the Opposition leaders in both Houses of Parliament will [likely] demand the appointment of the long-promised inquiry into the whole conduct of the war.”⁸⁴³ Still, waiting was difficult, and the lack of updates was frustrating. Amery complained in a May 1902 letter to his mother, “The negotiations have been interesting but I have not been allowed to write anything at all. Kitchener keeps a very strict censorship on the press and lets nothing go through.”⁸⁴⁴

Kitchener had a long history of enacting intense and generally effective censorship campaigns. Pre-treaty news from Vereeniging remained consistently Spartan save a number of coded communications surreptitiously dispatched by Wallace that

⁸⁴⁰ *The Manchester Guardian*, May 3, 1902.

⁸⁴¹ *Ibid.*, May 16, 1902.

⁸⁴² *Ibid.*, May 27, 1902.

⁸⁴³ *The London Times*, May 18, 1902.

⁸⁴⁴ Amery, *My Political Life*, 37-38.

landed his *Mail* the scoop on negotiations.⁸⁴⁵ Wallace's aptitude for censorship evasion frequently drew the Commander-in-Chief's ire. The correspondent had declared earlier in war, "I think the time is close at hand when I shall want to wire something that Lord Kitchener will not want to send or the Government to receive."⁸⁴⁶ The Vereeniging peace talks constituted that opportunity, as information provided by a Wallace informant allowed the *Mail* to disseminate word of the treaty's settlement hours before the House was formally informed.⁸⁴⁷

Significant debate and rejections by both sides continued throughout April 1902. Finally, in late May, Kitchener and Milner presented a final treaty draft to the Boer delegation, which included Orange Free State leader Marthinus Steyn; acting Transvaal president Schalk Burger; and Boer generals Louis Botha, Jan Smuts, Christian de Wet, and Koos de la Rey. Boer commando representatives initially disagreed over whether to continue the fight ("pro-war" Steyn would resign over the issue) and all the men objected to the loss, albeit temporary, of their Republics' independence. However, the promises of eventual self-rule, the potential to become co-rulers of a federated South African union, and the forgiveness of significant war debts, combined with the unattractive prospect of pursuing the struggle, led Boer delegates to vote in favor of the British peace proposal on May 31.

In the treaty, the remaining armed Boers found themselves compelled to "lay down their [weapons]...and desist from any further resistance to the Authority of HIS

⁸⁴⁵ For a fascinating look at Wallace's complex quest to evade South African censors, which included handkerchief signals and updates disguised as stock purchases sent to a wealthy financier colleague, see Neil Clark, *Stranger than Fiction: The Life of Edgar Wallace, the Man Who Created King Kong* (Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2014).

⁸⁴⁶ *The London Daily Mail*, June 19, 1901.

⁸⁴⁷ See Adrian Hadland, "Introduction," in *Changing the Fourth Estate: Essays on South African Journalism*, ed. Adrian Hadland (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2005), 7-8.

MAJESTY KING EDWARD VII whom they recognise as their lawful SOVEREIGN.”⁸⁴⁸

However, the “BURGHERS so surrendering...will not be deprived of their personal liberty, or their property,” and “[n]o proceedings CIVIL or CRIMINAL will be taken against any of the BURGHERS so surrendering...for any Acts in connection with the prosecution of the War.”⁸⁴⁹ Kitchener promised the Republics eventual self-government after a period under British military control and substantial aid for reconstruction. The issue of native rights and enfranchisement was tabled until the Boer states received their full independence. Kitchener privately wrote Roberts that he felt a “sense of relief and security that no more regrettable incidents [would] occur. Thank God that it is all over now and the end I am glad to say is equally well received on both sides.”⁸⁵⁰ A week after the signing, Milner confided to Amery that the transition from combat to peace was proceeding smoothly, and most Boers were willingly surrendering their arms.

The treaty signed, the British had finally subdued their opponents, but at the cost of damaging their international reputation. A.P. Thornton contends that British imperialism had “suffered a contraction, a loss of moral content, from which it never completely recovered.”⁸⁵¹ Just weeks before Vereeniging, the *Guardian* expressed annoyance with Salisbury’s recent speech to the Primrose League. In its appraisal, the editorial decreed that “[t]he whole early history of the war clearly reaches his mind as a kind of heroic legend, changed and idealised out of all likeness to the sad and ugly thing we [now] know.”⁸⁵² Bryce, as paraphrased in the *Times*, claimed “that latterly we had

⁸⁴⁸ Terms of Surrender of Boer Forces [Also known as the Treaty of Vereeniging, or the Peace of Vereeniging], FO 93/107/9.

⁸⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁵⁰ Kitchener to Lord Roberts, June 8, 1902. Herbert Kitchener Papers. PRO 30/57/16.

⁸⁵¹ Thornton, *The Imperial Idea and Its Enemies*, 109.

⁸⁵² *The Manchester Guardian*, May 8, 1902.

indulged in a haughty spirit, and had led other countries to question more than they ought to have done our regard for international rights and the purity of our motive.”⁸⁵³

A transformation of imperial character would require a fervent public commitment to national improvement. In the days following Vereeniging, the *Telegraph*'s Burleigh already claimed to perceive a British attitude transformation. As early as June 1902, the reporter argued, “A change has come over the spirit of our dream, and all that is earnest, strenuous and determined in our...character is unmistakably working to the top” once more.⁸⁵⁴ Such optimism was encouraging, but unrealistic and premature considering the distance the empire needed to travel to recoup its stained image. In his tome describing the findings of a late war National Education symposium, Laurie Magnus asserted:

Whether we shout it in the newspapers or confess it in our secret communings, we have had our ‘lesson’ in this South African war. We have learned, in circumstances which came within measurable distance of being fatal, the folly of blind self-confidence and the paramount wisdom of self-searching and self-preparation.⁸⁵⁵

Both conservatives and liberals in London expressed relief and satisfaction at the conflict's resolution. The *Times* reported patriotic celebrations across the empire and noted that Boer leaders promised “that they would do their duty to their new State as nobly as they have done it to the old.”⁸⁵⁶ However, journalists across the political spectrum would use Vereeniging as a platform from which to evaluate war policies and discuss potential post-conflict reforms. A *Times* editorial, based on information reported back from Amery, cautioned that “[w]e at home [cannot] yet know in full measure the

⁸⁵³ *The London Times*, February 3, 1900.

⁸⁵⁴ *The Daily Telegraph*, June 1, 1902.

⁸⁵⁵ Magnus, *National Education: A Symposium*, 21-22.

⁸⁵⁶ *The London Times*, June 5, 1902.

difficulties and dangers” facing British society as a result of the war.⁸⁵⁷ On June 30, the paper raised both military and economic concerns, emphasizing the increased relevance of Parliamentary debates “regarding some form of Imperial preference” and suggesting that Boer General Botha could “very well infuse ideas into our senior officers that might help in the diminution of many of the antiquated traditions with which our Army is still encumbered.”⁸⁵⁸ Wallace reminded *Mail* readers in early June that victory in South Africa did not mean the empire’s potential European enemies would back down and declared that Britain needed to figure out the best way to stay economically competitive. According to Hobson, “the files of our war press leave no doubt about the fact that [an unjust conflict] was eagerly sought here, under the delusion that it would be short, cheap, and territorially gainful.”⁸⁵⁹ Correspondents would continue to poke holes in political leaders’ claims as they sought to uncover additional imperial problems.

The *News of the World* argued that the British had entered the war “with a light-heartedness born of ignorance” and quickly found themselves overwhelmed and underfunded on the battlefield.⁸⁶⁰ Concerning enemy treatment, Hobson complained about excessive arrests and baseless indictments while denouncing the “overzealous” application of martial law.⁸⁶¹ The South African War may have temporarily “damned the flow of British politics,” but it did not prevent journalists from revealing concerns over domestic social problems, military weaknesses, and international economic competition that could be actively addressed after Vereeniging.⁸⁶² Webb, writing a tract for his Fabian

⁸⁵⁷ Ibid., June 6, 1902.

⁸⁵⁸ Ibid., June 30, 1902.

⁸⁵⁹ *The Manchester Guardian*, June 8, 1902.

⁸⁶⁰ Qtd. in Wilkinson, *Depictions and Images of War*, 53.

⁸⁶¹ See *The Manchester Guardian*, March 21, 1900,

⁸⁶² Marsh, *Joseph Chamberlain*, 523.

Society late in the war, described a “burning feeling of shame at the ‘failure’ of England” burdening the domestic population and hoped that the sense of disgrace could be “transmuted into political action.”⁸⁶³ Alfred Thomas Story, in his manuscript *Golden Deeds of the War*, warned that if the British people neglected to learn from South Africa, then they would earn the fate they had chosen for themselves.⁸⁶⁴

During the Vereeniging negotiations, Conservative and Unionist politicians continued to defend British military behavior. Chamberlain repeatedly denounced accusations of barbarism by arguing that the army had acted far less brutally than other fighting forces under similar circumstances, including the Germans during the Franco-Prussian conflict. Yet such mudslinging held little sway with war critics. Boer military leaders such as General Barry Herzog reinforced correspondents’ charges of British military abuses. During the Burghers’ Conference at the Vereeniging negotiations, one Boer leader described the circumstances in which Dutch women and children found themselves on the veldt:

Their homes and all food supplies were destroyed [and] [t]he British sent out at once to rob them of these fresh supplies...by means of armed natives, who took away all food and clothing and broke up the women’s cooking utensils. The women were then entirely at the mercy of these natives, with results that one dare not dwell upon.⁸⁶⁵

According to General Lukas Meyer, as described by Hobhouse, the burning of Boer farms persisted until the war’s conclusion in spite of Kitchener’s December 1901 order

⁸⁶³ Sidney Webb, “Twentieth Century Politics: The Policy of National Efficiency,” Fabian Tract 108, in *Fabian Tracts Nos. 96-129, 1900-1906*, 199.

⁸⁶⁴ See Alfred Thomas Story, *Golden Deeds of the War* (London: George Newnes, 1900).

⁸⁶⁵ *The Manchester Guardian*, November 21, 1902.

terminate the practice.⁸⁶⁶ The more Vereeniging exposed wartime brutalities, the harder liberal correspondents stressed the need for a revamped system. In the eyes of radicals, the struggle had provided, in Scott's words, a "rude and salutary check" on "rabid and reckless Imperialism."⁸⁶⁷ After the peace concluded, Liberals sought to reunite and rejuvenate their fractured Party by emphasizing the government's South African War failings and promoting divisions among the incumbents over key post-war issues such as tariff reform. The Liberals' aggressive strategies contributed to their reestablishment in power four years later.

