

# **The Army League, Conscription and the 1956 Defence Review**

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## Abstract

This thesis examines the role of Leo Amery as a military commentator and his decision to create the Army League in 1937. The League went on to argue for the introduction of conscription prior to the outbreak of the Second World War. In 1948 Leo Amery decided to resurrect the Army League and use it to publicise defence issues at the beginning of the Cold War. Leo and Julian Amery attempted to shape defence policy in the late 1940s and early 1950s by using the Army League as a pressure group to influence Government policy and public opinion. It focuses particularly on the League's report, *The Army in the Nuclear Age*, the culmination of several years of work by a small study group which included a considerable contribution from Basil Liddell Hart. The League published its report in November 1955 seeking to 'educate' the public on the key defence issues of the day including the impact of nuclear weapons on strategic planning and the need for a reorganisation of the Army. At a time when Britain was involved in two major counterinsurgency operations in Kenya and Malaya and a third was beginning in Cyprus the report also attempted to make a strategic case for retaining the remaining colonies and overseas bases at least until the end of the Cold War. However, on the contentious question of the continuing validity of National Service the League was ambiguous, proffering a solution based on utilising colonial manpower to make up any shortfall in recruitment and a reorganisation of the existing army manpower back into a small professional force with a limited conscript element. The report arrived as the Government was discussing the future of conscription and commencing a long-term defence review which meant that the League's proposals were studied in detail by the War Office and Ministry of Defence at the behest of defence ministers. Therefore the report and the Government's response to it add to our understanding both of the formation of defence policy immediately prior to the Suez crisis and of an alternative policy based on an aggressive response to further decolonization and anti-colonialism based on national security concerns.

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## Introduction

In 1937 Leo Amery Member of Parliament (MP) formed The Army, Home and Empire League (Army League) to campaign for rearmament and the introduction of conscription. Leo Amery a former Cabinet minister and journalist had spent many years campaigning for Army reform and the introduction of national service before the First World War. He was veteran pressure group campaigner with many years of experience publicising military and imperial issues to the public and the government. The creation of the Army League in 1937 was his response to appeasement and what he considered to be mismanagement of the defence effort. The League's activities in the late 1930s included the publication of *A Policy For the Army* in 1937. In 1938 the Army League became the Citizens Service League and campaigned for the introduction of conscription prior to the start of the Second World War. The pre-war League had an active membership of several thousand. The League in the 1930s produced a monthly pamphlet and held meetings and a national rally. The activities of the Citizens Service League were suspended in 1939 at the start of the Second World War. In 1948 Leo Amery decided to restart the League to campaign for better conditions of service for the Regular Army. In 1950 a study group was formed under the leadership of Leo Amery to write a report to highlight post-war defence issues and the impact of nuclear weapons on Army. The study group included Julian Amery and Basil Liddell Hart, who is considered to be one of greatest military thinkers and historians of his generation, both of whom were its most active contributors. In November 1955 the Army League published the *Army in the Nuclear Age: An Report by the Army Study Group*.<sup>1</sup>

Both reports were designed to inform the public and influence Government opinion concerning the Army and defence issues. The League's 1937 report was intended to promote the Army to the general public. The 1955 report attempted to articulate a British Army strategy for the nascent 'nuclear age'. The report also attempted set out a plan for a reorganisation of the Army to reflect the 'modern conditions' of the mid 1950s. However, the report did not influence Government policy and must be viewed as a failure. This thesis seeks to explore Leo Amery's association with the Army League and the preparation and publication of the 1937 and 1955 report's. The League was comprised of a group of distinguished ex-Army officers, serving Members of Parliament from both sides of the political spectrum, including several ex-Cabinet Ministers and contemporary experts on military affairs. They represented a substantial amount of expertise on military and strategic matters spanning many

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<sup>1</sup> The Army League. (1955). *The Army in the Nuclear Age: A Report by the Army Study Group* London: St Clements.

decades of public service. In the 1930s members included, Field Marshal Lord Milne, the former CIGS 1926 -1933, Lt-General Sir Ronald Charles who had been Director of Military Operations and Intelligence at the War Office (WO) 1931-34; The Marquess of Willingdon the former Viceroy of India 1931-36, Sir Edward Grigg, Conservative MP for Altrincham, later Lord Altrincham and Field Marshal Sir Philip Chetwode, the former Commander-in-Chief in India 1930-1936. In the early and mid 1950s members included Lieutenant General Sir Fredrick Morgan, Major General JFC Fuller, Lieutenant General Sir Wilfred Lindsell and the Labour MP Reginald Paget.

The 1937 report was launched nationally and widely distributed by the members of the League. The 1955 report was widely disseminated at home and abroad and well received by military experts and the press in America. It also received television and coverage in the UK. The most significant, and active, members during this period were Leo Amery, the chairman of the League, and his son Julian Amery, who was its secretary. The both of the reports was prepared by a small study group which was drawn from among its most eminent members. Although there was a strong element of Conservative imperial opinion represented within the League, the Report did strive to be objective and was more or less successful in this regard; the influence of Liddell Hart is clearly discernible in the 1955 report when it comes to its remarks on Army reorganisation and greater use of mobility based on highly mobile armoured forces and the use of air mobility to deal with colonial or regional emergencies. However, the overwhelming strategic conceptual influence is that of Leo Amery in the 1930s and of Julian Amery in the 1950s.

The League's methodology was simple: produce a well researched and factually accurate report which contained alternative policy recommendations that would be accessible to the general public and noticed by the press which could then be used to influence or assist Government policy. The League also used personal and social connections to advance its ideas in Parliament. Defence pressure groups can be divided into three main categories: associational, atomic and institutional. There are three standard approaches taken by defence lobby groups; firstly, to create favourable public opinion which the Government could not ignore; secondly, to lobby Ministers and MPs directly within Parliament; thirdly, to lobby officials within Government departments. The Army League, the Navy League and the Air League are associational groups. This is because they exist to promote the interests of their respective services. Institutional groups include the services themselves or the Chiefs of Staff (COS). Atomic groups are spontaneous organisations which temporarily lobby on a issue; the most notable in the 1950s was the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND); however, in the 1920s and 1930s the Peace Pledge Union and the No Conscription Fellowship lobbied for

peace and were mass movements; similarly, the National Service League (NSL) was a spontaneous movement which by 1913 claimed to have several hundred thousand members. Snyder argued that the Army League and the other associational groups could not offer the Government 'neither expert assistance nor control of membership, they have nothing to bargain with'.<sup>2</sup> He concluded that these groups had very little influence over policy. This assumption is borne out by the research in this thesis which shows that the Army League was not ignored but could not directly influence Government policy.

Compared to the activities of the Navy and Air League's the Army League was a smaller more elitist organisation. The Navy League was formed in 1894 to promote awareness of naval affairs with the public and ensure that 'party politics' did not interfere with naval policy; it also set about educating the public and young people through publications and lectures about naval issues. The Naval League received considerable assistance from the Admiralty and its more prominent members lobbied the Government and MPs assiduously about naval policy. In 1908 it orchestrated a national publicity campaign to force the Government to construct eight new battleships. By 1914 the Navy League reached its zenith and had a membership of 100,000. After 1918 the League's political influence began to wane and it concentrated on promoting its youth movement (Sea Cadet Corps) and educating the public through its publications. During the 1950s the Navy League was still active but had lost its earlier political significance. The Air League was formed in 1908 to promote civil, commercial and military use of air power. It was supported by many distinguished figures from the Royal Air Force in the 1920s and 1930s. During this period the Air League was active in lobbying the Government and industry on the merits of aviation. Like the Navy League the Air League developed a series of publications to promote and educate the public on aeronautical issues. In 1938 it formed the Air Defence Cadet Corps which was its youth movement. In the 1930s the Air League publicised the merits of air defence. Like the Navy League it was given official recognition from the RAF for its activities. In the 1940s and 1950s the Air League continued its promotion of civil and military aviation.

In contrast the Army League was never given official recognition from the WO. The Army League did produce a monthly pamphlet in the late 1930s called *Rising Strength* and produced a report in 1937 but not on the same scale as the Navy and Air League. The 1955 report was the first publication issued by the League since 1939 when it ceased its activities. The Navy and Air Leagues were still active in the Second World War. In this respect the Army League behaved more like a spontaneous movement. The Army League in the 1930s

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<sup>2</sup> Snyder, W. P. (1964). *The Politics of British Defence Policy 1945-62* Ohio: Ohio University p85.

was formed to agitate for improvements to defence measures which were introduced in 1939. The Army League from its conception sought to confront Government policy in one particular area. In this respect the League had more in common with the NSL than other associational groups. Leo Amery had been an influential member of the NSL and was intimately involved in the production of its written material. The Army League attempted use it's reports to gain public and press creditability which could then be transferred into political influence. In this respect the contribution of Leo Amery and later of Julian Amery is significant. Leo Amery spent over thirty years in public service as a backbencher and a Cabinet Minister and was well aware of how the system of government worked. If that is the case why did he waste his time with the League to gain very little political influence?

Snyder argued that associational groups could offer no expert assistance to Government. However, a non-official group of political and military experts could pose a tangible threat to the presentation of Government policy, especially in challenging international and economic conditions. In the late 1930s it appeared that Britain was on the verge of war with Germany and in the late 1940s with the Soviet Union. The League in late 1930s was responding to international tension and what it viewed as a lack preparation for the possibility of war. Leo Amery was also concerned that the public was not sufficiently aware of the dire state of the Army and its preparedness for a major war which he thought was eminent. Leo Amery was a vociferous critic of appeasement. His activities with the League enhanced his anti-appeasement stance and improved his political creditability. In the 1950s the League was attempting to make the case for retaining conventional forces while Government policy seemed to indicate that Britain was becoming over reliant on nuclear weapons and the concept of massive retaliation. However, Julian Amery was agitating against withdraw from the Middle East and Suez Canal Base by being publically associated with the League his perceptions on strategic policy and his standing as a military expert was improved. In both cases the Leo and Julian Amery benefited from being associated with the League.

Equally, the League's perceptions in the 1950s can be located within the debate concerning the direction of defence and strategic policy which is based on a declinist or 'orthodox' view of British security policy after 1945.<sup>3</sup> The orthodox analysis argues that British policy makers

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<sup>3</sup> See for example Baylis, J. (1989). *British Defence Policy: Striking the Right Balance* Basingstoke: Macmillan; Bartlett, C. J. (1972). *The Long Retreat: A Short History of British Defence Policy, 1945-70* London: Macmillan; Rosecrance, R. N. (1968). *Defence of the Realm: British Strategy in the Nuclear Epoch* London: Columbia University Press; Snyder, W.P (1964). *The Politics of British Defence Policy* Ohio: Ohio State University Press; General Sir W. Jackson. (1990). *Britain's Defence Dilemma: a inside View* London: B.T Batsford; Ovendale, R. (1994). *British Defence Policy since 1945* Manchester: Manchester University Press; Carver, M. (1975). *Out of Step: The Memoirs of Field Marshal Lord Carver* London: Century Hutchinson; Howard, M. (1972). *The Continental Commitment:*

were dictated to by economic and financial anxieties which compelled them to make intractable cuts to defence policy in a haphazard fashion. The declinist analysis of defence is pervasive and undeniable but Greenwood has stated that it does not provide an adequate explanation of the process.<sup>4</sup> What links many of these studies is the assumption that the ending of conscription contributed to the increasing pace of decolonization after 1959 and left the Army overstretched. Most studies link the reduction in manpower numbers after the 1957 White Defence Paper with the 'possible' inability of the British to carry out or contemplate large-scale counter-insurgency operations in the 1960s.<sup>5</sup> However, is this cogent statement because contemporary military analysts like the League, most of whom were committed imperialists, argued that regular forces, rather than short service conscripts were more suited to the task of internal security (IS)? They also argued that the existing large hybrid Army of regulars and conscripts was wasteful in manpower terms and therefore inefficient and in need of reorganisation to make it more flexible. The League argued that the quality of the Army and its equipment was being diluted by an over emphasis on quantity. The League recognised the valuable contribution made by conscripts but questioned the continued need for a hybrid army in the nuclear age.

Conversely, the League's study group thought that the army was being used 'far too much' for internal security duties because of overall failings in colonial security arrangements. This perception was widespread within Whitehall in the early 1950s, because most departments blamed the Colonial Office (CO), which was responsible for the Colonial Police and internal security, for the inability of Colonial Governments to effectively maintain order or anticipate trouble before it got to the point where the army was needed to restore order. In the early 1950s the Government began discussing what was wrong with the existing colonial security arrangements and what could be done to rectify the situation. In response, a Cabinet Committee on Colonial Security was convened in 1952 which had representatives from all the interested government departments. This Committee subsequently completed, in April 1955, a Report on Colonial Security which was written by the then General Sir Gerald Templer. The Report argued that the training, housing, pay and conditions of service of the colonial police

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*the dilemma of British defence policy in the era of the two world wars* Oxford: Clarendon; Chichester, M and Wilkinson, J. (1982). *The Uncertain Ally: British Defence Policy 1960-1990* London: Gower; Dockrill, M. (1988). *British Defence Policy since 1945* London: Blackwell; Martin, L. (1969). *British Defence Policy: the long recession* Adelphi Papers: International Institute for Strategic Studies; Darby, P. (1973). *British Defence Policy East of Suez* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>4</sup> Greenwood, D. 'Defence and national priorities since 1945' in Baylis, J. (ed). (1977). *British Defence Policy in a Changing World* London: Macmillan.

<sup>5</sup> Hyam, R. and Louis, Wm, R. (eds). (2000). *The Conservative Government and the End of Empire 1957-64* London: HMSO p xlii. Darby, P. (1973). *British Defence Policy East of Suez* Oxford: Oxford University Press p328.



and military forces and intelligence-gathering services (especially the police) in the colonies had to be improved urgently if security was to be maintained in the colonies.<sup>6</sup>

Templer also wanted more opportunities for rapid promotion and more comprehensive training of indigenous officers and the rank and file to create truly representative and efficient security forces in the colonies prior to 'self-determination'. This debate was taking place in conjunction with plans to transfer the administration and financial responsibility for colonial forces from the War Office (WO) back to the CO because the former had taken them over in 1939 at the start of the Second World War. The League's Report arrived at a point when many of the questions which they posed regarding colonial security and the future of colonial forces were being debated within Government. The League leaned toward maintaining the status quo by increasing the number of British-led colonial forces. Whilst Templer and the Colonial Security Committee, which more or less fully endorsed his Report, were arguing for greater indigenous participation at command level and the modernisation of, and the allocation of more resources to, the security forces.

The defence and decolonization debates were fundamentally about analysing management of what by the late 1950s were becoming intractable policy problems. The League's observations ruminate with dire warnings concerning the future economic and strategic validity of the British state if an injudicious withdrawal from its imperial commitments were undertaken based on short-term political and economic expediency. Conversely, the League did not present a strategy based on absolute reliance on the existing defence arrangements or give overt endorsement of the Government's strategic policy which at the time was based on universal conscription and multiple conventional capabilities. The League thought that the Army needed modernising, reorganizing and re-equipping urgently. But the basis for the strategic policy was the Edwardian geo-political concept that 'colonies and overseas bases equal power'. Similarly, the League argued that leadership of the Commonwealth was a fundamental policy consideration which required significant military and economic effort to sustain British status as a great power. The League's unequivocal strategic stance can now appear dogmatic, especially since it was made a year before the Suez Crisis, but much of the Report is undeniably pragmatic, if placed within the international context of the first decade of the Cold War. Selwyn Lloyd, Minister of Defence, 1955-1957 considered the Report significant enough to have it closely scrutinised by officials at War Office (WO) and the Ministry of Defence (MOD) after its publication. Chapters five and four will discuss the WO and MOD appraisal of the Report and its recommendations about the League. The League

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<sup>6</sup> National Archives CAB 21/2925, *Report on Colonial Security By General Sir Gerald Templer* 23 April 1955, hereafter CAB 21/2925.

mattered because of its high profile members and the fact that defence policy and colonial policy had reached a cross roads. Conversely, the League attempted to become a semi-official arm of the WO and Army Council in the late 1940s and early 1950s. However, these advances were blocked by successive Labour and Conservative governments. His post-war re-launch gathered steam in 1950 when the Korean War commenced and the government announced an extensive rearmament programme.

The Army League's perceptions in the 1950s can also be placed within linear observations that the process of decolonization from 1918 until the retreat from East of Suez in the late 1960s and early 1970s was an inevitable consequence of Britain's economic, political and military 'decline' from a great to a medium power (European Power) in the latter half of the twentieth century.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, the League's Report argued that the Government should and could better manage the over-stretched and underequipped Army by undertaking a major re-organisation and modernisation which would reduce manpower constraints and increase efficiency. The four main theories that have been advanced to explain the end of Empire can be broadly divided up as follows; the collapse of morale and the will to rule by the metropolitan centre; anti-colonial pressure from indigenous peoples, including the use of violence or the threat of it to overthrow the colonial state; international pressure from the United Nations (UN), Soviet Union and United States (US); economic vulnerability and imperial overstretch.<sup>8</sup>

The basis of this research on the Army League is the Leo and Julian Amerys' MSS at Churchill College Archive. Most of the material on the Army League only became available for scrutiny incrementally after 2003. Additionally many of Julian Amery's official papers from his tenure as Under-Secretary of War, Colonial Office (CO) and Minister of Air have now become available, although there are some restrictions on sensitive government documents. At the National Archive various Cabinet, Colonial Office, War Office and

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<sup>7</sup> See for example Gallagher, J. (1982). *The Decline Revival and Fall of the British Empire* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Darwin, J. (1988). *The End of the British Empire in the Post-War World* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. McIntyre, W.D. (1998). *British Decolonisation 1946-1997: When, Why and How did the British Empire Fall* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan; Louis, R, Wm, and Robinson, R. (1994) 'The Imperialism of decolonization' in *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, No 22 pp462-511. Sanders, D. (1990). *Losing an Empire Finding a Role: British Foreign Policy since 1945* London: Macmillan; Holland, R. (1991). *The Pursuit of Greatness. Britain and the World Role, 1900-1970* London: Fontana.

<sup>8</sup> Hyam, R. (2006). *Britain's Declining Empire: The Road to Decolonisation, 1918-1968* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Butler, LJ (2002). *Britain and Empire Adjusting to a Post-Imperial World* London: IB Tauris. Darwin, J. (1988). *Britain and Decolonisation. The Retreat from Empire in the Post War World*. Basingstoke Macmillan, Holland, R.F. (1985). *European Decolonization 1918-1981. An Introduction Survey* London: Macmillan. White, N.J. (1999). *Decolonization the British Experience since 1945* Harlow: Longman. McIntyre, D.W. (1998). *British Decolonization, 1946-1997. When Why and How did the British Empire Fall?* Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Ministry of Defence files were consulted on defence issues in the 1940s and 1950s. There are two WO files pertaining to the activities of the Army League between 1937 and 1956 at the National Archive both of which were consulted. The League was very closely linked to the Conservative Party Research Department through the participation of Brigadier John Faviell, defence advisor to the Conservative Party in the 1950s. The Conservative Party Archive at the Bodleian Library Oxford contains material concerning the activities of the Army League and compilation of the 1955 report. This archive also has many of the files of the Conservative Parliamentary Committee Army Sub Committee in the 1950s which Julian Amery was a member. Further information regarding the Conservative Party perceptions of defence and colonial issues were consulted at the Butler MSS Trinity College Cambridge - Butler was Chancellor of Exchequer from 1951 until December 1955. Another source on the League's activities in early 1950s is the Liddell Hart MSS at Kings College London Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives. Other papers consulted at Kings College included the Lindsell MSS, Julian Amery MSS, Dimoline MSS and the Pyman MSS. These papers contain considerable number of reports and papers generated by Liddell Hart which were used by the League to produce its 1955 report. The MSS's of former defence and war ministers Selwyn Lloyd, Hore-Belisha and Duncan Sandys at Churchill College Archive were also consulted.

Chapter one describes contribution of Leo Amery to the defence debate from the Boer War to the First World War and his period in Government in the 1920s. Leo Amery was active in the Army reform debate. Amery first made a name as a military commentator with his editorship of the various volumes of *The Times History of the War in South Africa*. Working on the six volumes would consume Amery for ten years. He subsequently used his position editorial post at *The Times* to argue for army reform. In 1903 he published *Army Reform* which sought 'modernise' the army after its deficient performance during the war in South Africa. Amery was closely involved with the ill fated ministry of Arnold Forster who was Minister of War 1903-1905. In 1905 Amery joined the NSL becoming one of its most strident supporters. Amery worked closely with Lord Roberts the NSL President for over decade. During the First World War Amery was at the centre of the War Cabinet working as a secretary under the direction of Maurice Hankey, later Lord Hankey. After the war Amery served as a junior minister and then Cabinet minister. In that capacity he was closely involved in the direction of military and strategic policy as First Sea Lord and later as Secretary of State for Colonies. In the 1930s he returned to the back benches in the House of Commons. It was from here that he became a critic of the League of Nations and the Government's policy of appeasement and disarmament.

Chapter two charts the creation of the League in 1937, its membership and their aims and methods and the role of Leo Amery. The League was formed at a point when it appeared that

Britain was unprepared for another major war.<sup>9</sup> Leo Amery decision to form the League was based on his personal conviction that Germany and Italy could only be stopped by the threat or use of force. Leo Amery had been a vocal opponent of appeasement for many years. He also thought that the League Nations was incapable of regulating the international system which by 1936 was collapsing. His negative views on the preparedness of the Army to fight another European War were shared by many of his fellow Conservative MPs by the late 1930s. However, Amery was primarily concerned in 1937 was that the Army was incapable of defending the Empire from external threats and internal disturbances. The first League which formed in 1937 was concerned primarily with findings ways of inducing more recruitment to the regular army. As the international situation deteriorated in 1938 after Munich the scope and direction of the League was expanded to include the introduction of conscription in peacetime which was contrary to Government policy. This reflected Leo Amery's long held belief that Britain should have a form of compulsory military service for its citizens in peacetime.

The first League was a larger organisation than the one which emerged in the Cold War. However, the pre-war League did not produce as many authoritative reports but produced a monthly magazine. The League became a vehicle to attack the sluggish rearmament programme of the Government and the defence policy of Neville Chamberlain, the Prime Minister. Without doubt Leo Amery used the League as a public platform to articulate his concerns about the direction of Government defence and foreign policies. Although, the League attempted not to antagonise the WO it was by 1938 actively at odds with the Government. This is borne out by attempts by the Conservative Central Office to demand that the League scale down its activities and not 'discuss' strategic policy or the issue of conscription. Politically the League was a Conservative organisation both in ethos and the political allegiance of its members. Similarly, the social background of its membership was narrow and representative of what was later termed the 'establishment'. In many ways the League in the 1930s reflected a strand of imperialist militarism which had been active in the Edwardian period. The League in the 1930s was very different to the one that emerged after the Second World War.

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<sup>9</sup> Bond, B. (1980). *British Military Policy Between the Two World Wars* Oxford: Oxford University Press; Bell, P.M. (1997). *The Origins of the Second World War in Europe* London: Macmillan; Taylor, A, J, P. (1964). *The Origins of the Second World War* Oxford: Oxford University Press; Ruggiero, J. (1999). *Neville Chamberlain and British rearmament: pride and prejudice, and politics*. Westport: Greenwood Press; Price, C. (2001). *Britain, America and rearmament in the 1930s* London: Palgrave; Gaines, P. (1993). *Dilemmas of appeasement: British deterrence and defence, 1934-1937* London: Cornell.

Chapter three looks at how the league was reformed in the late 1940s and how it evolved into what amounted to an elite study group. In 1950 the League's study group began working on a report about the problems facing the Army in the 1950s. The study group greatly benefited from the input of Basil Liddell Hart who supplied much of the material which was used in the final report which was published in 1955. The study group made several attempts to gain official backing and recognition for its work. Chapter four looks at how the study group finalised work on the report and the disagreements and problems which went into completion between 1951 and 1955. Leo and Julian Amery were very much on control of this process and the final report reflected their post war vision. Leo and Julian Amery can be rightly described as being diehard chauvinistic imperialists, especially because of Julian's central role in the Suez Group, but within the dynamics of mid-1950s Cold War geo-politics their entrenched perceptions regarding the continuing legitimacy of a strategic policy based on an Edwardian imperial security nexus of overseas bases, colonies and indirect rule is more complex than at first glance.

Chapter five analyses the League's 1955 *The Army in the Nuclear Age A Report by the Army League Sub-Committee* and WO assessment of the report. The report argued that considerable savings in manpower could be achieved by restructuring the Army organisation. The report discussed the impact of nuclear weapons on the Army and its wider implications for strategic policy. However, the report was ambiguous about the national service and still considered African colonies a viable source of manpower and resources for many years to come. The report claimed that Britain could remain a major international power by consolidating and entrenching within its existing (remaining) imperial structure and by emphasising the close relationship with the Commonwealth. The report argued that the Commonwealth should be more active in providing forces for 'imperial defence' and advocated more collective responsibility in the defence sphere, especially in the Middle East and Far East. However, since the turn of the century Britain had never achieved in peacetime a binding collective security agreement with Commonwealth countries or functioning military alliance based on mutual participation beyond the planning and staff level.

Conversely, in 1954 Britain had joined the American South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) which included Australia, New Zealand and Pakistan. The importance of creating regional strategic reserves which Commonwealth forces could contribute to was a central consideration of the League's planning. Both were analogous policy concerns which, according to the League, had to be rationalised by stressing the threat posed by the Soviet Union and China. Similarly, the management of independence for the remaining colonies was enshrined within strategic necessity. Although, the League recognised the importance of the

American alliance with Britain they were ambiguous about the true extent of the relationship between the two powers and of Britain's influence within it. Strategic policy in the early 1950s was overshadowed and dominated by the detonation of the hydrogen bomb which rendered large bases obsolete during a Hot War; however, Soviet willingness to intervene within the Third World or resort to the use of limited war via proxy states to extend its sphere of influence perpetuated the importance of overseas bases in the Cold War. Both of these issues the Report attempted to reconcile within the context of traditional security policy. Winston Churchill was a vociferous critic of Ernest Bevin's, the Foreign Secretary 1945-1951, policy of negotiation with the Egyptian Government regarding Britain's continuing tenure of the Suez Canal Base which he uncompromisingly described as 'scuttle' in opposition, but later when dealing with the problem in Government in the 1950s conceded that the hydrogen bomb had rendered the base obsolete.<sup>10</sup> The report viewed the remaining bases and colonies as vital to British and Western interests in the Cold War; equally they argued that the bases were a deterrent against more limited conflicts or regional disputes between the smaller powers which of course refuted many of the doubts concerning the vulnerability to nuclear attack.

The informal Empire of the Middle East was still regarded as a strategic glacis from which the Soviet Union and her allies could be attacked or confronted by conventional or covert means. Similarly, the colonies of the Far East, Malaya, Hong Kong and the remaining Pacific islands were perceived to be in the frontline of a tide of Chinese Communism which was surging through South East Asia and the Pacific rim. Ensuring the security of Malaya because of the high dollar-earning potential of its raw materials and its key strategic position was given the highest priority by successive British Governments and the League. The African colonies, which were in a state of constitutional and economic development, were expected to be many years away from self-government. However, the control of the Middle East, specifically Egypt, was linked to the unimpeded management of 'development' and constitutional reform in Africa. A Soviet presence in Egypt, backing Nasser's brand of anti-Western nationalism, was perceived to be a threat to the 'development' of the African colonies. However, the East African colonies contained considerable numbers of white settlers who would create significant political problems for successive British Governments in the 1950s and 1960s as they contemplated constitutional and political change. The League supported the greater involvement of British military personnel in East African forces. West Africa was already firmly on a path toward self-determination by the time the League published its Report but the League thought it wise that the military potential of the remaining

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<sup>10</sup> Louis, R, W, M. (ed). (1989). *Suez 1956: The Crisis and its Consequences* Oxford: Oxford University Press p62.

African colonies should be fully utilised by the British during the Cold War. Therefore, the League believed that British interests were best served by preserving a global military, political and economic presence.

The report argued that any more reductions in overseas commitments and military capabilities would have ‘momentous and incalculable’ economic repercussions for the British economy, leaving the UK only able to ‘concentrate power in Europe and Africa’. The League considered the problem to be one of financial management based on a desire to make political decisions based on transient convenience. A corollary of this argument was that reductions in defence estimates and overseas spending on security might lead to a long-term and irreversible diminution of trade and investment potential. Leo Amery argued in 1948 that ‘imperial preference is a foundation for our whole economic life’.<sup>11</sup> Much of the historiographical material on economic decolonization states that the early 1950s was a key period when economic liberalisation was put into practice by successive British governments because the Empire and the economic systems created to oversee and protect trade imperial had ceased to be of critical importance to the British economy and were in fact acting as a break on growth and modernisation.<sup>12</sup> However, recent studies have argued that the Sterling Area rather than being a drag on the economy was in fact still a useful trade and finance mechanism utilised by the British state and companies in the 1950s and early 1960s.<sup>13</sup> It is widely stated that the excessive amount of GDP dedicated to defence also had an adverse effect on the British economy.<sup>14</sup> However, the League equated defence spending with economic control and protection of British overseas assets, to the League it was a price worth paying for continuity and therefore power and influence.

If British military power was the custodian of a Commonwealth bloc, then economic interdependence was its fundamental foundation and unifying purpose. The League argued that a Commonwealth bloc was necessary for the security and prosperity of all its constituent

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<sup>11</sup> Amery quoted in Goldsworthy, D. (1971). *Colonial issues in British Politics, 1945-1961* London: Macmillan p170.

<sup>12</sup> Feinstein, C. ‘The end of empire and the golden age’ in Clarke, P. and Trebilcock, C. (eds). (1997). *Understanding Decline: Perceptions and Realities of Britain’s Economic Performance* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Schonfield, A. (1958). *British Economic Policy Since the War* London: Harmondsworth; Hinds, A. (2001). *Britain’s Sterling Colonial Policy and Decolonization 1939-1958* London: Westpot; Krozewski, G. (2001). *Money and the End of Empire: British Economic Policy and the Colonies, 1947-1953* Basingstoke: Macmillan; Kirby, M.W. (1981). *The Decline of British Economic Power since 1870* London: George Allen & Unwin.

<sup>13</sup> Schenk, C. (1994). *Britain and the Sterling Area: from Devaluation to Convertibility in the 1950s* London: Routledge.

<sup>14</sup> Feinstein, C. (1972). *National Income and Expenditure and output of the United Kingdom, 1855-1965* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Chalmers, M. (1985). *Paying for Defence* London: Pluto Press.

parts, and not merely a self-serving device for the UK. The League's justification and motivation for this policy was the threat posed by the Soviet Union and China to the international system and the West and, by inference nationalism and economic liberalism. The League contended that because of the Cold War Britain would be fully engaged as a 'major' global power for decades to come in the struggle against the Soviet Union and China. Optimistically the League emphasized that Britain's post-war economic and geo-political decline was 'temporary' but would become terminal if injudicious withdrawal from the leadership of the Commonwealth and control of the colonies was hastily contemplated for reasons of economic expediency or through exogenous pressure from another power.

However, the League's Report is full of ambivalences and contradictions concerning the longevity and direction of the imperial project and its continuing relevance to the West's effort in the Cold War. The League assumed that European imperialism in some shape or form would continue because it was self-evident that it was in the West's and American interests for it to do so, at least during the Cold War. Conversely, the League recognised that the colonies would move toward 'self-determination' but on a prescribed path guided by the metropolitan centre; the intention being to preserve British hegemony or influence after independence. Incongruously, the League believed British cultural assimilation and robust democratic constitutional structures would leave a positive legacy there by disseminating pro-British sentiment among the leaders and population of former colonies. Butler has noted that British officials in Africa on the eve of withdrawal in the 1950s showed 'astonishing confidence in their own ability to shape the long-term development of the colonial territories'.<sup>15</sup> The League argued that in the security sphere former colonies (including India) would naturally gravitate to the West because of British influence and a legacy of 'shared values'. However, the League's Report was published the same year as the Bandung conference which brought together Third World countries from across the globe. The conference set out a political agenda declaring that the participating states had a non-aligned status within the dynamics of the Cold War. The 1955 League report allows a closer examination of how pressure group analysis of defence policy was driven by personality and political expediency.

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<sup>15</sup> Butler, L. J. (2002). *Britain and Empire: Adjusting to a Post-Imperial World* London: I. B. Tauris p193.



## Chapter One: Leo Amery Military Expert.

Most of the historiography on Leo Amery focuses on his ardent support of imperialism or his indefatigable support for imperial preference for over 55 years or his political life.<sup>16</sup> However, his contribution to the national defence debate from the Boer war onwards is largely neglected as a separate study. A notable exception is a study by Grayson which is a comparative analysis of Leo Amery and the three Chamberlains (Joseph, Neville and Austen) differing opinions on the direction of imperial defence and foreign policy within the imperialist wing of the Conservative party between 1903-1939.<sup>17</sup> However, Grayson neglects the Army League, army reform and Leo Amery's work in the National Service League (NSL) to focus on the implications of imperialist philosophy on the direction of Conservative Party foreign policy. The main sources of information on his life and political career are the three volumes of memoirs which Leo Amery wrote in the 1950s and his two volumes of diaries edited by Barnes and Nicholson in the 1980s.<sup>18</sup> Amery began writing and recording his diaries after 1910. The diaries are an invaluable source of information which detail his political life up to 1945. Each volume contains editorial commentaries which cover aspects of his political life. The most detailed being his disagreement with Government in the late 1930s over German colonial concessions Amery also appears in studies on Appeasement and his role in bringing down the premiership of Neville Chamberlain.<sup>19</sup> This chapter analyses what shaped his fascination with and latter expertise concerning military and strategic matters before the First World War. It also looks at his contribution to national security in the 1920s as a member of the several Conservative Governments. However, the public opening of Leo

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<sup>16</sup> Louis, W. M. (1992). *In the name of God, go: Leo Amery and the British Empire in the age of Churchill* London: Norton; Faber, D. (2005). *Speaking for England: Leo, Julian and John Amery-The Tragedy of a Political Family* Free Press: London; Louis, W. M. 'Leo Amery and the post-war world, 1945-55', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 30 (2002), pp 71-90; Rubenstein, W. 'The secret of Leopold Amery', *Historical Research*, No.73 (2000), pp 175-96.

<sup>17</sup> Grayson, R. 'Imperialism in Conservative Defence and Foreign Policy: Leo Amery and the Chamberlain's 1903-39' in *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* Vol. 34, No. 4, December 2004 pp505-527.

<sup>18</sup> Amery, L. (1953). *My Political Life Volume 1: England before the storm, 1896-1914* London: Hutchinson; Amery, L. (1953). *My Political Life Volume 2: War and Peace 1914-1929* London: Hutchinson; Amery, L. (1955). *My Political Life Volume 3: The unforgiving years, 1929-1940* London: Hutchinson; Barnes, J. and Nicholson, D. (eds). (1980). *The Leo Amery Dairies. Volume 1 1896-1929* London: Hutchinson; Barnes, J. and Nicholson, D. (eds). (1988). *The Leo Amery Dairies. Volume 2 1929-1945 Empire at Bay* London: Hutchinson.

<sup>19</sup> Charmley, J. (1991). *Chamberlain and the Lost Peace* Basingstoke: Macmillan; Thompson, N. (1971). *The anti- appeasers. Conservative opposition to Appeasement in the 1930s.* Oxford: Clarendon Press; Ovendale, R. (1975). *Appeasement and the English Speaking World* Cardiff: University of Wales; Crowson, N. J. (1997). *Facing Fascism* London: Routledge; Olson, L. (2007). *Troublesome young men: The rebels who brought Churchill to power in 1940 and helped to save Britain* London: Bloomsbury.

Amery's archive in 2006 and a detailed ongoing cataloguing of its contents allow a more systematic approach to understanding Leo Amery's military activities.

In 1896 the Harrow and Balliol College Oxford educated Leo Amery gained a history fellowship at All Souls College (Oxford). Amery intended to pursue an academic career. However, in 1897 he was offered a post as a part-time foreign correspondent for the *The Times* while undertaking an academic tour of the Balkans. The following year Amery decided to take the Bar Exam with the intention of becoming a lawyer. Conversely, in 1899 he was offered a permanent position as an assistant foreign editor at *The Times* and subsequently decided to pursue a career as a journalist. At the age of twenty-five the virtually inexperienced Amery was sent to South Africa to manage *The Times* coverage of the War. Once arriving in South Africa Amery rapidly developed personal and professional contacts with senior British Army officers and politicians and their staffs. He also developed close working relationships with his fellow correspondents which included Rudyard Kipling, who became a close friend of Amery. Significantly, Amery became closely associated with Lord Milner, High Commissioner for South Africa and Governor of Cape Colony, and members of the latter's 'Kindergarten' of officials; Milner, who had also been at Balliol, offered Amery a post in his administration as his personal secretary, but Amery declined because he was embarking on his first major political project *The Times History of the War in South Africa*.<sup>20</sup>

In 1899 *The Times* was in financial difficulties, and Amery and the considerable pool of correspondents that *The Times* had dispatched to South Africa quickly began running up a considerable expenses bill; also Amery initiated a complicated ciphered dispatch system utilising the telegraph to rapidly send classified information to London; however, this turned out to be a costly failure due to technical difficulties.<sup>21</sup> Amery was primarily based in Cape Town during the war and was living very comfortably at one of the best hotels where he dined and socialised on a lavish scale with government officials and senior Army officers and their staff. By the end of December 1899 an increasingly exasperated Moberley Bell the editor of *The Times* began putting pressure on Amery to economise. Half jokingly Amery suggested to Bell that he would write a series of books about the war; Bell, who had already published profitable series of books, could see the commercial potential of the venture and gave his consent.<sup>22</sup> However, Amery quickly perceived that a series of books could be used means of establishing himself as a serious writer and commentator on contemporary political and

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<sup>20</sup> Amery, L. (ed). (1900). *The Times History of the War in South Africa* London: Sampson.

<sup>21</sup> Faber, D. (2005). *Speaking for England: Leo, Julian and John Amery-The Tragedy of a Political Family* Free Press: London p38.

<sup>22</sup> Barnes, J and Nicholson, D. (eds). (1980). *The Leo Amery Diaries, Volume I, 1896-1929* London: Hutchinson p33.

military issues and not solely as a means of generating revenue. Retrospectively Amery would write, 'my time in Berlin in 1899 had convinced me that Germany meant mischief, and what I saw in South Africa convinced me no less that our Army needed complete reorganisation to meet the danger. It was from this point of view that I took my writing of the South African war so seriously. For I felt that my criticisms of our generals and of our whole Army system would only go home if my facts were unchallengeable- as indeed they were'.<sup>23</sup> However, at the time the historian H.A.L Fisher described *The Times History of the War in South Africa* as a, 'history with a mission' calculated to, 'defend Imperialism in the past, to make Imperialism in the present, and, by displaying not only the virtues but also the faults of the British organization, to strengthen the Empire against the perils of the future'.<sup>24</sup> Clearly Amery was in the right place at the right time for someone wanting to make a name for himself, because the unfolding crisis in South Africa and its aftermath presented Amery with an opportunity to display his undoubted abilities as a writer, theorist and propagandist.

In the spring of 1900, when it appeared the war would shortly be over, Amery spent time travelling around South Africa adding to material he had collected since arriving in 1899; this included speaking to defeated Boer commanders and 'assessing' the performance of British senior officers, troops and officials. He set sail for home in August 1900 when the first phase of the conflict was over. On his return he immediately began working on the first volume. Amery would work directly on the first two and contribute, and edit, the next four volumes over nine years. It took Amery six months to write and edit the first volume; however, Amery increasingly insisted on being excessively precise and inclusive, which meant that the production of the subsequent volumes was slow and they became comprehensive and fastidious record of the war. The later volumes were edited by Erskine Childers and Basil Williams and many of *The Times* South African war correspondents contributed, including the pioneering and iconic Lionel James, *The Times* chief war correspondent, assisted Amery editing the early volumes.<sup>25</sup> The war produced a plethora of published memoirs, periodicals, illustrated histories and books from distinguished military writers and journalists.<sup>26</sup> However, the various volumes of *The Times History of the War in South Africa* were for many years considered to be the definitive work on the subject. Throughout the process of assembling the various volumes Amery was assiduously assisted by Field Marshall the Lord Roberts of

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<sup>23</sup> Leo Amery MSS, Churchill College Archive Cambridge, AMEL 1/2/3, Army Reform notes December 1947; Hereafter AMEL 1/2/3.

<sup>24</sup> H.A. L Fisher quoted in Louis, R, W, M. (2006). *Ends of British Imperialism* London: I. B Tauris p382.

<sup>25</sup> In 1905 throughout the Russo- Japanese war Lionel James would be the first war correspondent to use a wireless to file copy and was the first to report from a ship during a naval engagement. At the time James was considered to be the preeminent war correspondent of his day.

<sup>26</sup> Beckett, I. (2003). *The Victorians at War* London: Hambledon p226.

Kandahar and Lord Milner and their respective staffs. Both Roberts and Milner used Amery to propagate a positive portrayal of their roles in the conflict. Amery would work with both men over the next decade on the issue of Army reform and the campaign to introduce a form of compulsory national service.

The first volume of *The Times History of the War in South Africa* set-out the historical and political back ground of the conflict. It is a detailed and wide ranging appraisal, but steadfastly depicts the British motives and actions as being morally and politically justified. Significantly the first page of the first volume has a photograph of Joseph Chamberlain, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, whom Amery describes as the 'ablest of English politicians'.<sup>27</sup> Amery rapidly attached himself politically and socially to Milner during the war, and then to Chamberlain. Leo Amery's relationship with the two men shaped his future political career and his life-long commitment to imperialism and protectionism. Amery had been an admirer of Chamberlain since his time at Oxford and supported Chamberlain's break with the Liberal Party on the issue of Irish Home Rule. Julian Amery would later contribute to several biographical volumes about Chamberlain's life and political career.<sup>28</sup> However, Chamberlain was a divisive figure known for his radical views both on domestic and imperial policy within the Liberal party and later as a cabinet member of Lord Salisbury's, the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, Conservative Unionist Government. Chamberlain and Milner, were profoundly influenced by J.R. Seeley's influential work of 1883 *The Expansion of England* which argued for the creation of a 'Greater Britain' to counter the rise of the great continental powers of America and Russia.<sup>29</sup> Seeley noted that British imperialism had been conducted in an 'absent minded' manner, and advocated a planned methodical approach by the state to the question imperial governance which would utilise modern technology such as the steamship, telegraph, and railway to cement the 'bonds' of Empire.<sup>30</sup> This approach to the 'problem of empire' was enthusiastically endorsed by Chamberlain. By the 1890s Chamberlain had devised a policy of 'constructive imperialism' which sought to redress the apparent political and economic drift of the white settler colonies away from the mother country, while instigating a centrally planned and administered development and economic policy for new and existing colonies. Chamberlain envisaged the creation of an imperial federation which would gather all the 'different branches of the Anglo-Saxon races' into a mutually beneficial collective.

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<sup>27</sup> Amery, L. (ed). (1900) p13.

<sup>28</sup> Amery, J. (1951). *The Life of Joseph Chamberlain: Vol 4, 1901-03 At the Height of His Power* London: Macmillan; Amery, J. (1968). *Joseph Chamberlain and the Tariff Reform Campaign Vol 5.* London: Macmillan; Amery, J. (1968). *Joseph Chamberlain and the Tariff Reform Campaign Vol 6.* London: Macmillan.

<sup>29</sup> Seely, J. R. (1883). *The Expansion of England* London: Macmillan.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid* p61.

In June 1895 Chamberlain became Secretary of State for the Colonies. Chamberlain had asked for the Colonial Office (CO), which at the time was considered to be a 'political backwater', because he wanted to initiate his vision for politically unified British Empire.<sup>31</sup> Amery argued in the first volume of the *Times History of the South Africa War* that Chamberlain, since becoming Colonial Secretary, had created a 'sense of imperial unity and mutual understanding between England and the colonies'.<sup>32</sup> Unity became the watch word of Amery and his fellow imperialists for the next fifty years when discussing imperial economic and defence issues. Conversely, Chamberlain's 'constructive imperialism' was increasingly implemented through the use or threat of force and was overtly militaristic. Critics of this new imperialism like J. A. Hobson, who reported on the War in South Africa for the *Manchester Guardian*, argued that it was economically rapacious and distinctly militaristic both in tone and application.<sup>33</sup> However, even critics like Hobson maintained that the Government needed to adopt a more systematic approach to imperial problems and governance.<sup>34</sup> Chamberlain maintained that British race was predestined to rule, and that 'means justified the ends' which in case of South Africa meant war with the Transvaal and Orange Free State republics over the rights of Uitlanders (outsiders). In 1886 discovery of the massive Witwatersrand gold field in the Transvaal radically changed the social and political situation in the republic and central South Africa. The resultant gold rush was accompanied by an influx of predominantly British miners and speculators into the gold-field. The Uitlanders brought technical expertise and overseas investment and rapidly developed the area around Johannesburg (the centre of the Witwatersand) to point where it rivalled and then surpassed the Afrikaner capital of Pretoria as the principle economic and population centre in the Transvaal. However, there were a considerable number of German nationals who arrived to participate in the gold rush. The arrival of German nationals and investment was seen as direct threat to British interests in the region. Paul Kruger, the president of the Transvaal Republic, adroitly forged diplomatic and economic links with Germany and accentuated the strong cultural links between Afrikaner and German society.<sup>35</sup> The Boers diplomatic and economic position was significantly strengthened by the discovery of the Witwatersrand gold field, but by drawing in Germany and the other great powers into the affairs of the Transvaal Kruger was playing a dangerous diplomatic game which further antagonised the British government who claimed suzerainty over the Transvaal. Amery dismissively described the Boers as '20,000 families of

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<sup>31</sup> Thompson, A. 'Empire and the British State' in Stockwell, S. (ed). (2008). *The British Empire Themes and Perspectives* London: Blackwell p52.