Correspondents recognized that victory in South Africa hardly resulted from a valiant Victorian military effort. The war's excessive length, high death toll, lack of funding and supplies, and administrative bungles cast a shadow over the broader imperial project. Imperially minded journalists used the conflict to push for a revitalized British Empire by emphasizing military progress and economic growth. Anti-war correspondents focused more on social improvements, with many advocating a return to Liberal political leadership to initiate domestic welfare reforms *and* ensure a continued free-trade system. According to the *Morning Leader*'s Robertson, if imperialism persisted in its present form, it could constitute "the beginning of the end of Empire."⁸⁶⁸ In the war's aftermath, both factions sought to transform their Victorian plans for imperial salvation into Edwardian realities.

POST-WAR ECONOMIC REFORMS

⁸⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁶⁷ Qtd. in Koss, *The Rise and Fall*, 391.

⁸⁶⁸ Qtd. in Thompson, "The Language of Imperialism," 165.

As Robin Winks accurately attests, “Economic questions remain fundamental to an understanding of any empire” and the extension of direct British power into the Boer Republics following Vereeniging made those particular imperial issues more pressing.⁸⁶⁹ During the treaty negotiations, British political leaders took cautious first steps toward the stabilization of regional commercial intercourse by discussing a framework for the economic integration of the new colonies.⁸⁷⁰ The notion of an imperial federation was nothing new. Since the mid-1870s, British MPs had examined increasing ties with the colonies as a means to offset the metropole’s increasingly weaker economic performance compared to continental Europe. Conservative Henry Herbert, the Fourth Earl of Carnarvon, pondered how to realistically keep the massive empire together and “prevent those [valuable] particles from flying, as it were, into political space.”⁸⁷¹ In 1885, Dilke proposed a preferential *Zollverein* (customs union) aimed at effectively managing imperial economic policies and establishing a mutually beneficial relationship between the homeland and her dominions. Other concerned Britons formed the British Empire League in 1897 to encourage amicability across the realm and initiate discussions regarding federation’s potential benefits. The *Times* and the *Guardian* reported the League’s satisfaction with the military aid provided by Britain’s colonies during the South African conflict. According to Spencer Cavendish, the Eighth Duke of Devonshire and leader of the Liberal Unionists during Vereeniging:

We...have learnt that if we are to fulfill the duties imposed upon us by our colonizing instincts...we must rely not only upon our own strength and our own

⁸⁶⁹ Robin W. Winks, “Problem Child of British History: The Empire-Commonwealth,” in *Recent Views on British History: Essays on Historical Writing since 1966*, ed. Richard Schlatter (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1984), 466.

⁸⁷⁰ *The Manchester Guardian*, May 27, 1902.

⁸⁷¹ Lord Carnarvon, “Imperial Administration: The substance of a speech delivered to the Philosophical Institution, London 1877,” *The Fortnightly Review* 14 (1878): 753.

right arm, but we must put full confidence and trust in the loyal and encouraging assistance which we have learnt will be offered to us by every colony of this country...I am inclined to think that these great measures of colonial federation which we have seen within recent times are tending to strengthen...the cause of Imperial Federation which will spread over the whole world.⁸⁷²

Amery argued that the war had intensified imperial bonds of unity, so why not exploit those connections and work toward the creation of an economic federation, which he viewed as a logical next step. Historian Sir John Seeley acknowledged that a Greater Britain did not exist at present but believed “the impulse has been felt to found one, and the path has been explored” that may soon lead to such an organization’s creation.⁸⁷³

English journalists clashed post-Vereeniging over the possibility of abandoning the quintessential free-trade doctrine that had undergirded the empire for decades. Conservative reporters envisioned their realm as a close-knit unit uniquely destined to economically direct the ebb and flow of the international marketplace. Amery believed constructing a strong unified South Africa necessitated its inclusion in a broader, federated union of colonies and dominions. He argued in the *Times*, “Imperialists...care...more for the Empire than for ‘blind adhesion’ to the outdated gospel of free trade.”⁸⁷⁴ Amery’s newspaper offered federation supporters and tariff reformers, albeit inconsistently and tempered at times, a means for disseminating their commercial theories to a wide audience.⁸⁷⁵ *Daily Express* mogul Pearson, along with his

⁸⁷² *The Manchester Guardian*, July 24, 1902.

⁸⁷³ John Seeley, “Lecture VI: Commerce and War,” in *The Expansion of England: Two Courses of Lectures* (1909), ed. John Seeley (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1909), 109.

⁸⁷⁴ *The London Times*, August 22, 1903.

⁸⁷⁵ Despite their praise of Chamberlain, both the *Times* and the *Mail* vacillated in their support for tariff reform (what Andrew Thompson casts as “fitful, transitory, and partial alliances”). While both papers generally endorsed those economic reform plans, they were not without hesitation at times. Northcliffe particularly objected to the “stomach tax” on food, fearing his paper’s backing of the plan would cost him subscribers, and he insisted on negotiating directly with Chamberlain concerning what the *Mail* would and would not print and support. See Thompson, *Imperial Britain: The Empire in British Politics, 1880-1930* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 72-73.

staff writers Ralph Blumenfeld and J.B. Wilson, gave the politician solid backing and ample tariff coverage.⁸⁷⁶ Chamberlain supporter Garvin decreed in the *Daily Telegraph*, “[I]t concerns the welfare of generations yet unborn whether this Empire, unique in its character as unrivalled in its opportunities, is knit close into one homogenous whole, like a planet” or “is broken up into a mere meteoric shower.”⁸⁷⁷ In September 1903, Garvin penned a fifty-page supplement for the conservative *National Review* called “The Economics of Empire,” in which he cautioned that in the absence of a federated system, the colonies could negotiate their own regional trade agreements and “very likely erect...tariffs to keep British goods out.”⁸⁷⁸ After Vereeniging, Amery and other like-minded journalists emphasized the desirability of increased colonial integration if the empire wanted to remain competitive in the international marketplace.

Most left-leaning writers opposed the idea of a formal federation on the grounds that it unsettled the free-trade system, a hallmark of Gladstonian Liberalism. Others feared it would threaten dominion autonomy and excessively curtail colonial parliaments’ economic power. Morley and the *Daily News* were among the movement’s harshest critics. Lloyd George, an ardent laissez-faire advocate, penned numerous letters on the issue to London newspapers. The future Liberal reform champion reminded *Spectator* readers that just because the colonies had offered up troops for the war effort, such patriotic actions did not mean that British colonials favored a military *or* economic federation after Vereeniging. He believed, “It [would] be wise to leave them to make as

⁸⁷⁶ According to Semmel, Pearson’s influence extended far beyond the *Daily Express* and the *Standard*, which he acquired in 1904; the latter man was involved in the publication of the *St. James Gazette*, *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, *Birmingham Evening Dispatch*, *Leicester Evening News*, *North Mail*, *Midland Express*, and the *Newcastle Weekly Leader*. See Semmel, *Imperialism and Social Reform*, 102-103. Blumenfeld was a committed free-trader and established the Anti-Socialist Union in 1908.

⁸⁷⁷ Qtd. in David Ayerst, *Garvin of the Observer* (London: Routledge, 1985), 52.

⁸⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 53.

freely any advances they may feel able to make in the future towards a change in their nature of their contributions to the Empire.”⁸⁷⁹

The South African War’s conclusion provided correspondents a forum in which to further expand their debates regarding a federated empire. Those heated discussions merited significant print space along Fleet Street and did not always align directly with traditional partisan ideologies. In the conservative-leaning *Fortnightly Review*, author J.A. Farrer expressed misgivings with a departure from free-trade tradition and worried that in a very short time, the concept of *Zollverein* “ha[d] taken such possession of the press that it is now a household word.”⁸⁸⁰ Shaw utilized columns of print in the *Chronicle* to identify the main post-war threat to Britain to be “not the clanger of attack on the Empire from without” but internal commercial mismanagement. He advocated domestic socio-economic reforms but also encouraged Britain to capitalize on new opportunities in international exchange, arguing that “civilization as well as trade must follow the flag abroad.”⁸⁸¹ In his *Democracy and Reaction* (1904), New Liberal thinker Hobhouse argued that an imperial federation and democratic ideologies were not fundamentally incompatible “in the sense of a great aggregation of territories enjoying internal independence while united by some common bond.”⁸⁸²

⁸⁷⁹ *The Speaker*, December 16, 1899.

⁸⁸⁰ J.A. Farrer, “The Problem of Empire,” *The Fortnightly Review* 37 (1885): 344. Farrer was a popular author who opposed imperial federation on mostly economic grounds. He also objected to admitting the colonies to the Imperial council-room, arguing, “Why should we surrender our position of paramount superiority, and either descend to political equality with our subject colonies, or raise them to our political level? There can be no empire without subject dependencies.” See Farrer, “The Problem of the Empire,” 338-340.

⁸⁸¹ Shaw, *Fabianism and the Empire*, 14-15; Thompson, “The Language of Imperialism,” 156-159. As Thompson asserts, Shaw’s usage of imperial rhetoric to serve domestic ends (particularly Fabian social proposals in the wake of the 1900 general election) faced intense scrutiny, not only from the Labour Party but from Amery, who deemed the Fabians to be “more concerned with getting their ideas of the welfare state in practice by anyone who might be prepared to help.” See Amery, *My Political Life*, 223.

⁸⁸² Qtd. in Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain*, 60-61.

Socialist writer Blatchford, unimpressed with the Labour Party and anti-Liberal, lent his support (and that of his *Clarion*) to the imperial federation campaign, but not necessarily to Chamberlain and the Conservatives. Blatchford exploited the war's conclusion to amplify his more pragmatic perspectives on imperial progress, which in his eyes should be unimpeded by restrictive partisan platforms. Blatchford, deemed by Semmel to be alternatively "an imperialist, a militarist, a nationalist, [and] a protectionist" in addition to a socialist, sought to motivate British workers into forging a resilient nation able to confront the emerging German "menace."⁸⁸³ His recommendations merited significant post-war coverage in the *Mail*.

Hobson was a relative outlier among radical colleagues in his belief that an economic federation of British states, "[b]ound by free trade and interlocking political institutions," was "eminently desirable" and "might indeed form a step towards a wider [coalition] of civilised states in the future."⁸⁸⁴ He further asserted that "[a]n intelligent progressive community, based upon substantial equality of economic and educational opportunities, [can] raise its standard of consumption to correspond with every increased power of production."⁸⁸⁵ While not a fan of Chamberlain, Hobson felt a carefully constructed, voluntary association of British domains could yield economic benefit and imperial stability.

Hobson's *Imperialism* was published nearly concurrently with the Vereeniging treaty. In his work, he maintained that a loose alliance of British states could coalesce in

⁸⁸³ Semmel, *Imperialism and Social Reform*, 223. Blatchford's "multi-faceted" identity was not unusual for his time. Linda Colley claims, "[I]dentities are not hats. Human beings can and do put on several at one time." See Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 6.

⁸⁸⁴ Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain*, 58-59; Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study*, 351.