<sup>32</sup> Amery, L. (ed). (1900) p13.

<sup>33</sup> Hobson, J. A. (1900). *The War in South Africa: its causes and effects* London: J Nisbet p49.

<sup>34</sup> Hobson, J. A. (1905). *Imperialism: A Study* London: Archibald Constable p139.

<sup>35</sup> James, L. (1994). *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire* London: Abacus p260.

squatters' who had not developed Transvaal since they had arrived there in the 1830s.<sup>36</sup> Boer society was essentially agrarian and consisted of dispersed farms interspersed with a few small towns.

However, a combination of living in a hostile environment and continuous war with indigenous peoples developed a highly interdependent society based on strict observance to Calvinism and adherence to the principles of collective responsibility. All Boer males were liable for military service between the ages of sixteen and sixty and served in a commando. The Boers developed a highly efficient mobilization system which required all men to muster with their own horse, weapon, ammunition and food for eight days in the field. The Boers had no permanent military administrative organization but had a network of locally elected commandants who commanded each commando. Decisions in the field were made collectively by a vote, but once a strategy was adopted there was no deviation from the plan. The Boers adapted their tactics to suit the conditions on the veldt and preferred to ambush and fight on prepared or familiar ground.<sup>37</sup> The Transvaal and Orange Free State remained independent until they were annexed by the British in 1877. In 1879 After the British defeated the Zulu kingdom it was expected that the Boers would see the advantages of being part of British dominated South African confederation and accept the geo-political realities of the situation and submit to British hegemony. However, on 15 December 1880 the Boers rebelled against what they saw as the levying of excessive taxation, the imposition of British judicial and political institutions and fired on British troops in Pretoria- the capital of the Transvaal. The Boers rapidly mobilized about 8,000 men the British had about 1,500 deployed in small garrisons across the Transvaal. On 27 February 1881 at the battle of Majuba Hill a force of 500 troops and a naval detachment commanded by General Sir George Pomeroy Colley, considered to be one of the most intelligent and talented senior officers in the Army, was defeated by a comparable force of Boer irregulars. Colley was killed along with 93 of his men, 133 were wounded and 58 taken prisoner, however, the Boers lost one man and five wounded (one of whom died later). Majuba was a humiliating defeat for the British because Colley had been comprehensively defeated when in possession of seemingly impregnable defensive position. In response to these set-backs and in line with his policy of not pursuing further imperial entanglements William Gladstone, the Prime Minister, sued for peace and granted the Boers limited independence, but ambiguously retained suzerainty over the Transvaal. The Boers annually celebrated Majuba day as the defining moment in their struggle for self-determination. The Boers subsequently created the Afrikaner National League which it used to promote the possibility of a union of Natal and Cape Afrikaners.

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<sup>36</sup> Amery, L. (1900) p17.

<sup>37</sup> Lee, E. (1985). *To The Bitter End* London: Guild p43.

Amery considered the Boers victory at Majuba a 'splendid feat of arms' and an example of their tactical mastery of utilising broken terrain both in defence and attack and testimony of their ability with small arms.<sup>38</sup>

Amery argued that Majuba had emboldened Boer nationalism and created a sense of Afrikaner national unity, but he also noted that the Boers hubristically thought they had crushed the British. Amery asserted that Gladstone's lack of 'decisiveness' and his subsequent back down rather than the defeat of British military power had been the primary foundation of Boer nationalism. This assumption is probably accurate given that the Boers outnumbered the British garrison by eight to one. Also there were questions over the morale and composition of the British garrison; prior to the war there had been desertions from the garrison which was widely dispersed in small units; many of Colley's men were 'green' and he had no cavalry or mounted infantry.<sup>39</sup> The Boers had shown that they were masters of mobile infantry warfare; intrepid both in defence and attack, and that they were expert marksmen. In comparison the British effort had been desultory and based on the hubristic assumption that the Boers were merely itinerant farmers who could be easily defeated with the available forces present in the colony. However, Amery argued that if Gladstone had permitted the Army to respond to Majuba and send a properly constituted expeditionary force, then the outcome of the First South African War might have been very different. Troops embarking at Southampton in 1899 for South Africa was greeted with calls of avenge Majuba by the crowd.

In 1897 Chamberlain appointed Alfred Milner to the post of High Commissioner for South Africa and Governor of the Cape Colony. Milner, like Amery, trained as a barrister and journalist. During the general election of 1885 Milner stood as the prospective Liberal candidate for Harrow but failed to win the seat; ironically while campaigning he defended Gladstone's decision to negotiate with the Boers. However, like Chamberlain he became a Liberal Unionist and broke ranks with the Gladstone and the Liberal party over Irish home rule. Milner served under Lord Cromer in Egypt as a financial secretary in the British administration before returning to the UK and becoming Chairman of the Board of the Inland Revenue. Milner shared Chamberlain's views on the future direction of imperial policy and was a self-confessed 'British race patriot'. Amery described Milner as having 'courage and ability' and praised his efforts in attempting to negotiate with President Kruger of the

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<sup>38</sup> Amery, I. (ed). (1900) p69.

<sup>39</sup> Judd, D. (2007). *Someone has Blundered: Calamities of the British Army in the Victorian Age* London: Phoenix p114.

Transvaal.<sup>40</sup> However, after his arrival in South Africa Milner skilfully manipulated the political impasse over the rights of Uitlanders and set the British on path which would lead to war with the Boers. He granted greater autonomy to Cecil Rhodes British, and the South African Company in Rhodesia which further antagonised Boer sentiments and strengthened Rhodes control of region. This was particularly significant because Chamberlain had been forced to defend in the House of Commons the British South African company's and the involvement of British troops in the brutal suppression of a native uprising in Mashona and Matabeleland in 1896.<sup>41</sup> Rhodes was lauded by Amery as a patriot and a master exponent of 'modern' imperialism. Subsequently, Milner and Amery served as board members of the Rhodes Trust and were instrumental in forming the Round Table movement for the advancement of closer union between the Britain and the self-governing colonies both of which were funded by large bequests from Rhodes will. Milner steadfastly rejected offers of international mediation between Uitlanders and the Boers and made inflammatory speeches which made thinly veiled threats to use military force to resolve the political impasse.

In June 1899 Milner informed Kruger at a conference at Bloemfontein, in the Orange Free State, that the Uitlanders must be given full political rights, knowing that the Boers would never agree to such a proposal. Amery wrote to Sir Valentine Chirol, *The Times* Foreign Editor, that Milner had told him in September 1899 'that war is the only satisfactory solution', followed by 'annexation'.<sup>42</sup> Although, he saw the trap Kruger only offered limited concessions to the Uitlanders which of course were rejected and it was only a matter of time before the war started. Milner and Chamberlain then began military preparations for the 'defence' of Natal and the Cape, and began reinforcing the British garrison. In October 1899 the Transvaal and Orange Free State issued an ultimatum calling for the removal of British troops on their respective borders. However, Amery argued in the first volume of the *The Times* history of the War that Milner had attempted to negotiate a compromise, but Kruger was unwilling to concede because he was attempting to destabilise the Natal and Cape colonies through the Afrikaner National League by asserting Boer nationalist sentiment among the wider Afrikaner society in the Cape and Natal.<sup>43</sup> When the British did not comply the Boers attacked the Natal and Cape colonies before more British reinforcements could arrive. Amery considered this to be a 'blessing', because it handed the diplomatic initiative to the British since they were technically responding to an act of aggression and not invading a smaller state.<sup>44</sup> Over 10,000 Cape and Natal Afrikaners did fight for the Transvaal and Orange

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<sup>40</sup> Amery, L. (ed). (1900) p16.

<sup>41</sup> James, L. (1994) p262.

<sup>42</sup> AMEL 1/1/5, Letter to Sir Valentine Chirol , 19 September 1899.

<sup>43</sup> Amery, L. (ed). (1900) p200.

<sup>44</sup> AMEL 1/1/5, Letter to Sir Valentine Chirol, 11 December 1899.



Free state, but there was no general uprising against British rule in the Cape and Natal colonies. As Amery remarked to Chirol in January 1900 the 'Dutch rising which was so much feared has not developed'.<sup>45</sup>

Amery's observations of the political and diplomatic events surrounding the start of the war were mainly supplied by Milner and his staff and obviously shed a favourable light on the actions of Chamberlain and Milner. In Leo Amery's version of events the war was fought for the rights of Uitlanders and the removal of unrestrained Afrikaner nationalism as a political force and not the seizure of the gold field. Amery also went to great lengths to emphasize the emergent military and political threat that the Transvaal republic posed to British interests in South and Central Africa. This duplicated Milner and Chamberlain's views on the Boer threat to British hegemony. Chamberlain presented the war in South Africa to the rest of the Cabinet as a test of British resolve and influence within the Empire and a demonstration of strength to the other Great Powers.<sup>46</sup> Gollin described Leo Amery's twenty-five year relationship with Milner, as that of 'the devoted disciple'.<sup>47</sup> Unsurprisingly then, that Amery portrayed Milner and Chamberlain as the political heroes of the diplomatic war who had defended the rights of the Uitlanders against the nationalistic intransigence of the Boers led by the obdurate intransigent nationalist Kruger. However, both sides were indulging in irreconcilable bombastic brinkmanship. Similarly, cultural and strategic imperatives prevented a diplomatic solution. Amery gained considerable political and personal influence from his close relationship with Milner and Chamberlain which was cemented by his work on Volume 1 of *The Times History of the War*.

## **Military History or Selective Version of War**

Amery edited and predominantly wrote the next two volumes of *the Times History of the South African War* which were appraisals of the early military operations and the end of the first phase of the war in 1900; the second was published in 1902 and the third in 1904. Amery was given considerable assistance by General the Lord Roberts of Kandahar, who was known affectionately as 'Bobs' by the public. Amery would work closely with Roberts and members of his staff for the next decade on various topics related to the army and the issue of compulsory military service. At the start of the South African War in September 1899

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<sup>45</sup> AMEL 1/1/5, Letter to Sir Valentine Chirol, 2 January 1900.

<sup>46</sup> Grenville, J. A. S. (1970). *Lord Salisbury and Foreign Policy at the Close of the Nineteenth Century* p237.

<sup>47</sup> Gollin, A. (1964). *Proconsul in Politics: a Study in of Lord Milner in Power in Opposition and Power* London: Blond p123.

General Sir Redvers Buller was given command of British forces in South Africa. Buller had been reluctant to take the command in the first place, because he was concerned by the lack of military preparations being made by the Government and he doubted his own suitability for the task. However, he was persuaded by Lord Lansdowne, Minister of War, Arthur Balfour and Lord Salisbury, the Prime Minister, to take the command. The war started on 9 October 1899; however, Buller only arrived in South Africa on 30 October with reinforcements from the UK. Buller had initially planned to build up his forces (there were reinforcements being dispatched from a number of imperial garrisons) and then invade Boer territory. This was a sound strategy, because it would take time to concentrate and integrate his forces and build up supplies and logistic arrangements. However, the Boers struck first and invaded British territory at four different points aiming to cut the railway lines which linked the coast with the interior, which at a stroke took the strategic initiative away from the British who were heavily reliant on the railway system for movement and resupply.<sup>48</sup> The British forces, some of whom had only recently arrived from India and other imperial garrisons, on the border were forced back and then surrounded at Ladysmith, Mafeking and Kimberly; the Boers then made a limited advance toward Port Elizabeth and Cape Town but concentrated on laying siege to the trapped British forces. The Boers strategy was twofold; firstly, they had no intention of letting the British gain an overwhelming numerical advantage; secondly, the Boers thought that they could conjure up another Majuba and undermine British resolve and force a favourable negotiation and peace-terms. The Boers also thought that a string of early victories and invasion of British territory would act as a catalyst for a general uprising among Afrikaners in the Cape and Natal against British rule.

As a consequence Buller was forced to move his newly arrived army corps from Cape Town to Durban by sea, and moved in early December toward Ladysmith from Natal. Two other columns of British troops moved toward Kimberley and Mafeking from the Cape Colony; however, these forces were defeated at Stormberg and Magersfontein losing over 1,500 men in the process. On 15 December Buller and his 20,000 men moving toward Ladysmith were defeated at Colenso by 8,000 Boers and lost 1,100 men dead, wounded or missing after a frontal assault; Buller immediately retreated but was not pursued by the victorious Boers. Boers took a considerable number of prisoners, which were then paraded before the international press adding to the national sense of humiliation and bewilderment. The press dubbed this series of defeats 'black week'. On 16 December 1899 Roberts replaced General Sir Redvers Buller as the commander in chief of British forces in South Africa with General Sir Herbert Kitchener as his chief of staff. Amery would later state that the decisive decision

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<sup>48</sup> Judd, D and Surridge, K. (2002). *The Boer War* London: John Murray pp105-130.

to rapidly appoint Roberts had been a triumph for Lord Lansdowne, Minister of War, and Lord Salisbury, the Prime Minister, because they had not consulted Field Marshal Wolseley the Commander-in-Chief or the military 'establishment' at the WO before making the appointment. Amery also described, with the benefit of hindsight, the politicians as being 'stronger men' than the soldiers.<sup>49</sup> However, it had been the same politicians who had talked the reluctant Buller into going to South Africa in the first place and had waited before allowing a build up of troops in South Africa.

Buller was widely criticised in the press for his handling of the attempted relief of Ladysmith and his alleged signal to General Sir George White, the besieged commander of British forces in Ladysmith, telling him to surrender when he was defeated at Colenso. Buller was also vilified for leaving a battery of guns to the enemy after retreating from Colenso. Roberts only son was killed while attempting to retrieve the guns. After his arrival in South Africa Roberts reorganised the forces in the Cape, by increasing the number of mounted troops; he also issued new tactical guide lines which included the use of more diligent reconnaissance, avoidance of massed frontal assaults, continuous artillery bombardment of enemy positions rather than desultory or periodic ones, awareness of the use of available cover for infantry and artillery and more flexible employment of cavalry and mounted infantry. Roberts devised a strategic plan based on a rapid advance utilising his increased mobility and a carefully designed flanking manoeuvre toward Kimberly by mounted troops covered infantry. Roberts ordered Buller and his 40,000 men to hold and menace the Boers in the vicinity of Ladysmith, and remain within Natal; However, Buller began moving forward on the 10 January 1900. On 24 January his force was defeated at Spionkop losing 1,200 men dead, wounded and missing; this resulted in images of a mass grave of British dead on Spionkop being published around the world which caused further out-cry in the UK. On 5 February at Vaalkranz his forces were repulsed again and then forced to retreat. Amery described the British effort at the battle of Vaalkranz as the 'one of the feeblest performances in the history of war', and laid the responsibility solely on Buller.<sup>50</sup>

Roberts attacked on the 11 February with 37,000 men; the cavalry and mounted infantry successfully outflanked the Boers and managed to cross the Reit River and moved toward the Modder river (the only natural obstacle on the route to Kimberly) and Kimberly, while the infantry moved up behind. The 4,000 Boers holding a line at Reit River retreated back to

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<sup>49</sup> Amery, L. (1955). *My Political Life; Volume One England Before the Storm 1896-1914* London: Hutchinson p119.

<sup>50</sup> Amery, L. (ed). (1903) *The Times History of the War in South Africa: Vol III* London: Sampson p326.

Modder and on the 18 February they were cornered against the river at Parrdeberg. After a suicidal frontal assault commanded by Kitchener was repulsed with heavy loss the Boers were surrounded and bombarded into submission on the 27 February. Roberts advance gained momentum and the outnumbered Boers, who for the first time were displaying tactical ineptitude, were forced to retreat back toward their own territory. Roberts's use of increased mobility and superior numbers was ultimately to prove decisive during the ensuing campaign; however, Buller had reached the same conclusions regarding the need for more mounted troops after Colenso, but this was subsequently ignored by Amery who credited Roberts with devising the strategy and tactics which ultimately won the second phase of the war.<sup>51</sup> In March Roberts invaded the Orange Free State taking Bloemfontein and then moved into the Transvaal in May. However, the advance was hampered by increasing fatigue among the troops and animals and there were supply problems. Conversely, Buller did learn from his earlier mistakes and using similar flanking tactics to Roberts moved forward as the Boers retreated back into their own territory. Buller linked up with Roberts on the 24 July, and then defeated the Boers at Bergendal and then occupied Lydenburg.

The war appeared to be over and the Boers defeated. Buller requested to be sent home and On 9 November Buller returned to the UK and was welcomed home by euphoric crowds; he was offered in January 1901 the Aldershot Command and the new First Army corps. He was awarded the Grand Cross of St Michael and St George (GCMG). On 11 December Roberts, after handing over command to Kitchener, also returned home and was met with a wave of public affection and adulation on his arrival. Roberts was made Commander-in-Chief of the Army, given the Order of the Carter, an earldom and a grant of £100,000. However, the war then entered a new phase when Boers refused to surrender and the protracted guerrilla war began. Before leaving South Africa Roberts had authorised the use of pacification techniques designed to isolate the remaining Boer commandos from the local population who were supporting them. British troops also made reprisal raids for attacks on railways and outposts by Boer commandos; this involved the destruction of farms, villages, livestock and crops. The British also began the construction of block houses at strategic points and made sweeps by mounted forces to contain and destroy the remaining Boer commandos. He also gave instructions that the families evicted and dispersed by the destruction of farms be settled in concentration camps for their protection and to stop their contact with the Boer commandos.<sup>52</sup> Amery predominantly wrote Robert's and his staff's version of the war. Amery closely edited the first three volumes of *The Times* History and was general editor for the subsequent volumes. However, Erskine Childers edited the volumes which dealt with the controversial

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<sup>51</sup> Amery, L. (1955) p122.

<sup>52</sup> Pollock, J. (1998). *Kitchener* London: Robinson p195.

concentration camp policy, the guerrilla phase of the war and the period of political settlement and reconstruction.<sup>53</sup> Amery specifically noted in his political memoirs that the volumes that dealt with the subjects of concentration camps, the destruction of crops, the shooting of livestock and farm burning were the work of Childers and not his.<sup>54</sup> However, Amery was the editor in chief and had the final say in what was contained in the various volumes. Amery concurred with Childers observations, and wrote that the ‘concentration camp system caused far less misery and loss than would have been suffered had the families remained on the veldt’.<sup>55</sup> However, he did partially blame the Boers for the conditions in the camps, because of their ignorance of modern sanitary conditions and intransigent nature.

Arguably, Kitchener and Roberts emerged from *The Times* history of the war with their military reputations enhanced, if not protected; their mistakes which included a muddled reorganisation of the Army transport system, failure to deal with the poor performance of the Royal Army Medical Corps, and Kitchener’s frontal assault at Paardeberg were glossed over by Amery. Similarly, Kitchener’s direction of the guerrilla war was also judged to be a success, and accusations of prisoner executions and the rape of Boer women perpetrated by British soldiers were not commented on by Amery. However, Amery did launch a public and persistent attack on the reputation of Buller and other generals. On 28 September 1901 in response to the fact that peacetime and wartime command of the First Army corps was to be harmonised, which meant that in theory Buller would lead the corps in a future war, Amery using the pseudonym ‘Reformer’ in *The Times* editorial column launched an attack on Buller’s professional competence and the alleged surrender telegram to General White at Ladysmith.<sup>56</sup> On 10 October 1901 Buller responded at a luncheon at the Queen’s Hall Westminster and attempted to defend himself from the mounting criticism. However, William St John Broderick, Secretary of State for War 1900-1903, deemed that Buller had breached Kings Regulations and he was dismissed on 21 October, but was retained on the active list; however, he was never given another command. There has been some speculation by Powell that Buller was a scapegoat for the systemic failings of the army during the war.<sup>57</sup> He is also critical of Roberts’s performance in South Africa and his connivance in Buller’s dismissal. Amery benefited from attacking Buller because it allied him with Roberts and his staff, and it increased his apparent credentials as a military expert and political commentator. Leo Amery’s condemnation of Buller was based on what he considered to be the undisputed

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<sup>53</sup> Amery would heavily edit the final chapter, which was written by Childers, because it was critical of Milner. Childers then distanced him-self from the final chapter after its publication.

<sup>54</sup> Amery, L. (1955) p163.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid* p162.

<sup>56</sup> *The Times* ‘Army Reform’, 28 September 1901 p7.

<sup>57</sup> Powell, G. (1994). *Buller: a scapegoat?* London: Lee Cooper.

‘facts’, but his persistent pursuit of Buller smacks of a vindictive witch hunt on the most conspicuous scapegoat for the failings of a disjointed and transitional military system which reflected years of ambiguous imperial security policy direction and failure to deal with inadequate administrative management of the army. Arguably, Buller was very vulnerable because of his abhorrence of the press which made him an easy target for Amery and *The Times*, and his obvious unsuitability for a large independent field command which had been exposed during the major peacetime manoeuvres of 1898.<sup>58</sup> Buller at first rejected the offer of command in South Africa. However, after being asked by Lansdowne and Salisbury, who brushed aside Buller’s objections and doubts about his own suitability, Buller felt obliged to accept. The reluctant and ponderous Buller should never have been given the South African command in the first place. Amery viewed Buller’s replacement by Roberts as a political success but he was less inclined to criticise his appointment which was made by the same politicians. Amery went to great lengths to exonerate the politicians (especially the desultory reinforcement of the South African garrison prior to the war starting which Buller had complained about before accepting the appointment) from responsibility for the failure of diplomacy and ineffectual preparations for war. Lieutenant-General Sir William Butler, who was Commander of British forces in South Africa prior to the war, had warned Milner that any conflict with the Boers would be a ‘calamity’.<sup>59</sup> Milner forced Butler to resign his command and ignored his warnings. Amery glossed over the fact that Milner and Chamberlain had seriously underestimated the military potential of the Boers and their willingness to use force to protect their interests. Similarly, Amery ignored the fact that British forces at the start of the war were numerically inferior to the well armed and motivated Boers. Amery shifted the blame on to Buller and other senior officers for the disaster of black week and not on the politicians who engineered the crisis by not allowing adequate reinforcements to be sent to South Africa during the period of negotiation. His co-ordinated press campaign against Buller pushed the latter to the point of dismissal.

During the rest of 1901 and early 1902 Amery worked on completing volume two and preparing for volume three. While Amery was in South Africa James remained in London managing the sub-editors and interviewing returning officers and officials. Amery returned to South Africa at the start of 1902 to gather more information and was present when the guerrilla war ended on 31 May 1902. Amery worked closely with Lawrence James on the first two volumes and was involved in preparing the third when the war ended. But, it was the

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<sup>58</sup> Leeson, D. M. ‘Playing at War: The British Military Manoeuvres of 1898’ in *War in History* No. 15, Vol. 4 (2008) pp432-461.

<sup>59</sup> Beckett, I. ‘Butler Sir William Francis (1838–1910)’, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edition, Jan 2008.

second volume which caused the biggest stir, because it was highly critical of the Army and Buller and because Amery stated that he had used official sources to gather information. In fact Leo Amery's correspondence with Lawrence James shows that Amery and James had to provide payment for some of the information, and he utilised gossip from government officials and Army officers. James told Amery that he had to pay 'General Porter' £15 for information concerning the 'Rhodes Kekewich eimbrogilo'.<sup>60</sup> Porter had commanded one of General French's cavalry brigades and had been one of the first units to arrive in Kimberly after its relief. Lieutenant-Colonel Kekewich had commanded the besieged garrison and a force of civilians (most of whom were employees of Rhodes), but he had had difficulty dealing with the volatile and domineering Cecil Rhodes who was trapped in Kimberly. Rhodes thought that Kekewich was incompetent and insisted on countermanding orders and in one instance took a swipe at him. Once the town was relieved Rhodes pressurized General French into removing Kekewich from his command; however, Roberts and Kitchener both later publically acknowledged Kekewich's skilful and professional handling of the defence, and he later commanded a mobile column and was promoted to the rank of major general in 1902. However, a lot of officials and serving Army officers were happy to supply information to Amery, because they just wanted to record their side of the story. Although, Roberts supplied official information to Amery he was selective about its content and scope.<sup>61</sup>

On 24 May 1902 Amery wrote to James, from South Africa, that he was receiving military information from the WO about previous and ongoing operations; however, he was concerned that any of the journalists, officials or soldiers submitting material be made aware that their 'stuff' would be subject to 'revising' by Amery before it was published.<sup>62</sup> Amery noted that he was anxious not to give himself 'more trouble than necessary in revising'. Amery also suggested to James the names of people who might possibly give information or would like to contribute, such as Colonel Henderson, Robert's director of Military intelligence, who was writing the official history of the war for the WO.<sup>63</sup> Amery also told James that he had been given a 'circular letter' from Kitchener, 'telling people they may help me' when he arrived back in South Africa. This was in stark contrast to Emily Hobhouse, the social campaigner and charity activist, who had been the first person to highlight the terrible conditions in the concentration camps in the press, who Kitchener had deported on her return to Cape Town,

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<sup>60</sup> AMEL 1/1/8, Letter from Lawrence James, July 4 1902.

<sup>61</sup> Beckett, I. (2003). p87.

<sup>62</sup> AMEL 1/1/8, Letter from Leo Amery to Lawrence James, May 24 1902.

<sup>63</sup> Henderson was selected to write the first official history of the South African War by the WO after being sent home from South Africa due to ill health at the end of 1900. He managed to complete one volume but his continued ill health forced him to hand over to Sir John Maurice. He died in Egypt on 5 March 1903. The completed volume was never published by the WO due to its unfavourable assessment of the political handling of the crisis prior to the start of the War.

without even letting her set foot off her ship. Roberts also supplied Amery with a letter of introduction before he left London. In fact there was a general tightening of press censorship when Kitchener took over command in South Africa.<sup>64</sup> However, this did not appear to effect or apply to Amery who was free to gather information from army officers, government officials and captured Boer commanders. Amery was given General Sir Bruce Hamilton's, commander of the 21<sup>st</sup> Brigade, staff diary for the whole campaign.

Another important source of information for Amery was Lieutenant-General Ian Hamilton, Kitchener's chief of staff, who supplied him with despatches and other information.<sup>65</sup> At the start of the war Hamilton was given a temporary rank of major general and a brigade command under General Sir George White. He was involved in the early phases of the war before being besieged in Ladysmith with rest of White's command; he distinguished himself during the battle of Elandslaagte and during the defence of Ladysmith. After the relief of Ladysmith Roberts promoted Hamilton to the temporary rank of lieutenant-general and gave him a division of mounted infantry which he commanded until the end of the war. In 1900 he returned with Roberts to the UK before Roberts sent him back to be Kitchener's Chief of Staff during the guerrilla war. Amery suggested to James that the language in the dispatches from Hamilton should be 'altered freely' and filed under the heading 'from a correspondent'. This became a standard practice for Amery. Colonel Douglas Haig (later Field Marshal the Earl Haig) also provided Amery with information on military operations and had long discussions with Amery on several occasions about the war and the Army.<sup>66</sup> Another important source of information for Amery on the war was Colonel Henry Wilson, who was a member of Roberts's staff in South Africa and then followed Roberts to the WO in 1900. Wilson became a close friend of Amery (Wilson was Julian Amery's god-father and later Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS)) who supplied him information and advice for many years on military matters until his assassination in 1922 by Irish republicans. Amery's initial coverage of the war as an editor and then his work on *The Times* history gave him access to many officers who would go on to hold senior positions within the Army over the next twenty years. Both at the time and later this would prove highly useful to both Amery and his military contacts.

However, James wrote back to Amery that he was having difficulty getting information from 'official sources' because of Amery's decision to cite in his preface for the first volume that

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<sup>64</sup> Judd, D and Surridge, K. (2002). p254.

<sup>65</sup> AMEL 1/1/8, letter from Amery to James, June 1 1902.

<sup>66</sup> AMEL 1/1/8, letter from Amery to James, August 25 1902.



much of his documentation had come from ‘official heads’ which had caused a ‘fuss’.<sup>67</sup> James also warned Amery that ‘Buller’s friends have turned their backs upon us to a man’, because Amery had begun launching attacks on the professional competence of Buller in *The Times*.<sup>68</sup> Amery wrote to James that ‘it certainly is necessary that somebody should point out that the work isn’t simply an attack on Buller’.<sup>69</sup> However, Amery was forced to write in the preamble to the second volume that his attacks on Buller were ‘not personal’, but ‘impartial and objective’, and based on ‘facts’.<sup>70</sup> Nevertheless, in the second volume Amery was particularly scathing of Buller’s performance at Colenso. Whilst Amery was in South Africa he received the reviews for the second volume many of which were unfavourable. Amery argued that this was because of the influence of ‘Bullerites’.<sup>71</sup> However, Hamilton told Amery that Roberts considered ‘the chapter on Colenso enough to make a dead man turn in his grave, but the worst of it is that it’s all absolutely true’.<sup>72</sup> Given that Roberts only son was killed trying to recover the guns at Colenso, the phraseology of this statement is revealing and probably indicative of Roberts animosity toward Buller. Conversely, Kitchener had advised Amery, according to Amery, not to be too ‘severe on officers who had failed through acting on their own initiative’; however, Amery asked him whether ‘if had been too severe on Sir R. B. and he said ‘Not at All’’.<sup>73</sup> This statement is also illuminating, because it shows how Kitchener was concerned that Amery might indulge in indiscriminate attacks on the performance officers under pressure in the field. Similar fears were raised by Lt Colonel Charles a Court, later known as Charles Repington, who was asked to comment on the drafts of *The Times History of the War* and made the observation that Amery’s assessment of the war might ‘arouse dispute and ill feeling’ among his fellow officers.<sup>74</sup>

Leo Amery’s tour of South Africa in 1902 provided him with more anecdotal evidence from senior officers who had commanded troops under Buller. Sarcastically, Amery told James that Major General Neville Lyttelton, (Lyttelton had commanded troops at Spion Kop and was a close friend of Buller) had accompanied him on a recent trip to Spion Kop where Lyttelton had told him that he did not want it to get back to the ‘ears of his dear personal friend Buller’ that he had spoken to Amery.<sup>75</sup> Lyttelton was one of the few senior officers who emerged from what Joseph Chamberlain described as the ‘sickening fiasco’ of Spion Kop with his

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<sup>67</sup> AMEL 1/1/8, Letter from Lawrence James, July 4 1902.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid* p2.

<sup>69</sup> AMEL 1/1/8, letter from Amery to James, June 15 1902.

<sup>70</sup> Amery, L. (1901) p viii.

<sup>71</sup> AMEL 1/1/8, Letter from James to Amery 15 June 1902.

<sup>72</sup> AMEL 1/1/8, Letter from Amery to James, June 19 1902.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid* p4.

<sup>74</sup> Lt Colonel Charles a Court quoted in Beckett, I. (2003). p83.

<sup>75</sup> AMEL 1/1/8, letter from Amery to James 29 August 1902.

reputation intact. However, Lyttelton became a covert critic of Buller to the press and among other senior officers.<sup>76</sup> Amery built up a considerable amount of information on Buller's 'failures'. Without doubt Amery contributed, if not engineered, to the dismissal of Buller and in doing so moved closer to Roberts and his circle. Amery was only too willing to listen to, and indulge, senior officers in giving 'their' assessment of the war and the performance of other officers. However, given the general feeling that the Army and individual officers had performed badly, many officers and officials were only too willing to talk to Amery. Whether Amery made any attempt to change his preconceived, and often biased, ideas about the performance of individual commanders in the field after interviewing witnesses is open to debate. Especially, because Amery motives for writing his history of the war were increasingly becoming political. Amery sought to capitalise on the perception that the war had exposed deep rooted and systemic failings within the Army and by association the imperial defence system.

Similarly, imperialists, like Amery, sought to highlight the social, economic, military and political weaknesses of British society which they argued needed reinvigorating and modernising if it was remain a major imperial power. In 1902 Amery was invited by Beatrice and Sidney Webb, the social reformers and diarists, to join a selective dining club known as the Coefficients; other members included Lord Haldane, Sir Edward Grey, Bertrand Russell and H. G. Wells. The group met eight times a year to dine and discuss political, military, social, economic and imperial matters. The Webb's wanted the group to meet in an atmosphere where political allegiances could be put to aside and topical discussion undertaken in constructive way among intellectuals from different perspectives. Amery later described the group which met until 1910 as 'brains trust' or 'general staff'. His participation in this group began a lifelong affinity for being involved or founding small elite discussion groups and societies; before the First World War Amery was closely involved in the Empire League, the Round Table Movement, the Compatriots, Tariff Reform League, the Empire Parliamentary Association and the National Service League (NSL). A.J. P Taylor noted that Amery thought that formation of political policy was best achieved 'by small groups of men, meeting in dining-club and working out a policy'.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Pakenham, T. (1979). *The Boer War* London: Abacus p368.

<sup>77</sup> Taylor, A.J. P, 'Leo Amery' in the *New Statesman*. 23 May 1953.

## Army Reform

After the publication of the second volume Amery began promoting Army reform and national service both of which were endorsed by Roberts. The second volume of *The Times* history contained a considerable amount of comment on the need to reform the organisation of the WO and for general improvements to the training and equipment of the army.<sup>78</sup> Amery considered the army's performance in the Second South African War indicative of an army which needed to modernise and embrace continental practices. Amery noted that insufficient numbers of trained reserves, unlike the other European powers, was a major strategic weakness and that Britain needed urgently to create a general staff on 'Prussian lines' to co-ordinate the strategic objectives of the Army and its development. Amery concluded that colonial wars were not 'easy' but training and tactics was being adversely affected by the preponderance of diverse small wars. Amery noted that fighting numerous colonial wars 'might have created an atmosphere of reckless overconfidence', and the 'supreme belief in the virtues of improvising'; he further stated that there was a general neglect of strategy and tactics which had been caused by fighting against 'inferior foes' and the 'supervising of the shooting down of ill-armed savages'.<sup>79</sup> Amery observed that the existing 'diversity' of the British military system and inferior home defence arrangements were adversely affecting efficiency, and was therefore, according to him, a structural weakness at the heart of the Empire. Amery argued that many commentators had 'not been surprised' by the mediocre performance of the Army in the initial phases of the South African War, because the warning signs had been clearly articulated by the findings of the Hartington Commission of 1890 and the Wantage Commission of 1892 which had advocated reforms to the WO and the Army organization, the introduction of conscription and a increase in the Army establishment.<sup>80</sup>

In October 1900, William St John Brodrick became Secretary of State for War. Between 1886 and 1892 Brodrick had been financial secretary to the War Office; in 1895 he became Under-Secretary of State for War, and in 1898 Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs. Therefore, Brodrick was well aware of the organisation problems at the WO and was conversant with the army reform agenda. Once in office Brodrick sought to carry out radical reorganization of the home army by creating six army corps of regular and auxiliary forces which would be funded by a 50% increase in the pre-war Army estimate. Each corps would be comprised of 40,000 men; the first three corps of the new home army would be entirely regular and would form the

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<sup>78</sup> Amery, L. (ed). (1902). pp10-70.

<sup>79</sup> Amery, L. (ed). (1902) p22.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid* p23.

nucleus of an overseas expeditionary force of 120,000 men. The other three corps would be a mixture of regular and auxiliary units. This represented an increase of 45,000 on the existing number of regular and reserve forces earmarked for overseas service; however, the South African war had shown that the home army had been hard pressed to find 75,000 men fit for overseas service. Brodrick wanted to improve terms of service, enlistment and pay in the Army to attract more recruits. However, his decision to introduce an initial three year enlistment period was unsuccessful, because reenlistment figures were poor; many three year men chose to go straight to the reserve on completion of service. Sensing that having adequate numbers of manpower was going to be a major issue he argued unsuccessfully in Cabinet for the introduction of compulsory service which would mitigate against the vagaries of volunteer recruitment and ensure that his home defence scheme was viable. Brodrick was convinced that the Army lacked sufficient manpower both in the regular and reserve forces which could be solved by introducing a form of conscription. However, Brodrick was a firm supporter of the Cardwell system, and he believed that the war in South Africa had not highlighted any significant structural weaknesses in the Army organisation or at the WO.<sup>81</sup> Brodrick assured Roberts, by then Commander-in-Chief, that his scheme would get backing because of the prevailing political atmosphere for grappling with imperial defence issues which had been created by public and press demands for action to 'reform' the army after its disastrous performance in the war.<sup>82</sup>

Although supported by the majority of the Conservative parliamentary party, Brodrick's grandiose reforms were over ambitious and unrealistic. Even *The Times*, which broadly supported Brodrick's reforms, was sceptical of the scheme because it noted that 'volunteer' recruitment to the army was inadequate because of poor pay and conditions of service; there was a perception that the 'old happy-go-lucky notion that men of sorts can be always be found in an emergency' was so prevalent among the political classes that any shift in the

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<sup>81</sup> Edward Cardwell, Secretary of State for War 1868-1874, created a short service army which reduced time in the colours to six years (from twelve) and then a period of six years in the reserve. Cardwell also split regular regiments into two linked battalions, one which was based at home and the other overseas; however, when the overseas battalion returned to the UK the outward bound battalion invariably contained a large number of raw recruits or young soldiers, while the returning battalion was full of experienced or time expired men. Conversely, the home battalion increasingly became a training unit which supplied reliefs and drafts for the overseas battalion from its pool of experienced men or among its older recruits. Cardwell's reform of length service aimed at creating a reserve of 60,000, and in the hope of inducing better class of recruits to the colours by reducing the enlistment period time. Cardwell also instigated a localization scheme which connected regular regiments with militia, volunteer and yeomanry units in sixty six territorial districts. Cardwell had expected recruitment to improve as a consequence of his reforms; however, this was not to be the case. Cardwell also abolished the practice of purchasing commissions, instigated wide-ranging reforms of the administration of the WO and the organization of the Army and reduced the number of overseas garrisons.

<sup>82</sup> Spiers, E. M. (1980). *Army and Society* London: Longman p243.

direction of national defence policy was doubtful, if not impossible.<sup>83</sup> Amery and other imperialists went to great lengths to argue that a fundamental shift in national character was required to meet the challenges of the modern world and guarantee imperial defence. Campbell-Bannerman, the leader of the Liberal Party, attacked the scheme on the grounds that it was too expensive and unsustainable because it could only be implemented by introducing conscription.<sup>84</sup> The massive cost of the Boer war had shattered the Gladstonian system of finance which had been designed to keep government expenditure to a minimum; therefore, future Government spending was adversely effected by the war. Campbell-Bannerman also noted that Brodrick was utilising the hysteria surrounding an 'exceptional' war as a pretext to establish a state based on militarism. Although, the Liberal Party had been divided by the war in South Africa, they were united in their hostility to Brodrick's reforms.

As the guerrilla war in South Africa dragged on and increasingly became more controversial the political and public appetite for fundamental changes to the military system waned. However, after 1902 a series of committees were appointed to enquire into the Army's and WO performance during the war; the Royal Commission on the War in South Africa chaired by Lord Elgin, the Royal Commission on Militia and Volunteers chaired by the Duke of Norfolk and the Committee on War Office (Reconstitution) chaired by Lord Esher. Amery gave evidence to the Royal Commission on the War in South Africa and in the process greatly impressed Lord Esher, who was one of its members, with his knowledge of the war and wider military matters.<sup>85</sup> Roberts initiated a new training programme for officers and men, introduced the Lee Enfield rifle, modern quick firing artillery, new drills for the artillery and infantry and reorganised the mounted infantry. However, Roberts, like his predecessors, was less inclined to carrying out a meaningful reorganization of the WO. Nevertheless, in December 1902 the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) was created by the new Prime Minister Arthur Balfour which vastly improved the coordination and direction of imperial defence policy between politicians and the two services. Also in 1902 Britain signed an alliance with Japan signalling the end of 'splendid isolation'. But it appeared that a meaningful a reform of the WO or the creation of a general staff was still elusive as ever. In early 1903 Amery published *The Problem with the Army* which was a polemic about the unpreparedness and inefficiency of the Army during the South African War and an appraisal of the wider strategic questions which had been posed by the war.<sup>86</sup> Much of this work was a reproduction of his *Reformer* articles and information received from officers in South Africa.

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<sup>83</sup> *The Times* 'National Point of View' May 02 1901 p9.

<sup>84</sup> Campbell-Bannerman 'Army Organisation debate' in *Hansard* 13 May 1901 vol. 93, col,1484.

<sup>85</sup> Faber, D. (2005) p47.

<sup>86</sup> Amery, L. (1903). *The Problem with the Army* London: Guilford.

Amery had become highly sceptical of Brodrick's reforms and used *The Problem with the Army* to attack them as being merely good intentioned 'modifications', and not the 'radical' reorganisation that he thought was essential.<sup>87</sup> Amery argued that 'modern conditions' dictated that the formation of coordinated and efficient imperial defence system was now a national priority.

Amery wanted a series of major imperial garrisons of regular troops located at key points along a 'strategic front' from South Africa to Manchuria. This, he concluded, would allow Britain to move large bodies of troops rapidly to an emergency in a matter of weeks rather than in month or months which had been the case at the start of the Boer War. Amery argued that the war in South Africa would have been shorter, or may even have never started, if a considerable portion of the regular Army had been concentrated there. In 1901 Brodrick announced that he wished to garrison 12,000 troops in South Africa for 'Indian defence', but the Indian government refused to pay the annual cost of £400,000 required for their upkeep and the scheme was dropped. Amery cited this as an example of a disjointed imperial defence policy which relied on short sighted economic expediency rather than strategic realities.<sup>88</sup> Amery, also, bemoaned the economic and strategic introspection of colonial governments which he considered was accentuated by a lack of centralised coordination. In 1902 Chamberlain lobbied the Cabinet to permanently garrison a division of the regular army in South Africa. Chamberlain solicited Amery for advice on the subject while try to influence the Cabinet.<sup>89</sup> In early 1903 Amery also began privately lobbying Balfour as well.<sup>90</sup> This was done in partnership with Hamilton who also spoke to Balfour about creating a permanent garrison in South Africa at social gatherings and weekend parties.<sup>91</sup> Due to his increasing influence as a writer and journalist Amery was given invitations to the social and political gatherings of the Edwardian establishment; this gave him ample opportunity to discuss his ideas with the political power brokers of the Unionist movement and obtain political patronage.

Ironically, Brodrick objected to a garrison in South Africa on the grounds that the prohibitive costs, especially the initial expenditure, involved in stationing an additional number of troops abroad on a permanent basis made the scheme impracticable. The Cabinet concurred with Brodrick and Chamberlain backed down. However, Amery persistently exploited the spectre of another 'South Africa War' or war in India as justification for peacetime imperial defence

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<sup>87</sup> *Ibid* pp19-53.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid* p254.

<sup>89</sup> AMEL 2/5/2 Letter from Chamberlain to Amery 2 November 1902.

<sup>90</sup> Barnes, J. and Nicholson, D. (1988). *The Leo Amery diaries*, Vol. 1. London: Hutchinson p44.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid* p45.

schemes which appeared expensive but according to him were a fraction of expenditure involved in fighting a major colonial or limited war on the scale and intensity of the Boer War. Therefore, Amery wanted new commands located in South Africa, Canada, New Zealand, Burma and Australia.<sup>92</sup> These commands, he claimed, would increase strategic mobility and allow Britain to have an overlapping imperial defence scheme which would be mutually supportive and allow training in different climates and terrains. It would also allow the rapid reinforcement of India in the event of an attack by Russia or a widespread insurrection. He also wanted the government to reintroduce long-service enlistments of nine years and six with the reserve; because his overseas garrison scheme required keeping the bulk of the army in the colonies for long periods. Amery was an advocate of Sir Charles Dilke's dual army system of a long service overseas army and short service home army.

Amery intended the regular army to form the nucleus of an imperial army which would be supported by 'native' and colonial forces in regional defence schemes. If large numbers of British troops were stationed in different regions of the Empire then training and co-operation between colonial forces would be easier to achieve. However, he was pragmatic enough to note that 'neither India nor the great self-governing Colonies are in the least likely to submit to the direct interference of the War Office in their affairs'.<sup>93</sup> This perception presented a major obstacle to the aspirations of federal imperialists like Amery who wanted to create a supranational system based on shared values and goals. At the 1902 Imperial Conference, Chamberlain had contentiously informed the representatives that 'the weary titan staggers under the vast orb of its fate' in an attempt to persuade the self-governing colonies to increase their participation in the administration and defence of the Empire: more succinctly this was an appeal for more financial support. There was a partial agreement on the need to increase colonial naval forces and a promise to make financial contributions toward British naval construction from the colonies, but a military defence arrangement remained an area of disagreement; the British government wanted the self-governing colonies to be able to provide 'moderate imperial forces' for rapid deployment in an emergency which were capable of fighting against 'European troops' in conjunction with British regular units.<sup>94</sup> Brodrick used the conference to argue that the war in South Africa had shown that 'hastily levied reinforcements' could not 'be pitted against' European troops without further training and better organisation. However, the British delegation went to great lengths to point out that these forces would be used to strike against European forces which were stationed in overseas colonies and not for employment on the continent during a European war. The British also

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<sup>92</sup> Amery, L. (1903) p255.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid* p135.

<sup>94</sup> *The Times*, 'The Colonial Conference', 4 November 1902, p5.

wanted a definite obligation from the self-governing colonies to provide forces in an emergency, and not assurances which hitherto had been the case. It was noted, at the conference that due to the signing of the alliance with the Japanese the British might conceivably in the future be involved in a war against Russia and its ally France.

However, most of the self-governing colonies stated that they were willing to increase the training of their existing forces, but rejected the British proposals for the creation of imperial forces on the grounds that they represented an infraction of their sovereignty. The South African War had revealed how the British Empire could mobilize considerable military strength in an emergency, but the immediate post-war period revealed how the divergent political agendas of the self-governing colonies were still a stumbling block toward a unified security policy. Similarly, the defence discussions at the 1902 conference highlighted how tenuous a proposition an imperial federation was at this stage. Imperialists like Amery considered the creation of an imperial federation as a strategic necessity. Writing in 1911 journalist and noted Imperialist theorist Richard Jebb argued that the disastrous start of the war in South Africa appeared to have been the catalyst for the creation of an imperial federation, but by the time of the 1902 conference it was apparent that the war had fostered a burgeoning sense of 'nationalism' among the self-governing colonies.<sup>95</sup> Amery considered, with some justification, that there was a vacuum where a unified imperial defence policy should exist and that Britain should display more leadership by establishing a forward strategy based on new imperial garrisons which would require political cooperation from the self-governing colonies. Amery argued that the decision made in the 1860s and 1870s to withdraw imperial garrisons from the established colonies had been a mistake because it had undermined imperial unity and created resentment.<sup>96</sup> Amery believed that the creation of a General Staff administering a clearly defined imperial defence policy could efficiently coordinate the Empire's defence effort, even if the self-governing colonies were less than enthusiastic contributors in peacetime. Amery expected there to be a great expansion of forces in time of war and that the government should prepare cadres for dispatch to the colonies in an emergency.<sup>97</sup> However, Amery thought that Brodrick's reforms reinforced the 'outdated perception' that half of the regular army should be based in the UK in case of invasion. This he concluded destabilised colonial defence because the 'exigencies of imperial affairs' and modern geo-political conditions required a new approach. However, he acknowledged that the costs involved in garrisoning a considerable number of troops abroad appeared prohibitive, but he noted that the immense cost of the war in South Africa had shown the futility in not

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<sup>95</sup> Jebb, R. (1911). *The Imperial Conference: A History and Study* London: Longmans p369.

<sup>96</sup> Amery, L. (1903) p78.

<sup>97</sup> AMEL 1-1-14, Letter to Major Clauson, 7 May 1903.



having adequate numbers of men and material at mutually supportive strategic points. His underlying argument was that having the bulk of the regular army abroad acted as a deterrent and increased strategic mobility and was therefore more cost effective in the long run.

However, Amery unequivocally argued that ‘naval supremacy is the keystone of our whole defensive position’.<sup>98</sup> He also noted that in a major war with a major European power the movement of reinforcements through the Mediterranean and off the western coasts of Europe would present the ‘greatest difficulty and danger’.<sup>99</sup> Amery asserted that the Admiralty had stated that they could not ‘guarantee’ the safety of troop convoys from the UK or through the Mediterranean during a major war. This observation backed his assumption that the regular army should be concentrated at strategic points across the Empire. However, Hamilton told Amery that there was a considerable amount of ‘objections’ in the WO to his plans because the Admiralty could not move troops in a hurry from South Africa to India.<sup>100</sup> Paradoxically, Amery was a pragmatic adherent of the ‘Blue Water’ theory and believed that naval power was the cornerstone of British strategic policy. Amery believed that in the event of a major war with a European power Britain’s primary military effort would be directed at attacking their overseas territories or defending British overseas territories. He also argued that given the small size of Britain’s regular army, in comparison to the other European powers, the likelihood of British troops being deployed on the continent was negligible at the outset of a major war; but significantly he did not dismiss Britain’s participation in major war with another European power. Amery’s ideas appear to conform to the model of the ‘British Way in Warfare’ which accentuated the importance of maritime power; during the eighteenth century, Britain had used its maritime power to dictate where and when it fought on land; naval power had also allowed the British to keep their forces adequately resupplied in period when the most efficient form of transport was seaborne traffic. In an era of poor land transport links this gave the British a significant strategic advantage. However, the advent of the railways meant that the continental powers could rapidly concentrate their forces to counter any landing and then supply them without interference from British naval forces. In 1902, Russia’s construction of strategic railways toward India, the Far East and the Middle East presented the greatest challenge to Edwardian policy makers because it negated British maritime power.

Amery was a close associate of Halford Mackinder, the noted geographer, and a fellow Co-efficient, who argued that command of Eurasia by a single power, or combination of powers,

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<sup>98</sup> Amery, L. (1903) p11.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid* p9.

<sup>100</sup> AMEL 1-1-14, Letter from Hamilton to Amery 28 January 1903.

would dominate the world.<sup>101</sup> Mackinder noted that rapid industrialisation and improvements to transport networks in central Europe and Asia would increasingly give Russia access to vast mineral and agricultural resources and a protected internal market. Mackinder later developed his 'heartland' theory which stated that any power which dominated Eurasia would render oceanic commerce and naval power less important than had been the case in the past. This theory also applied to the United States in the Western Hemisphere which unlike Russia had a highly developed internal market, considerable raw materials and a comprehensive, and expanding, industrial and transport infrastructure. Similarly, Germany had by 1900 a highly developed industrial, agricultural and transport network which gave it considerable strategic advantages, but Germany was dependent on imports of raw materials and chemicals.<sup>102</sup> France with its overseas empire was like the British dependent on maritime commerce with its colonies. However, the logic of the heartland rendered the naval blockade one of Britain's primary strategic weapons ineffectual. Conversely, Britain, like France, was susceptible to blockade, because of its heavy reliance on imports of raw materials from its empire. Similarly, France and Britain relied on utilising sea power for communication with and transportation to their colonies. As Lord Fisher, the First Sea Lord, noted later, 'It's not invasion we have to fear if our Navy is beaten, it's starvation'.<sup>103</sup> Although, having a diverse and extended empire gave the British many economic and strategic advantages, the problems associated with transporting by sea, material over great distances to the UK in wartime were manifold. Arguably, the threat posed by cruisers, gunboats and submarines to British merchant shipping was a more significant national security problem than the risk of an invasion.

However, as the other great powers, especially Germany, expanded their industrial capacity and began building blue water navies, Britain was forced to respond by constructing modern ships and restructuring strategic policy to counter these new threats. After 1904 Fisher began redeploying the bulk of the navy to defend the British Isles from attack and reduced the number of overseas stations and squadrons.<sup>104</sup> By 1902 British strategic and foreign policy, which in theory was dependent on maintaining the European balance of power by remaining diplomatically detached from the alliance system was shifting toward entering into military pacts to counter the threat posed by Germany.<sup>105</sup> Splendid isolation had always been dependent on the global supremacy of the Royal Navy and a balance of power which did not

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<sup>101</sup> Mackinder, H, 'The geographical pivot of history', in the *Geographical Journal*, No.23, (1904), pp 421-37,

<sup>102</sup> Ferguson, N. (1998). *The Pity of War* London: Penguin pp 260-280.

<sup>103</sup> Fisher quoted in Kennedy, P. (1976) p201.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid* p219.

<sup>105</sup> Reynolds, D. (1991) p78.

favour one state or a combination of states. Although, Amery argued that Britain would never unilaterally fight a land war against another European power on the continent, because as an oceanic power the UK did not have the capacity to have a large army and navy, he did, however, advocate the creation of a large reserve since he expected another 'great war' in the Empire.<sup>106</sup> Similarly, he argued that if Britain became embroiled in a war with another European power, or powers, military operations on the continent would require the 'whole manhood of the country trained in the use of arms'.<sup>107</sup> Conversely, Amery stated that British military strength lay in its unsurpassed strategic mobility which was afforded by naval power. He concluded that Britain's principal offensive effort in a European war would be naval. However, adoption of his imperial defence scheme would have precluded the UK from taking part initially in continental operations until a nation in arms had been created, trained and equipped, because the bulk of the regular army and its equipment would have been deployed overseas protecting the empire or attacking the colonies of other great powers. Clearly, Amery's scheme was designed to counter the threat posed by France and Russia, and to a lesser degree Germany, to the Empire. But Mackinder's theories did begin to gather credence as it became apparent that the 'British way in warfare' based on maritime supremacy was being superseded by rapid industrialisation and the construction of railways on the continent and in Asia. The other ingredient of the British way in warfare was a continental ally or allies which could supply unlimited land power during a major conflict. By 1900 Britain's economic, industrial and strategic advantages over the other great powers were now at an end which increased the desire to realign British foreign policy to reflect the new strategic realities. However, Britain still obtained considerable economic advantages from invisible earnings such as insurance, overseas investments and maritime commerce. The perception of economic decline and isolation increasingly haunted Edwardian security policy considerations and increased the likelihood of British involvement in a major European war. The subsequent rapprochement with France and Russia removed a twin threat to the British Empire while simultaneously acquiring allies with the land forces to nullify Germany's military strength which was primarily directed at the British Isles.

Amery argued that home defence should be firstly the preserve of the Navy and that army strength in the UK should reflect the realities countering an invasion, which he stated would be limited given the difficulties involved in moving and concentrating sufficient men and material by sea on to a hostile coast protected by the Royal Navy, rather than reflecting hyperbole and scaremongering which had been the case in the past. He concluded that the regular army establishment in Britain could be reduced to a quarter of its strength by the

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<sup>106</sup> Amery, L. (1903) p5.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid* p10.

simple expedient of improving the training, facilities and organisation of the auxiliary forces. Amery noted that the headquarters of the auxiliary forces had, in his words, 'practically no organization', and as a consequence did not constitute an efficient army fit to counter a regular invasion force or a major raid. However, Amery was very careful not to criticise the Volunteer movement as an institution but argued that it should be reorganised to make it more efficient and thus able to deal with an invasion. He argued that a cadre of regular officers and NCOs should permanently seconded to the auxiliary forces to 'stiffen up' units and improve administration and organisation.<sup>108</sup> Amery argued that the prohibitive costs involved in being an officer, especially a commanding officer, of the volunteer and Yeomanry regiments excluded many competent officers of an 'ordinary professional income' advancing through the rank structure. He also argued that command of auxiliary regiments should be entrusted to professional soldiers. Given the dominance of Members of Parliament, the House of Lords and the 'establishment' in officers' corps of the Auxiliary forces this statement was probably calculated to cause some resentment, if not hostility, from Volunteer officers. Amery thought that the government could induce more interest in the Volunteers by paying each member for their time on duty.

Amery argued that national apathy was a major impediment to resolving imperial and home defence issues; this was, in his opinion, also a reason why recruitment to regular army and the militia was so poor. Amery's solution was that all children (male) in Britain between the ages of sixteen and seventeen should be taught how to use weapons and given rudimentary drill and tactical training through a military education system which would foster an 'underlying military spirit in the nation' and greater civic responsibility.<sup>109</sup> Amery also argued that a new national militia be formed which would replace the Volunteers and auxiliary forces. The compulsory militia ballot had been abolished in 1831 and subsequently the militia had gone into decline, but after the invasion scares of the 1850s it was revived as a voluntary force along-side the Volunteer movement. By 1900 service in militia comprised of three months initial training with the army followed by a requirement for a month's annual service; militiamen were paid for their time on duty but there was no overseas liability. The militia often attracted men in need of an additional income or the unemployed. Many decided to carry out the initial service period before deciding to join the regulars, which meant that the militia became an important source of recruitment for the army. Amery argued that the national militia should be based on compulsory universal service to create a 'nation in arms'. However, Amery realised that any compulsory system which was comparable with European

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<sup>108</sup> Amery, L. (1903) p99.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid* p110.

model was politically and socially unacceptable, so he argued that there would be no 'compulsory residence in barracks', except for short periods of annual training.<sup>110</sup>

Amery accentuated the social and medical benefits of his national militia scheme, because the state would be able to monitor the health of men whilst carrying out their annual service. During the war the poor health of large numbers of recruits had caused a national outcry. However, Amery stated in the first volume of *The Times* history of the war that it had been no surprise to those 'interested in military matters' that large sections of the of the urban poor were in poor health, and therefore not fit for service in the military, because for years large numbers of potential recruits were rejected on medical grounds or were unable to be posted overseas until their physical condition had been improved after enlistment.<sup>111</sup> Similarly, he thought that universal military training would improve the educational standards of the men enlisted. However, Amery noted that there was a lack of adequate training grounds in the UK and in the 'environs of London', but he argued that there were 'plenty of them in the Empire'.<sup>112</sup> Amery also argued that the Army should employ civilians to do many of the menial tasks which soldiers were required to perform in UK garrisons which would free them up to carryout military training. Amery stated during the war in South Africa that many reservists and volunteers had been found to be inadequately trained. This was a major problem because many regular units had their establishments brought up to strength with reservists prior to their embarkation for South Africa. The throwing together of men from different commands to create units for expeditionary forces was universally considered to be unsatisfactory. Amery's imperial system was designed to remove the need to establish composite forces in the UK for deployment overseas. However, Amery prophesied that a major war in the future would require large numbers of men and it would be a protracted attritional conflict which is why Britain needed to create a viable trained reserve.<sup>113</sup>

Amery was also influenced by writings of Polish banker Jean De Bloch who in 1899 argued in *The Future of War In Its Technical Economic And Political Relations Is War Now Impossible?*, that the defensive power of modern weapons had virtually rendered the offensive obsolete.<sup>114</sup> Bloch calculated that entrenched troops armed with magazine rifles, smokeless power, high explosive, machine guns and quick firing guns would create a fire swept zone which would be difficult if not impossible to cross; he considered that under such

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<sup>110</sup> *Ibid* p145.

<sup>111</sup> Amery, L. (ed). (1900) p65.

<sup>112</sup> Amery, L. (1903) p202.

<sup>113</sup> Amery, L. (1903) p85.

<sup>114</sup> Bloch, I. S. (1899). *The Future of War In Its Technical Economic And Political Relations Is War Now Impossible?* London: Garfield p45

circumstances the ratio of attackers to defenders would have to be eight to one. Bloch prophesied that the next major war would become an attritional conflict waged by massive armies locked into a series of indecisive sieges. Amery thought that Bloch might be right that the next war in Europe would create 'deadlock'. However, Bloch concluded that a major war was now unthinkable because nation states would face 'mutual annihilation or complete exhaustion' and lacked the economic or logistical ability to wage war on the scale required to overcome the firepower potential of modern weapons.<sup>115</sup> At the time many of Bloch's ideas were rejected by the British military establishment because he was perceived as an advocate of 'non-militarism and non-jingoism', and 'namby-pamby humanitarianism'.<sup>116</sup> Similarly, Bloch thought that the war in South Africa had reflected the realities of modern warfare. But many commentators argued that the war was unique and had been governed by local conditions and had not reflected a manifest inability to tactically respond to technological advances in weapons. A school of thought was created around the premise that it would always be possible push home an attack by utilising greater discipline and *esprit de corps* among attacking troops who would themselves be backed by artillery and machine guns. Amery argued that modern war required an increase in 'moral quality' and total adherence to discipline to overcome the technological advances which confronted the soldier on the battlefield.<sup>117</sup> He argued that both of these qualities could be better produced through a more comprehensive training of officers and men. The South African War had shown that many soldiers lacked initiative and independence when under fire or separated from direct command. Amery concluded that a more comprehensive training programme would improve the 'intelligence and will power' of the individual soldier which under 'modern conditions' he considered essential.

On the question of WO reform Amery argued for greater co-ordination between the different branches of the department. He advocated the creation of an Army Council which could strengthen the power of the Secretary of State for War and improve administration by channelling decisions and ideas through an executive board presided over by a politician. Amery argued that the office of Commander-in-Chief should be abolished and replaced by an Inspector General Of Forces who would be directly responsible to the Secretary of State for War.<sup>118</sup> Amery considered a lack of general staff a serious deficiency which needed to be urgently remedied. He noted that a general staff could co-ordinate training, planning, education, organisation, intelligence gathering, and the distribution of forces both at home and

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<sup>115</sup> *Ibid* p354.

<sup>116</sup> Jean De Bloch, 'The Transvaal War: its Lessons in Regard to Militarism and the Army Reorganisation, II' *Journal of the Royal United Service Institute*, No 45, Dec 1901, p 1421-22.

<sup>117</sup> Amery, L. (1903). p181.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid* p296.

in the Empire. Such a body he argued would constitute a ‘brain of the army’ which would ‘both acquire knowledge and use that knowledge to guide military policy’.<sup>119</sup> Many of the ideas contained in the *Problem of the Army* were drawn from various sources and many of Amery’s military contacts such as Hamilton and Wilson who supplied him with advice and information. Consequently, Amery quickly established a reputation as an expert on imperial defence policy and army reform. Amery also began, in his own words, ‘colloquing’ with a group of Unionist members of parliament led by Lord Hugh Cecil and Winston Churchill who were opposed to the Brodrick reforms on the grounds that they were too expensive and over ambitious. They also believed, as did Amery, Brodrick’s corps scheme was unworkable because of the small size of the regular army and its numerous overseas commitments. It was often remarked that Brodrick was attempting to imitate the continental military system without providing adequate amounts of manpower. The Hughligans, as they became known, mounted a sustained attack on Brodrick’s proposals in Parliament. Their attacks slowly gained momentum but never really ignited public attention. During this period Churchill would often dine with Amery and ask his advice on military matters and army reform.<sup>120</sup> On 19 January 1903 Churchill mounted a spirited attack on Brodrick’s reforms at a Primrose League<sup>121</sup> meeting in Oldham in his constituency.<sup>122</sup> During the speech he essentially endorsed Amery’s ideas about imperial defence and his criticism of Brodrick’s reforms. On 21 January Hamilton wrote to Amery and discussed Churchill’s attacks on Brodrick’s reforms and stated that Lord Roberts was inclined to acknowledge that there was a ‘great deal of truth’ in what Churchill was saying.<sup>123</sup> Amery later noted in his memoirs that he had not ‘broadly agreed’ with the Hughligans, and had increasingly distanced himself from them, because of their lack of meaningful alternative defence programme and their increasing advocacy of Winston Churchill’s appeal for retrenchment on defence spending.<sup>124</sup>

However, by early 1903 Brodrick’s plans were beginning to unravel. Recruitment figures were poor and his central plan for a six army corps were derided as a ‘phantom army’ by the Hughligans during parliamentary debates.<sup>125</sup> Ernest Beckett, one of the Hughligans, wrote to Amery in June 1903 stating that his ‘powerful and persistent advocacy’ in *The Times* would bring about ‘useful and necessary’ army reorganization.<sup>126</sup> The Hughligans also argued that

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<sup>119</sup> *Ibid* p119.

<sup>120</sup> Barnes, J. and Nicholson, D. (1988). *The Leo Amery diaries*, Vol 1. London: Hutchinson p39.

<sup>121</sup> The Primrose League was a mass movement devoted to the cause of Conservatism and the promotion of the Conservative Party. By 1910 it claimed to have 2 million members.

<sup>122</sup> *The Times*, ‘Mr Churchill on Army Reform’ 19 January 1903 p12.

<sup>123</sup> AMEL 1-1-14, Letter from Hamilton to Amery, dated 21 January 1903.

<sup>124</sup> Amery, L. (1955) p110.

<sup>125</sup> Ernest Beckett, ‘Army Organisation’ in *Hansard* 23 February 1903 vol. 118, col. 515-85.

<sup>126</sup> AMEL 1-1-14, Letter from Ernest Beckett to Amery dated 8 June 1903.

expenditure on the Army should be subordinate to that of the navy which they stated was the primary means of ensuring imperial and national defence. Similarly, the high cost of the South Africa War had placed a heavy burden on the public spending which further complicated Brodrick's attempts to create his six corps home army because he was under pressure from the Treasury to reduce spending. However, the defence debate was soon being overshadowed by other political events such as the controversial 1902 Education Act and in 1903 tariff reform. In May 1903 Chamberlain used a speech in Birmingham, his political heartland, to attack free trade and made a powerful case for tariff reform and the introduction of inter-imperial preferences to protect British economic interests.<sup>127</sup> Chamberlain set about setting up the Tariff Reform League and in the process split the Unionist government and coalition apart. Amery enthusiastically threw himself into the Tariff Reform League which subsequently attracted powerful support from politicians, industrialists and most of the newspaper proprietors. As a consequence the Tariff Reform League received considerable financial and organisational assistance from its powerful backers and launched a national propaganda campaign. In contrast the Free Food League which was set up as a counter to the Tariff Reform League by fifty-four Unionist MPs was underfunded and unable to mount an effective publicity campaign; many of the Hughligans, including Winston Churchill, were also members of the Free Food League. Amery recounted in his memoirs how shocked he had been to hear the 'vehemence' against Chamberlain and his tariff reform policy from members of the Hughligans at a private dinner held at Beckett's rooms in Mayfair.<sup>128</sup>

On 14 September 1903, Chamberlain resigned from Cabinet and devoted his energy to the cause of tariff reform. Balfour reacted by reshuffling his cabinet and Brodrick became Secretary of State for India and the Unionist MP Hugh Oakley Arnold-Forster was appointed Secretary of State for War. However, Arnold-Forster was not Balfour's first choice for the position of Secretary of State for War but was compromise appointment after five other candidates, including Esher, declined his offer of the post. Balfour, who was considered to be an expert of defence issues, also setup a small three man committee headed by Lord Esher to report on reform of the WO; the other members were Admiral Sir John Fisher, later Lord Fisher, and Sir George Clarke, who had been a member of the Dawkins Committee which had produced a report in 1901 on the lack of cooperation and preparation between the WO and politicians prior to the war in South Africa. Arnold-Forster was a known critic of the Cardwell system and avid navalist and he was enthusiastic supporter of Chamberlainite policies such as tariff reform and the creation of an imperial federation. Arnold-Forster was also advocate of the dual army system. Like Amery he had been a journalist and had written

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<sup>127</sup> Judd, D. (1996) p189.

<sup>128</sup> Amery, L. (1955) p195.



several pamphlets about the army in the late 1890s; in 1900 he published *The War Office, the Army and the Empire*. In 1900 Lord Salisbury appointed Arnold-Forster Parliamentary Secretary of the Admiralty. Arnold-Forster was an intellectual and technocrat, but he was considered to be austere and inflexible, and like Amery a poor public speaker.<sup>129</sup> However, shortly before taking up his post of Secretary of State for War Arnold-Forster suffered a heart attack from which he never fully recovered. Arnold-Forster would be plagued by ill health throughout his tenure at the WO.

On accepting the post Arnold-Forster began planning to dismantle what he considered to be completely discredited Cardwell system of linked battalions; he also wanted to abandon Brodrick's army corps scheme. He planned to create a dual army of 32 battalions of short service men enlisted for two years in a home army, and an overseas army of 112 battalions of men on a nine year enlistment for use in imperial garrisons and in a striking force. However, Arnold-Forster was under considerable pressure from the Treasury to make substantial savings. He decided to reduce the number of volunteers, disband half of the militia and restructure the home army. His plan was to improve training and equipment by reducing the overall size of the auxiliary forces; he also wanted to improve the organization and administration of the entire home army. Therefore, Arnold-Forster decision to reduce the volunteers and militia placed him on a collision course with members of the Cabinet and Government who were officers in the auxiliary forces. This opposition was replicated in the House of Commons where many members were also officers in the volunteers and militia.<sup>130</sup> However, Arnold-Forster confided to Amery that he thought 'that anything will really revive the Militia, or make it fit to face an enemy'.<sup>131</sup> His other proposals included building modern barracks, reorganizing the cavalry and improving the employment prospects for ex-soldiers. It was very apparent that Arnold-Forster had already determined prior to taking office what his policy would be. However, his inflexible personality and inability to engage in a constructive debate with senior officers and other politicians regarding his plans ultimately handicapped his ability to effect change.

Amery knew Arnold-Forster socially through Chamberlain and both were committed tariff and army reformers and imperialists. Amery wrote to Arnold-Forster at the end of 1903 stating that their ideas were in 'parallel' and offered his assistance which was accepted by

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<sup>129</sup> Tucker, A. 'The issue of army reform in the unionist government, 1903-5', *Historical Journal*, No. 9 (1966), 90-100

<sup>130</sup> Beckett, I. (1982). *Rifleman form: a study of the rifle volunteer movement 1859-1905* Aldershot: Ogilby Trust pp236-246.

<sup>131</sup> AMEL 1-1-15, Letter from Arnold-Forster to Amery, 19 July 1904.

Arnold-Forster.<sup>132</sup> Having Arnold-Forster appointed Secretary of State for War presented Amery with a good opportunity to get his ideas officially adopted. On the 9 January 1904 Amery wrote a memorandum to Arnold-Forster giving him advice on 'his reorganization plans'.<sup>133</sup> Amery was concerned that Arnold-Forster should make it clear in his statement to the House Commons that the proposed short service army was not solely intended for home service and would be used for imperial service if required. Amery was worried that in some 'great emergency the Government will dare not send the whole of the short service regular army out of the country' for political reasons. He also stated that the 'underlying problems of national service' were not being tackled. Amery also attempted to gain support from Arnold-Forster for the creation of a South African garrison. On 13 January Arnold-Forster replied that he had read Amery's letter 'with lively satisfaction, and with almost complete agreement' and that it was 'interesting how our minds have been working together'.<sup>134</sup> Amery sent Arnold-Forster clippings of Canadian plans for their militia and over the coming month's further letters setting out his ideas on army reform. However, Arnold-Forster was being stalled by the Cabinet from publically announcing his plans. Overtime Arnold-Forster's abrasive personality began to alienate senior officers and fellow politicians who had been initially prepared to listen to his proposals on WO and militia reform. Amery was well aware of the personal and professional animosity toward Arnold-Forster.

On 6 January 1904 Sir Clinton Dawkins, chairman of the 1901 Dawkins committee, and one of the founder members of the National Service League (NSL), wrote to Amery that he had encountered Arnold-Forster at the Athenaeum Club where he had 'seized hold of me' and then 'poured over me in his, nervous rapid way' and discussed the ideas he 'hopes' to put into practice at WO.<sup>135</sup> Dawkins told Amery that Arnold-Forster wanted to meet with him and discuss his ideas in more detail, but he admitted that he was 'rather avoiding him'. Dawkins other objective in writing to Amery was because he believed that Amery was the only qualified person outside of the WO worth speaking to on the issue of army reform and he wished to have a meeting with him so that when he saw Arnold-Forster again he wanted to know what 'particular point' Amery thought he should 'press upon him'. Amery sent Dawkins a long letter setting out his ideas on army reform. On 13 January Dawkins sent Amery a note thanking him for his information and said he was broadly supportive of his ideas; specifically he agreed that having short service men in a home army with a overseas liability to back the foreign service army was a good suggestion, but that the policy need

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<sup>132</sup> AMEL 1-1-14, Letter from Arnold-Forster to Amery, 17 November 1903.

<sup>133</sup> AMEL 1-1-15, Letter from Amery to Arnold-Forster, 9 January 1904.

<sup>134</sup> AMEL 1-1-15, Letter from Arnold-Forster to Amery, 13 January 1904.

<sup>135</sup> AMEL 1-1-15, Letter from Sir Clinton Dawkins to Amery, 6 January 1904.

careful presentation ‘so as to get into the popular mind its intimate connection’.<sup>136</sup> However, Arnold-Forster’s chief detractor was Lord Esher, who briefed against him within the Cabinet and with Balfour. Similarly, Lord Esher began intervening within the WO policy decision process which brought him into conflict with Arnold-Forster. However, because Esher was a confidant of King Edward VII Arnold-Forster was hard pressed to counter his interference. Amery was in close contact with Esher and they were in agreement on many of the issues concerning army reform.<sup>137</sup> Amery in memoirs stated that he had persuaded Esher to employ colonel Gerald Ellison, later General Sir Gerald Ellison, as the committee’s secretary; Ellison was later credited as having considerable influence over Richard Haldane, Secretary of State for War 1905 -1912, and made a significant contribution to reform of the army between 1905-7. Ellison has also been attributed with being instrumental in preparing the Esher Committee’s recommendations.<sup>138</sup> Amery considered Ellison to be responsible for ‘laying the foundations on which our General Staff system has been built up’.<sup>139</sup> In February 1904 Lord Esher’s Committee recommended the abolition of the post of commander-in-chief, the formation of a general staff, creation of a Chief of the General Staff, a permanent secretariat for the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) and the establishment of an army council of three civil and four military members. Balfour and the Cabinet endorsed Esher’s recommendations and the changes were set in motion immediately without seeking Parliamentary approval. Arnold-Forster had not been party to any of the work of the committee after being excluded from it at its inception. However, Arnold-Forster was now expected to rapidly implement its findings. Arnold-Forster tactlessly wrote to Roberts the day before the new Army Council was due start work informing him that the timetable for implementing the Esher Committee proposals had been increased and he would be shortly dismissed from his post.<sup>140</sup> However, Roberts decided to resign, but did accept a seat on the CID. Conversely, Lord Esher had no intention of relinquishing control of the process, so Arnold-Forster was placed in a difficult, if not impossible, position. A frustrated and increasingly impotent Arnold-Forster offered to resign on several occasions, but Balfour refused to let him go.

However, Balfour gave Arnold-Forster permission to make his statement on his vision for the army during the army estimate debate on 14 July 1904 but he was told not state that it was Government policy. However, Arnold-Forster was taken ill at home on 13 July 1904 and Amery was asked by Arnold-Forster’s wife, Mary, if he could help prepare the policy

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<sup>136</sup> AMEL 1-1-15, Letter from Sir Clinton Dawkins to Amery, 13 January 1904

<sup>137</sup> Barnes, J. and Nicholson, D. (1988) p49.

<sup>138</sup> Haldane, R. B. (1929). *An autobiography* London: Macmillan p184.

<sup>139</sup> Amery, L. (1955) p194.

<sup>140</sup> James, D. (1954). *Lord Roberts* London: Hollis pp402-406.

statement.<sup>141</sup> Arnold-Forster gave Amery access to official papers and his office at home to work on the statement. Amery asserted that the statement and an accompanying memorandum were completely unprepared and that he was forced to work all through the night to complete them.<sup>142</sup> Amery declared in his memoirs that Arnold-Forster's statement and subsequent performance at the dispatch box answering questions was entirely due to his 'practically repeating' the memorandum. Amery noted that Arnold-Forster reproduced 'his' memorandum in *The Army in 1906*.<sup>143</sup> Arnold-Forster never publicly acknowledged Amery's authorship of the memorandum. However, on 15 July Arnold-Forster wrote a private letter to Amery thanking him for the 'invaluable help you gave me. Very few men in London would have been competent to do work at short notice and with such material as I was able to supply'.<sup>144</sup> He further stated, 'I have your memorandum, which I can send to people, and which will explain matters better than my speech'. On 16 July Amery using his pseudonym *reformer* wrote a glowing endorsement of Arnold-Forster's statement to the House of Commons and of his new policy.<sup>145</sup> However, Amery recognising which was the most contentious part of the statement noted that 'the Militia was moribund' and needed to be reformed; he noted that auxiliary forces training, equipment was deficient and that the Volunteers establishment was short by 100,000. On 20 May 1904 the Norfolk Commission reported that the Volunteers and Militia were in an unsatisfactory condition and the Home Army needed reforming. However, the report also observed that without Regular support the Home Army would be unable to resist an invasion.<sup>146</sup> As a consequence the Commission concluded that it would be advisable to create a Home Army based on conscription. The controversial statement about introducing conscription overshadowed the rest of the report. Arnold-Forster thought that the findings of the report were 'unimportant' and resolved to press on with his own ideas.

Naively, Arnold-Forster thought that he had not 'greatly offended any party', and that 'I shall eventually get my own way with regard to the Militia'.<sup>147</sup> However, prior to his making statement in the House of Commons someone had leaked details of his plans to make cuts to the auxiliary forces to the *Daily Express* and the *Standard*.<sup>148</sup> This of course was calculated to stir up feeling against Arnold-Forster in the Commons chamber during the debate. The problem for Arnold-Forster was that his plans for the militia and volunteers made him many

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<sup>141</sup> Beckett, I. (1982) p236.

<sup>142</sup> Amery, L. (1955) p210.

<sup>143</sup> Arnold-Forster, H. O. (1906). *The Army in 1906* London: John Murray pp493-516.

<sup>144</sup> AMEL 1-1-14, Letter from Arnold-Forster to Amery, 15 July 1904.

<sup>145</sup> 'Mr Arnolds Reforms *The Times*', 16 July 1904 p11.

<sup>146</sup> Beckett, I. (1982) p234.

<sup>147</sup> AMEL 1-1-14, Letter from Arnold-Forster to Amery, 15 July 1904.

<sup>148</sup> Beckett, I. 'H.O. Arnold-Forster And The Volunteers' in Beckett, I. and Gooch, G. (1981). *Politicians and defence: studies in the formation of British defence policy, 1845-1970* Manchester: Manchester University Press p54.

enemies which then overshadowed his whole programme. Over the coming months Arnold-Forster became locked into a cycle of confrontation with the newly constituted Army Council and senior officers over his reforms. His position with the Army Council was made more difficult by the presence of Lord Lansdowne and Brodrick both ex Secretaries of State for War, because he was reversing much of their work. After July 1904 Amery began lobbying Balfour on the question of army reform.<sup>149</sup> But, Amery was increasingly at odds with Balfour over his refusal to fully endorse Chamberlain's tariff reform programme which increasingly limited his ability to wield any influence on behalf of Arnold-Forster's scheme with the Prime Minister.

In April 1904 Sir George Clarke became the first secretary of the CID.<sup>150</sup> Clarke supported some of Arnold-Forster's proposals but was in favour of retaining the Militia. Clarke, like Esher, began conspiring with Balfour against Arnold-Forster and succeeded in January 1905 in having a sub-committee of the CID convened to consider Arnold-Forster's proposals on the Militia. The committee was chaired by Balfour and included Clarke and Esher, but not Arnold-Forster who was excluded from the process. The committee subsequently decided to retain the militia. It was now apparent that Arnold-Forster had little authority or any say in the formation of army policy. However, Amery was on amicable terms with Clarke. Like Amery, Clarke supported the idea of a split long service-9 year enlistment- and short service-3 year enlistment- regular army; he also favoured compulsory military training in national schools and extending the overseas liability to all militia, Yeomanry and reserve forces during an overseas emergency. All of which Amery had been advocating for some-time. An overriding theme in Amery's writings on imperial security was the threat posed by the advance of Russian strategic railways into Asia. One of the dominant themes during Clarke's tenure at the CID was the Indian defence question. Balfour dominated the CID and the direction of strategic policy and his overriding concern was the possibility of a 'great war on the North West Frontier' which would require the mobilization of 100,000 men to reinforce British forces in India.<sup>151</sup> However, in October 1904 during the Russo-Japanese war Amery made a startling proposal to Clarke about how to deal with the Russian question.

On 27 October 1904 Amery wrote a paper to Clarke setting out his ideas on a scheme to assist a Finnish uprising against Russian rule. The letter was sent a couple of days after the Dogger

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<sup>149</sup> AMEL 1-1-15, Hand written Letter from Arthur Balfour to Amery, 19 July 1904.

<sup>150</sup> Gooch, J. *The Prospect for War* (1981) pp73-88.

<sup>151</sup> Otte, T. G. 'The Method in which we were schooled by experience': British Strategy and a Continental Commitment before 1914' in Neilson, K. and Kennedy, G. (eds). (2002). *The British way in warfare : power and the international system, 1856-1956 : essays in honour of David French* Farnham: Ashgate p309.

Bank incident when the Russian Baltic fleet on route to Port Arthur fired on the Hull fishing fleet which resulted in a trawler being sunk and an number of fishermen being killed and injured. Historically Finland had a semi-autonomous status within the Russian Empire, however, in 1901 the Finnish army was disbanded and a conscription law introduced which made all Finnish males liable for service in the Russian Army. The Finns responded by carrying out passive resistance, holding demonstrations and refusing to recognise the conscription edict. The Russia government reacted by imposing draconian laws and suspending all of the Finns autonomous privileges and individual political rights. By 1904 it appeared that the Finns were on the verge of rising up against Russian rule. Sensing an opportunity to attack Russia Amery wanted the British government to embark on a sustained programme of propaganda to orchestrate a revolution in Finland as a prelude to military intervention; he also wanted the British to enter into an alliance with Sweden which would encourage the Swedes to invade Finland in defence of Finnish rights.<sup>152</sup> However, he proposed letting the Swedes annex Finland for their assistance after the war was over. Amery argued that the British could send 120,000 regulars and 80,000 Militia, the Swedes could supply 250,000-300,000 men and the Finns 100,000; he thought that the Navy could be deployed to control the Finnish coast and blockade the Russia ports in the Baltic. Amery also noted that with the Russian military distracted by the Manchurian question there was an opportunity to strike at St Petersburg the 'very heart of Russia' from Finnish soil. He concluded that if the scheme worked having a hostile army at the gates of St Petersburg would make 'India safe'. However, Clarke dismissed the scheme on the grounds that if the project failed or succeeded 'we should be held up to the execration of Europe as insidious plotters seeking to involve inoffensive peoples in our own difficulties'.<sup>153</sup> Nevertheless, he did conclude 'meanwhile, you may be sure that the project is not being lost sight of'. To all intent purposes Amery's scheme was impractical and dangerous, but it does demonstrate how Amery considered himself to be a master strategist and it is indicative of his ability to get his 'memorandums' read by the most influential people within the British defence establishment.

By October 1904 the beleaguered Arnold-Forster was offering to send Amery official information to 'assist him' with his work.<sup>154</sup> With Amery providing favourable comments in *The Times* it was obvious Arnold-Forster needed to keep Amery on side. In October 1904 Arnold-Forster gained approval from the Cabinet for his long-service enlistments; and in June 1905 for a trial of his short-service enlistments. For much of 1905 Arnold-Forster attempted to bring about changes to the composition and size of the Volunteers. However, like his

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<sup>152</sup> AMEL 1-1-14, Letter from Amery to Sir George Clarke dated 27 October, 1904.

<sup>153</sup> AMEL 1-1-14, Letter from Sir George Clarke to Amery dated 31 October 1904.

<sup>154</sup> AMEL 1-1-15, Letter from Arnold-Forster to Amery, 18 October 1904.

previous endeavours with the militia Arnold-Forster soon found himself at odds with Parliament and other members of the Government. On the 20 June 1905, an ambiguous circular was sent to commands to find out how many men in the Volunteers were fit for overseas service. It was leaked to the press, who interpreted it as attempt by the Government to impose severe medical requirements to reduce the number of Volunteers. Although, Arnold-Forster retracted the circular and issued a new one which attempted to clarify the situation he was forced to defend the Governments position in an adjournment debate in the House of Commons on 13 July. By September other members of the Government were appealing for more recruits to come forward to join the Volunteers. Again Arnold-Forster was forced to bow to pressure and seek additional funding for the Volunteers from the Treasury. However, by December 1905 Balfour's government was on the verge of collapse. The issue of tariff reform had increasingly divided the Conservative and Unionist Parties. Balfour attempted to placate both sides by promoting a policy of retaliation which was designed to correspond with the trade restrictions of other states while continuing to abide by the principles of free trade.<sup>155</sup> However, the Conservative and Unionist support for tariff reform led to a series of by-election defeats. The Liberal Party accentuated the notion of cheaper food being a consequence of free trade and began promoting a new progressive social reform agenda. Similarly, a number of free trade Conservative and Unionist MPs were driven out of their seats or joined the Liberals'.<sup>156</sup> It was becoming apparent by the end of 1905 that Chamberlain's attempt to convince public opinion of the value of tariff reform was not succeeding.

At the start of 1905 Amery relinquished the role of military correspondent at *The Times* to Repington. In February 1905 Joseph Chamberlain and his son Austen Chamberlain put forward Amery as a prospective Unionist candidate for the seat of Wolverhampton East which was a Liberal seat. In April Amery was accepted as the Unionist candidate. In May 1905 the third volume of *The Times* history of the War in South Africa was published. This provoked some criticism of Amery, because he had again attacked the performance of senior officers and the army system, but as Amery noted there was no significant assault on his 'facts'.<sup>157</sup> Balfour resigned in December 1905 and a general election was called for the following January. On 15 January 1906 the Conservative and Unionist Parties were heavily defeated in an election dominated by the question of tariff reform, and Amery was unsuccessful in his attempt to gain a seat at Wolverhampton East. The new Liberal government was formed with a large majority of 130. The problem for Amery was that he

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<sup>155</sup> Gollin, A. M. (1965). *Balfour's burden: Arthur Balfour and imperial preference* London: Blond.

<sup>156</sup> Pugh, M. (1982). *The Making of Modern British Politics 1867-1939* Oxford: Blackwell p122.

<sup>157</sup> Amery, L. (1955) p219.

was intimately associated with the policy of tariff reform which increasingly left him isolated and out of touch with public opinion. In 1906 he published the *Fundamental Fallacies of Free Trade* which set out to make a case for a unified imperial economic policy constructed around a Zollverein; Amery argued that the period of free trade was now being superseded by the rise of a new international economic system which was dominated by the protectionist powers of the United States and Germany. After the election Amery did not have same level of direct access to new Secretary of State for War, Richard Haldane, as he had enjoyed with Arnold-Forster.

However, Amery was still in close contact with Esher, Clarke, Wilson, Hamilton and Ellison. Unlike the abrasive Arnold-Forster, the affable Haldane was prepared to consult and listen to WO officials and senior officers about their views on the Army reorganization. Haldane was a lawyer and came with little experience of military matters, and therefore had no preconceived ideas or prejudices when he became minister of state. However, Haldane's primary focus was on cutting expenditure on the Army from £29,813,000 to £28,000,000 which had been an election pledge of the Liberals. Haldane envisaged creating a two tier army comprised of a striking force of three corps, supported by elements of the Militia, Yeomanry and a new Territorial Force fashioned from the Volunteers, and the remainder of the Militia and Yeomanry which could be expanded in the event of a major war. Haldane's striking force was to be based in the UK but configured for overseas deployment in the event of a crisis. The striking force was comprised of six large divisions rather than dedicated corps which was considered to be ill-suited to the peacetime British army. Haldane decided to reduce overseas garrisons and reintroduce the old terms of service of seven or eight years with the colours followed by five or four with the reserve. This was a return to the Cardwellian system of having roughly equal numbers of units at home and abroad at the same time.<sup>158</sup> He planned to decentralise administration of the auxiliary forces to County Associations under the control of the Lord Lieutenants, this was the most controversial idea which Haldane proposed concerning the auxiliary forces. Amery later claimed in his memoirs that he 'might have suggested' the idea of County Associations to Haldane during a discussion on the creation of a Territorial force.<sup>159</sup> However, there is no evidence of a memorandum being written or a letter from Amery on the subject to Haldane which was his usual method of indoctrinating a government official on one of his ideas.

Gooch states that Haldane, like Arnold-Forster, came under a considerable amount of pressure from the Volunteer officer lobby that were opposed to being administered by county

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<sup>158</sup> Spiers, E. (1994) pp202-204.

<sup>159</sup> Amery, L. (1955) p214.



associations. However, Haldane received support from Esher which swung the argument in his favour.<sup>160</sup> However, Haldane also gained professional support from a committee of senior officers and Clarke, who were convened to look at the scheme and find its weaknesses. The most notable problem was that during a major conflict Haldane's Territorial force would take at least six months to expand and train the numbers considered adequate enough to sustain a large expeditionary force overseas. The committee made the suggestion that seventy four Militia depots be retained as reserve battalion cadres for the regular army. These cadres could be then utilised in a national emergency as the basis for a mobilisation scheme which could produce draft manpower for the regular army. In other words, the army had the machinery in place to massively expand the army in a national crisis. Haldane's plan for the Territorial force was intended to create a 'nation in arms' based on voluntary service. Haldane ensured that he had full backing from the Army Council and the Cabinet before publically announcing his plan on 4 March 1907. Haldane's scheme was diametrically the opposite of Amery's imperial defence plan. However, Haldane did complete the task of forming the General Staff which Amery had been advocating for many years.

During this period Amery moved away from solely advocating army reform to actively campaigning for compulsory military service. In 1905 Amery and Lord Milner became members of the National Service League (NSL). Another prominent member was Clarke. The NSL was formed in 1902 by the fourth Duke of Wellington and the Conservative politician Lord Newton in response to the Boer war and what they considered to be the apparent moral and physical decline of the nation. In 1904 it formed a women's branch but at this point was it not a mass movement; by 1905 the NSL had membership of 2000. After 1905 Milner and Amery were considered to be the driving force behind the NSL. It was Milner who persuaded Lord Roberts to become President of the NSL in 1905.<sup>161</sup> Amery wrote much of the NSL's public material and many of Roberts's speeches. Roberts had been for sometime publically advocating that every male should receive at least four months military training; he also stated that the possibility of an invasion or raid by a foreign power on the British Isles made it vital that the UK had a large trained reserve. Like Amery, he thought that Britain had insufficient trained reserves to respond to an attack on India. However, Roberts and other members of the NSL were careful not to publically state that compulsory service would include any sort of Foreign Service liability. In November 1905 Roberts resigned from the Imperial Defence

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<sup>160</sup> Gooch, J. 'Haldane and The National Army' in Beckett, I. and Gooch, J. (1981). *Politicians and defence: studies in the formation of British defence policy, 1845-1970* Manchester: Manchester University Press p54.

<sup>161</sup> Ropp, R. 'Conscription in Great Britain, 1900-1914: A failure in Civil- Military Communication ?' *Military Affairs* Vol.20, No. 2 (1956) pp71-76; Adams, R. J. (1987). *The Conscription Controversy in Great Britain, 1900-1918* Ohio: Ohio State University Press.