⁸⁸⁵ Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study*, 92. In the same breath, he also erroneously asserted that domestic Britons could find "full employment for an unlimited quantity of capital within the limits of [this] country." Clearly, given the direction of capital flows from the metropole, Hobson's argument here is untenable.

the future, provided such a system occurred naturally over time and remained undergirded by laissez-faire logic. Britain would have to walk a fine line between satiating colonial demands and not alienating existing foreign trading partners.⁸⁸⁶ Hobson theorized in the *Guardian*, “[I]f imperial federation mean[s] that these distant parts of the Empire, where the Queen’s Constitution had been reproduced, [are] more and more to act in harmony with the Government at home,” then “it [may be] a fertile notion.”⁸⁸⁷ While Hobson, Blatchford, Amery, and other reporters harbored diverse political backgrounds and ideas concerning the establishment and constitution of a federated system, they shared a common goal of imperial economic improvement. They used their journalism as a strategic tool to motivate the masses.

Chamberlain spearheaded the drive for imperial federation before, during, and after the war. He cast the concept of a federated system as the epitome of British nationalism and global dominance. The Colonial Secretary manipulated his press connections to spread his message across the realm. In a powerful pre-war speech in Toronto, Chamberlain lauded imperial economic unity as a “great dream...to stimulate the patriotism and statesmanship of every man who loves his country” and “whether it be destined or not to perfect realization, at least let us...do all in our power to promote it.”⁸⁸⁸

⁸⁸⁶ By the end of the Edwardian era, Hobson had abandoned his backing of imperial federation in any form, claiming in his 1909 work *The Crisis of Liberalism: New Issues of Democracy* that anyone still convinced of such a plan’s practicality was “merely the dupe...of Kiplingesque sentimentalism.” See *The Crisis of Liberalism* (London: P.S. King & Son, 1909), 258-259. For additional evidence and analysis of Hobson’s increasing contradictions and radicalization, see Peter Cain, *Hobson and Imperialism: Radicalism, New Liberalism, and Finance, 1887-1938* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) and Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain*.

⁸⁸⁷ *The Manchester Guardian*, October 24, 1900.

⁸⁸⁸ Qtd. in Niall Ferguson, *Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), 207.

Federation was Chamberlain's baby. He sought correspondents' assistance after Vereeniging to ensure it reached maturity.

Germany's rising economic clout combined with Britain's lacking industrial growth since the mid-nineteenth century made a post-war imperial preference system and a departure from free trade an appealing alternative for some. London remained the powerful center of global finance, trade, and gentlemanly capitalism. However, as Wiener contends, "the City did not depend on the prosperity of the domestic economy" and could flourish "while British industry languished."⁸⁸⁹ Britain's manufacturers had clung tightly to their craftsmanship traditions of quality over quantity, and producers often were unwilling to sacrifice value to save money or increase overall output. The growth of trade unions further restrained the industrial sector's ability to act quickly and progressively, and overseas investment was prioritized over domestic growth and development. Additionally, foreign competition from the Germans and the United States significantly reduced Britain's global exchange rate in manufacturing. The percentage dropped from 46% in 1870 to approximately 29% by the end of the South African War.⁸⁹⁰ The British economy had also become increasingly dependent on invisible exports, which constituted nearly a third of overall GNP by 1910. Chamberlain worried that paying for imports with investment in securities would weaken overall national health by transforming Britain from a land of manufacturers and producers to one of "consumers, chiefly rich men and their dependents."⁸⁹¹

⁸⁸⁹ Wiener, *English Culture*, 145.

⁸⁹⁰ Douglas A. Irwin, "The Political Economy of Free Trade in the British General Election of 1906," *Journal of Law and Economics* 37, no. 1 (April 1994): 78.

⁸⁹¹ Qtd. in Marsh, *Joseph Chamberlain*, 571.

Aggressive efforts to acquire additional imperial territory had all but ceased by Vereeniging. The focus shifted to the existing empire's amalgamation and potential reconstitution. Chamberlain believed a continued free-trade mentality would threaten British industry and viewed imperial federation as the gateway to protecting Britain from European and American economic threats. While addressing an audience at the Guildhall in January 1904, after having communicated extensively with Amery over his speech content, the former Colonial Secretary disregarded the 1903 Board of Trades report that indicated improved domestic economic performance, including increased wages and a lower cost of living for the average Briton compared to previous years. Chamberlain stressed that England's past achievements mattered little in terms of her present ability to contend with formidable new nation-states. As Amery reported in the *Times*, Chamberlain cautioned that "[w]e might decline as a nation, and [yet] wallow in comparative luxury" because he believed that "the greatness of a nation [is] not measured by comparisons with its own past but by its relative position among the countries of the world."⁸⁹²

Chamberlain felt that London's success as a financial capital depended upon "the productive energy and capacity [that was] behind it." He felt that domestic manufacturing was the backbone of imperial finance, and, in the absence of protective legislation, Britain could become an affluent trading center "with no productive industry whatever" and "a home for millionaires and for their [families]" to the exclusion of working men.⁸⁹³

⁸⁹² *The London Times*, January 20, 1904; Alexander Mackintosh, *Joseph Chamberlain: An Honest Biography* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1906), 295.

⁸⁹³ Qtd. in Marsh, *Joseph Chamberlain*, 597. Marsh argues that Chamberlain's perceptions of the prime manufacturing interests in Britain were "rather narrowly domestic." The politician neglected to address industries (including steel and cotton textiles) that actually benefited from free trade policies. His insistence on domestic control of industry "at all stages of the productive process" made him an inadequate

By promoting a self-sufficient domestic *and* imperial economic system, Chamberlain and his pro-federation allies hoped the metropole's population would "think imperially" and support the construction of tighter bonds with the colonies.⁸⁹⁴

The laissez-faire Liberals had already fractured twice, over Ireland in 1886 and over the South African War a decade later. Chamberlain took advantage of the Party's divisions and sought to rally his Conservative brethren around a federated union of Britain, her white dominions, and her colonies. In 1898, Chamberlain had urged the dependencies to focus on colonial instead of foreign imports to facilitate unimpeded intra-imperial exchange. However, the dominions remained hesitant to endorse such a system. Chamberlain refused to budge. Amid the massive early military failures in South Africa, the *Mail* printed what it deemed to be the highlights from "Mr. Chamberlain's great speech" of February 5, 1900, in which the politician addressed both military blunders and the potential to reinvigorate the empire through imperial preference. Chamberlain declared:

We have made mistakes. I am not anxious to dispute the blame...[However] [w]e are finding out the infinite potential [economic] resources of the Empire and we are advancing steadily...towards the realization of the federation of our race, which will inevitably make for peace and liberty and justice.⁸⁹⁵

Even free-trader Wallace identified some value in the war's ability to reveal the potential for closer connections between colonies, dominions, and metropole.

After Vereeniging, Northcliffe emphasized the *Mail*'s history of promoting imperial preference. He referenced an early 1900 article that acknowledged "[f]or years

representative for homeland manufacturing as a whole and cost him valuable political support. See Marsh, 595-596.

⁸⁹⁴ See *The London Times*, January 20, 1904.

⁸⁹⁵ *The London Daily Mail*, February 6, 1900.

Imperial Federation has been the dream of many of the noblest minds of our empire.”⁸⁹⁶

In the months following the treaty, the *Mail* generally backed Chamberlain’s preference ambitions, although Northcliffe would later waver over the tariff reform issue.⁸⁹⁷ While summarizing a late 1902 Chamberlain speaking engagement, the *Mail* described the politician’s “emphatic pronouncement in favour of...Federation, the hope of every loyal Briton” and praised his “distinct and impressive tones” while detailing his plans for the empire’s future.⁸⁹⁸

Chamberlain’s words mirrored those of Amery during Vereeniging. Just days after the treaty’s signing, Amery (in the *Times*) discussed coverage of the surrender’s acceptance in the *Berliner Neueste Nachrichten*. The German publication highlighted “the wretched state of the British Army” but also expressed little doubt that England would “turn to account the lessons of the war” and reassess its increased overseas economic competition.⁸⁹⁹ Both in his diaries and in the *Times* when possible, Amery conceptualized the empire as “a coherent system...to which every issue, political, economic, social, cultural and even moral could be related.”⁹⁰⁰ His June 6 *Times* article asserted, “If the settlement is now carried through wisely and firmly...all are ready...to co-operate with [the Boers] in building up a great, free, united South Africa under the British flag” as an important new addition to an increasingly interconnected empire.⁹⁰¹ Working together, Amery and Chamberlain reevaluated imperial purpose post-war. As Seeley wrote in his seminal 1899 tome *The Expansion of England*, the new rhetoric

⁸⁹⁶ Ibid., February 20, 1900.

⁸⁹⁷ See Thompson, *Imperial Britain*, 72.

⁸⁹⁸ *The London Daily Mail*, December 3, 1902.

⁸⁹⁹ *The London Times*, June 2, 1902.

⁹⁰⁰ Julian Amery, “Introduction,” 12.

⁹⁰¹ *The London Times*, June 6, 1902.

forged from collaborations between politicians and correspondents converted the British Empire into “a space for transformative moral and political action, for the shaping of a patriotic imperial citizenry, and for the stabilization of the homeland.”⁹⁰²

In Chamberlain’s mind, any further decay in the ropes tethering England to her imperial domains would have serious consequences for continued British global power. In a post-war correspondence with Liberal leader G.H. Reid, Chamberlain argued, “[I]t rests with us to say whether our own shall be counted for many ages to come as one of the greatest [empires] or whether we shall split up into minor and comparatively unimportant nationalities.”⁹⁰³ Several years later, he conveyed similar anxieties in a letter to Australian Governor-General Lord Stafford Northcote, worrying, “[T]hose who attempt to see the future are all agreed that if we do not find some way of coming closer together we must inevitably drift apart.”⁹⁰⁴ Britain’s dominions and colonies had demonstrated their loyalty to the crown with their money and manpower in South Africa. As Chamberlain saw it, an economically federated system was the natural outcome of such intensifying alliances. During Parliamentary debate in July 1903, Chamberlain told MPs that the federation issue demanded the House’s immediate attention because “the colonies in the late war ha[d] [just] shown the most signal proof of their devotion and attachment to the mother-country in her difficulties.”⁹⁰⁵ He sought to take economic advantage of the post-Vereeniging era and emphasize the importance of imperial preference.

⁹⁰² Bell, *Empire and the Future of World Order*, 8-9.

⁹⁰³ Joseph Chamberlain to the Honorable G.H. Reid, 13 June 1902, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC 17/2/5.

⁹⁰⁴ Joseph Chamberlain to Stafford Northcote, 18 January 1905, National Archive Records, PRO 30/56/1.

⁹⁰⁵ *The Manchester Guardian*, July 14, 1903.