Committee (IDC) after being admonished by Edward VII for making public announcements in favour of compulsory military service which were counter to Government policy and that of the IDC.<sup>162</sup> Roberts was now fully committed to the NSL and became its public figurehead. During 1906 the NSL began to receive financial assistance from sympathetic supporters and a favourable press from many of the leading newspapers. Roberts embarked on a national tour giving speeches on the merits of compulsory service and the UK's unpreparedness for war. Although, the NSL welcomed Haldane's national army scheme, Roberts pointed out that once the striking force had been dispatched there would be practically no army left in the British Isles for six months until the Territorial manpower had been mobilized, trained and equipped.<sup>163</sup> The NSL persistently used Haldane's admission that it would take six months to fully mobilize the Territorial Army as a reason to introduce conscription. The NSL also used the findings of the Norfolk Commission to back their case for the introduction of a conscripted Home Army. The other was the utilising the fear of invasion.

In 1903 Balfour had chaired a special committee of the CID which had concluded that the possibility of invasion was negligible; the committee argued that the maximum number of men which could be transported by the available shipping was 70,000 men; it would take twenty hours to cross and forty eight hours to disembark.<sup>164</sup> Under such circumstances they concluded the Royal Navy would be able to disrupt or destroy the bulk of the invasion flotilla while still at sea or disembarking. However, the enemy which the committee was considering was France.<sup>165</sup> As Otte notes under Balfour the CID reasserted the navalist orthodoxy about Britain's defence requirements.<sup>166</sup> In early 1907 the NSL commissioned a report from Cunard Company into harbour depths, port facilities and the size and composition of German merchant-marine tonnage. The NSL then produced a detailed memorandum which noted that the conclusions of CID's 1903 report were rapidly being superseded by increases in the naval and merchant marine capability of Germany; the NSL argued that Germany had a distinct strategic advantage, because the Royal Navy bases were positioned along the English Channel facing the old enemy France which left the East coast vulnerable to attack from across the North Sea. The Germans, unlike the French, concentrated the bulk of their fleet in home waters which meant they could, in theory, protect an invasion force more adequately than the French. Therefore, the threat posed by Germany became the principal concern of the NSL and in their opinion the reason why compulsory service should be introduced. Roberts noted that the pre-emptive attack on the Russian Fleet at Port Arthur by the Japanese in 1904 was a clear

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<sup>162</sup> James, D. (1954). *Lord Roberts* London: Hollis p422.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid* p426.

<sup>164</sup> Gooch, J. (1981) p73.

<sup>165</sup> AMEL 1-2-17, Letter from Balfour to Sir George Clarke, 20 July 1907.

<sup>166</sup> Otte, T. (2002) p311.

indication of what might occur at the start of hostilities with another major power. Roberts and Repington lobbied Balfour, now leader of the opposition, to force the Liberal government to carry-out a new enquiry. Roberts also began arguing that there were 80,000 trained German and Austria soldiers living and working in Britain who would be used to attack transport, communication networks, ports, vital factories and disrupt the mobilization of the reserves at the beginning of war. Balfour was sympathetic and succeeded in forcing the Cabinet Defence Committee to hold a fresh an enquiry into the question of an invasion.<sup>167</sup> On 27 November 1907 the NSL were invited to give evidence which was made by Roberts and Repington. However, the findings of the Committee, which agreed that the possibility of invasion had increased, were kept secret and the NSL demand for the introduction of compulsory service was ignored.<sup>168</sup> In response the NSL continued to make the case for the 'bolt from the blue'. However,

Amery was on the periphery of these events and did not take part in the proceedings at the House of Commons. Amery was a committed navalist and had previously played down the invasion threat. His motivation for compulsory service had been his conviction that Britain needed to prepare for another major colonial war and therefore needed to create a large reserve to allow the 'regular army and the navy to fulfil its imperial strategic role'.<sup>169</sup> However, Amery later concluded that his acceptance of the invasion threat was due to German intransigence. After 1900 the German threat was increasingly mythologized in a series of books such as Erskine Childers *The Riddle of the Sands* (1903), William Le Queux's *The Invasion of 1910* (1907) and R. W. Cole's *The Death Trap* (1907). *The Invasion of 1910* was a graphic account of a German invasion on the East coast which was preceded by attacks on shipping and naval bases by spies and saboteurs. The book was commissioned by Lord Northcliffe, owner of the *Daily Mail*; Le Queux received a considerable amount of help from Roberts when preparing the manuscript on the military and strategic material; Roberts also wrote the forward to the book. The book was serialised in the *Daily Mail* and became an international best seller. Both Le Queux and Northcliffe were members of the NSL and contributed to the national campaign.

After 1906 Amery began increasing his public profile by making speeches on behalf of the NSL, the Empire League and the Tariff Reform League. In 1906 Chamberlain suffered a stroke which effectively ended his political career. As a consequence Amery increasingly became the intellectual and spiritual guardian of Tariff Reform. By 1908 Britain and

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<sup>167</sup> Massie, R. K. (1991) p629.

<sup>168</sup> James, D. (1954) p426.

<sup>169</sup> Amery, L. (1903) p256.

Germany were locked into a naval arms race which increasingly influenced the strategic debate and the direction of defence spending in the UK. Similarly, the 1909 Imperial Defence Conference was dominated by naval questions; however, the Dominions were concerned about the threat posed by the Japanese navy which led to the creation of Australian naval squadron and the development of imperial naval forces.<sup>170</sup> British naval concerns were focused on the German fleet across the North Sea. By 1909 the NSL had increased its membership to 35,000 and was producing a considerable amount of printed material which was widely distributed by its burgeoning network of members and supporters. Local NSL branches held meetings and discussions and collected subscriptions. However, the NSL was quick to exploit any political crisis which would further their aims. During the early months of 1909 the Liberal government came increasing under pressure from the Admiralty to increase battleship construction from four to eight to match intelligence reports of a renewed German battleship building programme of seven. This presented difficulties for the Liberals who had vowed to cut defence expenditure and increase social spending programmes at the 1906 election and were planning to decrease naval construction even further. The Unionists and right wing press attacked the Government over the issue and launched a jingoistic campaign demanding that the Government agree to the immediate construction of eight battleships at the next naval estimate. The Admiralty used the Navy League to make its case to the public and put pressure on the Government. The problem for the Government was that Britain, unlike Germany, was totally reliant on naval power for imperial and national security. On 29 March 1909 the opposition tabled a vote of censure against the government in the House of Commons on the issue; the subsequent debate was dominated by the fact that Britain was wholly dependent on sea power which gave the Government virtually no room for manoeuvre.<sup>171</sup> The Liberals were forced to agree to the construction of eight battleships. This nearly split the Liberal Cabinet apart because the costs involved in constructing eight battleships in a single year were excessive and would require tax increases or reductions in spending elsewhere. The chief opponents of the policy in Cabinet were Lloyd George, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Churchill, President of the Board of Trade who were attempting to introduce a raft of social policies which included unemployment insurance and a statutory minimum wage in certain industries. Liberals decided to increase taxes for the rich and introduce a new land tax.<sup>172</sup> The NSL used the navy scare to renew their calls for the introduction of compulsory service on the grounds of national security.

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<sup>170</sup> Kennedy, P. (1976) p220.

<sup>171</sup> House of Commons Debate, 'Vote of Censure', in *Hansard*, 29 March 1909, col, 33-149.

<sup>172</sup> Morgan, K. O. (ed). (1988). *Oxford History of Britain* p375.

On July 12 1909 Roberts introduced a National Service Bill in the House of Lords. The bill was rejected by 23 votes which Roberts and his supporters considered to be a victory. Increasingly, the NSL tactics were focused on attacking the government's lack of preparation for a major war. They used the crisis over the navy scare to argue that naval supremacy could not be taken for granted. In November 1909 the House of Lords rejected the Liberal budget which set in motion a constitutional crisis which rumbled on through-out 1910. The Liberals called a general election for 9 February 1910. Amery contested the seat of Wolverhampton East, but lost. Shortly after the election Amery married Florence Louise Adeliza (Bryddie) Greenwood (1885–1975), the sister of Hamar (later Viscount) Greenwood, a barrister and Liberal MP. However, during the campaign in February Amery had been accused by ex-Sergeant Major Edmondson that *The Times History of the South African War* constituted a 'damnable libel' against the British Army; Amery responded by publicly claiming that Edmondson had been sent home in disgrace from South Africa for cowardice at a public election meeting. Another general election was called for 19 December 1910, and Amery was again unsuccessful in Wolverhampton East. Edmondson sued for libel and case went to court on 26 January 1911. During the trial Lord Roberts gave evidence in Amery's favour, as did officers and sergeants who had served with Edmondson in the Imperial Yeomanry.<sup>173</sup> The trial lasted eight days and Amery won. This did no damage to Amery politically, but he was forced to ask the Unionist party for money to help pay his court costs of £500 pounds.<sup>174</sup> The Liberal government had survived both elections but was returned with no overall majority, which made them dependent on Labour and Irish Nationalist MPs to get their policy programme through the Commons. In early 1911 Amery was asked by the Duke of Bedfordshire to contest the seat of Bedford at the next election. This had an added advantage because the Duke was willing pay Amery's election costs.

In December 1910 Haldane and Ian Hamilton published a book entitled *Compulsory Service* which set-out the case against national service.<sup>175</sup> Hamilton argued that Britain's voluntary professional army was more suited for garrisoning and expanding an empire rather than a force based on universal service. Haldane and Hamilton also rejected the notion that navy was incapable of defending the UK from invasion and set out the historical and constitutional case against conscription. To counter this in early 1911 Amery in collaboration with Roberts and the historian Professor John Cramb wrote *Fallacies and Facts* which argued that compulsory service was now a national priority because of the much altered international

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<sup>173</sup> *The Times*, 'Alleged Cowardice in the South Africa War', 27 January 1911 p3.

<sup>174</sup> Faber, D. (2005) p 79.

<sup>175</sup> Haldane, R. and Hamilton, I. (1910). *Compulsory Service* London: John Murray.

situation and Britain's increasing imperial responsibilities.<sup>176</sup> The book noted that the NSL had no plans to radically alter the professional army or its role but wished to create a large trained reserve for rapid expansion during a national emergency. Roberts also claimed that Haldane had asked Hamilton to write the book because he was the only senior officer at the WO who was not in favour of introducing compulsory service.<sup>177</sup> It was well known that many senior officers were sympathetic to the NSL. However, the only senior officer to publicly offer his support for the NSL was Wilson, by then a Brigadier General, who was commandant of the Staff College. Roberts also attacked Haldane for using his office to politicise the military members of the Army Council which was unconstitutional. However, the previous March Roberts had stated that he had the support of 105 Conservative MPs and inferred support from the Regular Army as well. James states that Roberts felt that Hamilton had personally betrayed him because of his collaboration with Haldane on *Compulsory Service*.<sup>178</sup> Amery merely noted in his memoirs that Hamilton had been 'persuaded' by Haldane to 'write against our campaign'.<sup>179</sup> In February 1911 Amery formally accepted the Duke of Bedford's offer to contest the seat at Bedford. However, in March Chamberlain contacted him and offered him the seat of Birmingham South because the local Unionist MP had been elevated to the House of Lords. Amery accepted and on 3 May 1911 and was returned unopposed. Amery had now achieved his foremost ambition of gaining a seat in Parliament. The following day he was formally introduced into the House of Commons by the leader of Liberal Unionists Austen Chamberlain. This afforded Amery the opportunity to become the champion of the NSL and tariff reform in the House of Commons.

During his first months in the House of Commons he rarely became involved in defence or Army debates. However, he did defend the NSL in the Commons. On one occasion he intervened during a question concerning alleged interference by NSL members to restrict recruitment for the Territorial Army.<sup>180</sup> However, after a few months Amery established a reputation for being a member of the 'awkward squad'. In 1912 he became more active in Parliament on issues concerning the Army and imperial defence. He became a regular contributor to ministerial questions and bombarded ministers for information and clarification of their facts.<sup>181</sup> On 12 March 1912 during the Army Estimate debate Amery made a strong case for increasing overseas garrisons and attacked the Government's policy on the Territorial

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<sup>176</sup> Lord Roberts. (1911). *Fallacies and Facts* London: John Murray.

<sup>177</sup> Roberts. (1911) p200.

<sup>178</sup> James, D. (1954) p429.

<sup>179</sup> Amery, L. (1955) p217.

<sup>180</sup> Amery, L. 'Territorial Force Recruiting (National Service League) debate' in *Hansard*, vol. 32, col. 2839, 16 December 1911.

<sup>181</sup> Amery, L. 'Army Expeditionary Force' in *Hansard*, vol. 35, col. 930. 11 March 1911.

Army and its reserves as being totally inadequate in the event of major war.<sup>182</sup> Amery pointed out that the NSL national service scheme would have created a force of 400,000 men available at the outset of a war for mobilization from the first three contingents of men; by calling up the fourth and fifth contingents this would increase to 650,000. However, he noted the Territorial Army had a nominal strength of 275,000 men which included 150,000 men who would need extra training (six months in some cases) to bring them up to the required state of efficiency at the start of a war. The NSL argued that the at least three of the contingents would be ready for immediate mobilization and the other two within weeks not months as was the case with the Territorial scheme. On 25 July 1912 Amery set-out his reasons for wanting to impose compulsory service during a debate on the functions of the Committee of Imperial defence; he stated, 'to-day we are utterly unable to command the sea anywhere in the world except in the narrow seas round our coasts. We have lost the command of the sea all over the world because we are using our tremendous Navy for one purpose only, for the continuous passive defence of the shores of this country'; he concluded, 'what I believe to be the only true solution to this problem, and that is to liberate the British Navy for its proper function of commanding the seas of the world, whether the narrow seas here or the Mediterranean or the Atlantic or even the Pacific, by providing a defence force on land in this country which would make invasion a dangerous and difficult task'.<sup>183</sup>

During 1912 Amery wrote to Roberts on a number of occasions concerning the policy direction of the NSL.<sup>184</sup> Roberts provided Amery with a confidential memorandum which set out twenty points of 'conditions under which a war for home defence would be fought'. At the top of this list was a 'rising in India, following the mutiny of the native army'; secondly, was the ability to 'dispatch of 100,000 men' at short notice which; thirdly, was 'trouble in Egypt which would require the same number of men'.<sup>185</sup> However, the possibility of an attack by Germany was given a priority of five, and only then after the bulk of the navy had been deployed in the Mediterranean. The real concern of Roberts and Amery was the defence of India and the Middle East. But those opposed to the imposition of compulsory service were suspicious that the real intent of the scheme was to drag Britain into a European war. On 25 October 1912 Roberts gave a speech in Manchester which was widely criticised for implying that the NSL wished to emulate the German conscription system to allow Britain to pursue a 'European policy'.<sup>186</sup> Both Roberts and Amery were regularly accused of being militarists.<sup>187</sup>

<sup>182</sup> Amery, L. 'Vote A –Number of Land Forces' in *Hansard*, vol. 35, col. 1018. 12 March 1911.

<sup>183</sup> Amery, L. 'Committee of Imperial Defence Debate' in *Hansard*, 25 July 1912, vol. 41, col. 1443.

<sup>184</sup> AMEL 1-2-17 Letter to Roberts from Amery on NSL policy, 22 June 1912.

<sup>185</sup> AMEL 1-2-17, Memorandum from Roberts not dated.

<sup>186</sup> Lord Roberts. (1912). *Message to the Nation* London: John Murray p IV.

<sup>187</sup> *Manchester Guardian* 'Roberts National Defence and the Territorial's', 10 December 1912.

After the 1912 Army Estimate debate Amery discussed with the former Conservative Under Secretary of State for War, George Wyndham MP, about making a concerted attack on the Government's Territorial Army policy.<sup>188</sup> Amery subsequently worked in unison with Wyndham until the latter's sudden death in April 1913. However, the Conservative Party now under the leadership of Bonar Law, who was a committed tariff reformer, would not endorse the imposition of compulsory service because he knew it was unpopular with public. Therefore, it appeared that Amery was at odds with his own party over the issue but many in the Conservative and Unionist parties were sympathetic to the aims of the NSL. On 15 July 1912 the *Manchester Guardian* noted that Leo Amery was not afraid to say 'out loud' what others in his party only 'dare to think'.<sup>189</sup> By the end of 1913 the NSL was reported to have a membership of 100,000. It appeared that the NSL was making progress toward its goal of educating the public of the benefits of compulsory service, but the issue of Irish Home Rule and the possibility of a continental commitment would increasingly dominate the defence debate.

In 1910 Henry Wilson became Director of Military Operations (DMO) at the WO. Gooch argues that the appointment of Wilson to the DMO marked a turning point away from a wholly imperial strategy to one which encompassed a continental commitment.<sup>190</sup> Tentative staff talks had started with the French in 1906, but nothing binding was agreed. However, British strategic assumptions concerning a continental commitment reflected mounting concerns about the preservation of Belgium and the Netherlands as independent states. After the Agadir crisis in August 1911 Wilson began pressing the Government to begin make detailed plans for a continental commitment to come to aid of France in the event of a war with Germany. Subsequently, the Government gave Wilson permission to make comprehensive arrangements for deploying an expeditionary force in support of the French at the start of a conflict; although, in public the Prime Minister, Herbert Asquith, denied the existence of any secret arrangement. Given Amery's close friendship with Wilson it is inconceivable that they did not discuss the planning for the continental commitment. Amery had persistently argued that Britain's security interests rested in the Empire, which is where he considered defence provisions, should be made. As Strachan has pointed out there were no real preparations made for major continental war by the British Government prior to 1914.<sup>191</sup> In 1914 Wilson thought that a European war would be over in months and not years. Amery

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<sup>188</sup> AMEL 1-2-17 Letter from Amery to Wyndham, 26 March 1913.

<sup>189</sup> The *Manchester Guardian* 'Our Military Policy' July 5 1912.

<sup>190</sup> Gooch, J. (1981). pp92-115.

<sup>191</sup> Strachan, H, 'The British Army, Its General Staff and the Continental Commitment 1904-1914' in French, D. and Holden Reid, B. (eds). (2002). *The British General Staff: Reform and Innovation, c. 1890-1939*. London: Macmillan pp75-94.



and other military writers had since 1900 been calling for a large reserve but it was always based on the assumption that it would be used to defend Britain's imperial interests at the outset of a major war. Conversely, in 1903 Amery had stated that Britain might find it necessary to become embroiled in a Great War to maintain the European balance of power which would require the mobilization of the whole of British manpower reserves. Amery was well aware that this would take months, if not years, to complete given the vast numbers of men that required training and equipping on an unprecedented scale. However, a military crisis closer to home would focus Amery's attention between 1912 and 1914.

The Anglo-Irish Wilson and Roberts were supporters of the Ulster Unionists and had become embroiled in the Irish Home Rule controversy. Amery was also fervently opposed to Irish Home rule as were many Conservative MPs. However, the Liberal Government was in favour of granting home rule to the Irish and prepared to pass a Bill through parliament. In 1912 the Ulster Unionists responded by forming the Ulster Volunteer Force and prepared to defend the Union. Roberts was instrumental in establishing the force. The Nationalists created their own force of volunteers to defend their interests. Many Army officers stated that they would not use coercion against the Ulster Unionists if the government tried to enforce Home Rule. Roberts was also in close contact with dissentient regular army officers. By March 1914 it was becoming apparent that Ireland might descend into civil war. At this point relations between the Government and Army officers in Ireland rapidly deteriorated after the general officer commanding in Ireland, Sir Arthur Paget, gave all his officers an ultimatum: resign or be dismissed if you were not prepared enforce the Government's policy. The focus of military dissension was the Curragh barracks outside Dublin where nearly all of the officers chose dismissal. The commander of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Cavalry Brigade Brigadier-General Hubert Gough and commanding officers of the regiments involved were summoned to the WO for a meeting with Government officials and the CIGS. Wilson had been involved for sometime behind the scenes contacting the press and cajoling fellow officers not to implement the Government's policy. On 23 March 1914 Amery was given information from Wilson on what was happening at a meeting at the WO between Gough and the Government. Gough received written assurances from Field Marshal Sir John French, CIGS, that they would not be compelled to use force. However, this was later repudiated by the Cabinet and French resigned on the 30 March. Amery relayed the details of the meeting on the 23 March to Bonar Law who raised a question with Government over the issue the same afternoon in the House of Commons. After this Amery became a conduit through which the Opposition received information from Wilson. Amery also became the principle tormentor of the Government

within the House of Commons on the issue of Irish Home Rule.<sup>192</sup> However, the increasingly vehement Amery began launching personal attacks against Asquith in Parliament and gained a reputation for impertinence and un-parliamentary behaviour. The crisis rumbled on for many months and was only placed in abeyance by a greater emergency which was unfolding on the continent: the First World War.

The start of the First World War caught Amery by surprise, because, as he later claimed, he was consumed by the Irish question.<sup>193</sup> The NSL immediately suspended its activities and Roberts offered his services to the Government. In August 1914 Amery was appointed by Kitchener, the new Secretary of State for War, as a recruiting officer for his new volunteer army. Amery concentrated his efforts on Birmingham and requisitioned the Town Hall to process the large number of volunteers that were coming forward. A week later Kitchener promoted Amery to the position of Civilian Director for the Southern Command, with a room at the WO. Amery reported to General Sir Henry Rawlinson, the Director of Recruiting. During his time in post Amery instigated a cross party Parliamentary Recruiting Committee and attempted to convince Kitchener to use the Territorial Army Associations to house, train and clothe the massive influx of recruits. However, Amery was abruptly sacked and at the age of 41 volunteered to join Rawlinson's, who had been given a command in Belgium, staff with the rank of captain. Amery served in Flanders as a temporary intelligence officer during the early battles of the war. On 14 November 1914 Roberts died while visiting troops in France. Without doubt Amery had genuine affection for Roberts and over the coming years would protect Roberts reputation. In January 1915 Amery was asked by General Callwell, head of Intelligence, to write a handbook on Serbia for use by British troops who were being sent to Salonika. At the request of Asquith, Amery was refused permission to serve on the staff of senior officers in the field. After appealing to Balfour for help Amery was given a permanent position with Callwell as a member of the Balkan intelligence section of military intelligence.<sup>194</sup> Amery spent the next few months in the Balkans gathering intelligence and acting as liaison between the British military attaches in region and the WO. Before returning to London on July 4 1915 Amery witnessed the 'shambolic' British landings in the Dardanelles. On his return Amery unsuccessfully lobbied the WO and Cabinet for a greater effort to be made in the Middle East and Balkans.

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<sup>192</sup> Faber, D. (2005) p81.

<sup>193</sup> Amery, L. (1955). *My Political Life: Volume II, War and Peace 1914-1929*. London: Macmillan p15.

<sup>194</sup> AMEL 1-3-28, Memorandum for the General Staff on Balkan situation.

Whilst Amery was in the Balkans, Asquith formed a coalition government from all the main political parties. During the spring of 1915, the Government was placed under increasing pressure to introduce conscription after a fall in volunteer recruitment. In August 1915 the Government instigated a National Register which was designed to access the UK's manpower resources. The register revealed that 5,012,146 men of military age were still not in the armed forces; of this number only 690,138 were employed in the starred occupations such as munitions, mining and the railways. The problem for Asquith was that most of the Liberals in government were opposed to any form of compulsory service, while the Conservatives were in favour. At the suggestion of Callwell, Amery began a campaign in Parliament to introduce conscription. In late 1915 Milner and Amery instigated a ginger group of Conservative and Unionists politicians against Asquith, whom they blamed for the 'disastrous' prosecution of the war. Wilson also became involved urging Amery to get rid of Asquith so that 'if we are to win the war'.<sup>195</sup> The group met regularly on a Monday night to dine and would continue to do so for the rest of war. In October Lord Derby, Director-General of Recruiting, and a pre-war advocate of compulsory military service, introduced a recruiting scheme designed to compel men aged 18 to 41 to register their willingness to be called up if required. However, the scheme was unsuccessful and on 27 January 1916 the Government bowed to pressure and introduced a compulsory system for unmarried men.<sup>196</sup> Asquith insisted that scheme exclude married men. Nonetheless, in May the scheme was extended to include married men as well due to mounting political pressure to have an equitable universal system of 'sacrifice'. Another reason was the mounting casualty numbers being incurred on the western front. In the autumn of 1916 after the battle of the Somme, Asquith came under a considerable political pressure to create a small war cabinet to improve the day to day direction of the war which was floundering due to lack of clearly defined co-ordination. Asquith managed to remain in power but on 6 December 1916 was replaced by Lloyd George, the Secretary of State for War. Lloyd George was considered acceptable to the Conservatives and Unionists, who subsequently dominated the new coalition government.

Lloyd George decided to create a new five man war cabinet to co-ordinate the British and Imperial war effort. Lloyd George asked Milner to join the Cabinet as a Minister without portfolio. Milner then had Amery appointed assistant secretary to Maurice Hankey at the newly reconstituted War Cabinet Secretariat. Lloyd George had instructed Hankey to create

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<sup>195</sup> Roger Louis, W.M. (1992). *In the Name of God, Go! Leo Amery and the British Empire in the Age of Churchill* London: Norton p62.

<sup>196</sup> Adams, R, J, Q. 'Asquith's Choice: The May Coalition and the Coming of Conscription, 1915 - 1916' in *Journal of British Studies* Vol. 25, No. 3 (1986) pp 243-263.

an entirely new system of cabinet governance to manage the direction of the war.<sup>197</sup> Hankey's War Cabinet Secretariat controlled the distribution of civil and military memorandum to and from the Cabinet, recorded and set the agenda of cabinet meetings, arranged the attendance of Ministers outside of the Cabinet and senior officers. Hankey's control of the War Cabinet Secretariat gave him unprecedented power and influence. This placed Amery for the first time at the heart of the government in the most powerful bureaucratic department in Whitehall. However, Hankey was deeply suspicious of Amery, because he thought he was over ambitious, pushy and a conspiratorial intriguer.<sup>198</sup> Another critic was Lord Derby, the new Secretary of State for War, who for sometime blocked Amery's promotion from captain to lieutenant colonel. However, this did not stop Amery becoming more involved in the preparation of strategic memorandum for the War Cabinet. Amery produced a considerable number of papers on the 'Empire at War' and was closely associated with the creation of imperial war cabinet.<sup>199</sup> Between 1917 and 1918 Amery was also responsible for collating and distributing Cabinet memorandums on the situation on the Western Front.<sup>200</sup> Amery was present at many of the key Cabinet meetings of the war. He later stated, that he learnt, that if the secretary provided a good conclusion to the discussion of a Cabinet or Committee it was rarely queried.<sup>201</sup>

On 1 December 1917 Henry Wilson became the British military representative on the newly created allied Supreme War Council (SWC). This post gave Wilson unrestricted daily access to Lloyd George and the war Cabinet and brought him back into daily contact with Amery. Wilson rapidly became a confidant of Lloyd George. However, this brought Wilson into conflict with General Sir William Robertson, Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS), who resented Wilson's interference in strategic matters. In January 1918 Wilson asked Amery to prepare a draft plan for allied operations for the rest of the year, which was known as Resolution 12. Amery argued that the allies should maintain a defensive posture in France and Italy but go on the offensive in the Middle East. Wilson approved the plan and submitted it to Lloyd George. However, Robertson objected and then conducted a press campaign against Lloyd George. On 18 February 1918 Robertson resigned and Lloyd George appointed Wilson as CIGS. Over time Amery developed a close working relationship with Lloyd George. Amery lobbied Lloyd George for some time to make Milner the Secretary of State for War. In April 1918 at the height of the German spring offensive Lloyd George made Milner Secretary

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<sup>197</sup> Naylor, J. F. (1984). *A man and an institution: Sir Maurice Hankey, the cabinet secretariat and the custody of cabinet secrecy* London: Macmillan p26.

<sup>198</sup> Faber, D. (2005) p98.

<sup>199</sup> AMEL 1-3-28, 'The Empire at War' .

<sup>200</sup> CAB 24/146, Cabinet Memorandum: Western and General Report 11, June 1917.

<sup>201</sup> Amery, L. (1955) p92.

of State for War. Amery moved to an office next to Milner at the WO and became the secretary of the so called X Committee which was comprised of Wilson, Milner and Lloyd-George.<sup>202</sup> For the remaining months of the war Amery worked closely with Milner and Wilson. At the end of the war, Amery was involved in preparing armistice terms for the various fronts and was on the periphery of the armistice talks in Paris.

In November 1918 Lloyd George and Bonar Law came to an understanding that the wartime coalition would be extended into peacetime. Lloyd George had the allegiance of 114 Liberal MPs and Bonar Law agreed to give these candidates a free run in the forthcoming election. Lloyd George and Bonar Law issued a joint letter of approval to their candidates which Asquith dubbed the 'Coupon'. Parliament was dissolved on 25 November 1918 and Amery was re-elected as a coupon candidate with a massive majority of 12,211 on 28 December. Lloyd George appointed Milner as Secretary of State for the Colonies. Amery was appointed Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Colonies. Amery's principle achievement whilst at the CO was the promotion of Empire migration; Amery helped establish the Overseas Settlement Committee which offered free passage to ex-servicemen to the Dominions.<sup>203</sup> He was also concerned with co-ordinating improvements to imperial communication and transport networks. He stayed at the CO until Milner resigned as Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1921. Amery was then made Parliamentary and Financial Secretary to the Admiralty. By 1922 many Conservative backbenchers were arguing that the coalition should be dissolved and a general election called. In early 1922 Bonar Law was forced to step down due to ill health and Austen Chamberlain became leader of the Conservative Party. Chamberlain wished to continue the coalition because he feared an electoral shift to the Labour party. However, Lloyd George was pursuing a belligerent Eastern policy which gave tacit support to further Greek territorial ambitions in Turkey. The Turks under Mustafa Kemal refused to accept the terms of the 1920 treaty of Sevres, which had ceded large sections of Asia Minor to the Greeks. In August 1922 the Turks attacked the Greeks and quickly drove them back. The British had a small force of troops at Chanak in the Dardanelles which formed a neutral zone between the two sides. The Turks quickly closed in on the British forces it appeared that Britain might be at war with Turkey. Lloyd George requested military assistance and moral support from the Dominion Governments; however, the only country to do so was New Zealand. At the same time Lloyd George issued a belligerent public communication which threatened the Turks with war if they did not retreat. However, there was no public support for a war against Turkey which greatly weakened

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<sup>202</sup> Faber, D. (2005) p114.

<sup>203</sup> Constantine, S. 'Migrants and Settlers' in Brown, J. and Roger Louis, W. M. (1999). *The Oxford History of the British Empire The Twentieth Century* Oxford: Oxford University Press p172.

Lloyd-Georges position. Although, a peaceful resolution to the crisis was achieved the Conservatives in the coalition were concerned that Lloyd George had acted irresponsibly. For many Conservative backbenchers this was the catalyst for forcing Chamberlain to end the coalition and call an election. On 22 June, Henry Wilson, by then the Unionist MP for North Down, was assassinated by two Irish republicans as he returned to his house, 36 Eaton Place, London, after unveiling a war memorial at Liverpool Street Station. The death of Wilson horrified Amery, who reflected in his diary that he had lost, 'one of my best friends'.<sup>204</sup> Wilson was also godfather to Julian Amery.

On 3 August Amery acting as spokesman for a group of disgruntled junior ministers informed Austen Chamberlain, an old friend that they were no longer prepared to serve under Lloyd George in a coalition Government. This became known as the 'revolt of the under secretaries'. On 19 October Chamberlain was confronted by a group of Conservative backbenchers at a stormy meeting at the Carlton club and was forced to agree to dissolve the coalition. The same day Lloyd George resigned and the coalition and government collapsed. A general election was set for 15 November. However, Austen Chamberlain considered Amery's intervention a personal insult which ended their friendship. Chamberlain resigned as leader and a rejuvenated Bonar Law returned to lead the Conservative party. On 15 November 1922 the Conservatives won the election with a majority of 87 and Bonar Law became Prime Minister. Amery was made First Lord of the Admiralty. During his tenure at the Admiralty Amery contributed to the *1924 Cabinet Report of the Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence on National and Imperial Defence* which sought to clarify and improve co-ordination between the three services in the field of national and imperial defence; and provide a framework for the creation of a air defence scheme for the Empire and the UK.<sup>205</sup> Amery was also involved in the dispute and subsequent enquiry between the Admiral of the Fleet the Earl Beatty, First Sea Lord 1919-1927, and the Air Ministry and Royal Air Force over the control of naval aviation; Amery supported Beatty within Cabinet but was forced to convince Beatty not to resign and take all of the naval members of the Admiralty with him when the decision of the enquiry went against the navy.<sup>206</sup>

Amery had to grapple with the consequences of the 'Geddes Cuts' to public spending in early 1920s and the imposition of the Ten Year Rule which stunted development and investment in

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<sup>204</sup> AMEL 7/16, Amery Diary entry 22 June 1922.

<sup>205</sup> National Archive, CAB 24/164, *Cabinet Report of the Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence on National and Imperial Defence*; hereafter CAB24/164.

<sup>206</sup> Barnes, J. and Nicholson, D. (eds). (1980). *The Leo Amery Diaries. Vol. 1 1896-1929* London: Hutchinson p314.

the Armed Forces.<sup>207</sup> Although, initially Navy was able to escape the worst consequences of Geddes recommendations the signing of the Washington Naval Treaty in 1922 annulled any pretensions about gaining parity with the other naval powers; in effect Britain was entering a phase of disarmament and tonnage restriction. The same year the Anglo-Japanese treaty was allowed to lapse. Both of these events were to have long-term consequences for British defence and foreign policies in the coming years. In 1923 Amery also cautioned the Cabinet against involving Britain in collective security arrangements-outside of the Dominions-and European treaties of guarantee and disarmament which he postulated would increase British commitments and 'drag' Britain into wars 'which we have no real interest, without in the slightest degree promoting either our own peace and security'.<sup>208</sup> On the question of disarmament Amery noted that prevailing ideological and political argument that the pre-war arms race had contributed to the outbreak of the Great War had missed the point, because it was 'essential to keep in mind that it is not armaments, as such, which bring about wars, but the conflict of interests and ambitions'.<sup>209</sup> However, Amery did argue that 'where there is no real conflict, where a costly competition of arms has grown up almost accidentally, or based on vague suspicion, frank explanation and discussion may put an end to such a competition for all concerned'. Amery cited the recent Washington naval limitation talks as a recent example of how mutual disarmament talks should, and could, proceed. But he warned that where there were 'fundamental differences of policy it is idle to imagine that a reduction of armaments is possible, or would, contribute to peace'. Presciently, but increasingly out of step with government policy, Amery contended that it only armed strength which preserves the peace in Europe. This memorandum exemplifies Amery's views on disarmament and the relative merits of collective security arrangements in the 1920s and 1930s.

Amery was disparaging of the League of Nations, which he compared to the Holy Alliance of 1814 Covenant, because it had the capacity to involve the UK in disputes and acts of aggression which had no strategic influence, or impact, on British interests and imperial policy. Amery advocated a partial return to Britain's Victorian diplomatic status of 'grand isolation' and argued that 'danger' lay in Africa, on the Afghan Frontier, the Middle East and the Far East, in other words adjacent or within the Empire. However, Amery's tenure at the Admiralty was cut short by the resignation of Bonar Law in May 1923 due to ill health. In October 1923 the new Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, decided to call a general election and fought the campaign with a manifesto commitment to impose tariff reform which he argued

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<sup>207</sup> Clarke, P. (1996). *Hope and Glory: Britain 1900-1990* London: Penguin p109.

<sup>208</sup> National Archive, CAB 24/ 161, 'Cabinet; Treaties of Mutual Guarantee and reduction of Armaments' 3 July 1923; hereafter CAB 24/161.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid* p2.

would reduce unemployment and protect British industry. Amery had lobbied Baldwin and his fellow Cabinet members for the introduction of this policy for a number of months. The Labour and Liberal parties fought the campaign on a free trade platform. Amery was now one of the preeminent tariff reformers in British politics who whole heartedly endorsed Baldwin's plan. However, the result on 5 December was a comprehensive rejection of protectionism. Although, the Conservatives were still the biggest single party in Parliament they had no overall majority. Baldwin attempted to govern by appealing to the house but this was voted down by the Liberal's led by Asquith. The Liberal's then allowed Ramsay MacDonald, leader of the Labour party, to form the country's first Labour Government. However, the Labour Government was dependent on Liberal support. This state of affairs lasted for ten months until the Liberals voted against the Government and another general election was called for the 24 October 1924. The resultant election campaign was fought on anti-socialist platform by the Liberals and Conservatives. However, the main beneficiary's were the Conservatives who won the election with a majority of 223. Labour lost nine seats and the Liberals one hundred and nineteen. This marked the end of Liberal party as a major political force for rest of the century.

On 6 November 1924 Amery was made Secretary of State for the Colonies. Amery had coveted this post for some time and saw this as his opportunity to carry-out a radical development programme in the colonies. He subsequently set up the Colonial Medical Research Council, the Empire Marketing Board and instigated a modest colonial development scheme after his more ambitious plans were scaled back by the Treasury and he created a new co-ordinated agricultural research service for the colonies. Amery was the first Secretary of State for the Colonies to undertake a tour all the Dominions. On 25 May 1925 Milner died which left Amery as the Conservative Party's foremost imperialist. In 1925 Amery stated in a speech that his aim was to utilise 'the economic possibilities' of the Empire's tropical territories and unlock its 'immense natural resources'.<sup>210</sup> In 1925 he formed the Dominions Office which he thought would foster a sense imperial unity and become a conduit to exchange information and theories and resolve policy anomalies. After 1925 he was also Secretary of State for Dominions. However, he was less successful at fostering a new spirit of collective responsibility between the Dominions and Britain. Although, Amery was advocate of Dominion participation in a multilateral collective security arrangement, he found the realities of the situation frustrating. This was starkly illustrated by unilateral decision by the Canadians to withdraw its forces from Russia in 1918, the rejection of the creation of an imperial navy in 1919, and the Chanak Crisis in 1922. The debate was characterised by the

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<sup>210</sup> Judd, D. (1996) p282.



unwillingness of the Dominion Government to have their defence and foreign policies controlled or influenced by the British Government.<sup>211</sup> In the 1920s South Africa and Canada increasingly pursued amplification of their status within a 'voluntary' imperial system, while the other Dominions were more measured in their approach. In 1926 the 'Balfour Definition' set-out a compromise formula which made the members of the Commonwealth 'autonomous communities' with an 'allegiance to the crown'.<sup>212</sup> This appeased their aspirations for independent status and kept them within the British sphere of influence. The intellectual driving force behind the compromise had been Amery because he sought to foster a spirit of unity.

During the interwar years little progress was made on creating an effective imperial military force. In fact, the Dominion's military forces reverted to being small underequipped militia's with diminutive professional cadre for training purposes. The Dominions also had virtually no air force personnel or modern aircraft; the combined strength of the Dominion air force personnel in the 1920s and 1930s was 1854 but there were virtually no aircraft.<sup>213</sup> There were no large-scale manoeuvres or exercises with British forces; however, there were some joint staff planning meetings, liaison and training of staff officers, but little else. The only the Dominion with a sizeable naval forces was Australia. The other great imperial force was the Indian Army which was reorganised in 1922 to incorporate the lessons of the Great War and recent constitutional developments in India. However, Indian politicians began demanding that defence expenditure and the British garrison be reduced. The British had no intention of reducing the garrison but did reduce defence expenditure; this had the effect of starving the Indian Army of modern equipment. During the 1920s Amery sought to improve imperial defence and was involved in the planning for the naval base at Singapore while at the Admiralty. However, he was bitterly opposed in the Parliament by the Liberals and was depicted by H. G. Wells as a war monger.<sup>214</sup> When he became Secretary of State for the Colonies he sat on the Cabinet sub-committee which finalised the plans for the base.<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> See for example Ashton, S. R. and Stockwell, S. E. (eds). (1996). *Imperial Policy and colonial Practice 1925-1940: Pt I Metropolitan reorganisation, defence and international relations, political change and constitutional reform* London: HMSO; Beloff, M. (1989). *Dream of Commonwealth 1921-42: Volume 2 of Imperial Sunset* London: Macmillan; Clayton, A. (1986). *British Empire as a Superpower, 1919-39* London: Athens; Kennedy, G. (ed). (2008). *Imperial Defence: the old world order 1856-1956* London: Routledge; Raugh, H. E. (ed). (2006). *The British Army 1815-1914* Aldershot: Ashgate; Watt, D. C. 'Imperial Defence Policy and Imperial Foreign Policy, 1911-1949: A Neglected Paradox?', *Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies*, No. 1 (1963).

<sup>212</sup> Hyam, R. (2006) p70.

<sup>213</sup> Barclay, G. S. (1976). *The Empire is Marching A study of the military effort of the British Empire 1800-1945* London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson p99.

<sup>214</sup> Amery, L. (1955). p253.

<sup>215</sup> CAB 24/172, CP 124 (25) Cabinet, The Singapore Base: Memorandum by the Chairman of the Committee of Imperial Defence.

However, Leo Amery's original plans were much reduced by reductions in defence expenditure. Increasingly, Amery was hampered by a lack of financial support to implement all his schemes when he was Colonial Secretary. Similarly, during his tenure as Colonial Secretary Amery made many enemies within Cabinet, because of his habit of talking over people or involving himself in other departments business.<sup>216</sup> With rising unemployment and an international financial system in crisis Baldwin called a general election for the 30 May 1929.

The Conservatives narrowly lost the 1929 election and Amery returned to the backbenches. However, when the National government was formed in 1931 Amery was not offered a post in the new government. Grayson argues that his persistent support for imperial preference and tariff control lead to his not being recalled to the National Government.<sup>217</sup> Also by then he had gained a reputation as an outspoken rightwing imperialist which made him unacceptable to the Liberals and Labour members of the Government. Among his fellow Conservatives his imperious manner and his capacity for scheming and intrigue left him isolated. Therefore, during the 1930s he held no government appointments but was an active backbencher within the Conservative parliamentary party and an ardent critic of appeasement.<sup>218</sup> From the backbenches he focused on the importance of a imperial strategic and economic co-operation as it became apparent, to him and others, that Britain and the Empire was inadequately prepared to resist the emerging external threats posed by Germany, Italy and Japan. However, it must also be noted that in the 1920s and 1930s there was a widespread support for the concept of international disarmament and pacifism in Britain because of the psychological impact of the Great War. Many people supported appeasement because they loathed and feared another major war which many thought would literally destroy the 'civilised world'. The economic problems of the Depression added to the general malaise and undermined public confidence in the state and the capitalist system. However, through-out the 1920s and into the early 1930s there was no credible threat to the British Empire from another power. Therefore, Amery appeared out of touch with the public and to a certain degree with mainstream political opinion in the early 1930s.

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<sup>216</sup> Middlemas, K. (ed). (1969). *Thomas Jones, Whitehall Diary: Volume II 1926-1930* London: Oxford University Press p175.

<sup>217</sup> Louis, W, M. (1992). *In the name of God, go: Leo Amery and the British Empire in the age of Churchill* London: Norton p 96.

<sup>218</sup> Grayson, R,S. (2006). 'Imperialism in Conservative Defence and Foreign Policy: Leo Amery and the Chamberlains, 1903-39' in *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* Vol. 34, No. 4 pp 505-527.

## Chapter Two: Creating the Army League

Through-out the 1930s Amery opposed the policy of appeasement. However, he also believed that Britain should be 'detached' from European affairs.<sup>219</sup> In 1931 Amery used the naval estimate debate to attack what he construed as 'wilful neglect of national security in the name of efficiencies'.<sup>220</sup> In the early 1930s Amery persistently argued that Britain was pursuing a short-term policy of unilateral disarmament which in the long run would adversely affect Britain's imperial security. However, development of the armed forces was still constrained by the limitations of the ten year rule which had imposed in 1919 when Amery was a junior minister. Bond notes that the imposition of a ten year rule was 'eminently sensible' after a major war, but in the mid 1920s the policy was placed on shifting basis that carried on until 1932 which was a destabilising factor on the development and rearmament of the Army.<sup>221</sup> However, after the First World War British overseas responsibilities increased which placed added pressure on an overstretched and underfunded Army. In 1932 the Chiefs of Staff (COS) managed to get the ten year rule overturned.<sup>222</sup> However, by the late 1920s the army was equipped with obsolete equipment and had insufficient numbers of munitions to allow for an adequate training cycle. During annual manoeuvres flags were used to simulate the position of guns and tanks. The Territorial Army was particularly short of equipment. In 1933 the Government setup the Defence Requirement Committee (DRC), which was comprised of representatives from the COS, Treasury and the Foreign Office (FO), to report on what urgent deficiencies three services had. The DRC outlined a five year rearmament programme. The WO wanted £40 million which was based on what the available industrial capacity in the much depleted armaments industry could realistically produce in the time span. The General Staff also wanted to organize a small expeditionary force which would be equipped to fight on the Continent.

However, Neville Chamberlain, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, was in favour of giving priority to the Royal Air Force and the Navy which he believed constituted a better deterrent than the Army. He rejected the notion that the Army should prepare small expeditionary force for operational use on the Continent. Chamberlain argued that the Maginot line rendered the French frontier impregnable which diminished the need for a British expeditionary force; he

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<sup>219</sup> Amery, L. (1935). *The Forward View* London: G Bless p282

<sup>220</sup> Amery, L. 'Navy Estimates, 1931' House of Commons Debate, 2 March 1931, *Hansard*, vol. 249, col. 1223.

<sup>221</sup> Bond, B. 'Judgement in Military History' in *Royal United Services Institute Journal (RUSIJ)* No. 134. (1989) p73.

<sup>222</sup> CAB 24/229, Cabinet Imperial Defence Policy, Reports by the Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee, February 1932.

concluded that Britain would be able to provide air and naval support to her allies and the Army should concentrate its effort on its imperial role and make a greater contribution to the air defence of Great Britain (ADGB). As a consequence the Army received £20 million. With some justification the Army considered it-self to be the 'Cinderella Service'. After 1934 in response to public fear of air attack the bulk of the Territorial Army was diverted to an air defence role. By the mid 1930s Amery's earlier scepticism concerning the ability of the League Nations to maintain the international system and its covenant commitment to promote disarmament was replaced by open hostility. In 1935 Amery argued against British support for the League of Nations use of sanctions against Italy, which had recently invaded Abyssinia, because he thought that it would only alienate Mussolini's Government and create a hostile state along Britain's imperial route through the Mediterranean to the Far East and India.<sup>223</sup> Amery argued that Italian forces in Libya and Abyssinia posed a threat to British interests in the Middle East and Eastern Africa which could not be ignored. In September 1935 three battalions of troops were dispatched to Malta and a brigade to Egypt from the UK. The Japanese occupation of Manchuria and its increasing belligerence toward China had destabilised the Far East and posed a threat to British interests in the region. Bond notes that the small Army by the early 1930s was incapable of effectively discharging its imperial defence role because its equipment, numbers and transport were inadequate.<sup>224</sup> On 16 March Germany announced that it was reintroducing conscription and that it had formed an air-force. This marked the end of the military limitations imposed on Germany at Versailles in 1919. During 1935 as the international situation continued to deteriorate Amery became convinced that Britain should increase the pace of the rearmament programme.<sup>225</sup>

In 1936 Amery began using the Empire Industries Association as a national platform to argue for increased imperial unity.<sup>226</sup> Amery organised a national campaign at which he gave speeches and made attended rallies supporting imperial preference and greater economic integration between Britain and the Dominions. Amery thought that this campaign was essential if British foreign policy was to be unequivocally backed the Dominions. He also considered it essential to the industrial development of British and Imperial industries which could then be better harnessed for strategic purposes and assist in the rapid mobilization of the Empire's resources in a future war. On 7 March 1936 German troops marched into the Rhineland which was seen as a final repudiation of Versailles Treaty. British response was to

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<sup>223</sup> Amery, L. 'Foreign Affairs Debate', in *Hansard*, 24 February 1936, Vol. 309, col. 104

<sup>224</sup> Bond, B. (1989) p70.

<sup>225</sup> Amery, L. 'Navy Estimate Debate 1935' in *Hansard*, 14 March 1935, Vol. 299, col. 648-652.

<sup>226</sup> Barnes, J. and Nicholson, D. (eds). (1988). *The Empire at Bay: The Leo Amery Diaries* London: Hutchinson p352.

allow Germany to remedy its 'justified grievances' in an attempt to avert a war.<sup>227</sup> However, it was now apparent that the balance of power in Europe was shifting which had long term implications for British foreign and defence policy. In November 1936 Amery was a member of a deputation of backbenchers and peers who had a meeting with Baldwin to discuss the matter of air rearmament. Amery also began writing letters to *The Times* stating that the Army needed strengthening which he argued could only be achieved by improving terms and conditions of service to stimulate recruitment.<sup>228</sup> But, Amery forcibly argued that Britain should not commit ground troops to the continent. However, Amery was an adherent of the air retaliation policy which was dependent on the development of a fleet of long range bombers.

By mid 1936 the Arab revolt in Palestine was in full swing and the Army was hard pressed to find enough manpower to deal with the problem and had been forced to call up Section A (most recently released men) of the Army reserve. Amery believed that the WO was being placed in an impossible position. The pace of rearmament was slow and in the case of the army there were serious delays and problems with programme. On 4 December 1936 the General Staff circulated a memorandum to the Cabinet on the present state of the organization, armament and equipment of the Army that unequivocally stated that the army could only send two divisions abroad which could not be provided with up to date weapons and was therefore 'not fit for war according to modern standards'.<sup>229</sup> On 16 December 1936 Duff Cooper, Secretary of State for War, wrote a memorandum to the Cabinet wanting clarification of when the Territorial Army would start receiving new equipment and confirmation of whether it would be configured for continental service which had a bearing on reequipping costs.<sup>230</sup> Cooper felt strongly enough about the situation to state that unless the Territorial Army received new equipment 'it might as well be abolished'. However, Chamberlain was opposed to anything other than a token continental commitment and continued to block any increase in spending on the Army until a further analysis of the problem had been carried out by the Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence, Sir Thomas Inskip. In other words he kicked the issue into the long grass.

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<sup>227</sup> Clarke, P. (1996). *Hope and Glory Britain 1900-1990* London: Penguin p185.

<sup>228</sup> Amery, L. 'The Army we need' in *The Times*, 20 November 1936.

<sup>229</sup> CAB 24/265, C.P. 325 (36). The Cabinet: The Organization, Armament and Equipment of the Army 4 December 1936.

<sup>230</sup> CAB 28/86, Cabinet 75, (36). Cabinet Meeting, 16 December 1936.

Another problem for the WO was a collapse in recruitment to the Army and Territorial Army which were both under strength.<sup>231</sup> The regular army establishment shortfall was 10, 074 and the Territorial's 40,000. The Army had 22 battalions fewer than in 1914 but had more imperial responsibilities. Amery estimated that the Army in 1936 had 112,000 fewer men than in 1914. In October 1936 Cooper circulated a paper to the Cabinet setting out the extent of the problem and his ideas for dealing with; Cooper shrewdly ensured that the paper contained recommendations and approval from the Army Council. Cooper wanted to improve conditions of service, pay, accommodation, new recreational facilities, free vocational training on discharge and improved employment prospects within the state sector for ex-servicemen. There was nothing new in this approach, however, the eternal problem was the cost; an initial outlay of £1,941,000 and then an annual additional cost of £1,898,000. The other problem was that the WO had identified a major problem with the garrison facilities in India which they concluded was having a detrimental effect on retention and recruitment to the regular army. The Government would be forced to ask the Government of India for £150,000 followed by an annual amount of £1,139,000. However, Cooper argued that the Indian Government 'should not be allowed to prevent this being put into force'. These were recognised to be 'formidable' figures but Cooper noted 'I believe they represent the price of the survival of the voluntary service'. Cooper was also wanted the Army begin planning for a continental commitment which put him at odds with Chamberlain who was opposed on the grounds of economic cost and his psychological aversion for creating the conditions for another protracted war of attrition on the Western Front. Danchev contends that Chamberlain was increasingly influenced by Liddell Hart's theories on 'limited liability' because it justified his aversion for a continental commitment and legitimised his defence policy.<sup>232</sup>

This was the situation facing the army when in early 1937 Edward Beddington-Behrens city investor, former soldier and League of Nations official, suggested to Amery that he should create a study group which could look at the whole question of 'Army reform' and imperial defence. Amery agreed and they both set about recruiting distinguished politicians, businessmen and retired soldiers to the study group. Amery decided to call the group the Army League Committee. Amery was able to convince Field Marshal Lord Milne, the former CIGS 1926 -1933, to be a member. Milne was heavily criticised at the time by Fuller, Liddell Hart and other military commentators for not pushing through at a faster pace of mechanization, motorization and modernisation of the army during tenure as CIGS.<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>231</sup> CAB 24/265, Cabinet: Recruiting For The Army Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War, October 1936

<sup>232</sup> Danchev, A. (1998). *Alchemist of War: The Life of Basil Liddell Hart* London: Phoenix p191.

<sup>233</sup> Bond, B. (1980). *British Military Policy Between the Two World Wars* Oxford: Oxford University Press p131.

However, Bond argues that the late 1920s and 1930s were a period when rapid technological advances in military equipment were rendering orthodox doctrines obsolete and as a consequence the lessons of the First World War were far from clear.<sup>234</sup> Milne was also president of the Army Cadet Force Association which was supported by funds from the dormant NSL-Amery administered the endowment. Milne famously remarked in 1926 that the Great War had been ‘abnormal’, and that the army was most unlikely ever again to be required to fight a European War; Sir Harry Hague was managing director of the chemical firm Wander Ltd, which made Ovaltine, and Chairman of Blackfriars Skin Hospital; Sir Anderson Montague Barlow Bart, Conservative MP, former Minister of Labour, who in 1920s chaired a Cabinet select committee on soldier’s pensions; Lt-General Sir Ronald Charles who had been Director of Military Operations and Intelligence at the WO 1931-34; The Marquess of Willingdon the former Viceroy of India 1931-36. Willingdon’s period as Viceroy had been very tumultuous because he had to deal with Gandhi’s campaign of civil disobedience and implement the Government of India Act; Sir Arnold Wilson, Conservative MP, author, a former Anglo-Persian oil executive, soldier and colonial administrator. Wilson met Mussolini in 1935 and Hitler several times between 1935 and 1937 and he was admirer of General Franco. Wilson wrote in 1935 that Hitler ‘was a great instrument of peace in the world’.<sup>235</sup> All the men had similar social backgrounds and were connected to the Conservative or Unionist Party. The only member who had not gone to public school was Sir Harry Hague. The first meeting of the Army League Committee took place on 1 February 1937 at the Army and Navy Club in London. Beddington-Behrens opened the meeting and said they had gathered together to discuss the ‘possibility of formulating a policy for popularising the Army’.<sup>236</sup> He posed the question, ‘What position would arise if some real military peril threatened the country or our Empire overseas’. This of course was a well trodden path for Amery, who had been arguing since 1900 for adequate reserves. Beddington-Behrens went on to argue that ‘the present deficiency in recruits, both for the regulars and the Territorial’s, was such that the present voluntary system was breaking down’. Amery and Beddington-Behrens suggested that the Committee would put forward proposals to the government in the form of a report. Once they had done this they proposed ‘elaborating’ a policy and starting an organisation along the lines of the Navy League which could be used for ‘general propaganda’. Beddington-Behrens suggested that the procedures of the National Housing Committee might be a useful guide when writing and publishing the report. Beddington-Behrens was a member of a The National Housing Committee comprised of businessmen,

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<sup>234</sup> Bond, B. (1981). ‘Outsiders influence on Defence Policy’ in *Royal United Service Institution Journal* No. 127, col.1, p10.

<sup>235</sup> Haxey, S. (1939). *Tory MP* London: Victor p24.

<sup>236</sup> AMEL 1/7/82, Army League Committee Summary of Discussion 1 February 1937.

eminent architects and housing reformers which in 1934 produced a private report which called for slum clearance, lower rents and a comprehensive programme of house building. The Committee attempted to put pressure on the Government by circulating an interim report to the Government and then the Press. An interim report being shorter and made up of headings received considerably more editorial and public attention than a normal report which was longer and more technical. Because of the report Beddington-Behrens secured a meeting with Neville Chamberlain to discuss its findings; he noted that Chamberlain listened to him patiently and then told him the government had no money for any great house building programme.<sup>237</sup> However, some of the recommendations were later incorporated into legislation.

Beddington-Behrens stated the Army League report would be designed to shape public opinion. However, he noted that the report 'must not enter into criticisms of the Government', but was designed to rouse public opinion in the country to 'help' the Government agree to certain 'necessary measures'.<sup>238</sup> He also thought that the Press would actively support constructive proposals put forward by the committee. He concluded that the report should be careful not to appear to militaristic because it was bound to attract criticism of this sort. In 1935 11.6 million people in the UK signed the Peace ballot (the UK's first national referendum) which argued that Britain should be actively pursuing a multilateral international disarmament policy, and be a leading member of the League of Nations.<sup>239</sup> Sir Harry Hague wanted to know if it was possible to get support from the 'Liberal and Labour' papers for any scheme connected to the Army. After a general discussion it was agreed that the 'Left Wing' was now beginning to fear the weakness of an 'unarmed democracy' in the 'face of the enormous military forces of the Dictatorship Powers'.<sup>240</sup> This point is interesting because the Labour Party usually voted against the Government's defence estimates on ideological grounds but there was an internal struggle within the Labour Party over the issue of rearmament. In June 1937 the Labour party national executive committee rescinded the party's objections to the rearmament policy and at the party conference in October 1937 the Labour party voted in favour of endorsing the executive committee's proposals. Sir Montague Barlow said he was attempting to get some representation from the Labour Party on the committee. He also thought it essential that they gain support from the Trade Unions, especially in the area of employment for ex-soldiers which he considered a vital consideration if the committee was to make suggestions for improving recruitment.

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<sup>237</sup> Beddington-Behrens, E. (1963). *Look Back Look Forward* London: Macmillan p106.

<sup>238</sup> AMEL 1/7/82, Army League Committee Summary of Discussion, 1 February 1937 p1.

<sup>239</sup> Ceadel, M. 'The first British referendum: the Peace Ballot, 1934-35', *English Historical Review*, 95. (1980) pp810-835.

<sup>240</sup> AMEL 1/7/82, Army League Committee Summary of Discussion, 1 February 1937 p2.



Lord Milne was 'anxious' that the committee would be run by civilians, because he did not want it 'to look as if the soldiers were conspiring together to obtain any special privileges'. Milne also thought it more appropriate that the 'soldiers' would give their advice as 'technicians'. This reflected a perception in British society that soldiers were above politics; however, Amery had worked closely on major political campaigns with two of the most politicised soldiers in British history Wilson and Roberts. Montague Barlow pointed out that the committee conclusions needed to be clearly associated with those of senior officers to have credence with public and the Government. Milne wanted that Committee to clearly determine for what purpose the Army was required for, what things the country should fight for and what armed forces were required to meet these contingencies. This was a reference to a continental commitment and asks the question what are the strategic and diplomatic absolutes which the British would accept as a condition to go to war. Milne wanted the report to be compiled slowly so it would have a permanent influence on policy. He confessed that he 'feared the general unpreparedness'. Amery agreed that the committee needed to formulate a general policy 'to show the direction and purpose of the Army'. He also wanted 'concrete' proposals on improving conditions of service which would assist recruitment in the future.<sup>241</sup> Amery wanted the group to make its report then wait and see what response it got and then form an Army League to promote Army issues to the public and the Government. Rather than abstractedly hinting at a continental commitment Amery stated the group had to consider whether an Expeditionary Force for intervention on the European Continent was really required. Amery was in-favour of the Air Force being the principle offensive weapon against another European power. He also pessimistically argued that given the state of recruitment to the Army this may have to be the only means providing military assistance to another European power. Generally British strategic planning between the wars revolved around an antagonism between the needs of imperial defence and the possibility of a continental commitment and a lack of resources; however, this obscured the wider implications of political and strategic developments on the continent and in the Far East to the detriment of an interdependent security policy based on a multilateral approach.<sup>242</sup>

Charles was concerned that Army had a bad reputation with the public which needed redressing. He also cautioned that the report should not be rushed and should be delayed until after the Army estimates to determine what the Government's defence policy was. Amery argued against, because he thought the Government 'has never expressed any general view upon such policy in the past' and thought 'unlikely that would do so in the future'. However,

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<sup>241</sup> *Ibid* p3.

<sup>242</sup> Howard, M. (1972). *The Continental Commitment* London; Bond, B (1980). *British Military Policy Between the Two World Wars* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

he thought that if the committee made a review of underlying policy it might force the government to take note. Sir Arnold Wilson wanted the Army League formed immediately, because of the Regular Army's urgent requirement for 16,000 recruits. He thought conditions in the Army were so bad that he would not personally advise anyone to join. However, he believed that conscription was the only way to get a satisfactory Army, though he thought that Committee 'should not advocate this policy at this stage'.<sup>243</sup> The committee decided not to form the League until after it had published a report. Amery told the group that he would ask Duff Cooper, Sir Maurice Hankey and Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS), Field Marshal Sir Cyril Deverell, if they would see them informally to discuss the general policy of the Committee. Beddington-Behrens then proposed Amery as Chairman which was carried unanimously. Lord Willingdon stated that he was willing to serve but made no real contribution to the discussion. At the end of the meeting Beddington Behren was tasked with preparing a draft report for the committee to discuss at the next meeting which was set for March 17.

On 13 February Amery, Charles and Beddington-Behrens went and saw Cooper at the WO. Cooper informed that he welcomed their decision to help the Army and would be grateful of any assistance they might give; however, he was more cautious about their idea of forming an Army League and said he would have to discuss this with his officials before making a statement of his views on the subject.<sup>244</sup> Cooper minuted his officials that he was favour of a League but was concerned that must follow Government policy, rather than advancing one of its own which might be opposed to the Government's position. He was also concerned that if the 'distinguished gentlemen' of the League were not fully conversant with the position of the WO through a lack of information they might inadvertently cause the department embarrassment. On 10 March General Sir Reginald May, the Quarter Master General (QMG), wrote a memorandum to the Army council stating that he thought it was doubtful if the League would be a success.<sup>245</sup> He thought that the League would struggle to raise funds from the public; there would be a public perception that the League would want to 'further a war on the continent; the Trade Unions would oppose it; it would be accused of being militaristic by a 'large number of influential people'. He also stated that when the Navy League was formed (189 'the majority of the country was only semi-educated and a great number illiterate, who were accustomed to believe what they were told. The man in the street does not now believe what he told'. Because of this May thought the Army League would find it difficult to

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<sup>243</sup> AMEL 1/7/82, Army League Committee Summary of Discussion, 1 February 1937 p4.

<sup>244</sup> National Archive, War Office File, WO 32/4644, Army League, minute no1, 18 February 1937. Hereafter, WO 32/4644.

<sup>245</sup> WO 32/4644, Loose Minute No3, Memorandum on the Army League by QMG, 10 March 1937.

convince the public to support it work. The CIGS was also hostile, because he was concerned that the League would begin to 'lay down policy'. May agreed and noted that the proposed membership list would not 'look on complacently and agree always with the policy of the Government'. Both men were concerned that the Army League would become political and therefore the WO would have its name 'associated with politics'. This reflected Milne's concerns about the League. May concluded that the WO should refuse to give official and financial assistance to the League. However, on 19 March May minuted that the WO 'could hardly refuse help of this kind' because it could use the assistance of an 'influential organization which was prepared to back us in our efforts to increase recruitment'.<sup>246</sup> He thought that the WO could offer recognition which would 'prevent undesirable activity in the sphere of policy'. May was also concerned that the League would become a satellite Army Council which would erode the status of the official body. Cooper also wanted to utilise the expertise of the 'strong committee' but had unspecified reservations about the motives of Beddington Behrens.<sup>247</sup>

On 14 March Beddington-Behrens wrote to Amery giving him an update on his progress on the report. He also enclosed a memorandum from Charles which set his personal views on the role of the army.<sup>248</sup> Beddington Behren also told Amery that he was having trouble with drafting the report which would appeal to the public and the Government simultaneously and wanted to get some 'outside' assistance. This had been agreed in principle by Montague Barlow, who suggested Basil Liddell Hart, at that point *The Times* defence correspondent. Liddell Hart was also surreptitiously advising Duff Cooper on the Army and general military matters.<sup>249</sup> However, Beddington-Behrens stated that Liddell Hart had 'very fixed views' which would place the committee in a difficult position 'if the man who drafts the report is always trying to get his ideas over'. The 'very fixed views' included his rejection of a continental commitment and his advocacy of a 'limited liability' based on the employment of air and sea power supported by two armoured divisions to deal with non imperial military commitments. Liddell Hart was also vociferous opponent of conscription. However, Amery persistently stated that Britain should concentrate on its imperial role and use its air and sea power in support of its European policy which differed little from Liddell Hart's ideas. Conversely, Amery was later considered to be a staunch critic of appeasement, while Liddell Hart has been described by Mearsheimer as a serial appeaser who misjudged scope of the

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<sup>246</sup> WO 32/4644, Loose Minute No 4, 19 March 1937.

<sup>247</sup> WO 32/4644, Loose Minute No 5, 1 April 1937.

<sup>248</sup> AMEL 1/7/82, Letter from Beddington-Behrens to Amery dated 14 March 1937.

<sup>249</sup> Danchev, A. (1998). *Alchemist of War* London: Phoenix p189.

threat posed by Hitler after Munich.<sup>250</sup> Beddington-Behrens comments illustrate the distrust of Liddell Hart in military and political circles, because he was perceived as a resolute self-promoter of his own conceptual ideas, while dismissing the perceptions of others as superfluous. However, after the war Liddell Hart would become an important source of technical information for the League Committee.<sup>251</sup> As a consequence Beddington-Behrens suggested that he should write the report. Amery concurred and Beddington-Behrens and work began on a draft copy of the report.

On 17 March the League held its next meeting. Three new members were also present. Sir Edward Grigg, Conservative MP for Altrincham, later Lord Altrincham. Grigg had been journalist, soldier, Liberal MP 1922-1926 and then Governor of Kenya 1925-1930. Grigg had recently written a book on the subject of national defence *The Faith of an Englishman* (1936), which had made a powerful case for increased spending on defence.<sup>252</sup> Field Marshal Sir Philip Chetwode, the former Commander-in-Chief in India 1930-1936 and deputy CIGS, Colonel Geoffrey Codrington, later Sir Geoffrey Codrington, who had served with the Leicester Yeomanry during the First World War and in 1933 he published a book on the Territorial Army.<sup>253</sup> In the intervening period since the last meeting Beddington Behrens, who was acting secretary, had produced a draft paper entitled the 'problems of Imperial Defence and the role of the British Army'.<sup>254</sup> Charles thought that the UK should be 'ready to meet a very strong air attack', and he considered Home defence to be largely one of maintaining the lines of communication with the Empire and the rest of the world. His primary concern was that air defence should be concentrated on protecting imports of food and raw materials and not dispersed 'all around England'. Grigg wanted the report to focus on defining what the strategic role of the Army. This theme was taken up by Amery, who observed that the Air Force and Navy had 'special roles', while the Army was perceived as being of secondary importance by the public. He thought the report needed to clearly set out how essential the need for land forces still was, and what their role was in relation to the other two services. Grigg required the Report to ignore the other two services and concentrate solely on the role of the Army and whether it should be configured for operations 'outside of the Empire'. This of course was becoming the fundamental question because it effected the direction of rearmament programme and the future configuration, organisation and deployment of the Army. The fear was could the security of British Isles be guaranteed by sea and air power

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<sup>250</sup> Mearsheimer, J. J. (1988). *Liddell Hart and the Weight of History* New York: Cornell University p222.

<sup>251</sup> See chapter 3.

<sup>252</sup> Grigg, E. (1936). *The Faith of an Englishman* London: Macmillan.

<sup>253</sup> Godrington, G. (1933). *What is the Territorial Army* London: Stifton.

<sup>254</sup> AMEL 1/7/82, Army League Meeting Minutes, 17 March 1937.

alone if a hostile foreign power was within striking range of British cities and ports. As Chetwode pointed out the preserving communication with the UK, which was the main imperial base, was vital for the safety of the Empire. However, Amery thought that the report should focus solely on the question of ensuring imperial defence first and then consider the question of 'continental engagements'. Chetwode countered that it was possible for three divisions to be made available for an 'independent striking' force. However, Milne was concerned that there were insufficient troops to reinforce essential garrisons. Amery concurred and pointed out that the situation in Palestine which had necessitated the calling out of Section A of the reserve had shown the inherent deficiencies of the Army.<sup>255</sup> Section A being the most recently discharged men.

Milne was concerned that the Government had never given any indication of what the problems of imperial defence were. He argued that the League should use the report set out what these problems were and how they could be solved. Grigg asserted that a clearer consideration of the Army's responsibilities for the internal and external security of the Empire was essential because it was impossible to accurately assess the strength and future organization of the Army without it. This point was also made by Charles who wanted the report to examine all the various Imperial liabilities in conjunction with responsibilities assumed under the various pacts and treaties which the British Government was obligated to honour. Milne stated that the Army was already seriously short of its Empire requirements which was the overriding problem facing the country at this point. Grigg pessimistically noted that any continental obligations would have to be 'moral support only' until such time that 'position of our defences was on a sounder footing'. He also thought that British security was 'dependent on a policy of diplomacy' until British military strength could be 'improved'. Chetwode said British policy should be based on the philosophy of the 'the Empire came first' but he did consider it important that 'we recognize the necessity of putting something on the shores of France in a Continental conflict'. This exchange clearly shows how brittle and ill defined British military and security policy had become by the end of the 1930s. The members of the League considered that the Army was incapable of carrying out its imperial defence obligations or interceding on behalf of Britain's European allies.

At this point the meeting moved on to questions about Army reform. Amery knew that the Government was contemplating radical changes in the Army, and it was the business of the committee to indicate the direction in which that reform is going. Amery wanted the committee to 'consider' the Cardwell system. Amery had for many years considered the

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<sup>255</sup> AMEL 1/7/82, Army League Meeting Minutes, 17 March 1937 p4.

Cardwell system ill suited to 'modern conditions', because it did not create a big enough reserve and there were too many regular units based in the UK in case of mobilization. Amery then proceeded to state that Arnold-Forster's scheme of having two year short service enlistments for a Home Service Army had been vindicated by the First World War; Amery explained that the war had shown that it was possible to train troops for active service in six months which had been one of the criticisms levelled at the scheme originally. Amery then argued that the League should promote the two tier army of long service imperial army and short service Home Army. However, Amery did not get backing for his idea. Milne thought that the country needed an effective Territorial Army which he thought was 'merely a collection of men with rifles'.<sup>256</sup> The minutes of the meeting reflected that the committee considered the Territorial Army 'practically hopeless owing to the lamentable condition of its equipment which was obsolete'. Codrington, the expert on the Territorial Army thought that the Government's attitude to the Territorial's needed closer scrutiny, especially the question of them using obsolete weapons. He also referred to a statement made by Cooper in the House of Commons the day before during the Army Estimate statement which give the impression that unless the Territorial Army received new weapons and equipment it would be a waste of time and money to train them.<sup>257</sup> For several years the Territorial Army had been undergoing a transitional period because it was being reconfigured to encompass an anti-aircraft role which was causing a degree of upheaval.<sup>258</sup> However, the main problems were a lack of modern equipment and sluggish recruitment. Conversely, the Territorial Army had lower rearmament priority than the Regular Army which destabilised the home defence programme.

At the end of the meeting Montague Barlow again asked if the committee would consider allowing a Liberal or Labour representative on the committee, because he thought their participation and co-operation would be 'necessary'.<sup>259</sup> However, this was rejected by the committee on the grounds that it might be better to nearly complete the report before 'co-opting' new members to join. Barlow also suggested that the military experts of the committee Milne, Chetwode and Charles-should jointly prepare a detailed assessment of imperial commitments and the role of the Territorial Army both abroad and at home. Barlow then suggested that Beddington-Behrens should be made Vice-Chairman which unanimously agreed. On 15 April the League held its next meeting at 24, Carlton House Terrace, London, which was home of Lord Iliffe. Until January 1937 Iliffe had been the proprietor of Allied

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<sup>256</sup> *Ibid* p6.

<sup>257</sup> Duff Cooper's Statement Army Estimate, 1937, in *Hansard*, 16 March 1937, Vol. 321, col. 1899.

<sup>258</sup> Lieutenant-Colonel J. K. Dunlop, 'The Territorial Army' in *Royal United Services Journal*, 25 March 1935 pp307-327.

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid* p5.

Newspapers which owned the *Sunday Times* and *Daily Telegraph* and considerable number of regional titles. After the breakup of Allied Newspapers in February 1937 he retained a number of regional papers in the Midlands, including the *Birmingham Telegraph*, and had he interests in periodicals and a publishing house. He was Chairman of the Guildhall Insurance Company, a member of Lloyds and president of Periodical Proprietors' Association from 1935 to 1938. Iliffe had been Conservative MP for Tamworth between 1923 and 1929. He had been a friend of Amery for a many years. Amery shrewdly asked Iliffe if he wanted to participate because it gave the League access to his newspapers and a ready source of finance. Victor Cazalet, Conservative MP for Chippenham, who was well known Zionist supporter and considered an up and coming MP.

Amery began the meeting by asking for general comments on Beddington-Behrens the paper. Amery thought that Beddington-Behrens had over emphasised the possibility of invasion because the navy and the air force made it impossible for a large force to be dispatched against the UK.<sup>260</sup> This marked a break with the NSL, who used the threat of invasion as one of main arguments for the introduction of conscription. However, he did add a caveat that an invasion would be possible if the naval and forces of the UK had been 'knocked out by enemy forces'. Chetwode interjected that the diminution of naval and air forces to other fronts could provide an enemy with the opportunity to attack. However, Amery believed that Britain would always have sufficient naval forces in the North Sea to deter or disrupt an invasion. Chetwode noted that a 'new combination of forces might be arraigned against us in the next war. We might have Italy and Japan against us instead of allies'. Although, with hindsight this statement seems prescient, by 1937 it was very clear that Italy and Japan had more territorial ambitions within their respective spheres of influence which made them potential enemies of the British. The committee agreed that any future literature should not emphasise a direct invasion threat but note that the possibility should not excluded in the future. Charles wanted the paper to stress the importance of air defence, because it was a new form of invasion and was now the major danger to the public. Charles thought also that the paper was insufficient and lacked detail on the particulars of air defence.<sup>261</sup>

Iliffe argued that the purpose of the paper was to educate the public and should give details. However, Milne thought that the paper should receive the blessing of the Secretary of State for War and the WO before publishing. He was concerned that if the League went into detail it may cause offence to the WO or contradict their policy. Milne wanted the report to be

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<sup>260</sup> AMEL 1/7/82, Minutes of the Army League Committee, 15 April 1937.

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid* p3.

edited by the WO or Secretary of State for War before publication and receive official recognition. Amery then told Milne that he had been to see the Secretary of State for War with Beddington-Behrens and Charles, and had discussed what they were doing and how they could achieve it. However, he thought it was a mistake to be directly connected to the WO because it would diminish the impact of the League by making it appear to the public that it was not independent; he was further concerned that the Secretary of State for War would be placed in a difficult position in the House of Commons if the group was not entirely independent.<sup>262</sup> Chetwode argued that the Army League should emulate the Navy League; by saying to the WO we will help you, but if you refuse are assistance we shall act independently in matters which the committee considered to be of 'grave national importance'. Beddington-Behrens later stated that he conceived of the idea of an Army League because of the activities of the Navy League.<sup>263</sup> The Navy League was formed in 1894 to promote a strong navy and ensure that the public were made aware of the need for adequate naval expenditure. The Navy League's most prominent public campaign had been in 1909 during the height of the navy scare. By 1914 it had a membership of 100,000 members. It produced books, pamphlets and gave lecture tours on naval matters. The Navy League also attempted to ensure that naval policy was above party political differences and therefore not subject to 'damaging' interference. The Navy League wielded considerable political power and in 1919 achieved office recognition from the Admiralty. It was also instrumental to the creation of the Sea Cadets Corps. However, overtime the Admiralty found it hard to control the League which increasingly reflected the personalities and aspirations of its organising committee and president.

Iliffe thought the committee should clarify whether the report was to guide Government policy or inform public opinion. Amery stated that the League wanted to help the Government and that he had told Cooper that they would at some stage show him what they were proposing and allow him to make comments and suggestions. But he said they should place a caveat on any exchange by saying the League would not categorically 'accept anything you say'. Iliffe said the initial report should make a specific policy recommendation which would mean it was aimed at the Government. Amery said it was preferable to raise interest with the public first on what the Army was for and after that it would be appropriate to discuss policy.<sup>264</sup> He wanted the first report to be a 'general statement' and not a detailed policy document. Amery then said that they would approach the Government with the attitude 'we are going to publish the memorandum, believing it will help you'. At this point Amery

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<sup>262</sup> *Ibid* p4.

<sup>263</sup> Beddington-Behrens, E. (1963) p113.

<sup>264</sup> AMEL 1/7/82, Minutes of the Army League Committee, 15 April 1937 p4.



wanted the relationship with the WO to be 'informal and friendly'. But, he would like the committee to agree to certain vital points which the League would press and others which they would be 'willing to be guided on' when dealing with the WO. Iliffe wanted the League to concentrate its efforts on increasing recruitment to the Regular and Territorial Army by arguing for increased pay and improved conditions of service. Amery replied that the League needed to also improve the public perception of the Army which was prejudicing recruitment; however, he conceded that good pay and conditions was important as well. There was general agreement on this point but they all thought that the Government needed urgently to create an 'organisation which meets our strategical needs'. The Committee also agreed that the possibility of seaborne invasion was highly unlikely so long as the navy and air force were strong enough to provide a deterrent. But there was concern that the air defence organisation was uncoordinated and under strength and should be included within the report as a matter of urgency. The spectre of the 'bomber always getting through' had been cause of public concern for a number of years. This made air defence the primary focus of the Government after it decided to commence its rearmament programme in 1934.<sup>265</sup> Similarly, the committee would have to address this fundamental question if it was to get public attention.

Amery thought that it was essential that the report state that it was desirable to have an 'Imperial Reserve' which could be moved without having to 'resort to a general mobilisation'. However, Beddington-Behrens thought that it would be better not to stipulate the number of divisions involved. Milne also agreed to this because he thought that without sufficient data the committee could not make an accurate assessment of the number divisions available for overseas service. Milne was also concerned that stipulating a number would put political pressure on the WO to achieve an unrealistic target. However, Amery pointed out that the emergency in Palestine could be used as a starting point. But Milne countered that all overseas garrisons were constituted on 50% basis which meant that during a period of intense international pressure all imperial garrisons would need to be reinforced prior to the commencement of hostilities. This of course would limit the amount of men which could be spared for an imperial reserve. As Chetwode pointed out the exception was the Indian garrison which always nearly at its establishment level. The question of mobilization was discussed at great length because Amery wanted the Government make it easier for the reserve to be employed prior to the commencement of a war without having to order a mobilization which in theory required Parliamentary consent.<sup>266</sup> He also thought that this would limit the atmosphere of crisis that a mobilization order created. Beddington-Behrens

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<sup>265</sup> Bialer, U. (1980). *The Shadow of the Bomber: The Fear of Air Attack and British Politics, 1932-1939* London:

<sup>266</sup> AMEL 1/7/82, Minutes of the Army League Committee, 15 April 1937 p9.

said that for 'Imperial interests we do not have enough troops'. Amery thought that expeditionary forces would be required in Egypt and Libya rather than in France at the start of the next war. The committee thought that imperial requirements diminished the possibility of creating a force for a European commitment. Amery also thought that fighting in the next war would take place in France and he predicted that Belgium would not be involved.

Grigg also wanted the importance of reinforcing imperial obligations emphasised within the report, which he stated should take precedence a European commitment. Grigg also noted that Cooper had made it plainly clear in a statement to the House of Commons that if Britain had two simultaneous imperial emergencies the Army would be at breaking point. Milne speculated that if in 1936 the Italians had launched an attack on Egypt or British possessions in East Africa there would have been no reserves either in theatre or in the UK to respond. Grigg said that the possibility of having a policy which included an Expeditionary force would have to be additional to the Imperial Reserve. There was concurrence on this point it was felt that it was impossible to have to these two forces analogous of each other. At the end of the meeting it was agreed that a small editorial team comprised of Amery, Beddington Behrens, Charles and Grigg would complete the report and that it should be published in the summer. This became the standard procedure of the League in the years to come. The committee would look at a prepared draft report which was often accompanied by memorandum written by individual committee members and Government publications. However, the final draft work was always left to a sub-committee which worked independently. This was the last recorded meeting before publication of the committee's first report. On 28 May 1937 Chamberlain became Prime Minister the same day he appointed Leslie Hore-Belisha the successful Minister of Transport as Secretary of State for War. Hore-Belisha was considered to be a dynamic and efficient minister who could modernise the WO. Hore-Belisha had served in the First World War as a major in the Royal Army Service Corps. He entered office believing that Britain should not be contemplating sending large forces to the continent again in time of war. He thought that the Army should be planning for a 'limited liability'. Hore-Belisha assumed that the Maginot line was impregnable and the French Army was still a formidable military force. Within months of taking office Hore-Belisha forged a close relationship with Liddell-Hart who quickly became his unofficial mentor.<sup>267</sup>

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<sup>267</sup> Bond, B. 'Leslie Hore-Belisha at The War Office' in Beckett, I. and Gooch, J. (1981). *Politicians and defence: studies in the formation of British defence policy, 1845-1970* Manchester: Manchester University Press p112.

On 26 July 1937 the committee published an eight page pamphlet *A Policy For the Army*. The opening section stated that the report was addressed to both public and the Government.<sup>268</sup> The published report stated that an imperial reserve with a high degree of mobility should be created which would consist of two divisions; this force could either be deployed to deal with an imperial emergency or 'against another power'. This of course was contrary to Milne's argument that it would place the WO in a difficult position if the committee specified the number of divisions. The report thought that the imperial (central) reserve should act as a spearhead for a larger expeditionary which would be created on mobilization. On the question of recruitment the pamphlet stated that improved rates of pay should be introduced for imperial service and a 'long service' pension which was Iliffe suggestion. The committee also stated that the 'public must realise that exemption from compulsory service in the armed forces of the Crown is a privilege that must be paid for'.<sup>269</sup> Although, this line appeared directed at the public its real target was probably the Government and in particular the new Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain. The report also wanted short service enlistments of two or three years with a six year period with the reserve introduced for Home, Caribbean and Middle Eastern service. The present six year enlistment was to be retained but would used to create a long service army to maintain the Indian garrison and stations in the Far East. This of course was the two-tier Army which Amery had been advocating for 37 years. The report stated that the Territorial Army urgently needed modern equipment to increase its efficiency and make it more appealing to potential recruits. The committee also thought that it was matter of urgency that a large anti-aircraft organisation be created which to supplement the 'insufficient protection afforded by air-defence acting alone'.

On the question of the size of regular Army the report thought that it was important that a minimum safety level be set. However, the report falls short of stating that compulsory service would be introduced to maintain the level of the regular Army. Committee also argued that in recent years imperial security in the Mediterranean had become a concern. This adversely effected communication and supply links with rest of the Empire. The report considered that reinforcing Mediterranean and Middle Eastern garrisons was the number one priority of the Army at the start of a major war. The report thought that air and navy forces afforded the best option for home defence which released the Army to concentrate on its imperial role. Something which was not mentioned in any of the discussions but was included in the report was the creation of a civilian employment corps which could be used to do fatigues and therefore release manpower for operational duties. They proposed that the corps would be formed out of ex-servicemen which would create a source of employment for them.

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<sup>268</sup> AMEL 1/7/82, Army League Committee, (1937). *A Policy For the Army*. London

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid* p2.

The final paragraph stated that the committee thought that the present system of voluntary can be made to work 'if the nation is determined that it is of vital importance'. In the press the report was presented as being the inspiration of Amery.<sup>270</sup> The report also tried to deal with perceptions that its agenda was purely militaristic by arguing that a strong 'defensive' posture was now vital because the League of Nations was collapsing and the international situation deteriorating. Amery later commented that the report was well received by the Press which is why the committee decided to form the Army League.<sup>271</sup> The report was also widely studied at the WO. On 13 July General Sir Harry Knox, the Adjutant General (AG), thought the report had made a 'valuable contribution to the education of the public' on the subject of the size of the Army.<sup>272</sup> Knox also minuted Hore-Belisha 'we are sadly in need of support, and public opinion must be aroused'. Knox and Hore-Belisha were clashing over the issue of recruitment which led to Knox's dismissal from the Army Council in November.

On 29 July Amery received a letter from General Burnett-Stuart, commander of the Southern Command, congratulating him on the report and the creation of the Army League.<sup>273</sup> Burnett-Stuart was outspoken advocate of armoured forces and had recently been the commander of British forces in Egypt. Burnett-Stuart enclosed a memorandum which he had sent to General Sir Archibald Montgomery-Massingberd the CIGS in 1934 setting out his belief that the Army should concentrate on its imperial and extra-European functions. Burnett-Stuart also thought that the Army should not be 'imitating the methods and organisation of continental mass warfare'. Burnett-Stuart also told Amery that the CIGS had not been at all pleased by the contents of the memorandum. Amery wrote back on the 4 August stating that he wholeheartedly agreed with Burnett-Stuart.<sup>274</sup> He also told him that he thought the League report had not gone far enough in stating that the Government should not be considering a continental commitment but he feared that the WO was 'still dreaming of another 1914-18 with unlimited time to build up a 60 division Army'. Amery was very uncomfortable with the prospect of a European commitment. His obvious preference for concentrating on imperial defence is clear. Amery now switched his attention to Hore-Belisha in attempt to get his ideas put into policy. On 3 November Amery wrote to Hore-Belisha suggesting a scheme were older men on long service enlistments be placed in garrison battalions for overseas service which would release existing foreign service battalions for service at home and for use in an

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<sup>270</sup> *The Times*, 'A Policy for the Army' 26 July 1937 p17.

<sup>271</sup> Amery, L. (1955). *My Political Life: Volume Three The Unforgiving Years 1929-1940* London: Hutchinson p199.

<sup>272</sup> WO 32/4644, Loose Minute No 7. 13 July 1937.

<sup>273</sup> AMEL 1/7/64, Letter from General Burnett-Stuart, 29 July 1937.

<sup>274</sup> AMEL 1/7/64, Letter from Amery to Burnett-Stuart, 4 August 1937.

emergency.<sup>275</sup> On 7 December Hore-Belisha replied that his experts considered garrison battalions in peacetime were prone to deteriorate badly and they were expensive to maintain because they required increased inducements.<sup>276</sup> Amery also wanted to know what Hore-Belisha thought about his short service Home Army scheme. Hore-Belisha responded that it would be difficult to use battalions of short servicemen in overseas emergencies because they may last for 'varying periods'. He also thought that short service battalions would contain a disproportionate number of young soldiers who would be leaving and joining units as their enlistment came to its end. This he concluded would disrupt the efficiency and cohesion of the Army. This letter ended any chance of Amery's getting his two tier army scheme adopted.

On 20 February 1938 The Army and Home and Empire Defence League was officially launched. However, *The Times* Editorial thought that the title was 'clumsy' and that the League was 'exaggerating the nation's ignorance of the state of defences'.<sup>277</sup> The motto of the League was 'In defence of Freedom'. The League stated that it was non-political organisation which had been formed to make 'defence a national issue'.<sup>278</sup> The League distributed a manifesto which stated that 'to prepare for defence is merely common-sense pacifism'.<sup>279</sup> One of the aims of the League was to make all 'men and women feel that defence is their own responsibility, not merely the job of the fighting services'. The manifesto also stated that there was a 'considerable shortage in the Army reserve' which should be remedied as soon as possible. Willingdon became President of the League and The Earl of Derby Deputy-President. Beddington-Behrens was Chairman of the Executive Committee. The League also had a council which included Amery, who was also a Vice President, Charles, Chetwode, Hague, Grigg, Milne, Iliffe and Montague-Barlow. New members included Duncan Sandys MP, Captain Bullock MP, Viscount Greenwood, who was president of the Iron and Steel Federation, Sir Malcolm Campbell, holder of the land speed record, J. P. Black, chairman of the Standard Motor Company, Major General Sir John Kennedy, Vice Chairmen of the British Red Cross and John Maxwell, owner of Associated British Cinemas (ABC). Although, the League was committed to being non political it had no representation from the Labour or Liberal party's on its council.

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<sup>275</sup> AMEL 1/7/66, Letter from Amery to Hore-Belisha, 3 November 1937.

<sup>276</sup> AMEL 1/7/67, Letter from Hore-Belisha to Amery, 7 December 1937.

<sup>277</sup> *The Times*, 'An Army League', 18 February 1938 p15.

<sup>278</sup> *The Manchester Guardian*, 'Defence of Home and Empire The New League formed', 20 February 1938 p18.

<sup>279</sup> AMEL 1/7/82. Army League Manifesto.

At the launch the League appealed for new members who could form local associations and hold meetings and rallies. It was envisaged that local branches would have minimum of fifty members. The League intended to distribute books to news-stands, bookstalls and libraries, use educational film shows and hold public debates and meetings. The League produced a monthly magazine called *Rising Strength* which was published from February 1938 until March 1939. The magazine's name was changed in March 1939 to *Citizen Service* but was discontinued in September 1939 when the war started. Although, it was called a magazine it was usually three pages long, and can be more aptly described as a pamphlet. According to Amery by June 1939 it had a circulation of 12,500 a month.<sup>280</sup> . Amery contributed many of the articles in *Rising Strength* and *Citizen Service* which covered a wide range of topics from Army recruitment to promoting the training of girls in nursing and civil defence. After the winter of 1938 *Citizen Service* was primarily concerned with promoting the introduction of national service.<sup>281</sup> The Leagues 'propaganda' methodology was designed to educate the public on the problems which 'defence faced under modern conditions'. The League also stated that it was independent of the Government. However, the League privately wanted its Executive Committee to maintain a constant liaison with the WO.<sup>282</sup> As well as promoting issues concerning the Army and imperial defence the League embarked on a campaign to educate the public on the subject of Air Raid Precautions (ARP) and civil defence. Membership of the League cost 10 shillings a year for normal members, £2 for founder members, life members were £50 and associate members 1 shilling a year. Although, the League had many distinguished members their participation appears to be limited to giving financial backing or making endorsements rather than active support. Willingdon and Derby had limited contact with the day to day business and were figure heads. Amery often asked distinguished people if they would mind having their name associated with the League.<sup>283</sup> The daily management of the League and its strategic direction was carried out Beddington-Behrens and the Executive Committee which was dominated by Amery. The League rented offices Belgravia, London, to co-ordinate its activities and had another in Birmingham. Public relations were handled by Richmond Temple, Director of the Savoy Hotel Company, and Beddington Behrens. Lord Iliffe gave financial assistance and the use of his staff for administrative activities. However, by 1939 the League employed accountants and secretarial staff. The League owned a car and office equipment. The League was also subject to income tax on its assets.

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<sup>280</sup> AMEL 1/7/78, Letter to Crawford 18 July 1939.

<sup>281</sup> AMEL 1/7/82, *The Citizen Service League* magazine February 1939.