Amery made sure that Chamberlain's words were played prominently in the *Times*, which had demonstrated its willingness to cautiously test the waters of federation and tariff reform. Prior to the war's outbreak, Chamberlain theorized in the paper that "if our colonies...will stand side by side and shoulder to shoulder with us in maintaining the honour and interests of the Empire" in South Africa, then they should be willing to discuss an economic integration that he believed would achieve the same ends.⁹⁰⁶ A year after Vereeniging, Amery kept Chamberlain's economic endeavors alive in the public consciousness. He reiterated in a June 1903 *Times* column:

The British Empire makes up so large a portion of the world that its constituent parts, if brought into due union and cohesion, would for all practical purposes be independent of the remainder. How best to effect such union and cohesion is the problem which now presents itself...and upon the soundness of the conclusions at which they arrive the future greatness of the Empire must depend.⁹⁰⁷

The post-war appeals of Amery and other pro-federation journalists such as the *Daily Telegraph*'s Garvin and the *Morning Post*'s Gwynne sprouted from wartime roots and revealed the writers' increasing desire to retool the imperial economic system after Vereeniging.

In the eyes of those newspapermen, economic integration was essential to keeping pace with rapidly industrializing protectionist nations. Amery's *Times* editor Bell acknowledged the validity of an imperial preference system, although England had long taken pride in its free-trade ideology. While privately maintaining some personal reservations about the program's capacity for success and distrusting Chamberlain, Bell admitted that "[i]f we can help to cement the Empire even by some financial sacrifice, we

⁹⁰⁶ *The London Times*, May 5, 1898.

⁹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, June 15, 1903.

have to do it.”⁹⁰⁸ Despite Amery’s pushes, the *Times*’ commitment to journalistic impartiality further restrained Bell from consistently endorsing imperial federation. In July 1903, the *Times* stated, “We are trying...to set aside stereotyped deductions...to look at things as they are,” and “to fit our policy to the conditions in which we live.”⁹⁰⁹

Chamberlain’s crusade for tariff reform was arduous and draining. He leaned heavily on Amery, Garvin, and other journalist colleagues for support and advice; as Marsh asserts, those writers “fed Chamberlain with information he could not get from the civil service, and with ideas with a radical edge.”⁹¹⁰ Amery’s political colleagues were instrumental in creating the Tariff Reform League in Vereeniging’s aftermath to promote the empire’s transformation into a unified economic bloc based on high import tariffs that would ostensibly fund domestic social reforms. The organization, chaired by press baron Pearson, declared its mission to be the endorsement of the tariff “with the view of its employment to consolidate and develop the resources of the Empire and to defend the industries of the United Kingdom.”⁹¹¹ Many of the Liberal (Imperialist) League’s goals, including temperance, urban revitalization, educational advancement, old age pensions, improved international trade, and a commitment to challenge German power, transferred seamlessly into the Tariff Reform League’s agenda.⁹¹² Such commonalities of purpose made Chamberlain hopeful that he could maintain the Conservatives’ political coalition with the Liberal Unionists. The Reform League dispensed a myriad of pamphlets promoting its cause and mobilized members’ press connections to obtain valuable space in the *Mail* and the *Times*. Chamberlain fully supported the tariff reformers’ endeavors,

⁹⁰⁸ Qtd. in Startt, *Journalists for Empire*, 37.

⁹⁰⁹ *The London Times*, July 11, 1903.

⁹¹⁰ Marsh, *Joseph Chamberlain*, 568.

⁹¹¹ *The London Daily Mail*, September 19, 1903.

⁹¹² See Scally, *The Origins of the Lloyd George Coalition*, 104.

particularly their commitment to guarding British markets against unchecked competition from economically protected nations. He would establish his own Tariff Reform Commission in December 1903.

Both the Tariff Reform and Liberal Leagues built their foundations on a social-imperialist ideology that emphasized the reciprocal benefits achievable by partnering domestic and foreign reform efforts. An imperial federation and social improvements were not mutually exclusive. Chamberlain tried to solicit worker support by claiming that protective tariffs would shield homeland manufacturing from external competition while increasing employment and providing funding for domestic social programs. By encouraging demand-based labor exchanges and establishing controls on immigration to benefit native workers, he believed that unemployment in the metropole could be further curbed. Chamberlain's popular campaigning slogan was "Tariff Reform Means Work for All."

Government leaders expressed similar views regarding continental rivalries in their speeches, which often were quoted, paraphrased, and deconstructed in English newspapers. Prior to Vereeniging, the *Mail* shared the concerns of Haldane, who feared that the British middle classes were "threatened by a new commercial combination." Haldane contended that while "[i]t was not wonderful that in the manufacture of iron and steel we had fallen behind the United States," it was shocking and frustrating "that we had also been beaten in this particular race by Germany."⁹¹³ To address those declines, Haldane argued that Britain should continue expanding its economic output and tightening its grip on the dependencies.⁹¹⁴ MP Lord Hugh Cecil quoted Chamberlain's

⁹¹³ *The Manchester Guardian*, October 23, 1901.

⁹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

words before Parliament when he declared, “The distress in working-class districts [is] doubtless mainly due to our system of one-sided free trade.”⁹¹⁵ However, Liberal representative Morley requested the commencement of roundtable discussions before formulating any potential plans for an imperial preference system.⁹¹⁶ Dozens of other concerned MPs meted out their anxieties and hopes outside of Whitehall at Tariff Reform League meetings.

Imperialist correspondents had used their Boer conflict commentaries to strengthen British unity with New Zealand, Australia, and Canada. During the war, Amery frequently suggested in the *Times* that fresh colonial and dominion soldiers could offset the lack of healthy troops in South Africa and also bring Britain’s global domains closer together. Chamberlain drew confidence from Amery’s public endorsements and orchestrated the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act, which passed the House of Commons in 1900. Subsequently, the British army benefited from the arrival of skilled Australian mounted infantry units and supply shipments. In late 1901, New Zealand’s Prime Minister Richard Seddon approved the deployment of up to 1,000 additional soldiers to South Africa. Seddon was encouraged by his people’s energetic response to the call for further troops. According to the Prime Minister, New Zealanders felt “that it [would] be for the best interest of the Empire...and that the number of mounted [men] [would] be increased without delay.”⁹¹⁷

Chamberlain applauded the additional assistance from across the realm and touted that enthusiasm as evidence that the dominions might support a federated empire post-conflict. The *Mail* highlighted Chamberlain’s pleasure with “[t]he splendid

⁹¹⁵ *The London Times*, October 17, 1904.

⁹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, June 19, 1902.

⁹¹⁷ *The Manchester Guardian*, December 16, 1901.

and...spontaneous rally of the colonies to the mother country,” which “affords us some compensation even for the sufferings of the war.”⁹¹⁸ Such behavior was cast both as a showcase of devotion to Britain and a demonstration of imperial responsibility in wartime. Under Roberts’s leadership, the supplementary soldiers helped recharge the British army and assisted in the capture of the Boer capital Pretoria in June 1900. Following Vereeniging, Amery applauded the dominions’ contributions, which he claimed confirmed “the vast reserve of power latent in the patriotism of the free nations which compose the British Empire.”⁹¹⁹

After the war’s conclusion, Chamberlain admitted:

We may yet be in fact as well as in name, the greatest Empire that the world has ever seen—on the other hand, we may, if we fail to take the present opportunity, drift into a condition of apathetic indifference which must in the long run be the precursor of separation.⁹²⁰

He quoted Amery’s words in his public speeches and in his Parliamentary arguments for federation. The correspondent’s South African reports provided Chamberlain with valuable justifications for their shared goals of a federated empire and tariff reform. Again, the Anglo-Boer conflict demonstrated the heightened involvement of the domestic press in government policy development. For advice, Chamberlain turned directly to Amery and other imperialist newspapermen, including Garvin and the *National Review*’s Leo Maxse. During such exchanges, correspondents offered Chamberlain and other politicians both personal perspectives and assessments of current public opinion. As

⁹¹⁸ *The London Daily Mail*, February 6, 1900.

⁹¹⁹ 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 Donal Lowry, ed., *The South African War Reappraised*, 190.

⁹²⁰ Joseph Chamberlain to Colonel Denison, 2 December 1903, Joseph Chamberlain Papers, JC 18/4/3.

Marsh affirms, “In an interactive process, [war journalists] pressed their vision of the world and their impression of their readers upon the statesmen they revered.”⁹²¹

Amery, writing as “Tariff Reformer” in the *Times*, penned scathing critiques of free-trade policies to support Chamberlain’s post-war tariff crusade. He covered the Colonial Secretary’s impassioned May 1903 Birmingham speech and equated it to Martin Luther’s confrontation with the Catholic Church’s authority in 1517 Wittenberg. After the speech’s delivery, Amery helped craft a letter to the *Times*, ostensibly drafted by liberal thinkers, which confirmed their supposed agreement with Chamberlain’s economic proposals. The document was published in the paper in July 1903 and prompted a Lady Edward Cecil to write Milner, “The rank and file of the Liberal Imps are very discontented with their leaders and want to follow Joe.”⁹²²

Amery and Chamberlain both believed that a revitalized Greater Britain could become economically strong and self-sufficient, buoyed by protective tariffs and investments in productive colonial markets. Both men treated the war as a critical pivot point for the Empire and a fortuitous opportunity to forge the economic unity that they believed could quell domestic uneasiness and maintain Britain’s international preeminence. In early 1903, Chamberlain paraphrased Amery when he challenged British workers to “claim your share in all that the Empire represents” by validating the establishment of a federated empire and “join with us to ... confirm the strength, power, and influence which I believe in the future you will find to be the greatest force in

⁹²¹ Qtd. in Marsh, *Joseph Chamberlain*, 567.

⁹²² Lady Edward Cecil to Milner, July 1, 1903. Milner Papers, Vol. 41: folio 19. However, Searle reminds readers that statements like Cecil’s “must be viewed with some skepticism,” as not every Liberal broke rank and joined Chamberlain’s tariff crusade. For an analysis of early Edwardian political “flip-flopping,” see Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency*, 146-148.

civilization.”⁹²³ Amery’s assistance was not limited to helping Chamberlain draft arguments. The correspondent also aided in the composition of Milner’s many addresses regarding the “British family of states.” With Amery as his guide, Milner delivered a multitude of speeches after Vereeniging, in which he discussed the nurturing of a “twofold patriotism” that would yield subjects with dual allegiances — loyalty to their home region and loyalty to their empire.⁹²⁴

The war had revealed the lack of money being utilized to address homeland social problems. As previously discussed, Chamberlain believed in taxing imports to stimulate and protect the domestic economy and provide valuable funding for healthcare, education, and assistance for the poor. He told mining spokesman Percy Fitzpatrick that an imperial preference policy would ensure that “the essentials for life, industry, and trade within the Empire [would] be available for the Empire.”⁹²⁵ Chamberlain’s economic campaigns held the potential to generate widespread social benefits for the metropole, but such efforts would also carry a domestic price tag because raising import tariffs on foreign goods would elevate food prices — particularly the cost of wheat. Many British workers bemoaned the so-called “stomach tax” proposal, claiming that protectionist policies would leave their families hungry with a “smaller loaf” of bread when they could not afford the added expense. The debate further split the Unionists, but Chamberlain held firm that the benefits of tariff modification would exceed the costs. He theorized that food taxes “could be levied in such a way as to grant a worthwhile measure of preference to colonial produce,” while “the [domestic] labourer would benefit from increased

⁹²³ *The Manchester Guardian*, February 2, 1903.