<sup>282</sup> WO 32/4644, The Army and Home and Empire Defence League 26 September 1938.

<sup>283</sup> AMEL 1/7/78, Letter from Amery to Lord Chatfield, 22 March 1939

The League was run as a registered company with an incorporated board of governance made up of a council of management. In September 1938 the League had 2,500 members and 7,000 subscribers to *Rising strength*. However, the League's accounts for 1943 show that they had received £201 in normal member subscriptions prior to the start of the Second World War but had been expecting to receive a further £255 before membership was suspended in September 1939. This would mean an active membership of around 912 members based on a subscription of 10 shillings.<sup>284</sup> Life and council members would put this figure at around 950. However, prior to officially launching the League the executive committee had sought to contact every retired Army officer which it considered to be ready made membership source. In January 1938 Captain Bullock MP the League's acting secretary had telephoned the WO requesting the names and addresses of every retired army officer living in the UK.<sup>285</sup> Bullock said the League wanted the information to circulate their 'propaganda' and make appeals. The WO officials stated that would not divulge the information but did agree to forward material if the League paid the postage costs. However, Hore-Belisha thought that this was setting a dangerous precedent which would also give the League a veneer of official approval, so the request was denied. This undoubtedly was a setback for the League which needed to attract subscribers and members to increase its financial resources. At its launch the League had £12,000 (£640,000 in today's money) which had been donated by its council members. However, by September 1939 the League had assets totalling £4140 (£164,151 in today's money) which included covenant loans and donations. Therefore most of the League's capital came from donations from its wealthy members. It was also evident that the League's propaganda campaign between February 1938 and September 1939 had greatly reduced the League's coffers.

In November 1938 Beddington-Behrens told Amery that he was preparing 5000 copies of a speech given by Amery for members 'who could run a circulation close on six figures'.<sup>286</sup> The Army League did supply other organisations such as the Over-Seas League, the Empire League, Colonial Defence League and Air Raid League with its material. The Over-Seas League was created by Sir Evelyn Wrench in 1918 to promote imperial unity. Wrench also founded in 1929 the All Peoples Association to promote Anglo-German cooperation; however, in 1936 he was forced to close it because its aims clashed with those of the Nazi Party. For a time Wrench was considered to be pro-Nazi after he published a book in 1940 entitled *I Loved Germany* which attempted to distinguish between Germany and the Nazis state. However, Wrench had told Beddington-Behrens that the Army League could utilise the

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<sup>284</sup> AMEL 1/7/78, Income and Expenditure Account period from 1 April, 1940 to 31 March, 1942.

<sup>285</sup> WO 32/4644, Memorandum on Captain Bullocks question January 1938.

<sup>286</sup> AMEL 1/7/78, Letter from Beddington-Behrens to Amery 26 November 1938.

68000 members of the Over-Seas League 'to the fullest extent' which somewhat dismisses any notion that he was pro-Nazi. Similarly, the Army League cultivated close links with Air Defence League which was formed in January 1939 by Sir Arthur Salter, the MP for Oxford University. Salter had been pressing the Government for a number of years to improve air defence precautions and increase stocks of food and raw materials. The Navy League and Air League both had large memberships. Lord Lloyd President of the Navy League 1930-1941 also became a member of the Army League Council in early 1938. Lloyd and Amery also worked closely together promoting imperial preference. Many of the pre-war military pressure groups had interconnected leaderships, who were also active in Imperial associations. The overlapping nature of these contacts is evident in council membership of the Army League. The League's 'ordinary' members created local associations which were encouraged to give luncheons and meetings which would then be attended by guest speakers supplied by the council. The League was essentially an organisation which was at the heart of the establishment and centred in Westminster and Belgravia.

## Munich

After its inception the League remained inactive for several months but events would soon move the organisation in a different direction. On 10 March 1938 Hore-Belisha gave his first Army Estimate speech which set out his vision for the Army.<sup>287</sup> He announced that pay, pensions and conditions of service in the Regular Army would be improved; the Territorial Army would receive more equipment and additional home defence responsibilities. However, Hore-Belisha stated that the Army's primary role was Home defence followed by imperial defence which negated any notions of a continental commitment. He argued that the Army's primary consideration was preparing for the 'menace of air attack' and internal security, which included post attack recovery. He also set out a plan to create a two division strategic reserve which would be used for emergencies. Hore-Belisha announced that key imperial garrisons at strategic points would have their establishments increased. Many of the League's proposals were included in speech. When it was Amery's turn to contribute, he congratulated Hore-Belisha on his speech which he thought 'portended little less than a complete revolution in the structure and organisation of the British Army'.<sup>288</sup> On 22 March when closing the debate Hore-Belisha stated, 'I was indebted to several hon. and right hon. Members who have advanced ideas from time to time, notably my right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook

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<sup>287</sup> Hore-Belisha, 'Army Estimate' in *Hansard*, 10 March 1938, Vol.332, col. 2134.

<sup>288</sup> Amery, 'Army Estimate' in *Hansard*, 10 March 1938, Vol.332, col. 2137.



(Mr. Amery). I thought he would be gratified that after so much advocacy he had won a case for his main points'.<sup>289</sup> However, on the 10 March the Germans annexed Austria. On 14 March responding to the crisis Amery called on the Government to contemplate creating a war cabinet to manage the emergency.<sup>290</sup> It was apparent that Hitler's next demand would be the Czechoslovakian controlled Sudetenland which contained a large ethnic German population. Amery thought that the Czechs would fight and urged the Government to stand firm against German aggression. In the spring Amery began calling for the introduction of a national register which would be the first step toward preparing the population for military and industrial conscription. The WO response to the formation of the League was mixed. On 1 March the new AG, Major General Clive Liddell, thought that the manifesto was innocuous; however, the WO was unhappy with the comments concerning the size of reserve.<sup>291</sup> Liddell said that he had been in touch with Sir John Kennedy and told him that it would be advisable in the future that the League 'find out the facts from the WO' before printing. However, he also said that they would not give the League any material which was not publically available which Kennedy had understood. In May a minute was circulated which stated that the League should be encouraged to provide paid lecturers throughout the country to assist the WO in getting its message across to the public.<sup>292</sup> However, there was some uneasiness at the WO because many of the League's members were in favour of conscription which was contrary to Government policy. This discounted the possibility of giving official recognition or assistance to League.

On 1 June deputation of Conservative 1922 Committee, which included Sir Edward Grigg, held a meeting with Chamberlain in attempt to force the Government implement a national register.<sup>293</sup> However, Chamberlain was adamant that the international situation did not warrant such a drastic step. In the following weeks the crisis intensified and it appeared that Britain might go to war with Germany over the Sudetenland. By the middle of the summer League began using its network of members and contacts to start agitating for increased preparations in the event of war. On 15 June Amery gave a speech in Leeds at a luncheon hosted by the League where he warned about how modern warfare involved the 'paralysing the moral of the people by panic' and the 'destruction of all that equipment of national life which is essential either to the support of arms in the field or to the life of the civilian

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<sup>289</sup> Hore-Belisha, 'Army Estimate' in *Hansard*, 22 March 1938, Vol.333, col. 1096

<sup>290</sup> Amery, 'Foreign Affairs Austria' in *Hansard*, 14 March 1938, Vol. 333, col. 85.

<sup>291</sup> WO 32/4644, Minute 37, Notes on Manifesto by AG 18 February 1938.

<sup>292</sup> WO 32/4644, Minute 49, 18 May 1938.

<sup>293</sup> Crowson, N. J. (1997). *Facing Fascism: The Conservative Party and the European Dictators, 1935-1940*. London: Routledge p153.

population itself'.<sup>294</sup> He also thought that the state of the Army 'was a cause of grave concern', because it was 'totally unprepared and its reserves woefully inadequate to deal with a serious crisis'. However, he stated that he was against putting 'an army of millions on to the continent'. He argued that Britain should improve its air defence arrangements and the Army because the 'next few years will be years of the gravest anxiety'. On 15 July Grigg was a guest speaker at a public meeting organised by League at the Taylorian Institution in Oxford.<sup>295</sup> Grigg used the meeting to argue that the Government needed to create a national register of occupations, skills and previous military service experience; he also wanted a national youth training programme established for teenagers which would offer 'voluntary' military instruction.<sup>296</sup> The same day Chetwode addressed a meeting of businessmen on behalf of the League on the subject of 'cooperation of industry with defence' at an event run by *Firestone* tyres; the League proposed the establishment of a liaison committee between the League and business to help promote awareness of defence requirements and production difficulties.

During the summer Amery increasingly began criticising Government defence and foreign policy. On 12 July Amery wrote to *The Times* about his concerns concerning the amount of supplies and food stuffs being stored by the Government to mitigate against the derogation of merchant shipping by air and naval attacks; Amery pointed out that the available merchant marine tonnage was 3 million tons less than in 1914, and that 7 million tons had been sunk between 1914-18 which had caused considerable problems to the war effort.<sup>297</sup> However, Amery's final break with Chamberlain's Government occurred at the end of September and marked his decision to call for the introduction of national service. In mid-September Amery wrote to Anthony Eden the former Foreign Secretary asking him to participate in a revamped National Service League.<sup>298</sup> Eden had resigned from the Cabinet in February after disagreeing with the direction in which Chamberlain's foreign policy was moving. Eden soon became the leader for a group of younger Conservative MPs, including Harold Macmillan, who were opposed to appeasement.<sup>299</sup> Cazalet was also on the fringes of the group. The head of the Conservative Research Department, Sir Richard Ball, while attempting to undermine their influence on Parliamentary Conservative sarcastically described them as the 'Glamour Boys'. However, the name stuck and far from ridiculing them, it increased their resolve and appeal among disaffected backbenchers. Ball states that Amery 'an old enemy' of the group began

<sup>294</sup> *The Times*, 'Destroying National Morale', 18 June 1938 p18.

<sup>295</sup> *The Times*, 'A register of Occupations; proposals of Sir Edward Grigg', 15 June 1938 p16.

<sup>296</sup> *The Manchester Guardian*, 'Camp for Training Youth', 15 June 1938 p15.

<sup>297</sup> Amery quoted in *The Times*, 'Food Supplies in War, Strain on Mercantile Marine', 12 July 1938 p12.

<sup>298</sup> AMEL 1/7/78, Letter from Eden to Amery, 24 September 1938.

<sup>299</sup> Ball, S. (2004). *The Guardsmen* London: Harper pp178-215.

attending their meetings after the Munich debate in October.<sup>300</sup> However, Amery was trying to recruit Eden to a new NSL before Munich. However, Eden declined the offer saying he was too busy, but a more likely explanation was that Eden knew that public support for the introduction of national service was divided and volatile. *The Daily Mail* produced a poll of its readers in October which showed that they were equally divided on the issue.<sup>301</sup> On 28 September Chamberlain flew to Munich and agreed to all of Hitler's demands. The British and French then forced the Czechs to cede the Sudetenland to the Germans. Although war appeared to have been averted, Munich marked a turning point for Amery, who became a bitter and vociferous critic of Chamberlain for appeasing Hitler over the Sudetenland.

On 5 October Amery abstained during the Munich debate. The following day Amery clashed with Chamberlain in the Commons over an issue when Chamberlain stated 'that conscription or compulsory national service will not be introduced by this Government in peacetime, and that statement still holds good'.<sup>302</sup> Amery responded 'In that case, would it not be desirable to have a change of Government, in order to make it possible to introduce this necessary Measure?' On 10 October Amery wrote to Hore-Belisha that he accepted Chamberlain's decision regarding conscription but he told him that he was contemplating using the Army League to promote the issue.<sup>303</sup> He asked Hore-Belisha for an informal and unofficial meeting to discuss what kind of national service would be acceptable to the WO and how best to promote it. On 12 October Amery wrote to Sir George Shee, a former secretary of the NSL, that he was considering creating a 'new National Service League in order to preach the necessity of some form of National Service as the groundwork of all defence'.<sup>304</sup> Amery wanted Shee to send him as much information on the various policies and campaign strategies which the NSL had developed between 1905 and 1914. Also Amery had decided that it was preferable to discontinue the activities of the Army League and create a new organisation which could promote the creation of a national register and the introduction of national service. On 14 October Amery wrote Grigg saying that he intended to utilise the staff and funds of the Army League to promote national service and that the other members of the council were in agreement with his idea.

Amery had been discussing with Lord Salisbury about making a public appeal for a national register to be introduced as a precautionary measure.<sup>305</sup> Salisbury had been calling for the

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<sup>300</sup> *Ibid* p191.

<sup>301</sup> *The Daily Mail* 'Poll of Poll', 26 October 1938 p15.

<sup>302</sup> Chamberlain quoted in 'Conscription and National Service question' in *Hansard*, Vol. 339, col. 474.

<sup>303</sup> AMEL 1/7/78, Letter to Hore-Belisha regarding the question of national service, 10 October 1938.

<sup>304</sup> AMEL 1/7/78, Letter concerning NSL, 12 October 1938.

<sup>305</sup> Amery, L. (1955) p210.

introduction of conscription since summer. On 1 November Amery and fellow League members Milne, Black, Beddington Behrens, Charles, Willingdon, Iliffe and Hague signed a manifesto with Lord Salisbury, Admiral Sir William Goodenough, Marshal of the Royal Force, Sir John Salmond, Sir Henry Price and the Bishop of London published a manifesto. The manifesto called on the Government to establish a Ministry of National Service, compile a national register and introduce national service as soon as possible. However, the manifesto argued in favour of compulsory service being extended to the Territorial Army not the Regular Army. However, on 18 November Sir John Anderson, the Lord Privy Seal, circulated a memorandum to the Cabinet on the subject of national service.<sup>306</sup> Anderson view on the subject was clear 'I have never been able to understand how it can seriously be contended that a compulsory National Register has any value, except as a prelude to some form of compulsory service'. Anderson preferred making an appeal for volunteers and the issuing of a handbook for the guidance of would-be volunteers. In early November Amery produced a memorandum for the council on the future of the League. He argued that the League needed to concentrate on areas that the public were 'interested in' rather than 'detailed points of organisation matters' which they 'are not'.<sup>307</sup> He thought that concentrating on the issue of conscription was of 'vital importance' and demanded a detailed and unambiguous campaign. The overriding reason he thought it was necessary to act was the fact that 'the Government is hesitating to do what they know they ought to be doing, for fear of public opinion'. Amery argued that there was 'unorganised body of latent public opinion in favour of national service that only needed organising to develop into a powerful movement capable of influencing Government policy'. He also thought that if the League tapped into this public opinion it could attract many new members and in the process more funds from subscriptions.

On 25 November the Army League council decided to suspend its activities and start a new organisation called the Citizens Service League which would concentrate on the promotion of compulsory military service. It was decided by the council to launch the new organisation in January 1939 at the annual general meeting. However, a more pressing problem for the League was that it was running out of funds which would severely curtail its future activities. On 30 November the Cabinet decided not to introduce a compulsory national register or national service on the grounds that it was inappropriate during peacetime.<sup>308</sup> On 1 December Anderson announced that the Government would introduce a voluntary register and a voluntary national service scheme in January.<sup>309</sup> In view of this partial realignment of

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<sup>306</sup> CAB 24/280, C.P. 262 (38) Cabinet National Service: Memorandum by the Lord Privy Seal, 18 November 1938.

<sup>307</sup> AMEL 1/7/82, The Future of the League memorandum to council members.

<sup>308</sup> CAB 23/96, Cabinet 57(36), Meeting of the Cabinet, 30 November 1938.

<sup>309</sup> Anderson, J. 'Sir John Anderson's statement' in *Hansard*, 1 December 1938, Vol. 342. col, 598.

Government policy in the direction of the League, the League's council decided to ask the Army Council for some kind of recognition of their work over the preceding months and for the future. On 22 December Hore-Belisha noted that the League's request 'go very far toward formal recognition by the Army Council' which he thought was unwise and the request was denied.<sup>310</sup> Hore-Belisha was particularly worried about the League's stance on National Service and its increasingly 'political' message. He believed that the WO should treat the League with 'benevolent neutrality', while attempting not to 'antagonise it'. In March 1938 the WO had been forced to send a letter to the League's Executive Committee to complain about article in *Rising Strength* written by Beddington-Behrens about the poor conditions in the Army which were discouraging recruitment.<sup>311</sup> The same article claimed that the Government had significantly reduced medical standards in an effort to increase recruitment. The WO thought that the League was in fact harming the WO recruitment drive and were being overtly political. After this, Hore-Belisha was weary of becoming too close to the League. By the end of 1938 Amery was openly attacking the Government which compounded WO suspicions.

In January 1939 Amery began gathering support for the League's new campaign. He wrote to Lord Beaverbrook who pledged the support of Daily Express.<sup>312</sup> The League decided that it would support the Government's efforts to popularize service in the Militia and not launch an assault on Chamberlain's policy. After Hore-Belisha's complaint about the tone of the League's articles in *Rising Strength* Amery was careful not to use the League against the Government because he surmised that its role was to nudge and inform and not alienate the WO. Most of the Executive council were in or closely connected to the Conservative Party which dominated the National Government. Similarly many of the League's backers were also connected to the Conservative Party. On 31 January 1939 Amery wrote to Beddington-Behrens stating that the council 'wanted to make it clear that our permanent policy is not intended to interfere with the Government's efforts to meet the immediate urgency (whatever we may think of those efforts in private).'<sup>313</sup> Similarly, the League's proposals for compulsory service were carefully nuanced to make them more palatable to the public. The League accentuated the social and civic benefits of giving teenagers four to six month military or civil defence training.<sup>314</sup> Over the winter Hore-Belisha began arguing in Cabinet for the creation of six divisions for rapid dispatch to the continent in the event of an emergency. This marked the end of WO advocacy of a limited liability which had been the fundamental policy

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<sup>310</sup> WO 32/4644, Note from S of S on the Army League, 22 December 1938.

<sup>311</sup> WO 32/4644, Letter to Army League Executive 1 March 1938.

<sup>312</sup> AMEL 1/7/78, Letter from Beaverbrook to Amery, 24 January 1939.

<sup>313</sup> AMEL 1/7/78, Letter from Amery to Beddington Behrens, 31 January 1939.

<sup>314</sup> AMEL 1/7/82, The Citizen Service League in the *Right Bulletin* July 1939.

consideration of Hore-Belisha collaboration with Liddell Hart. Hore-Belisha and Liddell Hart had ended their 'partnership' in the summer of 1938 after the latter had made many enemies among military establishment which made it difficult for the relationship to continue. On 22 February 1939 the Chancellor, Sir John Simon, reluctantly agreed that the previous financial objections were no longer valid given the international situation and the additional funds were released for the Army.<sup>315</sup> On 15 March the Germans occupied the rest of Czechoslovakia which effectively dispelled any notion that Hitler could be contained through negotiation or that his territorial ambitions were confined to bringing Germans inside the Reich. This signalled the end of appeasement as an effective foreign policy consideration. On 7 March the Government announced that the TA would be doubled in size and there was large increase in the Army Estimate.

On 22 March Amery wrote to Lord Chatfield, Minister for Co-ordination of Defence, asking for a meeting to discuss defence issues.<sup>316</sup> Amery told Chatfield that opinion in the Conservative Parliamentary Party was in favour of introducing conscription. However, he told Chatfield that he was against putting an army of the size of that which had fought in the Great War on the Continent again. But he noted that a voluntary system would not produce enough trained manpower which could be placed straight into the field without additional training. Amery was convinced that the nation understood that the next war would be a total war and 'are absolutely ready' for a compulsory service, because it was in the national interest. On 24 March Amery wrote to Lord Cunliffe Lister, the former Secretary of State for Air, asking him to join the Citizen Service League or whether he could use his 'name as member of the council'. Amery also remonstrated that the international situation demanded the introduction of conscription, because 'we have got to make this timid government and this factious and unreasonable Opposition to do what I believe the nation as a whole is crying out for'. Another reason why Amery contacted Cunliffe Lister was because the League needed more funds to continue its campaign. Since January the League had made a concerted effort to publicise its activities. The culmination of this campaign was to be a large rally at the Queens Hall in London on 26 April which was too used as a platform to urge the Government to adopt national service. The fact that the League was running out of money is probably indicative of not being able raise increase its membership. However, the international situation continued to deteriorate which gave added emphasis to the League's efforts. On 31 March the British and French Government's offered Poland a military guarantee. On 6 April the Italians invaded Albania. Amery gave a speech that afternoon in the House of Commons which

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<sup>315</sup> Peden, G. C. (1979). *British Rearmament and the Treasury, 1932-1939* Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press p148.

<sup>316</sup> AMEL 1/7/78, Letter from Amery to Lord Chatfield, 22 March 1939.

questioned whether the Government's defence policy was adequate for the 'multiple dangers' which were 'now confronting the country'.<sup>317</sup> Amery argued that the Government's decision to give a military guarantee to Poland had created a 'formidable commitment' which the defence policy needed to address as soon as possible.

On 24 April the League gathered for its rally at which Amery was to give the key note speech on the urgent need to introduce conscription. On the same day Chamberlain announced that the Government was introducing a compulsory military training bill for men aged 20-21 who would be called up for a period of six months in the Militia. Another significant move was to call up Territorial and Air Force personnel to reinforce the air defence organisation. Bond argues that this transpired after Hore-Belisha 'performed the bravest action of his political career in forcing Chamberlain to accept a measure of compulsory service in peacetime despite repeated pledges to the contrary'.<sup>318</sup> On 27 April Amery welcomed the Government's decision to introduce conscription but was scornful of the Labour party's decision to oppose it on the grounds that the volunteer system had recently provided a steady flow of recruits.<sup>319</sup> This marked the end of the rationale for the existence of the Citizen Service League. However, Amery was concerned that the decision to compulsory military training might be subject change and thought it best to continue its activities. On 1 May Amery wrote to Hore-Belisha stating that the Government should try and obtain older voluntary recruits for work on anti-aircraft batteries. On 4 May he was contacted by Sir Douglas Hacking, the Chairman of the Conservative Party about the future of the Citizen Service League.<sup>320</sup> Amery had asked the Conservative Party Central Office for assistance with the League. However, Hacking told Amery that the Party had received reports from all over the country stating that conscription was being 'accepted quietly' by the public. Under such circumstances Hacking thought that if the League continued its work it 'might result in stirring up opposition' to the policy and ignite a counter campaign calling for a return to a voluntary system. Predictably Amery ignored Hacking and the League continued its work.

Amery decided that the League should agitate for compulsory service to be introduced permanently. Amery was convinced that the activities of the League had contributed to the introduction of the Militia Act.<sup>321</sup> During July and August the League set about raising funds for its new campaign that would coincide with the general election which was due in early 1940. On 18 July Chester Beatty, one of the League's council members, who was also a stock

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<sup>317</sup> Amery, L. 'European Situation' in *Hansard*, 6 April 1939, Vol. 345, no. 3115.

<sup>318</sup> Bond, B. (1994) p267.

<sup>319</sup> Amery, L. 'Compulsory Military Training' in *Hansard* 27 April 1939, Vol. 346, no. 1387.

<sup>320</sup> AMEL 1/7/78, Letter from Sir Douglas Hacking, 4 May 1939.

<sup>321</sup> AMEL 1/7/78 Letter to Crawford 18 July 1939.

broker managed to secure donations £1000 from sources in the city.<sup>322</sup> However, on 3 September 1939 Britain and France declared war on Germany. On 13 September the Executive Committee of the League met to discuss the position of the League. They decided to suspend the propaganda activities of the League for the duration of the war. It is difficult to gauge the League's efforts or its impact. The deteriorating international situation made the implementation of their recommendations self evident. Amery would remain on the backbenches until May 1940. He will always be remembered for his attack on Chamberlain during the Norway debate on 7 May 1940 when he said 'depart, I say, and let us have done with you. In the name of God, go'. The day after Chamberlain resigned and Winston Churchill became Prime Minister. On 13 May Amery was offered the post of Secretary of State for India which he accepted. However, he was not given a seat in the War Cabinet.

Right from his arrival at the India Office he was involved in the planning and co-ordination of India forces at a time of unprecedented crisis. Italy had declared war on Britain which meant that the Middle East, East Africa and the Mediterranean were now threatened. France had fallen and most the British Army's equipment and supplies had been lost at Dunkirk. Therefore, India and the Indian Army were of significant strategic importance to the British war effort. On 25 July he submitted a memorandum on the preparation Indian troops for service overseas.<sup>323</sup> The Indian Army, like the British, had been totally unprepared for a modern war. Most of the best equipped units had been sent to Egypt and East Africa in August and September 1939. The COS wanted as many India units as it could muster sent to the Middle East and East Africa to bolster British forces against the Italian forces in Libya, Abyssinia and Somaliland. However, Amery also had to contemplate the possibility of war with Japan which required sending Indian troops to Malaya and Burma. Another consideration was the possibility of Soviet aggression against Afghanistan which meant having sufficient forces in the North West Frontier area for internal security duties and to deter invasion.<sup>324</sup> After the fall of France the rapid mobilisation of Indian forces became a top priority. However, the problem for the Indian Government was a lack of equipment and supplies which would hamper the expansion of the India Army. Leo Amery's first weeks in office were spent dealing with this problem. Similarly, after the fall of France the WO requested the regular units of British garrison be replaced by Territorial units in training in the UK as a matter of urgency. Because of Amery's extensive and detailed knowledge of defence

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<sup>322</sup> AMEL 1/7/78, Letter from Chester Beatty 31 July 1939.

<sup>323</sup> AMEL 2/8/5, War Cabinet, Preparation of More Troops in India for Service Overseas, 25 July 1940.

<sup>324</sup> AMEL 2/8/5 Memorandum by the Secretary of State for India On the Preparation of more Troops in India for Service Overseas, 29 June 1940.



issues and the Army he was able to quickly grasp the problems associated with the movement, supply, training and concentration of military forces.

However, Amery also had to deal with the political upheaval which had been a feature of Indian politics since the 1920s. When in 1939 the Viceroy Lord Lithgow declared war on Germany without consulting the Indian Government he created a political crisis which was still raging when Amery took office. For a number of years Amery had been arguing the India should be given dominion status. He considered the best way to deal with the political crisis was to promise the Indian people that in exchange for their continued loyalty during the war they would be granted post-war Independence.<sup>325</sup> However, his plan was not acceptable to Churchill, who was committed to maintaining British control of India, and the rest of the Cabinet. After only several weeks in post he considered resigning. In August Churchill made a watered down proposals to Indian Congress Party, the Muslim League other nationalists which offered consultation on outstanding political issues and the granting of Dominion status after the war. This was rejected. Amery was then forced to impose tight political and civil control of India through the Defence of India Act. Many anti-British politicians were arrested and imprisoned. By 1941 India had over 200,000 troops serving abroad and by 1942 it was expected that India would have a million men under arms.<sup>326</sup> However, the entry of the Japanese into the war on 7 December 1941 would severely test the Indian Army and British forces in South East Asia. Hong Kong was captured on Christmas day. On 10 December the Japanese invaded Malaya and drove the British imperial forces down the Malay Peninsula. In February 1942 the Japanese captured the much vaunted Singapore fortress and 130,000 British, Indian, Australian and New Zealanders troops went into captivity. This event shattered British prestige and mortally weakened European imperialism across Asia. The fall of Singapore was a poignant moment for Amery because he had been instrumental in getting the great naval base constructed. Another blow was the loss of Burma which brought Japanese forces to the border of India. In March 1942 the British government sent a mission led by Sir Stafford Cripps, deputy leader of the Labour Party, to negotiate with Indian nationalist politicians in an attempt to gain their support for the duration of the war. Cripps essentially offered the 1940 proposals again.

However, in August 1942 Congress the largest nationalist party passed its 'Quit India' resolution which called on the British to withdraw from India immediately. In reprisal the British arrested leading Indian nationalist leaders which led to widespread unrest and riots.

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<sup>325</sup> CAB 67/7/26, War Cabinet: India and the War. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for India, 8 July 1940.

<sup>326</sup> AMEL 2/8/5, War Cabinet Defence Committee Indian Military Problems, 25 October 1941.

This was only contained with some difficulty by the Indian Army and Police which stayed loyal. However, the British were able to cultivate the Muslim League which softened its stance toward British rule and the war effort in exchange for assurances about the possibility of a post-war political settlement that might include the creation of a separate Muslim state. Amery was instrumental in laying the ground for the possibility of Muslim succession. After the Japanese occupation of Burma, Amery had to deal with a rise in pro-Japanese sentiment across India and the possibility of sabotage and attacks on British and Indian security forces by nationalists.<sup>327</sup> On 10 May 1943 Amery circulated a paper to the Cabinet stating that there were concerted attempts both from inside and outside India to subvert Indian Army forces.<sup>328</sup> Amery was concerned that the pro-Japanese Indian National Army (INA) would become the focal point of anti-British sentiment and effect morale among Indian troops serving with the British. However, his fears proved to be unfounded. By the end of the war two million Indians had volunteered for service in the Indian Army. For the first time officers and men were drawn from all sections of Indian society and were considered to be highly professional and proficient soldiers. By 1945 the Indian Army was equipped with armour, artillery and other technical equipment. The Indian economy had been harnessed for the war effort and became an important source of war material for the allied war effort in South East Asia. Amery between 1940 and 1945 was intimately involved in directing and coordinating this effort mammoth effort. However, for much of the war Amery was at odds with Churchill over the direction of Indian policy and his usual capacity for involving himself in the affairs of other departments made him enemies within the Cabinet. Nevertheless, he was undoubtedly successful at dealing with the political and military crisis which engulfed India between 1940 and 1945. At the time of the General Election in 1945 Amery was attempting to create a constitutional plan which would be acceptable to all sides. However, this would be the last time Amery would serve as minister because during the election he lost his Sparkbrook after 33 years and did not return to Parliament.

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<sup>327</sup> CAB 66/22/40, W.P. (42) 110, War Cabinet India 3 March 1942.

<sup>328</sup> CAB 66/36/47, WP (43) 197, Subversive Attempts on Loyalty of the Indian Army, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for India, 10 May 1943.

## Chapter Three: The Army, Home and Empire Defence League 1945-1951

On 23 October 1945 the Army League held its first meeting after the end of the Second World War. There were only nine council members were in attendance; Lord Iliffe, Amery, Lord Altrincham, Beddington Behrens, Major Meade, Sir John Kennedy, Mr R, Peters, Capt Bullock and Mr G, Storey. Iliffe started the meeting by stating that he understood that many members had decided that they would not seek re-election to the council or remain members of the League.<sup>329</sup> Derby and Milne had decided to step down due to ill health and old age and Willingdon had died in 1941. Then Iliffe invited Amery to set out the League's strategy toward the new Labour Government. Amery replied that there was no indication of the Government's attitude toward compulsory military service; however, he stated that the regular army required 'National support' which he thought could be fostered by the League. He thought that any decision about the League's future should be delayed until the Government announced its policy. Altrincham agreed with Amery but wanted the League to gain the endorsement of a 'leading soldier of the war' to give it gravitas; he suggested Field Marshals Montgomery and Alexander. Beddington-Behrens pointed out that since its inception the League's policy had been to bring in 'prominent soldiers' to give advice and gravitas. Iliffe also wanted a re-organisation of the League so it would 'function more efficiently' in the future. However, Amery wanted no action taken until the Government policy had been ascertained. Altrincham also mentioned whether the League might consider in the future co-operating more closely with the Navy League and Air League or even amalgamation.<sup>330</sup> Amery dismissed this, stating that he thought co-operation was acceptable but 'not necessarily one League'. Beddington-Behrens said that the League could usefully function for the time being by sending questions to Members of Parliament on service pay and pensions. Amery said that any possibility of forming a inter service League should be considered and that Field Marshal Montgomery should be approached before another organisation similar to League was created which he might endorse. The League had £4, 775 (£166, 475 amount today) in war bonds and assets but had liabilities of £1000 (34,860) which had been accrued in 1939 by the Citizen Service League. However, the League was not receiving subscriptions from members. If the League was wound up then its assets had to be

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<sup>329</sup> AMEL 1/7/78, Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of The Army and Home and Empire Defence League, 23 October 1945.

<sup>330</sup> *Ibid* p2.

transferred to 'any other organisation having similar objects'.<sup>331</sup> Amery then broke the meeting up.

At this time Amery was under intense personal pressure because his eldest son John Amery was in custody on a charge of high treason. John Amery had been interned in France in 1940 but had willingly made propaganda broadcasts for the Vichy regime, the Germans and the Italians during the war.<sup>332</sup> Over the coming months Amery attempted to get his son to plead guilty on the grounds of diminished responsibilities. On 28 November John Amery went on trial at the Old Bailey, however, John Amery chose to plead guilty and was convicted of high treason sentenced to death within in eight minutes. On 19 December John Amery was executed at Wandsworth Prison. Amery responded to his death by writing a pamphlet entitled *John Amery an Explanation* which he circulated to all his friends. After 1945 he devoted much of his time attacking the Anglo- American Loan and the imposition of the Bretton Woods agreements because he argued that these would sweep away imperial preference and the Ottawa agreements and allow American domination of international trade and the Commonwealth. In 1945 Amery was offered a peerage but turned it down so Julian Amery could pursue a career in politics. The League would remain dormant for eighteen months. During this period the Cold War would intensify and Britain would find itself dealing with financial ruin and increasing Soviet intransigence. The main problem facing the Army between 1945 and 1946 was dealing with demobilisation while ensuring that Britain's many overseas commitments were fulfilled.

On 6 November 1946 Clement Attlee, The Prime Minister, announced that the Government was going to introduce peacetime conscription to bridge the gap between war and peace establishments of the armed forces.<sup>333</sup> Attlee took the unusual step of announcing the Government's intention of introducing peacetime conscription the week before the King's speech to Trade Union Leaders and Labour MPs and activists at a political conference to prepare the most ardent opponents of conscription in his own party and the Unions for the Government's decision. Attlee was very keen to point out that the adoption of the scheme was not going to be a 'permanent feature of our national life'.<sup>334</sup> However, Ball states that Attlee had assured Field Marshal Sir Alanbrooke, Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS), in

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<sup>331</sup> AMEL 1/7/78, Letter concerning League accounts, 8 October 1945

<sup>332</sup> Faber, D. (2005) pp439-450.

<sup>333</sup> Scott, L. V. (1993). *Conscription and the Attlee Governments: The Politics and Policy of National Service 1945-1951* Oxford: Clarendon Press p40.

<sup>334</sup> Attlee quoted in *The Times* November 7 1946 p4.

February 1946 that conscription would be permanent.<sup>335</sup> Between October 1945 and January 1946 the Joint Planning Staff (JPS), on behalf of the Chiefs of Staff (COS), had undertaken an extensive review of possible commitments and preparations necessary for another large conflict.<sup>336</sup> This was carried out in conjunction with the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) who provided an assessment of Soviet and American intentions and possible Soviet force dispositions in Eastern Europe and the Balkans. This first round of post-war planning emphasised the fact that in the first five years of the peace there would be large numbers of trained reservists left over from the war which would support the mobilisation phase of another major war, unlike in the last war when Britain had very few reservists. The JPS proposed that the Armed Forces should have a peacetime strength in 1947 of 1,440,000 in a state of heightened readiness, but they also stated that the probability of war was unlikely before 1951. Attlee replied that due to economic considerations and the fact that war was doubtful the COS should significantly reduce their estimates.<sup>337</sup> This is how the revised figure of 1,100,000 appeared in Cmd 6743 in February 1946. If the COS plans had been accepted then the Government would have been forced to introduce a three year period of National Service to cover the manpower requirement for the projected force levels. The Government wanted the length of service to be restricted to eighteen months which is what it was introduced at. On 12 November 1946 Attlee stated publicly that conscription was necessary because of 'rapid developments in modern warfare would rob this country of that breathing space - measured in years rather than in months - by virtue of which alone in the past two great wars it has been able to build up its warlike strength and overcome its enemies'.<sup>338</sup>

However, on 7 May 1947, after a backbench revolt during the passage of the Bill through Parliament, the Government reduced the length of service to one year.<sup>339</sup> Michael Foot argued that the Government's decision had been a 'great victory for parliamentary democracy'.<sup>340</sup> But the Labour left wingers would have a short-lived victory because international events would increasingly compel the Government to increase the length of service. On 17 June 1947 Amery wrote to Lord Iliffe setting out his fears for the post-war Army and the need to lobby for better organisation of, and welfare provisions for, the regular Army, now that the 'issue of conscription' had been settled.<sup>341</sup> Amery also stated that the

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<sup>335</sup> Ball, S. J. 'A rejected Strategy: The Army and National Service 1946-60' in Strachan, H. (ed). (2000). *The British Army, Manpower and Society into the Twentieth-first Century* London: Frank Cass p38.

<sup>336</sup> Lewis, J. (1988). *Changing Direction: British Military Planning for Post-war Strategic Defence, 1942-1947*. London: The Sherwood Press p247.

<sup>337</sup> Attlee quoted in Lewis, J. (1988) p248.

<sup>338</sup> Cmd 7042, *Statement Relating to Defence February 1947* London: HMSO p7.

<sup>339</sup> Scott, L. V. (1993) p273.

<sup>340</sup> Foot, M. 'The Government and conscription' in *Daily Herald*, April 1947 p1.

<sup>341</sup> AMEL 1/7/81, Private Letter to Lord Iliffe, 19 June 1947.

present government had ‘not’ come to any kind of lasting conclusions regarding the Army. However, he had been in contact with Viscount Alanbrooke, who had recently handed over the post of Chief of the Imperial General Staff (C.I.G.S.) to Field Marshal Montgomery, whom Amery thought was not focussed on the problems facing the Army at this point, about using the Army League as a powerful public sounding board for serious issues confronting the Army. On 18 June Iliffe wrote to Amery saying that they should hold a meeting to decide whether continue the League and inform the council of their decision.<sup>342</sup> On 19 June Amery wrote back to Iliffe stating that he considered the time was now right to disband the Citizen Service League.<sup>343</sup> Amery thought that even though the Act was only binding for five years conscription would become permanent feature of post war society. Amery suggested to Iliffe that the League should look at organisational questions facing the whole of the military system and the welfare of the Regular Army. Amery also had concerns that the Regular Army would be ‘neglected’ by the Government. Amery’s decision was to continue the League but wait and see in which direction Government policy was going.

The question of pay and conditions of service in the Regular Army had been a significant issue during the debates concerning introduction of conscription. On 12 November 1946, during the debate on the King’s Speech in which the peacetime National Service Bill was introduced, Lord Holden, a Labour peer, added that regular recruitment to the armed forces had been poor since the war because: ‘psychologically young people are less inclined after six years of total war to join the armed forces and that rising employment and social equality has dissipated traditional negative social inducements such as poverty, hunger and unemployment as a compelling factor in men joining the armed forces’.<sup>344</sup> However, Bond states that in the 1920s and in the 1930s, when there was high unemployment, the Army still struggled to recruit enough men to its ranks due to its negative reputation.<sup>345</sup> Many commentators thought that the Welfare State would act as a break on recruitment to the armed forces. Conversely, the Minister of Defence, Emmanuel Shinwell, stated publicly in 1947 ‘the public does not seem to realise that the Army for the most part, from rank and file to the officers, are living in quarters which civilians would not be prepared to accept’.<sup>346</sup> This comment is very revealing because one of the most powerful domestic issues of the early post-war era was the chronic shortage of housing and the generally dilapidated state of property. On 18 September 1948, Woodrow Wyatt, a Labour MP, set out in the popular magazine *Picture Post* what he thought

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<sup>342</sup> AMEL 1/7/82, Letter from Iliffe to Amery, 18 June 1947.

<sup>343</sup> AMEL 1/7/82, Letter from Amery to Iliffe, 19 June 1947.

<sup>344</sup> Lord Holden, House Lords debate on the Kings Speech in *Hansard* fifth series. 12 November 1946

<sup>345</sup> Bond, B. (1994). ‘The Army Between The Two 1918-1939’ in Chandler, D. G. & Beckett, I (eds). *The Oxford History of The British Army*, Oxford: Oxford University Press p256.

<sup>346</sup> Shinwell Emanuel quoted in Liddell Hart, B. (1950). *The Defence of the West* London; Cassell p226.

was wrong with the Army: 'low pay and poor conditions of service'.<sup>347</sup> Another problem was that there were high levels of employment in the late 1940s which made it difficult to attract recruits or retain personnel.<sup>348</sup> The Government could not compete with the higher wages on offer in civilian life. This was compounded by the fact that providing national service manpower was expensive. However, the overriding problems were a lack of resources and persistent overseas commitments which required considerable manpower resources.

On 3 July 1947 the League held a general meeting to decide its future. Amery announced that the Army League would absorb the Citizens Service League stating with some pragmatism 'that now that conscription is part of the law of the land, it is unnecessary to revive The Citizens Service League'.<sup>349</sup> However, Amery was more circumspect when he argued that the government did not realise that a 'considerable standing Army was necessary' as well as a 'conscript Army which could not be used overseas'. Leo Amery perceived that national service was becoming a catalyst for a weakened two-tier Army, neither being sufficient for its allotted tasks. However, at this point the Army League had become little more than an informal discussion group with a greatly reduced membership, whose pre-war aims had clearly been achieved. There were only four other members present including Iliffe at this meeting. Amery said he would try and get Alan Brooke interested in the League and suggested that he offered the post of President. Amery also decided the future direction of the League needed careful consideration. However, on 1 August Amery wrote to Iliffe stating that Alanbrooke had declined his offer to become involved in the League. Iliffe stated that it might be more practicable to give the remaining funds to Army Cadet Movement and start the Army League from scratch in a few years time.<sup>350</sup> However, on 31 December the League held its Ordinary General Meeting which agreed that the League should continue.<sup>351</sup>

On 7 January 1948 the League Council Committee held a meeting to discuss what form the League's activities would take in the future.<sup>352</sup> Amery thought there was enough 'uncertainty of outlook' that the League should adopt a watching brief. Iliffe offered to have his employees carry out all secretarial work which was accepted. Amery also decided to give £500 to the Army Cadets from the League. But, League activity subsided again. However, during 1948 the international situation began to deteriorate further. In March Britain formed

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<sup>347</sup> Woodrow Wyatt 'What's Wrong with the Army' in *Picture Post* Vol.40. No.12. September 1948, p26.

<sup>348</sup> Addison, P. (1995) pp173-174.

<sup>349</sup> AMEL 1/7/81, Minutes of the Army League Committee meeting, 3 July 1947.

<sup>350</sup> AMEL 1/7/82, Letter from Iliffe to Amery, 1 August 1947.

<sup>351</sup> AMEL 1/7/82, Annual General Meeting and Report of the Management Council, 31 December 1947.

<sup>352</sup> AMEL 1/7/82, League Council Meeting, 7 January 1948.

the Brussels Pact with France and the Benelux countries. At the end of June the Soviets began blockading Berlin. In September 1948 at the height of Berlin air blockade Churchill, the leader of Opposition, received a paper from a COS Committee, written by Montgomery, on the state of the Army. This paper stated that Army morale in the UK was low due to inadequate allowances, particularly for married personnel, poor accommodation and scarcity of married quarters, constant movement of personnel due to short service conscripts and a shortage of regular personnel and the low quality of those who re-enlisted.<sup>353</sup> It is interesting that Churchill received a 'top secret' report on the state of the army at a time when the Soviets were tightening their grip on Berlin and the regular army was stretched to the limit abroad, when there was a growing consensus among the COS that more resources were needed to bolster the defence effort. In September 1948 the Government admitted that more resources were needed for defence and that much of the Armed Force's equipment was becoming obsolete and that wartime stocks were nearly exhausted.<sup>354</sup> Gorst contends that defence planning undertaken by the COS between 1946 and 1948 was flawed because it only paid 'lip service' to the realities of the economic situation.<sup>355</sup>

Because of the Blockade, on 23 September 1948 demobilisation of National Servicemen was delayed by three months to provide extra manpower. On 1 December 1948 the Government was forced to increase the length of National Service from 12 months to 18 months as it became clear that the international situation would remain uncertain.<sup>356</sup> At the end of 1948 more British troops were being committed to Malaya to deal with communist insurgents. Recruitment to the Regular Army was also sluggish which was placing pressure on regular units which were increasingly being filled with conscripts. The increase in the length of service allowed conscripts to be deployed to units in the Middle East and Africa. On 3 December 1948 Amery had lunch with General Slim the CIGS where he gave him a memorandum entitled 'Army Requirements'.<sup>357</sup> Army requirements set out what Amery considered to be the Army's peacetime role and what its strategic dispositions should be at the start of the next war. Much of the document contained ideas that Amery had been arguing for since 1903; troops based at vital strategic points across the globe; the creation of a strategic reserve; a large static home defence army; a highly mobile small professional force for overseas operations; the creation of a long service overseas Army; greater technical training of service personnel. However, he believed that Britain should reduce the number of national

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<sup>353</sup> Chur 2/12, *Chiefs of Staff Committee: State of the Army in September 1948 Statement by CIGS* pp2-3

<sup>354</sup> Herbert Morrison, Debate on the Address in *Hansard*, 14 September 1948, Vol. 456, col 32.

<sup>355</sup> Gorst, A. 'Facing facts ? The Labour Government and defence policy 1945-1950' in Tiratsoo, N. (ed). (1991). *The Attlee Years* London: Pinter Publishers p192.

<sup>356</sup> *The National Service Amendment Bill (26)*, 4 November 1948 London: HMSO.