⁹²⁴ J. Lee Thompson, *A Wider Patriotism: Alfred Milner and the British Empire* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2007), 115. Chamberlain conceptualized England as the imperial “fatherland” of a federated system based on “coordination, not subordination.”

⁹²⁵ Qtd. in Marsh, *Joseph Chamberlain*, 550.

employment and higher wages.”⁹²⁶ Chamberlain argued that “unless we bind the colonies to us by preferential treaties, and...proceed without delay to tax the food of the people of the United Kingdom, the unity of the Empire cannot be saved.”⁹²⁷ In his presentation of Chamberlain’s proposals, MP Gorst reminded Parliament that “since 1895, little has been done to improve the condition [of Britons who] are looking about to see what they have gained by [the war], but perceive only the burdens and difficulties which it has left behind.”⁹²⁸

Chamberlain’s imperial preference crusade naturally faced significant opposition, mainly from liberal free-traders, who argued that restoring protectionism would damage the economy and could not successfully supersede a half-century of laissez-faire tradition.⁹²⁹ According to Blumenfeld, the liberal press raised such an uproar regarding the taxes that such newspapers “almost hypnotized a large section of the public into the belief that if tariffs were imposed on any kind of foreign goods, the British working man would starve.”⁹³⁰ Labeling their plan the “big loaf policy” in contrast to Chamberlain’s “stomach tax,” the Liberals played off the domestic masses’ demands for affordable foodstuffs. The Opposition Party balked at the “undue encumbrances” it claimed Chamberlain’s reforms would impose on English consumers, particularly the increased cost of basic goods, and lamented that protectionist legislation would only benefit a handful of specialized manufacturers. Immediately following Vereeniging, a *Guardian* editorial stated:

The relations between the mother country and the colonies are relations between

⁹²⁶ A.W. Bob Coats, *On the History of Economic Thought* (London: Routledge, 2005), 288.

⁹²⁷ Irwin, “The Political Economy of Free Trade,” 82-83; *The Manchester Guardian*, July 14, 1903.

⁹²⁸ Gorst, “Mr. Chamberlain’s Proposals,” 11.

⁹²⁹ See Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain*, 16.

⁹³⁰ Qtd. in Semmel, *Imperialism and Social Reform*, 112.

self-respecting and self-dependent communities, freely maintained out of no feeling of compulsion or dependence, on the basis of general recognition of certain mutual interests, of mutual good feeling, and the pride in a common history...[The Empire's] unity will not be rendered more secure by imposing fresh obligations which in England at least will from the first be felt as a burden.⁹³¹

The *Guardian* printed several lengthy articles centered on Campbell-Bannerman and his concerns that tariff reform would inhibit the empire's economic independence and initiative. In a November 1902 speech, the Liberal leader claimed that "of all the insane schemes ever offered to a free country as a boon", the abandoning of free trade "is surely the maddest."⁹³² Campbell-Bannerman was unrestrained in his antagonism toward the roadblocks he predicted high import taxes would erect. Both the *Daily News* and the *Guardian* offered him a platform from which to publicize his critiques of Chamberlain. In a January 1903 talk, the Leader of the Opposition asserted, "[T]rade is injured when it is not allowed to follow its natural course, and when it is either hampered or diverted by artificial obstacles;" thus, "I oppose protection...in any form."⁹³³ Unfettered market exchange undergirded the late Victorian worldview. To many, a federated system supported by tariffs represented a step backwards. A letter to the *Times* editor from a Mr. B.H.H. in June 1903 revealed similar anxieties on a popular scale, asking "Is this country and each other State in the Empire prepared to give up its full fiscal autonomy, and to merge itself, in this most important political respect, in the Empire?"⁹³⁴

The liberal press disseminated its discontent with tariff reform in multiple ways. Northcliffe dispensed "Walking Inquirers" to conduct man-on-the-street interviews about Chamberlain's proposals and then report their findings back to the *Mail*. The majority of

⁹³¹ *The Manchester Guardian*, June 16, 1902.

⁹³² *Ibid.*, November 29, 1902.

⁹³³ Qtd. in Wilson, C.B.: *A Life of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman*, 413.

⁹³⁴ *The London Times*, June 6, 1903.

those surveyed opposed the measures because of the higher food prices such changes would bring.⁹³⁵ Political economy professor H.W. Wilson critiqued Chamberlain's ideas in multiple articles, a number of which featured prominently in Northcliffe's publication. After exhaustively evaluating British import and export data, both colonial and foreign, Wilson remained unconvinced "that the great British Empire which exists now would necessarily be any greater as an Empire in consequence of a measure which could only reduce the civilising influences resulting from trade between nations."⁹³⁶ Wilson's tracts came with a disclaimer stating that they "express[ed] the opinions of the writer, and not necessarily that of the *Daily Mail*."⁹³⁷ However, as previously mentioned, Northcliffe fluctuated regarding his public stance on Chamberlain's policies, often out of concern that excessive support for unpopular tariffs would decrease his readership and profits.

In the war's closing months, the *Guardian* reported Canada and Australia's refusal to increase their military contributions to South Africa. In the minds of *Guardian* reporters, the rejections constituted an "emphatic repudiation...of Mr. Chamberlain's conclusion that the war had 'realised' the Empire and created a feeling of loyalty hitherto unknown."⁹³⁸ Anti-war protests swelled in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand during the final year of combat, as the dominions viewed Britain's continually escalating demands for manpower to be excessively burdensome. Furthermore, when British colonies successfully provided war assistance to their mother country, they became increasingly self-assured and often nationalistic in their mindsets. Consequently, the war also contributed to a fracturing of imperial allegiances, as the emboldened dominions

⁹³⁵ See Searle, *A New England?*, 344-345.

⁹³⁶ *The London Daily Mail*, June 30, 1903.

⁹³⁷ *Ibid.*, June 30, 1903.

⁹³⁸ *The Manchester Guardian*, May 22, 1902.

actually became less inclined to involve themselves directly in future military endeavors. Problematically for Chamberlain and other federation advocates, the war had awakened a slumbering national consciousness within multiple imperial realms. The less British they became, the less likely dominions and colonies were to willingly participate in an economically restrictive federated empire.

While not denying the importance of a strong alliance between Britain and her domains, the *Guardian*, the *Daily News*, and other liberal publications accused Chamberlain of attempting to “annex the Empire to the English Conservative Party.”⁹³⁹ Liberal correspondents charged tariff reformers with crafting a ploy to maintain political dominance rather than acting in the best interest of domestic Britons. Lloyd George’s *Daily News* in particular alleged that tariff reformers were trying to coerce British territories into joining a formal association to which they had not consented. Churchill expressed similar sentiments during a post-war speech, warning that if the British government tried to force upon the colonies “a fiscal system for which their conditions had not prepared them, and for which their public opinion was at present unready”, then imperial politicians could “strike a serious if not mortal blow” to the current friendly relationship between the mother country and her imperial domains.⁹⁴⁰

Amery and Churchill met frequently during the imperial federation debate and agreed to disagree on the issue. In the aftermath, Churchill abandoned the Conservative Party. Amery respectfully wrote of the future Prime Minister, “[H]is patriotism has always been for England...[and] the other, newer conception, that of the Commonwealth as the object of a wider patriotism...has never seriously influenced his thinking, his

⁹³⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁴⁰ Ibid., November 6, 1902.

eloquence or his actions.”⁹⁴¹ The diverse ways in which correspondents’ wartime commentaries influenced the making and breaking of friendships and partisan allegiances during the Edwardian era demonstrated the increasingly intimate relationship between the fourth estate and the political arena.

In June 1903, Liberal reformer Courtney lambasted Chamberlain and the potential demise of the free-trade system in an article titled “Preferential Trade with the Colonies.” While Courtney firmly believed in strengthening imperial connections between colony and metropole, he rejected what he perceived to be economic capitulation. In his critique, Courtney declared, “The ideal of a self-subsistent British Empire, wholly independent of other nations, isolated and content with its isolation, is to me repugnant rather than attractive.”⁹⁴² A month later, former Liberal Leader of the Opposition Sir William Harcourt decried, both in a lengthy letter to the *Times* and during Parliamentary discussion, “I believe there can be no greater delusion” than to assume “that a preferential tariff would prove a bond of permanent union.”⁹⁴³ Liberal MP Sir Robert Reid emphasized in a speech reprinted in the *Guardian* that “[f]ree [t]rade was essential” to the empire’s survival and decreed that a protectionist policy “would mean misery...starvation and...if it were pressed it would mean social revolution.”⁹⁴⁴

The heated debates over the tariff issue were ignited by correspondents’ reassessment of the empire’s economic future following Vereeniging. While not all war reporters supported Chamberlain’s plan for imperial preference, they all believed in a powerful, united British Empire for the twentieth century. As the *Daily News*

⁹⁴¹ Qtd. in Amery, *My Political Life*, 39.

⁹⁴² *The Manchester Guardian*, June 20, 1903.

⁹⁴³ *Ibid.*, July 14, 1903.

⁹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, July 17, 1903.

pragmatically queried in a column assessing MP Bryce's June 1900 speech on imperialism, "Do we [Liberals] not all [simply] wish to draw closer our ties with the colonies...without reckless[ly] increas[ing] the burden of the taxpayer?"⁹⁴⁵

Correspondents mobilized the South African War's resolution to reinvigorate discussions concerning the economic policy of Edwardian Britain, whether it was maintaining the mantle of free trade or reviving protectionism by building an imperial federation. Politics and financial analyses aside, war reporters sought to keep their empire on solid footing, at home and abroad. During the conflict, Chamberlain claimed that "the war —with all its losses and sacrifices — has yet brought us in a few months further on our way to a true [unified] conception of Empire than a whole generation of peace."⁹⁴⁶

In the end, pro-tariff correspondents' appeals for working-class backing of protectionist legislation could not overcome political divisions or garner substantial popular support. Many Unionists deserted their Conservative allies. Those contentious economic issues helped to reunite free-trade Liberals with many of their former Liberal Imperialist adversaries to rebuild their Party while the Conservatives fractured. Chamberlain resigned as Colonial Secretary in September 1903 to devote himself full time to his tariff reform campaign. He made one last appeal to British workers in the summer of 1905, emphasizing the capability of protective taxes to keep laborers employed and provide funding for social programs. He promised the Lancashire Conservative Working Men's Federation in June that if "[you] [g]ive me power to give you more employment...everything will follow. It will be easy enough then for your

⁹⁴⁵ *The London Daily News*, June 5, 1900.