<sup>357</sup> AMEL 1/7/83, Army Requirements.



service men serving in Germany which should become a regular army commitment with weaker units. He also argued that the Government needed to raise a large foreign legion made up of Poles and Germans for service in the Middle East. He also argued that a large air transportable force be created which could be used for imperial emergencies. On 22 December Slim wrote back stating that the WO had considered his proposals but pointed out that the cold commitments demanded a larger army than could be raised by voluntary recruitment which is why units in Germany contained large numbers of national servicemen.<sup>358</sup> Slim agreed that a air transportable force was a good idea but noted that financial constraints made it difficult to realise this aspiration in peacetime. He said that the question of a foreign legion was always being considered but he observed that Gurkha units already constituted a foreign legion. However, Amery did not mention pay and living conditions of the regular Army. He had moved on familiar ground the promotion of an imperial strategic policy and the creation of an army able to meet Britain's overseas commitments.

Amery was perceptive enough to realise that conscription was a doubled-edged sword because it guaranteed a source of temporary manpower for the Armed Forces but would it attract enough men to make the regular forces viable once their period of compulsory enlistment had expired? The Government were well aware of this problem but they were constrained by the fact that they needed to maintain considerable overseas commitments which meant having large amounts of manpower. The introduction of conscription was a Pyrrhic victory for advocates of conscription like Amery because it was destabilising the Regular Army. In early December 1948 Leo Amery circulated 'Army Requirements' to League members.<sup>359</sup> On 16 December 1948, Lord Iliffe wrote to Amery stating, 'I am glad we did not entirely wind up the Army League', because the 'present mismanagement of Army affairs' was a cause for concern.<sup>360</sup> After this Amery began writing to potential new League members. Amery asked General Sir Giffard Martel, who had been commander of the Royal Armoured Corps from 1940-1942 and then head of the military mission to the Soviet Union from 1943-1944 before retiring from the Army in 1945, if he would consider joining the League. In August 1947 Martel stated in an address to the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) that conscription would adversely affect voluntary recruitment to the regular Army and the Territorial Army.<sup>361</sup> He also contended that Britain was unlikely to fight another 'protracted' conflict in the nuclear age and therefore no longer required a large reserve.

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<sup>358</sup> AMEL 1/7/83, Letter from General Slim to Amery, 22 December 1948.

<sup>359</sup> AMEL 1/7/81, Memo on Army, 2 December 1948 .

<sup>360</sup> AMEL 1/7/81, Letter from Iliffe to Amery, 16 December 1948,

<sup>361</sup> General Sir Giffard Martel 'The Trend of Future Warfare' in *Royal United Services Institute Journal* No 97, November 1947.

Martel hypothesized that British forces would be involved in the immediate post-war period in 'policing duties' more suited to a regular Army, and that many of the UK's 'imperial policing duties' would be taken over by a 'international body' in the future. This latter consideration was the widely-held belief that the UN would eventually provide the framework for a collective security force to enforce international law. In the 1920s and 1930s Martel had been advocate of armoured warfare and the tank and was an unsuccessful Conservative candidate at the 1945 general election. Much of his writing on defence issues contained considerable amounts of anti-communist rhetoric.

In April 1949, Martel wrote a detailed briefing paper for Winston Churchill on the pros-and cons of peacetime conscription and the general direction of post-war defence. He stated 'we need a highly efficient regular army of 200-250 thousand men, which would provide our overseas garrisons, four divisions with attached troops for use in Germany or elsewhere'.<sup>362</sup> Martel further argued 'even with the present unattractive pay and conditions we already have 174 thousand regulars. But these men, instead of being concentrated in effective units, are being used to train an army of 430 thousand men at annual cost of £304 million'. Martel's solution was to abolish National Service and use the money then being spent on conscription to provide better pay and conditions for the regular army, which would attract more recruits and achieve his proposed force of 250,000. The figure of between 200,000 and 250,000 equates to the size of the regular army before the war. Martel also alluded to Liddell Hart as being 'like minded' on the subject of conscription and noted that if conscription was not quickly dispensed with it would become increasingly difficult to dislodge. As Martel pointed out, the government had four million reservists with vast military experience who could be mobilized until the mid-1950s 'when it would not be of much value'. Martel wanted a highly trained, well equipped and mobile Regular Army backed by a powerful air force. This echoed Amery's advocacy in the mid-1930s of a strong air and sea defence capability backed by a mobile imperial field force.

On 10 January 1949 Martell wrote to Amery, a lifelong advocate of conscription, stating that there was 'very little difference between our views'.<sup>363</sup> Martell thought that the Soviet Union would not be able to start a major war until the mid 1950s. He, also, noted that financial constraints made it difficult to provide for a 'proper regular army plus all the immense training establishments for national service men'. Martel argued that the Soviet Union would not be able to launch a major attack on Western Europe without considerable period of

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<sup>362</sup> CHUR 2/25, Memo on the Pros and Cons of Conscription by Sir Giffard Martel dated 24 June 1949 to Sir Winston Churchill. Hereafter CHUR 2/25.

<sup>363</sup> AMEL 1/7/83, Letter from Martell to Amery 10 January 1949.

warning for at least next few years. Martel also thought that technological developments would make large static military forces vulnerable and obsolete. On 13 January Amery wrote back stating that he thought it imperative that there were sufficient reserve forces to guard factories, air fields, docks, transport and communication infrastructure from air-borne forces, sabotage and commando raids.<sup>364</sup> Amery also reflected that the wartime reservists experience was being superseded by new technology and their 'lack of individual preparedness'. He argued that a compulsory system kept the reserve viable and made the Territorial Army a significant military force. However, Martel declined Amery's offer to join the League on the grounds that he was too busy.

However, Amery was also looking for new members in the House of Commons because most of the old council members who had been MPs were now in the House of Lords or had lost their seats. This meant finding recruits who could use the Commons chamber as a pulpit to publicize League's views. On 7 February Amery wrote to the Conservative MP Brigadier Prior-Palmer, a former professional soldier, who had been attacking the Government policy on regular recruitment in the House of Commons.<sup>365</sup> On 1 December 1948 during the National Service Amendment Bill Prior-Palmer had made a powerful speech which wanted the Government to concentrate more resources on making sure that the regular army retained its personnel by improving pay and conditions of service.<sup>366</sup> He was also concerned that the identity and training of the regular was being eroded by national service. Amery sent Prior-Palmer notes and a memorandum on army recruitment and information about League and told him he supported his stance on recruitment. On 9 February Prior-Palmer thanked Amery for his information and support and said he would attend meetings if he was able to find the time.<sup>367</sup> On 7 March 1949, Iliffe wrote to Amery stating 'the mess which the government have made of recruiting for the regular Army inclines me to think that it might be really worth restarting the Army League, on original lines..'.<sup>368</sup> At this point Amery wrote to Beddington-Behrens telling him that he decided to formally re-launch the League because of the 'regular recruiting mess'.<sup>369</sup> Although, Amery had already begun recruiting new members and was busy formulating a policy for the League. However, it is clear that, although the League was reconstituting in what amounted to a defence of the Regular Army, it was positioning itself to attack Labour's 'mismanagement' of the Army. This had a clear party political bias which

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<sup>364</sup> AMEL 1/7/83, Letter from Amery to Martel, 13 January 1949.

<sup>365</sup> AMEL 1/7/83, Letter from Amery to Brigadier Prior-Palmer, 7 February 1949.

<sup>366</sup> Brigadier Prior-Palmer, 'National Service Amendment Bill debate' in *Hansard*, 1 December 1948, Vol. 458, col. 2055.

<sup>367</sup> AMEL 1/7/83, Letter from Brigadier Prior-Palmer to Amery, 9 February 1949.

<sup>368</sup> AMEL 1/7/81, Letter from Iliffe to Amery, 7 March 1949,

<sup>369</sup> AMEL 1/7/81, Letter to Beddington-Behrens 7 March 1949.

was missing from the pre-war approach of the League which was careful not to attack the Government directly.

The Conservative Party published a pamphlet in December 1948 which accused the Government of being divided on the issue of conscription and weak because they had reduced the length of service to a year and then back to eighteen months.<sup>370</sup> If there was any consensus regarding defence issues it was skin deep. However, Bartlett argues that Attlee's government 'emerges with much credit' for its handling of defence matters between 1945 and 1948.<sup>371</sup> By December 1950 Brigadier John Faviell defence adviser to the Conservative Party Central Office (CPCO) was a member of the League Council. Faviell served in First World War as a Gunnery officer; in Ireland during the troubles in the early 1920s and Palestine in the 1930s where he won the Military Cross. During the Second World War he served with the 51<sup>st</sup> Highland Division. After the war he served as secretary to the Army Board at the WO. He retired from the Army in 1950. Throughout the 1950s Faviell kept records of League meetings and discussion papers which were kept by the Conservative Research Department (CRD). Faviell was also involved in the production of League material. Among Faviell papers at the CRD is a briefing paper from the Army Council concerning the state of the Army in 1949.<sup>372</sup> The paper noted that the condition of the regular army gave cause for concern. There was a perception that national service would continue to deteriorate the regular army to point that it would cease to be an effective force. The remedy was increased pay and conditions of service and a 'drastic reduction of national service' which would be necessary to fund the wealth increases. Faviell's interest in the League probably stemmed from his desire to use it to push for increases in pay and conditions of service to improve recruitment to the regular army.

On 14 March Amery wrote to the Labour MP Reginald Paget, later Baron Paget of Northampton, stating that he had for sometime followed his speeches on the problem of the Army.<sup>373</sup> The Eton- and Cambridge- educated Paget was considered to be on the right of the Labour Party. He was a noted barrister and had entered Parliament in 1945. Amery broke the ice by saying 'This is not a Party question, for whatever views we may hold either about foreign policy or national expenditure, we must all want to have the best defence that our economic situation will allow'. Amery told Paget that he wanted to create a 'voluntary career army'; however, he also informed him that national service should provide enough men with a 'minimum of elementary military knowledge. The length of that period of training is a

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<sup>370</sup> *Current Notes on Politics* London: Conservative Party, 27 December 1948, pp2-4.

<sup>371</sup> Bartlett, C. J. (1972) p44.

<sup>372</sup> Conservative Party Archive, Oxford University Bodleian Library, Conservative Record Department CRD 2/38/ 4, Defence Policy Army; hereafter CRD 2/38/4.

<sup>373</sup> AMEL 1/7/83, Letter from Amery to Paget, 14 March 1949.

matter of much less consequence than the organisation as a whole'. He also thought that 'such training should not be confused with military service'. This is illuminating, because Amery, who had been an advocate of national service in peacetime for nearly fifty years, was concerned that conscription was being misused. On 16 March Paget replied to Amery saying that he was 'in entire agreement with your appreciation of the present situation'.<sup>374</sup> Paget also agreed to attend a League meeting. This gave Amery the possibility of crossbench participation which had been missing from the pre-war League. But, Paget was hardly representative of the Labour Party given his background and negative assessment of Government policy.

Amery also targeted the Conservative MP Brigadier Anthony Head. The Eton, and Royal Military College Sandhurst, educated Head joined the army in the 1920s and served in the cavalry. During the Second World War Head a distinguished career both as a field and staff officer. He was present at all of the major allied conferences of the war. He entered Parliament in 1945. Head soon gained a reputation as an expert on defence matters and was considered to be one of the rising stars of the Conservative Party. On 14 March Amery wrote to Head stating that he thought the Government policy on recruiting for the regular army was failure because 'they cannot make up their minds regarding universal training as a permanent feature in our military scheme'.<sup>375</sup> He also attacked the Cardwell system 'with its seven years of service that has wrecked the Regular Army from a recruiting point of view, ever since I have known it'. Amery acknowledged the need for having a large reserve for home defence and 'later for occupying enemy territory' but thought that national service should not debase the regular army. Amery concluded that national service should be regarded as a 'training school'. This idea was based on the NSL model of summer camp plus yearly refresher training. Amery, as usual, sent a memorandum and information on the League. Head also arranged to attend a League meeting. He also approached Brigadier Toby Low, the Conservative MP for Blackpool North. Low trained as a Barrister before the war and had also been a member of the Territorial Army. During the war he served in Greece, North Africa and Italy. By 1945 he was one of the youngest brigadiers in the Army. In 1945 he was serving as a staff officer with 5 Corps in Austria when he supervised the forcible repatriation of Cossack prisoners of war to Soviet forces; the Cossacks were summarily shot on their arrival in the Soviet Zone of occupation. This would later come back to haunt Low when he was accused of being war criminal by Count Nikolai Tolstoy and Nigel Watts in 1989.<sup>376</sup> Low won the case

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<sup>374</sup> AMEL 1/7/83, Letter from Paget to Amery, 16 March 1949.

<sup>375</sup> AMEL 1/7/83, Letter from Amery to Head, 14 March 1949.

<sup>376</sup> *The Guardian*, 'Private Row which opened war wound: 'Spurned Jury rejects Tolstoy crimes charge' 1 December 1989 p2.

but his reputation was tarnished by the affair. After 1946 Low was the political correspondent for the *Army Quarterly* and compiled 'The Army From Parliament' column.<sup>377</sup> Low attended several League meetings at the end of 1950 and in early 1951 before joining Churchill's Government as a junior minister in October 1951.

Another brief member was Major General Sir Ian Jacob. Jacob was commissioned into the Royal Engineers in 1918 and subsequently served in India and Egypt between the wars. In 1938 he was appointed military assistant secretary to the Committee of Imperial Defence at the WO. In 1939 he was promoted and became assistant military secretary to the War Cabinet. During the war he worked closely with Churchill the Minister of Defence (and Prime Minister) as one of military secretaries. In 1946 he retired from the Army and joined the BBC as head of overseas broadcasting. Like Low he attended meetings of the League at the end of 1950 and in early 1951 but he then joined Churchill's new Government in October 1951 as chief staff officer and deputy military secretary to the Cabinet. Another part-time member was Professor Solly Zuckerman who attended several League meetings over the years. Zuckerman was a renowned scientist who specialised in anatomy. However, in 1939 Zuckerman began researching the effects blast damage on human beings. Zuckerman quickly became the leading expert on blast damage to humans and buildings. Zuckerman was also employed by the Cabinet to assess the effectiveness of Bomber Commands strategic offensive against Germany. Zuckerman also worked as scientific advisor to the Combined Operations Executive; he was responsible for calculating the level of naval and air bombardment needed to knock out shore defences. After the war Zuckerman chaired or was a member of many eminent Whitehall scientific committees in the 1950s and 1960s.

Lieutenant General Sir Fredrick Morgan also contributed to the League in 1950. Morgan was commissioned into Royal Field Artillery in 1913 and joined the Lahore divisional Artillery of the Indian Army. He served on the Western front during the Great War before returning to India in 1919. He would serve in India until 1935. Between 1935 and 1938 he was a staff officer at the WO. In 1940 Morgan commanded the support group of 1<sup>st</sup> Armoured Division of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) during the fighting in Northern France. Between 1940 and 1943 Morgan held a number of commands. However, in 1943 he was appointed chief of staff to the supreme allied commander (COSSAC). In this capacity he would be intimately involved in the planning for the invasion of North West Europe. In 1944 he was appointed deputy chief of staff at Eisenhower's headquarters (SHAEF). In 1945 Morgan became chief of operations in Germany to the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation

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<sup>377</sup> Low, T. 'The Army From Parliament', *The Army Quarterly* Volume LXII April, and July 1951 London: William Clowes p27

Administration (UNRRA). In 1946 Morgan was forced to resign after claiming that UNRRA operations were being manipulated by 'sinister' Soviet and Jewish organisations. In October 1951 Morgan became controller of Atomic Energy and discontinued his association with the League.

It is difficult to gauge the impact of these members on the League and activities, because Julian Amery, the League's secretary, kept very selective records of the League's meetings which often amounted to heavily annotated summations of events.<sup>378</sup> In 1956 when Julian Amery handed over to brigadier Vernham as secretary of the League he told him not to record all discussions of League meetings for 'political' reasons but keep the records brief.<sup>379</sup> However, the papers of the study group are more extensive and contain discussions on the preparation of articles and reports. Another problem concerning post-war membership was that many members left to take up appointments in the Government or to run official bodies which precluded them from being members of an unofficial body. Between 1949 and 1950 Leo Amery and other League members managed to rebuild the League but the 1951 general election decimated the League because nearly all the members of the League were associated with Conservative party which formed a new Government in October and many members left to join the new Government. However, during 1949 as Amery rebuilt the League the international situation began to dictate what the direction the League's studies would take in coming years. On 4 April 1949 the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) was created which did much to stabilise the military situation in Europe.<sup>380</sup> However, on 29 August the Soviet Union detonated its first atomic bomb which shattered the American nuclear monopoly. This meant that the Western allies would have to reconsider their conventional forces levels. Then on 1 October Mao Zedong proclaimed the formation of the People's Republic of China after defeating the Nationalists forces Chiang Kai-shek. It seemed to all intense purposes that the West was now facing a monolithic threat which was being directed from Moscow.

In July 1949 Amery began writing to the Minister of War, Emmanuel Shinwell, on the Army recruitment situation.<sup>381</sup> Amery told Shinwell that national service should be separated from the Regular Army; this would greatly reduce the amount of time that the Regular Army was spending on training national servicemen. Amery thought that national service should be reduced to one year and undertaken within the Territorial Army at local drill halls or military

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<sup>378</sup> Kings College London, Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, LH 5/4/2, Minute of Meeting of the Army League, 30 November 1950. Hereafter, LH 5/4/2.

<sup>379</sup> AMEJ 485, Letter to Vernham concerning the taking of notes at meetings. 10 September 1956.

<sup>380</sup> Cook, D. (1989). *Forging the alliance: NATO, 1945-50* London: Secker & Warburg.

<sup>381</sup> AMEL 1/7/83, Letter from Amery to Shinwell 26 July 1949.

bases. On 28 July Shinwell replied that he wished that national service could be undertaken within the Territorial Army but the 'difficulty is that our worldwide commitments at the present time call for a degree of full time national service'.<sup>382</sup> As Shinwell pointed out overseas commitments made it impossible for the government to introduce such a policy. Similarly, the Army had an establishment of 345,000 men in March 1949 who were hard pressed to carry out all the various commitments required of it. The pre-war Army had been hard pressed to recruit and maintain a army of 210,000. After 1946 the volatile international situation compounded the problem and became a constant drain on resources, manpower and planning. On 15 August Amery wrote to Shinwell suggesting that he look at Arnold Forster's scheme two-tier Army system. Amery still believed that the Army should be divided between a long service Regular Army and a short service Home Army which could be supplemented by the Territorial Army fed by national service.<sup>383</sup> However, Amery's ideas were unrealistic because the international situation and British imperial commitments were too widespread to be fulfilled by voluntary recruitment alone. By the end of 1949 the League was slowly being reactivated and rebuilt by Amery. However, this gained momentum in 1950 when Amery asked his son Julian Amery to join the League as acting secretary.

## **The New League**

Julian was born in 1919 and educated at Eton and Balliol College Oxford. Like his father he was small and studious. Whilst at Oxford he was a member of the Oxford Union and in 1939 participated in a debate with Liddell Hart (against) over the issue of introducing peacetime conscription due to the international situation.<sup>384</sup> Julian Amery was the younger son of Leo Amery. During the Second World War Julian had served in the Balkans as part of the military mission to the Royalist forces of General Mihailovic in Yugoslavia. In 1945 he decided that he wanted to become a writer before embarking on a political career. In 1946 he was involved in a Secret Service operation to infiltrate agents into Albania; however, all the agents were captured on arrival because the mission had been compromised by Soviet intelligence. In 1948 he published his wartime exploits in *Sons of the Eagle*. On 23 February 1950 Amery entered Parliament after winning the seat of Preston North (at the second attempt, after being unsuccessful in 1945) at the general election; also that year he married Catherine Macmillan, youngest daughter of Harold Macmillan. Julian Amery, like his father, was a committed imperialist and was instrumental in 1954 in the formation of the Suez Group of Conservative

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<sup>382</sup> AMEL1/7/83, Letter from Shinwell to Amery 28 July 1949.

<sup>383</sup> AMEL 1/7/83, Letter from Amery to Shinwell 15 August 1949.

<sup>384</sup> Faber, D. (2006) p325.



MPs who were opposed to Eden's intention of withdrawing from the Canal Zone; he was additionally secretary of the group.<sup>385</sup> He also a dedicated supporter of the European Economic Community (EEC) and worked closely with Beddington-Behrens in the European Movement. When Harold Macmillan became Prime Minister in January 1957 he became Under Secretary of State for War and then in November 1958 he was made Under Secretary of State for the Colonies. In 1960 he was given the post of Secretary of State for Air and in 1962 Minister for Aviation. He never served in the Cabinet. At the 1966 general election he lost his Preston seat but in 1969 he won a by election and was elected as the MP for Brighton Pavilion. After the 1970 general election Edward Heath, the Prime Minister, appointed him Minister of State for Public Buildings and Works after a few months he became Housing Minister. In 1972 he moved to the Foreign Office as Minister of State which was his last government post. In 1974 the Conservatives lost the general election. In 1975 Heath was replaced by Margaret Thatcher as leader of the Conservatives. In 1979 when Thatcher became Prime Minister she overlooked Amery who remained a back bencher until 1992 when he retired from the Commons. In 1992 he created a life peer as Lord Amery of Lustleigh. Onslow described Julian Amery as a political operator 'par excellence', who sought all 'avenues to achieve his political agenda'.<sup>386</sup> He died in September 1996 at 112 Eaton Square.

In 1950 the Army League Council consisted of the following: Major Edward Beddington Behrens, Field Marshal Lord Chetwode, Lord Altrincham, Robert Peters, Sir Henry Price, Lord Iliffe and Leo Amery.<sup>387</sup> However, Chetwode died on 6 July 1950. Another notable recruit in 1950 was Basil Liddell Hart who would provide much of the League's intellectual stimulus over the coming years. Although Liddell Hart been rejected in 1937 by the League Council, he was asked by Amery to become a member. Basil Liddell Hart was one of Britain's foremost contemporary military thinkers and historians until his death in 1970. Liddell Hart was born in Paris in 1895. His father was the chaplain to the Methodist church in Paris. Liddell Hart was educated at number of schools and in May 1914 passed the entrance examination for Corpus Christi College Cambridge to read history. However, at the start of the First World War Liddell Hart was commissioned into the King's Own Yorkshire Regiment and served in France in the trenches.<sup>388</sup> He began writing his first military articles in 1918 and was given a regular commission in 1921. However, in 1923 he was invalided out due to poor health, although he was retained on half-pay until 1927. In the period immediately

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<sup>385</sup> Onslow, S. (2006). 'Unreconstructed Nationalists and a Minor Gunboat Operation: Julian Amery, Neil McLean and the Suez Crisis' in *Contemporary British History* Vol. 20, No.1, p74.

<sup>386</sup> *Ibid* p74.

<sup>387</sup> AMEL 1/7/81, List of Council Members, November 1950..

<sup>388</sup> Holden Reid, B. (2004). *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* Oxford: Oxford University Press p245.

after the war he produced several papers on tactical experience gained in the war, all of which enhanced his reputation as a military thinker within the Army. After 1923 he moved into journalism, initially as a sports correspondent. In 1925 he became the military correspondent for the *Daily Telegraph*. By the late 1920s his work as a military writer was being internationally recognised. At this time his theories concerning 'indirect approach' were formulated. During this period he was a devotee and friend of Major General JFC Fuller who was considered the foremost exponent on the theory of mechanized warfare.<sup>389</sup> Fuller would be asked to contribute to the League and became a member of the study group in 1950.

During the mid-1930s, Liddell Hart argued against the use of the mass conscripted army (nation in arms) in favour of highly-trained flexible mechanized armoured and infantry forces.<sup>390</sup> There were two main reasons for this theory. First, Liddell Hart argued that the great loss of life in the First World War would have been avoided, at least for Britain, if the British government had not been drawn into the attritional nature of modern warfare by sending the bulk of its manpower strength to Europe. Liddell Hart based this assumption on a critical reappraisal of Clausewitz's theory of absolute warfare and its corollary the 'nation in arms'.<sup>391</sup> Liddell Hart argued that the UK should remain aloof from large-scale continental commitments. But he did argue that the use of sea power to enforce a blockade and provide defence for the UK was still relevant in the 1930s. Additionally, he stated that naval power allowed the use of amphibious forces for strategic purposes to carry the fight to the enemy's interior: indirect approach. Further Britain should utilise its Empire, industry and commerce in support of, or as Liddell Hart stated, 'subsidizing', Britain's allies.<sup>392</sup> In other words a return to the 'classic' British way of fighting a continental war with a 'peripheral strategy' utilising the mobility and surprise of naval power to project land forces and material support for allies. By the mid- 1930 he advocated a 'limited liability', consisting of air and naval forces with a land commitment of two modern armoured divisions for rapid deployment as required for operations on the continent in support of Britain's European allies. This approach had been supported by Amery in the mid 1930s.

Strachan argues that Liddell Hart's perceptions in the 1920s and 1930s were 'didactic', designed to provoke discussion by utilising the irrefutable historical evidence of Britain's maritime domination since the eighteenth century, as a device to substantiate his

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<sup>389</sup> Trythall, A.J. (1978). 'The Fuller-Liddell Hart Lecture: A dialogue' in *Royal United Service Institution Journal* No 124:1

<sup>390</sup> Liddell Hart, B. (1931). 'Economic Pressure or Continental Victories' in *Royal United Service Institution Journal* No. 76 pp486-510.

<sup>391</sup> Liddell Hart, B. (1931). p488.

<sup>392</sup> *Ibid* p487.

‘prescriptive’ for the future.<sup>393</sup> The championing of the conventional British strategic policy by traditionalists became intertwined with an increasing awareness, also a historical fact which Liddell Hart largely ignored, that Britain’s peripheral strategy was dominated by its reliance on an alliance with a European military power with considerable land-based forces. In 1935 Liddell Hart became the military correspondent for *The Times* and an unofficial advisor to Duff Cooper and then Hore-Belisha many of his modernising ideas on the WO were instigated by the latter.<sup>394</sup> This relationship was ended in 1938 because Liddell Hart’s outspoken attitude and previous attacks on the military establishment created powerful enemies who conspired to remove his ‘unofficial’ influence on an elected official. During the period of appeasement Liddell Hart wrote two books, *Europe in Arms* (1937) and *The Defence of Britain* (1939), which advocated a policy of ‘limited liability’, constraining military commitments to air and naval forces, supported by two first-rate armoured divisions. In the late 1930s Liddell Hart undertook a series of speaking engagements warning of the dangers of National Socialism and Fascism.<sup>395</sup> However, he opposed appeasement and the possibility of war in equal measure which somewhat diminished the perspicacity of his anti fascist rhetoric. Liddell Hart later stated that he had expressed considerable reservations about Chamberlain’s security policy and was an ardent opponent of appeasement.<sup>396</sup> However, Mearsheimer refutes this, arguing that in 1939 Liddell Hart ‘downplayed’ the threat posed by Hitler and advocated more appeasement when it became apparent the Britain might go to war with Germany.<sup>397</sup> Mearsheimer notes that Liddell Hart was unable to articulate a integrated grand strategy which maintained a balance of power on the Continent without making a major military commitment.

This period corresponded with major health problems (a heart attack in June 1939), which effectively ended his association with the pro-appeasement *The Times* although his relationship with the paper had been deteriorating since Liddell Hart had been publicly campaigning against the dangers of Fascism and appeasement. During the Second World War he was criticised for having a defeatist attitude, due to his advocacy of a defensive strategy based on an ‘armed truce’ and collective security.<sup>398</sup> Liddell Hart’s ideas were denounced for being ineffectual and misguided given the geo-political situation after 1940 in the West and after 1942 in the Far East. Liddell Hart stance was further weakened by the realisation of the true barbaric nature of National Socialist Germany and Japanese militarism. This and his

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<sup>393</sup> Strachan, H. (1994). ‘The British Way in Warfare’ in Chandler, D, G and Beckett, I (eds). *The Oxford History of the British Army* Oxford: Oxford University Press p399.

<sup>394</sup> Bond, B. (1981) p12.

<sup>395</sup> Danchev, A. (1999) p202.

<sup>396</sup> Liddell Hart, B. (1965). *The Memoirs of Captain Liddell Hart* London: Cassell p240.

<sup>397</sup> Mearsheimer, J, J. (1988) p224.

<sup>398</sup> Holden Reid, B. (2004) p245.

rather erroneous assumption made in 1943 that it was only a ‘possibility’ that the allies could defeat the Axis powers, effectively left him isolated and by 1945 without an outlet for his work.<sup>399</sup> However, his doctrine of an armed truce and defensive collective security were more suited to the realities of the emergent Cold War. After 1946 his polemics about the use and threat of atomic weapons in future conflicts entered into his published articles and books along with assessments of Soviet military strength and operational doctrine. He was also a supporter of the 100 who campaigned against nuclear weapons and was sceptical about their value as a credible deterrent. In 1945 he began having a series of interviews with captured German generals who were imprisoned near his home in the Lake District. In 1948 he published *The German Generals Talk* which asserted that the generals had been merely professionals doing their duty for Germany; Liddell Hart argued that the megalomaniac Hitler had deceived and manipulated them and they had been ignorant of the true extent of the Nazi states crimes. In 1951 he published *The Other Side of the Hill* which was an updated version of *The German Generals Talk*. In 1953 he published the *Rommel Papers*. During the early 1950s Liddell Hart campaigned on behalf of the German generals. Paget was Field Marshal Von Manstein’s British lawyer and published a book about his client in 1951. In 1950 Liddell Hart wrote *The Defence of the West* which evaluated the impact of nuclear weapons on conventional defence and what resources the West required to defend itself against Soviet attack.

By 1960 his reputation as a military thinker had been fully restored after fourteen years of rehabilitation. His political outlook has always been considered to be to the left in leaning and after 1945 he did support the Labour government of Clement Attlee, whom he advised on military matters. His relationship with the Conservative Party was cool, mainly due to his negative relationship with Churchill, whom he had criticised after 1940 for his management of the war effort and his repeated calls for a negotiated settlement.<sup>400</sup> He did have links to Labour politicians in the 1950s, notably John Strachey<sup>401</sup>, former War Minister, and Denis Healey, a future Secretary of State for Defence and shadow spokesman on defence issues in the 1950s. Liddell Hart would annually holiday after Christmas at a Bournemouth hotel with Field Marshal Montgomery. He was a sole advocate of the rehabilitation of the reputation of the German General Staff in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and subsequently fostered links with many senior general officers in newly-emergent West Germany as a consequence. He argued publicly for NATO to adopt a policy of a flexible deterrent in the late 1950s and early

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<sup>399</sup> Bond, B. (1977). *Liddell Hart: a study of his military thought* London: Cassell p147

<sup>400</sup> Holden Reid, B. (2004) p245

<sup>401</sup> Strachey later became joint Chairmen of the League with Tufton-Beamish a Conservative backbencher in 1958 after Amery left to join the government.

1960s.<sup>402</sup> His ideas in the 1950s were wildly admired in Israel and by President Kennedy, who considered his book *Deterrent or Defence* as a major influence on the shaping of defence doctrine in Washington after 1960.<sup>403</sup> Liddell Hart was knighted in 1966 by Harold Wilson's government and died in 1970.

Clearly, the Amery's and Liddell Hart were at opposite ends of the spectrum in their views on conscription. But both were united in a belief that the Army by 1950<sup>404</sup> was not suited to the task it was increasingly being called upon to carry out: namely counter-insurgency operations across the globe in defence of British interests and defending Western Europe from Soviet aggression. Liddell Hart argued in *The Defence of the West*, that conscription would be a drain on the regular armed forces and defence budgets because of the increased pay and resources needed to equip and maintain such a large force and that it would tie up considerable number of regulars in training these men, undermining their own efficiency and availability for operational use as a consequence. McInnes makes the observation that in 1945, many sections of the Army were still governed by old concepts of small wars and imperial policing and as a consequence there was a desire to return to an all-regular force as soon as possible.<sup>405</sup> There was more common ground concerning the size of Britain's continental commitment, which was seen as being a limiting factor on the Army's ability to carry out its traditional role as imperial policeman. Given that the two were in many respects poles apart, their collusion within the League can be construed as a clear indication of their perceptions regarding the gravity of the geo-political situation facing Britain and the perceived mess that the Army and overall direction of defence policy were in at the time. In 1949 and 1950 League initially began preparing to lobby on the subject of Regular Army recruitment and pay and conditions of service. After Julian Amery entered the Parliament he used the Commons as a platform to attack Government policy. However, the League was attempting to engage with WO and become its 'unofficial' appendage.

On 28 March 1950 Julian Amery asked John Strachey, Minister of War, whether the Government had any plans to look again at 'other sources' of manpower, including the formation of a foreign legion, because of the 'difficulties encountered' in recruiting for the Regular Army.<sup>406</sup> Clearly Julian Amery was aware that the WO had discussed the possibility

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<sup>402</sup> Liddell Hart, B. (1960). *Deterrent or Defence: A Fresh Look at the West's Military Position* London: Stevens and Sons pp49-56.

<sup>403</sup> Holden Reid, B. (2004) p245.

<sup>404</sup> Liddell Hart (1953), 'The State and Prospect of Europe's Defence' in *The Virginia Quarterly Review* Vol 29 No2 p1.

<sup>405</sup> McInnes, C. (1996). *Hot War Cold War: The British Army's Way in Warfare 1945-95* London: Brassey's p3.

<sup>406</sup> Amery, J. 'Foreign Legion' in *Hansard*, Vol.473, col. 157, 28 March 1950.

of using foreigners because Leo Amery had written to Slim in 1948 about recruiting Poles and other Eastern Europeans into a foreign legion and the latter had confirmed this. Julian Amery asked if the Government's reticence was due to the fact that it did not wish to upset the 'susceptibilities' of the Soviet Union; however, he pointed out that the international situation had deteriorated since the Government had last looked at the situation which might necessitate a change of policy. Strachey replied that situation did not warrant a change in policy. Julian Amery's appraisal of the size and organization of the Army was based on his perceptions of the geo-political realities of the Cold War and the military threat posed by the Soviet Union and Communism. Julian Amery became an uncompromising cold warrior and this remained his stance for many years to come. In contrast Low used parliament to push the Government on improving housing, pay and conditions of service in Regular Army to increase recruitment.<sup>407</sup> However, events in the Far East would further galvanise the League to increasingly study questions relating to strategic policy and not the welfare issues related to the Regular Army and the issue of recruitment.

On June 25 1950 the Communist North Koreans crossed the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel and attacked South Korea.<sup>408</sup> In response Britain was quick to support the United Nations Security Council resolution tabled by the United States on June 27 to defend South Korea. The following day British naval forces were being deployed under American command in the Sea of Japan. At the start of the Korean War Slim, told the government it would be impractical to send national servicemen to Korea due to the current length of service.<sup>409</sup> His solution was to call up reservists and offer national servicemen special engagements to cover the conflict to circumvent the length of service issue. This provided 500 officers and other ranks in addition to reservists to bring 29 Brigade (two infantry battalions) up to strength which was dispatched from the UK to the Far East in August 1950.<sup>410</sup> There were British forces in Hong Kong (mainly regulars) and Malaya but the FO and CO both argued that these forces should not be weakened because of the threat posed by Chinese forces and Communist terrorists, although 41 Royal Marine Commando was formed from personnel in Hong Kong and was attached to American forces in Korea. By November 1950 British forces included armoured and artillery units and 5 battalions of infantry.<sup>411</sup> This force was later incorporated into the Commonwealth Division (including Canadian, Australian and an Indian Army medical unit which was the

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<sup>407</sup> Low, T. 'British Army Housing' in *Hansard*, Vol.472, col.973, 14 March 1950; Low, T. 'Regular Army Recruitment' in *Hansard*, Vol. 477, col. 117, 11 July 1950; Low, T. 'Territorial Army Volunteers' in *Hansard*, Vol. 477, col. 2020, 18 July 1950.

<sup>408</sup> Sandler, S. (1999). *The Korean War, No Victors, No Vanquished* London: UCL

<sup>409</sup> Farrar-Hockley, A. (1994) p319.

<sup>410</sup> Bartlett, C.J. (1972) p55.

<sup>411</sup> Morris, E. (1984). 'The Korean War' in Pimlott, J (eds). *British Military Operations 1945-1984* London: Hamlyn p46.

second largest independent force deployed by the UN during the conflict after that of the United States.<sup>412</sup> The Korean War was unlike most of Britain's other post-war conflicts because it was a major limited war which placed considerable strain on the economy and saw the first wide-scale call up of reservists and a temporary moratorium on regular discharges from the Armed Forces. Darby argues that Korea effectively ended any debate that National Service was temporary or unnecessary, or that Britain could contemplate reductions in Cold War commitments and defence spending.<sup>413</sup>

In response to the Korean War in August 1950 the Government announced that it was increasing conscription to 24 months. Both of these measures were supported by the Conservatives.<sup>414</sup> This was not an unexpected move on the part of the Government because, since the invasion of South Korea in June, the newspapers had been stating that an increase in the length of national service was a foregone conclusion if national security was to be maintained in response to what *The Times* described as 'wanton' Communist intimidation. The increase in National Service, *The Times* argued, was 'belated under the circumstances'.<sup>415</sup> The Conservative Research Office sent Churchill a briefing on the Government's plan, asserting that the increase would in the short-term make no difference to military security in Europe, which relied heavily on the mobilization of reservists, but in the long-term would increase manpower available for training units releasing regular manpower for operational units abroad.<sup>416</sup> In an attempt to appear magnanimous the government reduced part-time liability for conscripts in the reserve (which included annual two-week refresher training) from seven years to five and a half years. The government acknowledged that greater numbers of National Service men would now be able to serve in colonies and the Far East because transport difficulties such as passage time and disruption to the cohesion of units caused by the large turnover of transiting personnel would no longer be such an issue.<sup>417</sup> The period of 24 months would remain until the last National Serviceman returned his kit to stores in 1963 and the armed forces reverted to being all regular. Also after August 1950 conscripts were more likely to serve in the colonies on active service. At the same time the Government increased the pay and conditions of service for regulars and re-enlistment and re-engagement bounties to boost recruitment and retention of conscripts. The increase in the length of national service netted an additional 55,000 men for the Army. On 1 April 1950 the regular

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<sup>412</sup> 71 Officers and 615 other ranks (British) were killed during the conflict.

<sup>413</sup> Darby, P. (1973) p23.

<sup>414</sup> Cmd 8026, August 1950, *Increase in the Length of Full Time Service With the Armed Forces* London: HMSO.

<sup>415</sup> *The Times*, 'the fighting forces' 31 August 1950, p 5.

<sup>416</sup> Chur, 121, Note On Defence Measures Announced By Government Conservative Research Department, September 1950 p4.

<sup>417</sup> Cmd 8026 p3.

Army had strength of 184,000 men but recruitment to the regular army was falling again.<sup>418</sup> On 24 July Julian Amery wrote his first open letter to *The Times* stating that the Korean War had shown Communist world was at war with that the West and had been for some time and would be until they abandoned their bid for world domination.<sup>419</sup> He also argued that all Western nations needed to act together against Soviet aggression in whatever form it took.

On 12 September the Government announced that it was introducing a £3400 million rearmament programme over the following three years. The decision was made against the advice of the Treasury who were concerned about a balance of payments deficit of £600 million and faltering economic recovery. The start of the Korean War increased commodity prices in world markets which adversely affected British trade and domestic consumption. The decision to introduce the rearmament programme increased defence spending to 10% of Gross National Product (GNP) from 6.5%. However, the rearmament programme required American economic assistance which was promised, but not guaranteed. The scale of the rearmament programme was unprecedented and reflected the growing sense that a major war with the Soviet Union was imminent. Over 327000 persons would be needed both in the services and industry to undertake the rearmament plan. The Labour Government had a parliamentary majority of six which made it particularly vulnerable to backbench dissent. Many Labour MPs were opposed to increases in defence spending, because it might jeopardise spending on welfare and social programmes. By the end of the 1950 defence policy was becoming a major problem for the Government.

By the autumn of 1950 Leo Amery had managed to convince Lieutenant General Sir Wilfred Lindsell, who had served as successful staff officer in the Middle East and in India during the Second World War, to join the League as a military expert. Although, there are no papers relating to Lindsell's involvement with the League within his archive at King's College London Liddell Hart Centre for Military Studies. Another new recruit was Lieutenant General Sir Frances Tucker who served in the Indian Army for his entire career; Tucker had had a distinguished military record in the Second War leading the 4 Indian Division in the Middle East, North Africa, Italy and the 4 Indian Corps in Burma. Tucker's papers at the Imperial War Museum do not extend into the post war period. Another addition was Hore-Belisha who joined the League's council. However, Hore-Belisha archive at Churchill College Archive Centre contains no record of his activities in the Army League or his membership. Amery asked Tucker and Lindsell to join League to give it more military representation. Lindsell and Tucker quickly joined a nascent study group which included Leo and Julian Amery, Paget and

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<sup>418</sup> Cmd 8475, *1952 Statement on Defence February 1952* London: HMSO p5.

<sup>419</sup> Julian Amery quoted in *The Times* 'Korea United Fronts', 24 July 1950.



Basil Liddell Hart. On 27 October 1950, Leo Amery wrote to John Strachey, Minister of War, on behalf of the League setting out a long list of its observations on the shortcomings of the Army and its inability to deal with the deteriorating international situation.<sup>420</sup> The League offered its services to the Government and a requested access to WO records to help them accomplish their task. Amery informed Strachey that one of the reasons the League had decided to contact the government was because of *Defence in the Cold War*.

In 1950 the Chatham House Study Group led by Anthony Head published *Defence in the Cold War* an influential assessment of what the West needed to do to counter the Soviet threat in Europe.<sup>421</sup> Essentially they argued that NATO needed to increase the number of divisions and tactical air-force units permanently in a state of readiness in Europe. It was widely accepted that NATO in its first year had been desultory in its efforts actually to provide forces and had been more content to stick to limited planning and liaison activities.<sup>422</sup> Similarly, after the detonation of the Soviet atomic bomb in 1949 doubts about the value of the American nuclear deterrent began to surface and this focused attention on the ability of the existing ground forces to delay the Red Army whilst America mobilised its forces and deployed them to Europe.<sup>423</sup> Julian Amery circulated a copy of *Defence in the Cold War* to the study group who then appraised and discussed it. On 5 November Lindsell considered the paper to be influential and constituted a starting point which the League could follow on from.<sup>424</sup> Lindsell wanted the League to look at strategic questions and then use its analysis to educate the public and put pressure on the Government to make 'suitable provisions to meet the requirements of the situation'. Tucker was concerned that the paper was too defensive and argued that the League should concentrate on showing how to beat the Communists.<sup>425</sup> However, like Lindsell he thought the League should use it as a starting point for further studies and discussions. Paget thought that the paper overplayed the unity and cohesion of the Soviet system. He wanted the League to look at what weaknesses the Communists had and how they could be exploited by the West. Paget also thought that the West should start building up resistance movements behind the Iron Curtain to undermine and overstretch Soviet forces and regimes. The paper became the starting point for the League to produce its own document.

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<sup>420</sup> AMEJ 458, Letter from the Amery to Minister of War, 27 October 1950

<sup>421</sup> Head, A. (ed). (1950). *Defence in the Cold War: the task of the free world* London: Chatham House

<sup>422</sup> Cornish, P. (1996). *British Military Planning for the Defence of Germany 1945-1950* Basingstoke: Macmillan.

<sup>423</sup> Bartlett, C, J (1972) p58.

<sup>424</sup> AMEL 1/7/83, Letter from Lindsell to Amery, 5 November 1950.

<sup>425</sup> AMEL 1/7/83, Letter from Tucker to Amery, 14 November 1950.

Not surprisingly Government perceived the League's offer of assistance with suspicion. Strachey responded that the League's offer would be considered but access to official material would be declined because they were not an official body.<sup>426</sup> On 7 November 1950, Emmanuel Shinwell, Minister of Defence, wrote to Leo Amery setting out ground rules which the WO and Ministry of Defence (MOD) would adopt in their dealings with the League; the only limitation being that the League would not be given access to official material.<sup>427</sup> However, the note also encourages Amery and offers assistance, as long as it does not contravene security considerations. On 30 November the League held a meeting at 112 Eaton Square which included Hore-Belisha, Zukerman, Lindsell, Paget, Jacob, Liddell Hart, Morgan, Low, Beddington-Behrens and Julian Amery. JFC Fuller also attended the meeting. Fuller like Liddell Hart is considered to one of the great military thinkers of the twentieth century. However, in the early 1950s Fuller was still tainted by his association with Fascism in the 1930s and even today is still a controversial figure.<sup>428</sup> Fuller had been estranged from Liddell Hart because of ideological attraction to Fascism but by mid 1940s they had resumed their earlier friendship. It was probably Liddell Hart who invited Fuller to attend the League meeting. Amery informed the meeting that League needed influence public and official opinion on the 'gravity of the defence situation, upon shortcomings in the present dispositions and plans for the scale, organisation, and use of our land forces'.<sup>429</sup> Amery invited the members of the meeting to provide papers for discussion at their next meeting which was to be held on 14 December.

On 14 December 1950 Liddell Hart produced a paper setting out his thoughts on the international situation and its impact on military policy. Liddell Hart thought the League needed to prioritise Britain's commitments in order of relative importance.<sup>430</sup> He was concerned that the term 'commitments' was too broad and was losing its meaning. Liddell Hart ranked the UK as the highest priority followed by Western Europe, Scandinavia, South Europe, South East Europe, Africa, Turkey, the Middle East, India and Pakistan, the Far East and Australasia. However, he noted that all of the commitments were interconnected and presented a strategic problem which could only be solved by the careful deployment of military forces at vital points. Liddell Hart thought the West needed to have 40 divisions to deal with a 'sudden' Soviet invasion of Western Europe. He noted that France had plans to create 20 divisions by 1952, Belgium 5 and Holland 4. This left a large gap which he thought should be filled by the Germans. However, he thought for 'the time being' that this was

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<sup>426</sup> AMEJ 458, Strachey to Amery dated November 1950.