⁹⁴⁶ Qtd. in Marsh, *Joseph Chamberlain*, 490.

employers to give you higher wages,” and “it will be easy enough then to [pass] all the legislation which is intended to rise your standard of living.”⁹⁴⁷

Despite Chamberlain’s efforts, the reunited Liberals won an overwhelming victory in the 1906 general election. Multiple historians, including Morgan, have deemed South Africa “Britain’s Vietnam,” with the substantial difference that “in Edward VII’s Britain, unlike Nixon’s America, it was the protestors who [finally] won the day and captured power.”⁹⁴⁸ The free-trade Liberals took control, but the concept of imperial federation did not die. Amery and his pro-federation colleagues kept the debate active regarding the possible benefits of “uniting together kindred races with similar objects.”⁹⁴⁹

In 1909, Milner began The Round Table movement, an international association of discussion groups initially committed to promoting a federated imperial system. The former High Commissioner and his “Kindergarten” of like-minded British South African civil servants constituted the movement’s core. Working with the Round Table as an honorary member, Amery played a valuable role in campaigning for an imperial federation, the united system for which he and Chamberlain had fought so aggressively in the years after Vereeniging. The former war correspondent felt certain that a federated empire endeavor could not succeed merely by allowing the current framework to collapse. Such change would require a calculated push by the right individuals to

⁹⁴⁷ *The London Times*, June 5, 1905.

⁹⁴⁸ Moore, “Lloyd George, Keir Hardie and the Importance of the ‘Pro-Boers,’” 291.

⁹⁴⁹ Robert Kubicek, *The Administration of Imperialism: Joseph Chamberlain at the Colonial Office* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1969), 32.

facilitate cooperation and compromise and to demonstrate the validity of such an alliance to a skeptical domestic population.⁹⁵⁰

A year later, the group established the widely disseminated *Round Table Journal: A Quarterly Review of the Politics of the British Empire*. In the first issue, Liberal secretary (and Lloyd George's future private secretary) Philip Kerr informed readers that the empire represented the culmination of the "individualist principles of the British race" and that it had to be maintained at all costs.⁹⁵¹ Milner still viewed the current empire as tenuous and believed a more efficient integrated system would be better poised to address imperial concerns that had lingered since Vereeniging. His plan for economic prosperity was rooted in keeping the British racially linked via "Home Rule all round."⁹⁵² However, Milner and Amery clashed with multiple Round Table members, including Kerr and Lord Robert Cecil, who identified themselves as free-traders and claimed that tariff reform actually fomented disunity among the empire's disparate parts. The June 1913 issue of *The Round Table* argued that "[t]he problem of Empire is a political [one] to be determined not by the standard of wealth" but by its cohesion.⁹⁵³ According to the laissez-faire members, imperial cooperation could not be sacrificed on the altar of protectionism. Debates dragged on regarding the economic and political positions of the Round Table, and the outbreak of World War I further stalled the organization's progress. Yet even after the Great War, Milner continued to fight for imperial unity. In 1925, he stressed to the *Times*, "The British State must follow the race...[for] [i]f the swarms

⁹⁵⁰ Qtd. in Alexander May, "The Round Table, 1910-66," (PhD dissertation, University of Oxford, 1995), 47. See also Andrea Bosco, *The Round Table Movement and the Fall of the 'Second' British Empire, 1909-1919* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017).

⁹⁵¹ J.E. Kendle, *The Round Table Movement and Imperial Union* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), 110.

⁹⁵² See also Kendle, "The Round Table Movement and 'Home Rule All Round'," *The Historical Journal* 11, no. 2 (1968): 332-353.

⁹⁵³ *Round Table Studies*, June 1913 (London: R. Clay, 1913), 497.

constantly being thrown off by the parent hive are lost to the State, the State is irreparably weakened.”⁹⁵⁴

On the eve of World War I, *The Round Table* decreed, “Political corruption, place-hunting, and party intrigue have their natural home in small communities, where attention is concentrated upon local interests,” but “[g]reat public causes call into being the intellectual and moral potentialities” of an entire people.⁹⁵⁵ Britain needed the resources and support of its entire empire to maintain its global preeminence. However, the majority of Round Table members concurred that economic incorporation without political integration would work against the ultimate goal of imperial harmony.⁹⁵⁶

Despite his often clashing economic opinions, Amery played a significant part in establishing the group’s quarterly journal. During the South African conflict, Milner witnessed the correspondent’s ability to influence political policies. The politician frequently picked the brain of his *Times* colleague on matters concerning post-war military and economic reform. Milner’s initiation of Amery into his Round Table demonstrated Fleet Street’s increasing ability to disseminate imperial concerns to a wide audience while simultaneously exercising influence over political policymaking. Although most Round Table members did not hold public offices, they had friends in high places and mobilized their government connections to share their concerns directly with British politicians. By distributing a respected journal to a large readership and publicizing that periodical in popular newspapers, they ensured the continued circulation of their ideas regarding new conceptualizations of empire through the public and political consciousness of the late Edwardian era (and under the reign of King George V). The

⁹⁵⁴ *The London Times*, July 27, 1925.

⁹⁵⁵ *Round Table Studies*, June 1913 (London: R. Clay, 1913), 497.

⁹⁵⁶ See Bosco, *The Round Table Movement*, Chapter III.

Round Table members disagreed on the constitution of their economic and political plans, but displayed an avowed commitment to strengthening imperial unity.

SOUTH AFRICA AS A MICROCOSM OF FEDERATION AND THE SHIFTING BOER MYTH

The federated empire project resembled in macro form the post-Vereeniging plan for Boer reconciliation and the establishment of a white-ruled, British-dominated Union of South Africa. As Amery, Chamberlain, and later the Round Table sought to intensify England's connections to her imperial domains, Milner and other leaders at the Cape endeavored to both pull their colonies into an imperial federation and to create a alliance of states within South Africa that would mimic the larger system. Garvin acknowledged that the maintenance of empire rested on the dominance of the white population, "proportionate in number, vigour and cohesion to the vast territories," including all of South Africa, that the British Empire controlled.⁹⁵⁷ Vereeniging had to cement Britain's regional authority while extending an olive branch to the subdued Boers for the purpose of forging a new racially based partnership. Such an undertaking required a public reconstruction of the Boer's popular image in the metropole. Correspondents were tasked with transforming enemy into ally overnight.

Boer myths and stereotypes required constant reshaping to fit the changing military climate in South Africa. According to the English popular press, the Boers simultaneously "flouted the rules of civilized warfare and behaved like perfect gentlemen" at various times during the conflict.⁹⁵⁸ When the war commenced in 1899,

⁹⁵⁷ Qtd. in Davin, "Imperialism and Motherhood," 10; Surridge, "The Military Critique," 594.

⁹⁵⁸ Wilkinson, *Depictions and Images of War in Edwardian Newspapers*, 23.

overconfident Conservative politicians depicted their rural opponents as backward, primitive, and uneducated. Author John Procter repeatedly critiqued the Dutch colonial farmer as “[l]azy, shiftless and dirty in his habits...greatly degenerated...but endowed with an abundant stock of cunning.”⁹⁵⁹ As late as the 1900 general election, Churchill assessed that “most people take a hard view of the Boer, as a creature unfit to live, treacherous, unworthy of sympathy or else hold their tongues.”⁹⁶⁰ The English press initially depicted an adversary lacking virility and brains to assuage any potential concerns domestic Britons might harbor regarding the war’s rapid and successful conclusion. Liberal papers such as the *Guardian* and the *Morning Leader* criticized the pro-war press for depicting the Boers as “poorly clad, unshaven, unclean and hungry looking;” however, such commentaries were motivated mainly by politics rather than true anger at those classifications.⁹⁶¹ If the Boers were seen as impoverished and malnourished innocents, then a British war of conquest against them could be cast as unjustified imperial aggression perpetuated by Conservatives and Unionists.

Early in the conflict, propaganda pieces contrasted purported British concerns for non-white Africans with the Boers’ alleged hatred for indigenous peoples. Britain had touted itself as the latter’s protector against the threat of racial violence from their battlefield opponents. Early pro-war newspaper reports referred to the Boers as herds or flocks lacking direction, common sense, and sometimes even the mental capacity to differentiate between right and wrong. At that particular moment, black Africans were the victims and Boer farmers the mindless aggressors. But early war propaganda,

⁹⁵⁹ John Procter, *Boers and Little Englanders: The Story of the Conventions* (London: George Allen, 1897), 121, 170.

⁹⁶⁰ Qtd. in Davey, *The British Pro-Boers*, 62.

⁹⁶¹ *The Morning Leader*, January 9, 1900.

disseminated by the *Times* and the *Mail* and endorsed by Salisbury, Chamberlain and Milner, remained relatively unconvincing in sculpting “an Abraham Lincoln kind of heroic emblem” for the British.⁹⁶² Furthermore, discussions about black African rights in any forum could run counter to government attempts to garner domestic backing for the war effort. Most domestic Britons harbored race-based attitudes even if they confined them to private conversations and were disinterested in the plight of non-whites.

With each Boer victory, the stereotyped portrayals of Boer weakness and stupidity became harder to justify. Yet simultaneously, demonizing the enemy became even more crucial to maintaining war support. The pastoral Boer was refashioned into a malicious, deceptive Dutch farmer, a cheater who prospered by utilizing unscrupulous guerilla tactics or by murdering innocents. But war correspondents quickly acknowledged the fallacy of perpetuating those myths, particularly after witnessing the Boers’ impressive battlefield skills firsthand. After Black Week, Wallace warned that it would be foolish “not to recognize that we are fighting a formidable and terrible enemy.” His fellow *Mail* correspondent Steevens highlighted the chivalrous characteristics and skilled marksmanship of the Boers he encountered at Ladysmith.⁹⁶³ Even British soldiers could not conceal their admiration of their opponents’ overwhelming passion and refusal to surrender. Lionel Curtis, in his work *With Milner in South Africa*, recalled a private in the City of London Imperial Volunteers (who was also the brother of *Times*’ editor Buckle) declaring, “We who are fighting men are mostly pro-Boers. The really bitter people have stayed at home.”⁹⁶⁴

⁹⁶² Lowry, “The Wider Impact of the South African War,” 205.

⁹⁶³ Qtd. in Wilkinson, *Depictions and Images of War*, 36.

⁹⁶⁴ Lionel Curtis, *With Milner in South Africa* (London: Blackwell, 1951), 105, 205.

After Vereeniging, the British immediately sought reconciliation with their adversaries. Imperialist politicians had achieved their objectives: the reestablishment of full authority over southern Africa; control over the Republics' lucrative gold mines; and the preservation of the Cape as a strategically valuable imperial stopover port. Now, the British proposed friendship to their former foes and offered the Boers junior partner status in what they envisioned as a racially pure federated South Africa. Chamberlain claimed that British control would be utilized "to secure equality for the white races and justice for the blacks."⁹⁶⁵ In truth, non-white Africans merely constituted a hindrance to union aspirations. They would have to face reinvention as irrelevant and extraneous wartime players to legitimize Britain's post-war plans.

After Vereeniging, the "backwards Boer" myth was quickly excised, and the two colonial opponents now had to stand united in a European brotherhood. Chamberlain told the *Guardian* that "the fusion of the [white] races will add strength and power to the British Empire."⁹⁶⁶ The June 5, 1902 *Times* reported that "the Boer nationality will be...safe and as prosperous under [our] flag" and "we [have] the best and brightest hopes for the future of a new South Africa."⁹⁶⁷ Colonial officials now sought the Boers' assistance in further exploiting the natural resources of South Africa, including its non-white population. However, Chamberlain worried that local Africans would be insufficient as a mining labor force because he deemed them "allergic to work."⁹⁶⁸ He also expressed concern with the Transvaal Labour Commission's recommendation to import Chinese laborers because of the challenge such foreigners could pose to white

⁹⁶⁵ *The London Daily Mail*, February 6, 1900. What Chamberlain meant by "justice" was never explained.

⁹⁶⁶ *The Manchester Guardian*, February 2, 1903.

⁹⁶⁷ *The London Times*, June 5, 1902.

⁹⁶⁸ David C. Atkinson, *The Burden of White Supremacy: Containing Asian Migration in the British Empire and the United States* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2016), 88.

economic opportunities and racial stability. Those debates would persist throughout the Edwardian era but not hinder the Union's establishment.

By early 1903, the dim-witted veldt dweller had been completely reinvented by British leaders. Chamberlain announced that Britons "recognize[d] in the Boer people qualities which every Britisher must honour—qualities not altogether dissimilar to those on which we pride ourselves."⁹⁶⁹ The politicians also tried to erase army atrocities from the minds of their new Boer brothers. That task proved daunting, as the concentration camps and farmhouse burning had left an "enduring scar" which was "seared into the very soul of the Boer people." The psychological effects of British wartime behavior would prove at times to be a "barrier to the fulfillment of [white] reconciliation."⁹⁷⁰

Amery and Milner acknowledged that the divisions between Boers and Britons would take time to heal. They desired to bridge that gap by rapidly uniting the two European peoples into a British-dominated federated union. However, to ensure their former enemies' cooperation, the British called on their paramilitary South African Constabulary to police the former Boer Republics. They also dispensed civil servants to ease the transition to British leadership.

Directly after the war, Milner campaigned for unity in multiple speeches across South Africa, many of which Amery helped to compose. The Colonial Administrator helped transform the Boers' image into one of "a virile race and an asset of considerable importance to the British Empire, for whose honour and glory I hope before long they may be fighting side by side with us."⁹⁷¹ In truth, the pro-Boers played just as pivotal a role as their conservative counterparts in building a foundation for amicable post-war

⁹⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁷⁰ Qtd. in Spies, *Methods of Barbarism?*, 305.

⁹⁷¹ Qtd. in George Cassar, *Kitchener: Architect of Victory* (London: William Kimber, 1977), 135.

relations between the two combatants. The former not only served as a counterweight to jingoistic propaganda, but their commentaries emphasizing the magnanimous nature of the Boers penetrated the domestic public consciousness and smoothed post-war reconciliation with Britain's former opponents. The *Guardian* asserted that since the Jameson Raid, British policy in South Africa had been "more or less successfully 'rigged'" to serve Conservative economic interests."⁹⁷² In the eyes of Hobson and other radicals, the South African War had confirmed their portrayal of the Boer as a brave fighter and now a worthy ally in the creation of a white union.⁹⁷³

The conflict's conclusion brought a mix of relief and anxiety. With the Treaty of Vereeniging signing, atrocities committed in the name of military success were exposed and the need to address the imperial economic situation became evident. Debates over a system of imperial preference would last for years, face repeated challenges (some insurmountable), make and break political allegiances, and most importantly, help to economically stabilize the British free-trade system for a new century. Whether their allegiances were to the Unionist-Conservative government, the Liberal free-traders, or even Hardie's Labourites, war correspondents acknowledged the threats posed by increased foreign economic competition during the struggle. They utilized their coverage of the conflict, and particularly Vereeniging, to address such anxieties. Their commentaries publicized the imperial economic crossroads at which Britain found itself

⁹⁷² *The Manchester Guardian*, March 20, 1901.

⁹⁷³ Hobson's critiques of empire influenced numerous prominent twentieth-century socialists and communists, including Vladimir Lenin. The comparison of the Boer to the stereotypical victimized common man abused and used by a rapacious bourgeoisie resonated with the more radical members of the Edwardian working classes. It was not a coincidence that the Labour Party began its ascent into the British political arena concurrently with the publicizing of socio-economic frustrations following Vereeniging. Interestingly, Hardie threatened the newly elected Liberal government that if they continued to delay and/or failed to deliver upon their promises for Old Age pensions, the working classes would "go over *en masse* to Tariff Reform." See E.H.H. Green, *The Crisis of Conservatism: The Politics, Economics and Ideology of the Conservative Party, 1880-1914* (London: Routledge, 2005).

post-war, and, working alongside political colleagues, journalists initiated conversations about the merits of an imperial federation versus the value of maintaining a free-trade system. Such activism served to underscore the increasing influence of the press in foreshadowing imperial struggles and crafting potential solutions.

CONCLUSION: THE WAR'S CHANGING LEGACY AND THE POWER OF THE PRESS

With the Union's establishment in 1910, British imperialists crafted a new legacy for the Anglo-Boer conflict. The South African War became a game between European gentlemen that resulted in mutual benefit for both players. Chamberlain never clarified what constituted justice for the non-white local peoples, and few cared to push the question. Boer leaders agreed to the peace at Vereeniging with their eyes already trained on a future white South Africa. As Thornton contends, "The Boers would have been driven to suicidal desperation if they had thought the victorious British intended to hand their country over to the natives."⁹⁷⁴

Racial attitudes undergirded the South African struggle and contributed significantly in directing the young nation's twentieth-century development. For example, correspondents had observed but largely ignored Baden-Powell's starvation of the Mafeking Baralong. Boer women and children's suffering in the concentration camps horrified domestic social reformers, but non-white abuses were dismissed as inconsequential. The Stop-the-War-Committee claimed to protest "all wartime injustices," but Stead's organization refused to publicly support black or Coloured rights. His pamphlet "The Treatment of the Natives in South Africa" mirrored the widespread opinions of writer Frederick Selous's *Travel and Adventure in South-East Africa*. In his 1893 publication, Selous stated that "certain Kafirs are better men than certain white men," but "as a whole the Kafirs are an inferior people, and in their present state of

⁹⁷⁴ Thornton, *The Imperial Idea and Its Enemies*, 156.

development are with some few exceptions only fit to be hewers of wood and drawers of water.”⁹⁷⁵ Frequently, correspondents and politicians deliberately downplayed the critical and dangerous tasks undertaken by non-whites protecting Mafeking. British military leaders also ignored the roles those Africans played as supply transporters and scouts who provided intelligence on the enemy. For the post-war empire, South Africa’s local peoples constituted an impediment to the construction of a British-Boer union. Thus, the war was literally whitewashed and most non-white contributions excised from the record. Radical liberals including Lloyd George occasionally expressed concern with the continued subjugation of non-white laborers, but only when deemed to be politically advantageous. As Morgan argues, South Africa’s blacks were “in the main a dialectical tool used with much effect” to ridicule claims that Milner and his political allies had fought the war “to uphold the [African] majority, rather than an issue that stirred him in their own right.”⁹⁷⁶ British colonial leaders systematically repealed non-whites’ remaining rights in the years following Vereeniging and treated the local peoples as an inconvenience while they and the Boers constructed the Union. Hobson prophesized, “Even if [a] firm abiding dominion of the British race [is] be established throughout South Africa, it [will] not secure the liberties and the progressive civilization of our ‘black brothers’.”⁹⁷⁷

During the early 1900s, Cape Colony officials began a long process of severely restricting the rights of black Africans and Coloureds. The 1913 Natives Land Act placed nearly ninety percent of South African territory exclusively under white control. By the Edwardian years, the concepts of biologically based race and Social Darwinism had

⁹⁷⁵ Frederick Selous, *Travel & Adventure in South-East Africa* (London: Rowland Ward, 1895), 9-10.

⁹⁷⁶ Morgan, “Lloyd George, Keir Hardie and the Importance of the ‘Pro Boers’.” 296.

⁹⁷⁷ Hobson, *The War in South Africa*, 313.

permeated domestic English thought. Britons' lack of sympathy for non-white Africans shaded imperial policymaking and public opinion. The white man's war myth disregarded any "native" African contributions to British victory and helped establish a racially structured South African society.

With World War I on the horizon in 1911, the *Times* continued to display its faith in the imperial idea, asserting:

We have reared an Empire greater than mankind has ever seen...[and while] we have made mistakes {and}...been guilty of wrongdoing...wisdom and justice [traditionally] have been its foundation...It is to [our national] character that the Empire owes its distinctive features, and upon which its future mainly depends.⁹⁷⁸

But the expansive "new" imperialism that pulled the British headfirst into the South African conflict had lost much of its applicability and relevance. Correspondents such as Amery had used their war writings as appeals for "a more serious, socially aware and creative version of imperialism, working if possible with the grain of local society."⁹⁷⁹

Yet the empowered empire that emerged from the battlefields of Verdun and the Somme was no shadow of its former self. The 1926 Balfour Declaration reclassified the dominions as autonomous communities within a British Commonwealth of Nations, but it was not until after World War II that the empire finally began to collapse in the wake of post-conflict economic devastation and nationalist uprisings for independence in the remaining colonies. By the mid-twentieth century, the British Empire was transitioning from reality to history.

⁹⁷⁸ Qtd, in Startt, *Journalists for Empire*, 206.

⁹⁷⁹ Morgan, "Lloyd George, Keir Hardie and the Importance of the 'Pro Boers'," 210.

Stephen Koss asserts that the turn-of-the-century English press both “recorded and reflected the transition from old to new.”⁹⁸⁰ South African War newspaper correspondents used their public influence to spark a rigorous reassessment of British values, domestic concerns, and imperial priorities. The war exposed the empire’s inadequacies, and no journalist, regardless of partisan loyalty, could ignore the potential consequences of continued government inaction. By 1900, the British shared the global stage with Germany and other powerful nation-states eager to shift the European power balance in their favor. An economically lagging Britain, defended by an obsolete and mismanaged army and hampered by domestic social problems, could not sustain its massive empire without widespread reform. By transmitting those concerns to an increasingly politically conscious public and Parliament, conservative and liberal correspondents helped initiate necessary, overdue discussions of imperial betterment.

Most English war reporters came from privileged backgrounds, excelled in sports and academia at imperially minded public schools, and compiled extensive journalistic credentials prior to South Africa. They were strikingly similar in social class, religious affiliation, and educational experiences. Their political leanings, however, seemed to coalesce from individual experiences. Recruited by English press barons to increase sales and skillfully dramatize the Boer conflict, the reporters held complex personal motivations for covering the war. They ventured to South Africa for adventure, for knowledge, for clarification, for experience, or for some such as Churchill, to boost individual popularity as the groundwork for a future political career.

⁹⁸⁰ Koss, *The Rise and Fall*, 409.

Once on the battlefield, correspondents witnessed the failures of an unprepared army, the product of continued government indecisiveness and unresponsiveness. Liberal writers used the war as a platform to condemn Conservatives' economic pursuits and alleged apathy toward domestic social inequalities. Pro-war correspondents utilized their position to garner public support for the war while exposing the need for imperial reforms. English press barons generally exercised restraint in their editorial stances to avoid jeopardizing sales. However, war reporters were not as constrained by such financial concerns. They often were published in multiple papers, and their commentaries occasionally contradicted the publication's editorial viewpoint. They pushed British politicians to take responsibility for imperial missteps and inaction. Independent of their personal political leanings, journalists "all professed to see a common stock of British ideas and ideals," shared "the view of the Empire as part of a multi-dimensional world of grand politics," and believed in "a mutual understanding by the British and the people of the dominions of one another's history, politics, and common concerns."⁹⁸¹ The correspondents, educated to serve their empire, fulfilled their duty by boldly publicizing its problems.

The South African War was a mere blip in Britain's lengthy imperial history. But the Anglo-Boer struggle was a critical turning point. According to Badsey:

It marked a convenient convergence of a host of new political and social developments in Britain itself, with corresponding developments in the mass media, in media technology...in the art of war, and in the social and political structure of the British army and the empire, all converging on the rural African veldt at the end of Queen Victoria's reign.⁹⁸²

⁹⁸¹ Startt, *Journalists for Empire*, 209-210.

⁹⁸² Badsey, "A Print and Media War," 7.

The multi-faceted threat posed by militarizing Germany, British domestic economic underperformance, army miscalculations, and conspicuous social woes in the metropole increasingly worried English correspondents. Their efforts to enlighten the domestic population about imperial issues proved relatively fruitful. The public's intensified interest in the empire's politics, combined with the print media's unchecked expansion, prevented the government from effectively masking imperial deficiencies. The hypothetical loss of dominance in South Africa challenged the British to prove their superiority against a white European opponent. With each subsequent military embarrassment, reporters grew more adept at censorship evasion. The correspondents were able and willing to connect with readers and hold the government responsible for imperial debacles. The war humiliated and humbled Victoria's empire, which ironically ensured its survival in the twentieth century. Journalists ranked high on its list of saviors.

English war reporters documented the evolving balance of power among the press, the government, and the domestic public in late Victorian and Edwardian England. The writers held politicians accountable for policymaking decisions, narrowing the gap between MPs and their constituents. Before the war, imperialist propagandists sought unquestioning support for elitist-formulated policies from domestic Britons. During the conflict, correspondents challenged the masses to read actively, evaluate imperial choices thoughtfully, and become more directly involved in politics. Under Edward VII, Lloyd George's liberal reforms reflected the government's growing sense of responsibility to serve and represent its people. The war reporters helped to refashion an empire that was more inclusive of and responsive to Britons. The proponents of that reformed realm valued close, amicable relations with the white dominions, although Chamberlain's

federated system of imperial preference remained an unfulfilled aspiration. Many military changes resulting from the conflict were less than radical — the War Office's restructuring, for example — but Britain's army was significantly improved in the post-war years. Numerous changes enhanced the ability, skill, knowledge, and health of the average soldier. Army modifications played an instrumental role in Britain's ability to compete with and eventually contribute to the defeat of upstart Germany in World War I just fifteen years after Vereeniging. The Edwardian Liberal governments' social policies, most notably Lloyd George's acts, constituted the advent of the British welfare state. Yet those notable domestic reforms and increased checks on elite political power did not translate to widespread imperial equality. Biologically sanctioned racism, anti-Semitism, social engineering, and a rejuvenated sense of cultural superiority all characterized the early twentieth-century British Empire.

English correspondents mobilized their socio-political networks to glean insider information and attempt to influence political developments. Accurately evaluating their ability to directly affect policy change in that manner is more difficult. How politicians perceived newspapers' myriad proposals hinged on a multitude of factors such as the political climate in Parliament and their own perspectives on issues raised by concerned writers. English journalists were empowered by the South African War, but they certainly did not hold a monopoly over information dissemination. They could criticize army conduct and expose government lies and blunders in print, but only to an extent. The British government viewed excessive political criticism in wartime as traitorous. As Northcliffe and Wallace learned, leaking confidential information could mean arrest, prosecution, or the loss of one's media status and reputation. English reporters'

commentaries were extensively revised in South Africa and altered further by domestic press censors before reaching their readers. Correspondents had to find clever, subtler ways of exposing their discoveries. The next generations of journalists would work hard to carry on their predecessors' efforts to evade censorship and enlighten readers about the truths of war.⁹⁸³

The degree to which war reporters engineered public opinions is difficult to measure. The domestic populace was not a blank state on which newspaper propagandists could "write at will."⁹⁸⁴ The literate English public was inundated with quotidian concerns. They formed opinions based on an amalgamation of complex, pre-existing internal and constantly changing external factors, including gender, class, occupation, locality, their children's health, and even the cost of bread. Many Britons likely felt overwhelmed with contradictory information and excessive propaganda regarding South Africa. Inconsistent press reports often left readers confused about the war's true nature and whose coverage they could trust. Thus, the correspondents' ability to influence domestic public opinion was limited, erratic, and dependent upon their capacity to establish and maintain credibility. This study asserts that war correspondents faced a formidable task in their arduous effort to push their political comrades into challenging the entrenched government's policies and to lead their readerships past the propaganda facades.

⁹⁸³ However, evading censorship remained challenging for war correspondents. McCracken casts the South African conflict as a "training ground" for more efficient "control and manipulation of the press a dozen years later when the First World War broke out," as "[a]ll the component parts in the relationship of a military intelligence section and the press were honed and tried in South Africa: licensing, censorship, photo opportunities...embedded journalism, and the supply of false or misleading information." See McCracken, "British War Correspondents in the Field," 117-118.

⁹⁸⁴ Thompson, "Imperial Propaganda," 315.

However, this evaluation is not about why and how correspondents failed but rather the times they successfully mobilized political action and domestic concern. War journalists contributed to the development of a “climate of opinion” in Britain that grew louder and more diverse in the coming years. During the war, Victorians and Edwardians obtained most of their news from the popular press, and English reporters helped to shape many readers’ opinions about the conflict. Wilkinson’s study argues that when correspondents constructed “vicarious experiences of warfare” for those who were not battlefield eyewitnesses, the “ubiquity of the particular [depictions] of war” they disseminated established the press’s “currency in society.”⁹⁸⁵ The war’s media saturation challenged the government’s ability to effectively censor information. While large-scale propaganda campaigns did not halt anti-war activities or obscure the war’s grim realities, most domestic Britons remained generally pro-war throughout the conflict. They could, however, discern small, emerging cracks in the Empire’s foundation and determine for themselves the need to commence imperial improvement efforts once South Africa was won.

This study demonstrates that correspondents utilized their wartime commentaries to reveal imperial weaknesses and foreshadow the need for military, economic, and social reforms in Edwardian England. War reporters blamed government policy, not the British Empire or its people, for such failings and challenged Britons to help restore imperial glory. Each humiliating battlefield loss validated the correspondents’ claims. Each newspaper expose that contradicted government propaganda enhanced their influence over domestic public opinions. War journalists refused to sweep aside South African

⁹⁸⁵ Wilkinson, *Depictions and Images of War*, 3.

disasters. They adopted the role of innovators of a new, more respectable type of political reporting. The correspondents strove to report information in an unbiased manner, avowing their commitment to produce “good” journalism in an age of expanding democracy.⁹⁸⁶

Regardless of class leanings, most Britons initially supported the conflict and expected a quick British victory over the Boers. Although disillusioned by distressing defeats and the draining effects of an exhaustive siege, the domestic population celebrated Mafeking’s liberation. But the historicized legend of unprecedented imperial jubilation distorts heightened public anxiety about the empire’s future. Correspondents utilized the siege as a platform from which to debate military problems and potential solutions. Anti-war activities and organizations, as well as questionable British tactics such as civilian internment, became openings to discuss domestic social concerns. Popular interest waned in the war’s final months when a British victory seemed assured, and anti-war protests effectively ceased. The Treaty of Vereeniging reawakened concerns about army issues, particularly in light of Hobhouse’s concentration camp dispatches, and also reinvigorated heated political debate over imperial preference and protective tariffs.

To better understand how the press influenced popular opinions, historians need to further clarify their definitions of “patriotism” and “war support.” They must further dissect the overly simplistic “pro/anti-war” and “pro-empire/pro-enemy” dichotomies. The majority of Britain’s domestic population was pro-empire in that they supported the monarchy and believed in imperial global superiority. But as the correspondents demonstrated, an imperialist mindset did not always translate to unconditional support for

⁹⁸⁶ See Startt, *Journalists for Empire*, 211.

government policy. Neither could all anti-war activists could not be stereotyped as traitorous antagonists. This study has tackled those challenges by identifying significant factors that contributed to domestic Britons' and war journalists' complex understandings of "imperial support" and "patriotic duty" in the context of the Anglo-Boer conflict.

This paper evaluated the English popular press's South African correspondents and analyzed their roles in commencing post-war imperial reform efforts. The conflict's high stakes and extensive print media coverage instigated a sub-war over information control and popular opinion. Politicians and press barons disseminated exaggerations, myths, and distortions, selectively revealing and concealing important facts to fit their personal agendas and fill their coffers. The Conservative government encouraged patriotic propaganda to maintain its power and justify an imperialist war with the Boers. Newspaper editors wanted to financially exploit the war's entertainment value. English reporters' motivations were much less clear-cut. They used their coverage to promote various reform agendas, a process that often forced them to utilize social connections, make commentary unfriendly to government policies, and evade press censorship campaigns. The journalists had to appease newspaper owners' and editors' wishes without losing personal credibility; they had to expose imperial weaknesses without appearing traitorous. The tightrope they walked was delicate and narrow, but they kept their balances. Many correspondents successfully surmounted the challenges they faced en route to the truth. They used the South African War to positively influence post-conflict policy reform endeavors and help stabilize their empire. This evaluation has sought to give credit to those reporters while helping to clarify the war's transformative

effect on the complex power relationship among the press, the public, and politics in turn-of-the-century England.

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