<sup>427</sup> AMEJ 458, Letter from Shinwell to Leo Amery, 7 November 1950.

<sup>428</sup> Holden Reid B. (1990). *J. F. C. Fuller: military thinker* London: Macmillan

<sup>429</sup> LH 5/4/2, The Army League Minutes of Meeting 30 November 1950.

<sup>430</sup> AMEL 1/7/83, Captain Liddell Hart Some Questions of Military Policy, 14 December 1950.

politically impossible until French security fears were addressed; he also noted that the Germans themselves were concerned that rearmament might induce an attack by the Soviet Union. He concluded that the British needed to provide five or more divisions as would the Americans. Liddell Hart was also concerned about French morale which he stated needed 'stiffening from outside'.

On the question of Africa he thought that the local forces would be sufficient to assure security because that area was not in immediate danger. Liddell Hart argued that Australia and New Zealand were the lowest priority and that security in this area could be provided by the United States which both countries had gravitated to during the War. He was convinced that because of the vast size of Chinese resources defence of the Far East was not possible. Pessimistically, he noted that 'Malaya might be preserved for a while' but only at the risk to other areas. Because India had strong natural barriers he thought that it might be able to hold out until its resources had been properly organised and co-ordinated. In his opinion the Middle East could not be defended. He noted that the chain of British air bases in the area were 'extremely insecure' and had too few aircraft; the solitary division in the region was too far from the immediate danger points in Turkey and Iran. He conceded that the Middle East was vital to British interests and could be used to attack Soviet oil fields in Caucasus and armament factories in the Urals. However, he thought that the importance of the Suez canal was over exaggerated. Liddell Hart believed that Turkey was the most strategically important country in the region because it was easier to defend due to its strong 'natural barricades' and was closer to targets in Russia and the Balkans; the Turkish Army was numerically strong and could be developed to make it resilient defensive force. Liddell Hart was concerned that a policy might develop which was based on trying to 'hold everywhere, and thus risking collapse everywhere'. He advocated 'reapplying the principle of concentration' and making informed strategic decisions based on facts rather than 'feelings'. On the question of national service Liddell Hart thought that it might be advisable to reduce the length of service and create a 'post-mobilisation national army'. He wanted a 'greater ready for action force' by reverting to a purely regular 'first line' active force. In other words the importance of the active army would override that of that reserve forces.

Amery countered with a paper on the importance of defending Middle East to ensure the security of the Commonwealth and the West.<sup>431</sup> Amery argued that the Russians had the geo-political capacity to strike West, South and South East. However, he thought that a Soviet strike into the Middle East was the most attractive because Iran and Turkey lacked the ability

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<sup>431</sup> AMEL 1/7/83, Defence of the Middle East.

to defend themselves and the region was highly volatile. He also believed that the Middle East should become the defensive responsibility of the Commonwealth because its loss would mean that the Commonwealth would be cut into two. Amery believed that utilising British influence in the region built up over the years was a 'significant starting point' from which to create a military alliance in the region. Amery supposed that the state of Israel 'was now a permanent reality' which meant that it was 'vital to Western interests' that the co-operation with Israel was achieved because its roads and ports would be invaluable in a war to defend Syria, Iraq and Persia from Soviet attack. However, he noted that Arab intransigence toward Israel made any military accommodation with Tel Aviv challenging but not impossible. Conversely, his attitude toward the Arabs can be construed from his remarks concerning the Suez Canal and the Arab League. Amery believed that Egypt should 'be told quite plainly that there can be no question of our leaving the Canal Zone'. Amery portrayed the Egyptians as being xenophobic and that their 'psychology is one that respects force more than appeasement'. He also thought that the Arab League should be broken up because it was an 'unnatural body' which maintained discord in the region for its own benefit and worked against British interests. The Amerys would increasingly agitate against any withdrawal from the Canal Zone. Amery's advocacy of the importance of the Middle East is consistent with the 'Three Pillars Strategy' which was articulated by the COS in 1948.<sup>432</sup> British policy was based on the assumption that the defence of the Middle East was vital to the security of the British Commonwealth and therefore should take precedence over a European commitment. Echoing defence policy of the mid 1930s, the COS argued that British air and naval power would be used to counter a Soviet threat in Europe.

Fuller prepared a paper that argued the Soviet Union held the initiative because of their 'aims and strategy'.<sup>433</sup> Because the world had divided into 'irreconcilable ideological camps' one based on 'freedom and the other slavery' he believed that war was inevitable. Picking up on the theme which he had been arguing since the mid 1940s he stated that Anglo-American policy in the last war had allowed Stalin to control central Europe which gave him a clear strategic advantage in the next. Fuller stated that Russia's military power was immense and designed to create a 'psychological terror', and could 'easily conquer Western Europe'. He assumed that the Soviets would first use propaganda, fifth columns, strikes, rebellions and civil wars across Europe, Africa and Asia as a prelude to invasion. He termed this 'conspiratorial subversion'. Interestingly, he thought that the Iron Curtain was designed to keep Western culture out of the Soviet Union and its satellites so it would not infect their citizens with democracy. He argued

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<sup>432</sup> Ovendale, R. (1996). *British Defence Policy since 1945* Manchester: Manchester University Press p43.

<sup>433</sup> LH 5/4/2, Our Defence Problem by Major General J.F.C Fuller.

that 'Russia is living under a greater terror of being corrupted by Western culture the Western Europe is of being subverted by Russian Marxism. This is a Key point to note'. His assessment of Soviet military strategy was based on what he described as 'closely circumscribed towards winning the strategical centre of gravity at the least expense to herself'. This he argued was achieved through distracting her enemy's fighting forces by drawing them away from their main avenue of advance; and by building satellite forces around the Soviet Union. Fuller noted that over the last five years British forces had been drawn into Malaya, the French in Indo-China, the Dutch into Indonesia and the Americans Korea; Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Rumania were being rearmed and a Volksarmee was being created in East Germany. Fuller considered this to be a direct threat to Western Germany because as long as Western forces were being drawn away from Western Europe Soviet military strength grew in the East.

Fuller also prepared a supplementary paper which argued that the maximum number of troops which the government could recruit using the 'present system' was 400,000 officers and men.<sup>434</sup> Fuller calculated that Britain could only raise a maximum of ten divisions. He discounted the Territorial Army from his figures because he thought it was 'inoperative'. However, the Government was planning for Territorial Army to rapidly expand from its strength of 82,500 on 1 January 1950 to a target of 150,000 within three years due to an influx of national servicemen.<sup>435</sup> Fuller considered the defence of Western Europe as the primary operational task. To achieve this he thought that the Western powers needed to have 40 divisions based in Germany with a further reserve of 20 in France, Holland and Belgium. He also wanted Spain and West Germany brought into the alliance system. On the question of the size of the West Germany forces he thought foolish not to completely rearm West Germany rather than a suggestion to create a few brigades. This was a reference to the Pleven plan of October 1950 which envisaged the creation of an integrated multi-national European army. This was subsequently known as the European Defence Community (EDC). Pleven's plan was to integrate German manpower into NATO in a way which was acceptable to the French. His idea for Spanish troops was completely unacceptable because Franco's Fascist Government was internationally isolated. However, by mid-1950s the American Government was negotiating with Franco about using air and naval facilities in Spain. Fuller wanted the League to concentrate on getting West Germany rearmed as quickly as possible. He also likened the alliance with France like being 'wed to a corpse: it is strategical necrophilia'. This appears to be was Fuller's last paper for the League and he is not recorded as attending any further meetings.

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<sup>434</sup> CRD 2/38/ 4, Defence in the Cold War Army League Paper by General Tucker, 14 November 1950;

<sup>435</sup> CAB 129/38, CP (50), Cabinet Statement on Defence, 27 February 1950.

On 21 December the study group held its next meeting at 112 Eaton Square. The meeting was attended Lord Balfour of Inchrye. Balfour had been Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Air during the War. After the war he was president of the Chambers of Commerce of the British Empire from 1946 to 1949. He was successful business man who later chairmen of British European Airways (BEA). Balfour read an ‘appreciation of the defence position of Western Europe, prepared by a leading Western military authority’.<sup>436</sup> The minutes of the meeting state that the statement ‘underlined the utter inadequacy of that has been done so far in this field’. The group thought that a supreme global headquarters staff should be created to co-ordinate Western efforts. However, it was agreed that such a body would have to be a purely Anglo-American organ. The group also thought that there would be possible security objections to giving continental nations representation on a ‘supreme staff’. This statement is indicative of British ambivalence toward West European countries which were effectively treated with suspicion and distain. However, it also fails to understand the fundamental shift which had occurred in the relationship between the United States and the UK since 1945. Britain had gone from interdependence to junior partner status with five years. The group assessed Liddell Hart’s paper and agreed that the dangers that the country faced would ‘require a national effort and sacrifice on a vastly greater scale than anything suggested by the responsible authorities’. Because of Liddell Hart’s paper it was decided that the League needed to ‘bring home to the public and official opinion the need to relate the effort required of this country more closely to the dangers which confront it’. It was also decided that the League would look at the question of manpower and how large an army Britain needed to undertake the defence of its world interests.

Leo Amery was asked to write a letter to *The Times* to state publically that the country needed to be aware of the task facing it. On 1 January 1951 Leo Amery’s letter was published in *The Times* calling for ‘statesmanship backed by armed strength’.<sup>437</sup> Amery stated that the UK should more or less place itself on a wartime footing by securing and stocking raw materials and food stuffs and reactivate the lend lease agreement with United States; increase the number of ready divisions from 6 ‘weak’ to 10. He also wanted British Government to massively reinforce British garrisons in the Middle East which he described as an area of ‘vital importance’ to the Western World. On 17 January the study group held a meeting to discuss manpower, equipment and organisation of the Army.<sup>438</sup> Field Marshal Auchinleck attended the meeting as a guest of Leo Amery. Auchinleck had spent most of career in the

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<sup>436</sup> CRD 2/38/4, Minutes of the meeting at 112 Eaton Square 21 December 1951.

<sup>437</sup> Amery, L. ‘Statesmanship and Armed Strength’ in *The Times*, 1 January 1951 p7.

<sup>438</sup> AMEJ 121/31, Army League Minutes of Meeting at 112 Eaton Square, 17 January 1951.

Indian Army. During the Second World War he commanded land forces in the disastrous Norway campaign in 1940. In November 1940 he was appointed Commander-in-Chief in India. In 1941 he was given command of Commonwealth forces in the North Africa. In 1942 he was replaced by General Montgomery. In June 1943 he was reappointed Commander-in-Chief in India and held the post until 1947 when he retired from the Army. Amery knew Auchinleck well and was considering asking him to become president of the League. Faviell, Low and Liddell Hart produced a paper on the type and number of forces required to defend the UK and the Commonwealth. Leo Amery thought that paper might make a possible opening section of a report which the League would publish. The paper argued that all assumptions concerning Western security were only possible with 'sufficient air support'.<sup>439</sup> The paper also asserted that 'danger is regarded as immediate and calling for an almost wartime sense of urgency'. Soviet active strength was estimated at 175 divisions of which 55 were armoured. There were a further 125 divisions which could be mobilised within a month. They also had 1,000,000 men in the armies of their European satellites. The Soviets also had the advantage of interior lines of communication which meant they could concentrate rapidly against Western Europe or the Middle East. But he noted they were strong enough to operate in both theatres as once. The paper calculated that the West needed to mobilise 80 divisions by 30 days of a major conflict. The paper also stated that the British needed to have 10 active divisions in Germany to ensure that other Western nations were given a psychological boost. The British contribution to the Middle East should be 5 divisions of which 3 should be armoured.

On 30 January the Government announced that it was increasing the rearmament programme and calling up Z reservists for fifteen days refresher training.<sup>440</sup> Z reservists were all members of the reserve who had been called up before 1948 under the wartime national service legislation. The Government wanted to call up 235,000 men for refresher training by the end of 1951. The Government also announced an increase the rearmament programme to £4700 million over four years. On 5 February Julian Amery wrote to Faviell asking for his comments on a draft paper which he would then circulate to the rest of the group which might form the basis of a report.<sup>441</sup> Amery argued that the 'defence of Western Europe is today an indispensable condition of our survival'. The study group began looking at ways of increasing the amount of manpower available to the Army and other European countries. Liddell Hart supplied a letter from General Student about the possibility of rearming Germany. Student was the former commander of German airborne forces during the Second World War. Student

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<sup>439</sup> AMEJ 121/31, How Large an Army do we need?

<sup>440</sup> Attlee, C. 'Defence Programme' in *Hansard*, Vol. 483, col. 579, 29 January 1951.

<sup>441</sup> CRD 2/38/4, Letter from Julian Amery to Faviell, 5 February 1951.

thought that Germany was suffering from 'psychological problems that would last a long time' this he concluded would mean it would be some time before 'German divisions are ranged which are willing to fight'.<sup>442</sup> This was a major problem for Western defence planners because it was widely assumed that the Soviets were on the brink of launching a major offensive in Europe or the Middle East.

However, Lindsell thought that Russia was not in fact on the verge of launching an 'all out' war.<sup>443</sup> Lindsell argued that the Russians wanted the Western allies to rapidly increase the size of their standing forces, because this would strain manpower and manufacturing resources and severely interrupt the Western economic capacity and growth. This would allow the Soviets to use 'their propaganda' and subversion to undermine Western democracies. A central theme that the Soviet military effort was part of a co-ordinated 'long term' plan which incorporated a period economic, political and social disruption followed by subversion and then military operations is a reoccurring argument made by League's members. Lindsell also considered assessments of Russia military strength to be exaggerated; this was because he thought they lacked the necessary stores, administration, and maintenance and movement capacity to maintain such a large force in the field. Lindsell considered it important that the study take into account the possibility that the Soviets would not be ready before the mid 1950s.

Liddell Hart said he had received figures by different military authorities which estimated the numbers of forces needed by the West to defend against a Soviet attack; 40 divisions were required in the first echelon; 20 divisions (15 armoured, 5 infantry) ready at moment's notice; 20 divisions (5 armoured, 15 infantry) ready at 2 to 3 days; 40 divisions in second echelon; 20 (5 armoured, 15 infantry) ready in 10 days; 20 divisions at 30 days. Liddell Hart argued that the British needed to revive French, Dutch and Belgium morale. Persuade the Germans to rearm and gain American support. However, he argued that the price for American support would assume a disproportionate burden on British forces. Liddell Hart stated that once the 'Continental nations had recovered their strength and spirit, it might be possible for the British to withdraw forces from Europe'. This would allow them to be redeployed to the Middle East or South East Asia. Liddell Hart believed that the majority of British forces in Germany should be armoured. He also calculated that minimum strength required to defend the Middle East was five active divisions (3 armoured and 2 airborne). These forces would be required to hold and contain any attack until the second echelon of 3 British divisions, 2 British colonial divisions (West and East African), 2 Arab divisions, 2 Israeli divisions and 1 Foreign Legion

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<sup>442</sup> AMEL 1/7/83, Letter from Student to Liddell Hart, 8 November 1950.

<sup>443</sup> AMEL 1/7/83, Army League Comments on 'How Large Army we need', 18 February 1951.



division could be deployed. Liddell Hart decided not to calculate the force required to defend South East Asia because he had not made an assessment of the fighting qualities of Communist China. He thought that 3 divisions would be necessary to defend Malaya, Hong Kong and Singapore. The only threat to UK was from airborne attack which he thought could be contained by two active divisions. Liddell Hart argued that the Britain needed to create a force of 17 active divisions and 10 reserve; 10 of the active divisions should be armoured. In 1950 the Army had strength of 375,000 (193,000 regulars); the active army had 7 and half divisions (1 armoured division which was forming). The Territorial Army (TA) had 105,000 men (94,000 volunteers and 11,000 national servicemen and national service volunteers); the reserve army could field 9 divisions (6 infantry, 2 armoured and 1 airborne). The active army was deployed across the globe which meant that largest concentration of forces was in Germany where there were two divisions. However, both of these divisions contained the large number of national servicemen.

On 27 February the study group met to discuss the problem of finding more manpower for active units.<sup>444</sup> Lindsell thought that in peacetime the UK did not have the resources to maintain 17 active divisions. It was decided that the study group should investigate how the army could save manpower to increase its fighting formations. It was also proposed that the study group approach the Secretary of State for War to provide tables of establishment for infantry and armoured formations. In response Liddell Hart produced a paper on the divisional slice. Liddell Hart stated that the British Army had raised about 10 divisions from a total strength 450,000 (including the TA).<sup>445</sup> Each division contained 18,000 men for every 45,000 serving with colours. The other 27000 were employed on headquarters staffs, supply lines, anti-aircraft defences and administration. In comparison the Americans produced 1 division for every 54,000 men and the French for every 37,000 men. However, the Soviets produced 1 division for every 16,000 men. Liddell Hart sated that soldiers in the British Army would never accept the 'standard of economy' which the Soviets imposed on their soldiers. He also noted that because Britain was a colonial power it would be more difficult to reduce supply and movement units because of the logistical complexities of having diverse imperial commitments. Liddell Hart produced a second paper on the subject entitled 'cutting the tail'.<sup>446</sup> The tail units consisted of headquarters staffs, supply, transport and administration formations. He thought all were 'over loaded' and could be reduced. Liddell Hart proposed increasing the number of 'sub-units' commanded by a single headquarters. Traditionally the British Army had based its organisation on 'fours'-four sections in a platoon, four platoons in

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<sup>444</sup> AMEL 1/7/83, Army League Meeting 27 February 1951.

<sup>445</sup> LH 5/4/2/3, The divisional slice.

<sup>446</sup> LH 5/4/2/3, Cutting the tail.

a company, four companies in a battalion, four battalions in a brigade. In the war this was abandoned in favour of having three battalions in a brigade which was the continental method.

However, each division contained three brigades but had divisional artillery attached which formed the fourth principal unit. Liddell Hart wanted to increase the number of battalions in a brigade to five. He also envisaged continuing this 'system of five' up the organisation chain; a corps commander would command five divisions instead of three or four; an Army commander would command a larger number of corps. He also proposed creating a division which had two enlarged brigades of five battalions each. This would reduce the number of headquarter units and free up manpower from the tail for other units. The teeth or fighting units were usually deployed within divisions and brigades and constituted all arms formations. Each division at full establishment had 930 officers and 18,770 enlisted men. However, modern warfare required considerable number of administrative staff and logistical units at divisional level. An infantry division had detachments of the Royal Army Service Corps, Royal Army Medical Corps, Royal Army Ordnance Corps, Provost, Mobile Bath, Postal Unit and a Divisional Salvage Unit. It would also have independent armoured brigade support attached. An artillery regiment had 36 officers and 636 enlisted men and was comprised of three batteries. An armoured division had 869 officers and 17,337 enlisted men and about 277 tanks; an attached infantry brigade (including an anti-tank battery) and an artillery regiment with anti-aircraft battery. An armoured division had signal, engineer, Royal Army Service Corps, Royal Army Medical, Royal Army Ordnance and Provost units. By the end of the Second World War the division contained a considerable number of vehicles and required a large amount of technical and logistical support. Liddell Hart argued that the number of tail units could be considerably reduced without adversely affecting the operational performance of teeth formations. However, his primary target for reduction was headquarter and administration units which in his opinion were a hindrance on the army organisation.

However, Lindsell was critical of Liddell Hart's approach.<sup>447</sup> Lindsell argued that comparing the British Army with other nations 'unhelpful', because 'there were far too many differences of armament, tactics, environment, national characteristics, political views of control and general system of maintenance'. He pointed out that that the army had been forced by political pressure to create a 'vast welfare organization' during the Second World War which had restricted the number of teeth units. During the war the British created 11 armoured divisions, fourteen independent armoured or armoured tank brigades, thirty five infantry

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<sup>447</sup> AMEL 1/7/83, Comments by General Lindsell.

(including two airborne divisions) and nine county divisions for beach (home) defence. Additionally there were equivalent of 12 divisions employed on anti-aircraft defence. Men were also required for training, communication, repair and supply formations both at home and in overseas bases. This required huge amounts of manpower. Lindsell noted that the amount of petrol, food, ammunition and supplies required to keep each division in the field was prodigious; this required trucks which also needed men, spares and maintenance. Logistical support was further complicated by terrain and climatic conditions. Lindsell, who had been a staff officer in North Africa, noted that operations in the desert required the collection and movement of large amounts of water which impacted on the number men and vehicles required to keep a division moving. As he pointed out if the distance might be 400 miles or 1200 miles then the number of men and lorries required would need to be adjusted which necessitated having adequate and flexible tail resources. He described this as the 'incremental factor'. He also used his knowledge gained in Burma directing jungle warfare to argue that control of forces in undeveloped and challenging territory required a greater number of headquarter organizations to maintain the cohesion of units in the field. Similarly, the movement of supplies through undeveloped terrain required considerable amounts of manpower or a substantial air resupply capacity. However, he agreed that the reduction of the number of headquarter formations was possible, if Liddell Hart's five brigade system was adopted.

Leo Amery thought that the figures supplied by Liddell Hart raised questions about what contribution the UK could make to European defence without completely 'disorganising our life'.<sup>448</sup> Liddell Hart thought that it was '50/50' that the present British contribution would be adequate. Leo Amery thought the study group 'should plan for safety' and revise its figures to reflect 'minimum strategic' need. Leo Amery thought that the study group needed to 'ruthlessly eliminate any weapons which are not going to be used to their fullest in any future war' in an attempt to stretch manpower and save resources. Amery agreed with Lindsell that the study group needed to consider what was required in the Cold War and how that would be achievable without damaging the economic status of the country. This consideration increasingly became a central argument advanced by the COS for the adoption of a declared policy of atomic deterrence to offset smaller conventional forces levels compared to the Soviets. Amery pointed out that if Britain had been better prepared in time of peace then it was possible that 'we could have avoided the last war'. Amery also noted that it was better to avoid war by strength and risk financial problems rather than being unprepared and weak. The meeting agreed that redirecting manpower to form more divisions was the best policy for the

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<sup>448</sup> AMEJ 121/13, Minutes of Meeting, 27 February 1951.

study group to promote. On 8 March Julian Amery used the Army estimate debate to argue for the Government to implement much of what was contained in the study group paper.<sup>449</sup> Amery argued for a major study to be carried out in the divisional slice and used Liddell Hart's facts and figures to back his argument. He wanted the tail cut and the manpower used to create more tail units. He also called on the Government to consider using African manpower to create additional units for defence of the Middle East. On 31 March Lindsell wrote Julian Amery congratulating him on his speech during the debate which he stated 'sets out admirably the Army League case'.<sup>450</sup> However, Lindsell said that he thought that any major reduction in the size of the tail was a mistake.

On 16 April the study group began discussing whether the Government should instigate new Esher Committee which should be independent of the WO.<sup>451</sup> Liddell Hart told the meeting that he had heard that the Government was considering cutting down the tail. The meeting also decided that Lindsell (Lindsell was not present) argument about not drastically cutting the tail should be rejected by the League. Lindsell had argued that the French defeat in May 1940 had been caused in part by them having inadequate tail. However, Liddell Hart stated that it caused by 'red tape, lack of manoeuvrability, bad organisation, liner formation and Communist infiltration. At the meeting it was decided that Julian Amery and Liddell Hart should start working on a draft report for publication. Leo Amery also thought that the League was getting enough interest shown by the WO because it lacked official recognition. He argued that the League should utilise the present situation with rearmament to bring home to the public the gravity of the international situation and use it to promote a 'long sighted policy in Army affairs'. This was the first tangible step toward producing a public report. Paget wanted 'Julian Amery and his group in the house' to push for the appointment of a wide-ranging committee to look at the organisation of the Army. This was to be backed up by the League 'putting out a reasoned case'. Leo Amery also argued that contrary to public opinion the Government's rearmament programme was not in fact taking place. He also said that Lord Lloyd, President of the Navy League, had spoken to him about whether the Navy League and Air League should work together with the Army League to campaign to promote a 'more effective rearmament programme'. However, no joint campaign was launched and subject was not mentioned again. This may have been because Leo Amery wanted to retain the League's independence from more established military pressure groups.

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<sup>449</sup> Julian Amery 'Army Estimate Debate' in *Hansard*, Vol. 485, col. 759, 6 March 1951.

<sup>450</sup> AMEJ 121/13, Letter from Lindsell to Amery, 31 March 1951.

<sup>451</sup> AMEJ 121/13, Army League Meeting, 16 April 1951.

While the League was carrying out its study of the manpower problem the Army Council decided to convene a Committee to look into the General distribution of manpower in the Army.<sup>452</sup> This Committee was to be headed by General Sir Gerald Templer. However, the Templer Committee was not given a wide remit and was restricted to UK based administrative units only. No overseas, Divisional, Corps or front line units were consulted by the members of the Committee. Leo Amery wrote to Strachey on 28 March and the 19 April setting out what the study was working on and whether the WO would allow it access to official material.<sup>453</sup> On 11 May Strachey wrote to the Leo Amery offering to allow the League study group to consult Templer's Committee's.<sup>454</sup> Strachey told Amery that study group was being invited to meet with the Committee in an unofficial capacity and because of security considerations would not be allowed access to official information prior to the meeting. He tried to placate Amery by stating 'I realise, of course, that members of your group are all men on whose discretion we could rely; on the other hand, you would undoubtedly wish to quote in your report facts and figures from which it would be possible for an enemy to deduce much valuable information regarding our detailed organisation'. The study group began preparing information for a possible meeting with the committee. In the meantime they began a further examination how it would be possible to cut the tail and create more teeth units using the existing manpower establishment. It was also decided that increasing the number of divisions from 10 to 15 was not feasible in peacetime.<sup>455</sup> The study group began considering whether it would be possible to reduce manpower requirements in the tail by creating 'tailor-made' fighting formations which could be deployed for particular tasks. This would mean a departure from the 'ready-made' formations which configured for all purposes so far as organisation and equipment are concerned. The study group proposed the creation of task forces which would be matched to suit terrain, it would operate in, and the character of the enemy. This they claimed would allow a simplification in weapons which in turn would diminish the number of men engaged on supply and maintenance of different weapons and machinery.

On 25 September the study group met the Templer Committee in a committee room at the WO. Leo Amery invited Field Marshal Auchinleck to attend with the study group but he declined because he stated that he was unprepared and not 'up-to-date' to cross-examined by the committee. Leo and Julian Amery, Hore-Belisha, Liddell Hart, Paget and Faviell attended on behalf of the League study group. Liddell Hart produced a set of notes for use by the study

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<sup>452</sup> National Archive, WO 216/387, Committee on General Distribution of Manpower in the Army: Meeting to hear general staff comments. Interim report. June 1951.

<sup>453</sup> LH 5/4/2, Letter from Amery to Strachey asking for official information on establishments.

<sup>454</sup> AMEJ 458, Strachey to Leo Amery 11 June 1951.

<sup>455</sup> LH 5/4/2, Army League Memorandum.

group at the meeting.<sup>456</sup> His main talking point was that headquarter units were too big and had too much transport. He noted that between 1949 and 1951 the manpower levels in armoured division had recently increased by 523 men but the number of tanks had not. He also stated that the WO had increased its staff. However, he gave no figures to back his assertion. He stated that a Russian infantry division was stronger in quantitative weapon-strength than its British counterpart but had 70% less manpower. A British infantry division was 300% larger in transport as well. Liddell Hart stated that the committee had been 'sunk into detail' and was not looking at the whole question. After the meeting the League produced a memorandum on proceedings.<sup>457</sup> Templer was not present at the meeting. The WO officials to observe and the committee was represented by Major-General Eveleigh and Major General Whitfield. Leo Amery opened the meeting and asked Eveleigh and Whitfield to explain what their remit was and what progress they were making. Eveleigh explained that the committee's scope was limited to the administrative units of the Army at home and did not include the WO organisation. He further stated that the committee was not permitted to examine the structural organisation of the Army or wartime establishments. This confirmed what Liddell Hart had expected, that the committee's scope was too narrow and not radical enough. Eveleigh calculated that if the recommendations made by the committee to date were carried out then 721 officers and 10,000 other ranks could be redeployed. The committee was also recommending that retired officers and civilians be used to replace regular soldiers where possible.

Although, the committee was not permitted to look at corps, divisional or brigade establishments they thought that considerable savings could be made in manpower in front-line units by simply reducing their peacetime strengths through making structural changes within formations. However, the committee did not elaborate what from these changes would be taken or if they would get the opportunity to undertake a wider study. Leo Amery stated they were 'attempting to reduce the swollen girth of the army by massage without considering diet and general way of life'. Bastyan countered that the committee had to take into account the strength of tradition and habit in the Army which would inevitably make such a reorganisation very gradual. He also stated that attempting a major reorganisation at a time of crisis when the Army had to be constantly ready was unwise. Liddell Hart asked whether any work had been started on cutting the number of links in the chain of command, such as corps and Brigade Headquarters which would save manpower and accelerate the speed of information and the execution of decisions. Liddell Hart also made himself a personal record

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<sup>456</sup> LH 5/4/2/3, Notes for discussion with Templer Committee, 25 September 1951.

<sup>457</sup> LH 5/4/2/3, Memorandum of the Meeting with the Templer Committee.

of the meeting.<sup>458</sup> He noted that the members of the committee had rather a shock when I expressed surprise at the limitations imposed on the committee given that their terms of reference seemed to include all the present distribution of manpower in the Army. Liddell Hart had been sceptical about the scope of the committee and his fears were confirmed at the meeting.

The Committee's final report which was submitted in November 1951; the report listed the unit commanders and specialist officers consulted whilst the report was being compiled but did not mention the League.<sup>459</sup> Leo Amery reported to a meeting of the League's council committee on 2 April 1952 that Field Slim, had told him that the remit of the Templer Committee had been widened as a result of its meeting with the League.<sup>460</sup> This seems to be rather pushing the truth because the League met the Committee roughly one month before it finished its report and the scope remained limited to minor commands and units. The fact that the League was not mentioned is indicative of what the limitations of the League were: they had little, if any, influence over official bodies. However, the fact that the committee met with them is testimony of their collective expertise. The meeting with the committee would be last meeting with an official body by the study group. On 25 October 1951 Labour lost the general election and Churchill was returned to power. This had event wide ranging implications for the League because many of its members left to take up posts in the new Government. Also as a consequence of the meeting the study committee decided to prepare a report for publication on the task of the British Army. Another major change to the League in 1951 was the resignation of Lord Iliffe from the council. From this point on Leo Amery and Julian Amery controlled the League and its activities.

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<sup>458</sup> LH 5/4/2/3, Notes on Meeting with the Templer Committee at the WO.

<sup>459</sup> WO 216/388, Final Report of the Committee on General Distribution of Manpower in the Army, November 1950.

<sup>460</sup> AMEJ 512, Meeting of the League Council, 2 April 1952.

## Chapter Four: From Study Group to Pressure Group

The League had not taken any subscriptions since 1939 from its members. The membership had become exclusive and restricted to life members and friends and associates of the Amerys'. The League had essentially split into two. The study group revolved around Leo and Julian Amery, Liddell Hart, Faviell, Paget and Lindsell, while papers were circulated to Tucker, Auchinleck and Hore-Belisha, who occasionally attended meetings. The pre-war members like Iliffe and Beddington-Behrens were involved in the administration of the League and did not contribute to the creation of policy. However, Iliffe and Beddington-Behrens controlled the finances of the League. The life members were free to attend annual meetings but the Amerys' controlled the daily direction of policy. This is starkly illustrated by Leo Amery's attempts to clarify Julian's status within the League between 1951 and 1952. In January 1951 Leo Amery decided that the League should begin preparing a report for publication, so he asked Iliffe and Beddington-Behrens for their support. On 10 January 1951 Leo Amery wrote to Iliffe setting out his proposals for setting up a separate account in readiness for the production of a report.<sup>461</sup> Leo Amery also wanted Julian Amery, who was acting secretary, to be paid for his work on the report. Amery also wrote to Beddington-Behrens asking for his support in getting Julian Amery paid for his work.<sup>462</sup> It was decided that the League should deposit £750 in a separate account for the purpose of creating a report and to help the work of the study group. Julian Amery was to be paid for 'producing the report' which would mean that he would not be paid a salary and thus avoid paying income tax.<sup>463</sup>

In September 1951 the League's council decided that it 'might' be possible to make a payment of £500 (£12,000) for Julian Amery's work on the report. By the start of 1952 the League had funds of £5315 (£131, 549 at today's price). However, only £1100 (£27,000) was in a deposit account; the rest was invested in bonds which netted a small annual income of £90 a year. However, on 6 June 1952 Iliffe wrote a revealing letter to Beddington Behrens, 'I have no doubt that L S Amery's work has been invaluable but in view of the fact that his father took such a leading part in the formation and running of the Empire Defence League, the Council will have to be careful to see that the sum voted is on the low side. The son, as so often is the case, has to suffer some little handicap on account of the activities of his

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<sup>461</sup> AMEL 1/7/83, Letter from Amery to Lord Iliffe, 10 January 1951.

<sup>462</sup> AMEL 1/7/83, Letter from Amery to Beddington-Behrens, 9 January 1951.

<sup>463</sup> AMEL 1/7/83, Letter from Beddington-Behrens to Leo Amery, 10 January 1951.



father'.<sup>464</sup> On 10 June Beddington-Behrens wrote to Leo Amery enclosing what he described as this 'astonishing' letter and asking for Leo Amery's advice on who he should contact on the League's council to get support for Julian Amery's payment. On 13 June Leo Amery wrote back stating that there was some force in Iliffe's argument because no 'concrete report has yet appeared'.<sup>465</sup> He also noted that hardly any life members turned up to meetings and he was unsure which members were active. Amery told Beddington-Behrens that perhaps any payment to 'Julian' should be left until the report was completed. However, his 'main concern and Julian's', was that the latter should not be subject to income tax on any payments made by the League for work carried out on the report. It was the production of report would be the focus of the Leo and Julian Amery and the study group for the next two years.

In February 1952 the study group began working on a possible report about the 'task' which the Army would face in the next five years. The same month at the NATO summit in Lisbon it was agreed that by the 1954 Britain would provide 10 Regular and reserve divisions for the defence of Europe and further 8 reserve divisions by D-day plus 30. In 1952 the British Army of the Rhine (BAOR) had 3 active divisions. However, British global commitments required the presence of 4 active divisions with 2 divisions at home. The total NATO strength in Europe in 1952 was 25 divisions, the target was 96 divisions and 9000 combat aircraft by 1954.<sup>466</sup> At best, and with some difficulty, the UK managed to keep 10 active divisions in the field during peacetime.<sup>467</sup> It was also widely accepted that the reserve divisions needed at least three months training before they would be fit to join the line. Therefore Lisbon goals were unrealistic. By start of 1952 the Korean war had reached stalemate and the security situation in Malaya had stabilised. Negotiations for the EDC were ongoing and the strategic situation in Europe seemed to be improving. This was international situation when the study group began detailed work on a new report.

On 1 February 1952, Faviell wrote to Julian Amery setting out his thoughts on the problems facing the Army in the future.<sup>468</sup> Faviell predicted that the Soviets would 'stir up trouble' in colonies, citing Malaya, West Africa and Hong Kong as examples. Soviet covert action, he maintained, was increasing internal security problems for the UK and France 'in colonies'. He also stated that our 'European allies are comparatively far weaker than they have been in the past'. Faviell argued that Britain had no choice, even if went against the grain, but to provide

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<sup>464</sup> AMEL 1/7/83, Letter from Lord Iliffe to Beddington-Behrens, 6 June 1952.

<sup>465</sup> AMEL 1/7/83, Letter from Leo Amery to Beddington-Behrens, 13 June 1952.

<sup>466</sup> Spiers, E. 'The British Nuclear Deterrent: Problems and Possibilities' in Dilks, D (eds). (1982). *Retreat from Power: Studies in Britain's foreign Policy of the Twentieth century: Volume 2, after 1939* London: Macmillan p159.

<sup>467</sup> CAB 129/42, CP (50) 248, Size and Shape of the Armed Forces 1951-1954, 30 October 1950.

<sup>468</sup> AMEJ 512, Memorandum on the Army from Faviell to Julian Amery, 1 February 1952,

a continental commitment to ensure that other Western European states had time to rebuild their strength. Equally, the UK should redefine the roles of the Army between forces devoted to operations in the colonies and those for deployment to Europe. A reduction in overseas garrisons should be undertaken by quickly settling on the 'minimum' required for safety and the creation of a strategic reserve. This, he concluded, could be partially achieved by greater savings in manpower usage, the adoption of new technology and a better appreciation of financial constraints. This is precisely what occurred five years later in 1957 when Sandys presented his White Paper on Defence.

However, on 2 April the study group held a meeting at which Faviell stated that the League should either concentrate on welfare issues or strategic ones, and should attempt to attract new members.<sup>469</sup> Faviell argued that the League did not have enough 'detailed' knowledge on strategic issues to give its opinions credibility. He also felt that the League primary function was lobbying government to improve conditions of service for the Regular Army. Doing both, he concluded, would dilute the League's ability to be an authority in either area. Whether this was an attempt to steer the League away from mounting attacks on the new Conservative Government's Defence, Colonial and Foreign policies is not clear. Faviell's files in the Conservative Party Archive have no reference to this meeting or his thoughts on the direction of the League. Faviell had been quite active in his support to Amery and the League by supplying information and his advice when Labour was in power. Although Faviell counselled caution, the League, and primarily its study group, began to widen its polemic to include more emphasis on strategic issues. Given that Leo Amery was Chairman and Julian was Secretary, and Liddell Hart's association, the League's direction was arguably predestined to be confrontational and focused more on the strategic issues which Faviell counselled against. It was agreed that the title of the report should be *The Task of the British Army*. At the same meeting it was agreed that the Labour MP Woodrow Wyatt would be asked to join the study group. Wyatt had been Under-Secretary and Financial Secretary at the War Office between April and October 1951. Wyatt agreed and joined the study group in May.

On 22 April the Julian Amery circulated to the study group the NATO Standing Group report, written by General Eisenhower on 2 April 1952, which stated 'the big task' was 'the recruiting, training and equipping of standing forces and reserves, and of providing their support in the war of airfields, signal communications and supply lines'.<sup>470</sup> Tucker thought

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<sup>469</sup> AMEJ 512, Minutes of the study group meeting, 2 April 1952

<sup>470</sup> AMEL 1/7/84, Report of the Chairman of The Standing Group North Atlantic Treaty Organisation by Dwight D Eisenhower, 2 April 1952

that the paper showed that NATO was not making the best use of its trained manpower and its reserves and should create home guard units.<sup>471</sup> The question of how viable NATO's Lisbon forces levels and the reliance on reserve forces became a central theme in the study group's analysis. In July after a tour of Western Europe Liddell Hart described the French mobilization scheme for its reservists and its general military organisation and ethos as being out of step with modern strategic problems and warfare, harking back to pre-1914 concepts and methods.<sup>472</sup> The 1951 reserve training scheme had been described by the *Manchester Guardian's* defence correspondent as more reminiscent of 1914 and 1939 and therefore rather 'anachronistic in the nuclear age'.<sup>473</sup> Liddell Hart pointed out pessimistically that the forces in place in Europe were only viable if rapidly reinforced by reserve divisions which were under-strength and not formed or prepared for their designated task of stemming a Soviet attack towards the Rhine. Liddell Hart argued that existing units would cease to exist as coherent forces after a week of combat operations with Soviet forces east of the Rhine. Another factor was that French reserve divisions made up the basis of the NATO strategic reserve forces and these were being weakened by the drain on officers and NCOs and regular troops being deployed for operations in Indo-China. Liddell Hart saw the only long-term practicable solution being a rapid decision on West German rearmament to alleviate the problem, and even then he stated that this would only create the minimum force needed to counter Soviet Forces. After 1952 much of NATO planning began to reflect the need to redress the conventional forces imbalance in Europe. The possible use of tactical nuclear weapons and size and disposition of holding forces now increasingly took precedence over creating larger conventional forces based on reservists.

By the end of May the study group had prepared a ten page draft copy of *The Task of the British Army*.<sup>474</sup> The paper set out what the principle commitments of the British Army would be the next five years. They considered the principle task providing an adequate organisation for the land defence of the UK 'against such sea or airborne attack as may get through'. The paper postulated that the UK was susceptible to an airborne assault on a 'vital area'. Unsurprisingly, they argued that Army had to provide enough garrisons to assure land defence and internal security of the 'main bases' on the Commonwealth lines of communications. The 'growing range' of aircraft was described as having a fundamental effect on the nature of war because 'soon nothing will be out of range of anywhere'. It was envisaged that thermo-nuclear weapons had abolished the distinction between the battle field

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<sup>471</sup> AMEL 1/7/83, Letter from Tucker to Julian Amery, 22 April 1952.

<sup>472</sup> AMEJ 512, Letter from Liddell Hart to Julian Amery, July 1952.

<sup>473</sup> The *Manchester Evening Guardian*, 30 January 1951 p14.

<sup>474</sup> AMEJ 124/5, 'The Tasks of the British Army'.

and the home front. On the question of missile attack the paper argued that British and Commonwealth forces should be deployed to prevent Soviet forces from establishing launching sites in range of the UK or other key Commonwealth territories. It was also argued that establishing 'situations of strength on the main approaches to our territories or essential interests' was a primary policy consideration. The Middle East was designated as a key area because of its oil fields, the Suez Canal and its approaches to Africa, South East Asia, India, Malaya and Australasia. These were described as the 'keys to the struggle for the world'. The paper asserted that the British had manifold overseas defence responsibilities which could not be reduced.

It was expected that British forces would be involved in Cold War operations which required the creation of a highly mobile strategic reserve.<sup>475</sup> The study group argued that the threat to Imperial territories was 'greater today than at any time in British history'. This was attributed to the spread of Communism and the rising tide of 'Asian and African Nationalism' which had 'vastly increased the problems of internal security'. Similarly, it was noted that the Soviet Union maintained its forces virtually on a permanent war footing which meant that the UK's armed forces had to be kept at a constant state of readiness that was unprecedented in peacetime. However, the size of the Army needed to carry out all these tasks was the subject of some debate within the study group. Liddell Hart's briefing paper of 1951, which assumed that the UK needed to have 14 active divisions and 10 reserves, was still the basis of the League's calculation for an effective security posture. However, the paper pointed out that the Army was hard pushed to provide 10 divisions which were spread thinly. The problem of what was feasible due to economic and manpower constraints was considered not to be insurmountable but would require an increase in the length of service of national service to achieve. However, Liddell Hart's ideas concerning increasing the number of fighting formations from existing manpower resources was discussed as a possible alternative. The paper reiterated the importance of looking at the Army's organisation in an attempt to 'purge it of superfluous manpower' and reduce supply lines. It used Liddell Hart's comparison figures between different divisional slices as an exemplar of how the British were wasting manpower. In fact the paper was a reaffirmation of Liddell Hart's previous papers on combing the tail and his work on the divisional slice. However, Lindsell was concerned that the paper was asking for too many cuts to the tail which would affect the ability of the Army to carry out sustained operations in a hot war. He reiterated his earlier concern that making comparisons with other nations was erroneous. He pointed out that he had carried out a study in the last war for Churchill into the problem of the tail and had concluded that it was

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<sup>475</sup> LH 5/4/2/3, Notes on the task of the British Army draft copy.

impossible to make substantial cuts without adversely affecting the Army's organisation. He was thought that the idea to shorten supply lines was 'nonsense'. On the question of reducing the number of headquarter units he was also now expressing doubts about whether one commander and his staff could manage more units over a wider geographical area. It was obvious that Lindsell would not agree to Liddell Hart's idea of cutting the tail to increase manpower. On 23 May Julian Amery sent a letter to the study group asking for more input because of Lindsell's comments and to discuss how the League should progress with its 'inquiry'.<sup>476</sup> However, a moratorium was placed on any further discussion on the paper until September when the next meeting of the study group would take place.

The study group's perceptions concerning how to maintain Britain's international status were not out of step with those of the Government. On 18 June 1952 Eden, the Foreign Secretary, wrote a Cabinet memorandum entitled *British Overseas Obligations* which was an attempt to classify in order of importance overseas commitments and whether it would be possible to rationalize them.<sup>477</sup> Eden argued that Britain could not reduce its overseas commitments without losing prestige. He noted that the UK gained considerable economic and financial benefits from its overseas obligations but the cost of maintaining them was increasingly beyond the economic capacity of the UK. Eden argued that the 'essence of a sound foreign policy is to ensure that a country's strength is equal to its obligations'. Eden believed that British foreign policy should seek to establish more collective security arrangements which would allow a reduction in British military obligations overseas yet retain the UK's influence. He was concerned that the defence of the Middle East, which was the sole responsibility of the UK, should be 'internationalised' by drawing in the United States and through the creation of a regional defence pact. However, he thought that this would not cause an 'immediate alleviation' of the UK's burden but in the long run would reduce military commitments. This was also applied to South East Asia which he noted was a key Cold War commitment. He believed that the Commonwealth should be induced to share in the defence responsibilities of both the Middle East and Far East. Either way Britain had to show leadership which would require the use of military and economic resources. However, Eden's memorandum demonstrates that there many inherent tensions contained within British policy considerations because maintaining prestige while balancing economic constraints were not mutually compatible policies.

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<sup>476</sup> AMEL 1/7/83, Letter from Julian Amery to study group members, 23 May 1952.

<sup>477</sup> CAB 129/53, C(52) 202, 'Cabinet British Overseas Obligations, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs', 18 June 1952.

On 15 July the COS circulated its Defence Policy and Global Strategy Paper to Cabinet which signalled its support for a defence strategy based on atomic deterrence.<sup>478</sup> The report shifted emphasis away from Cold War roles to Hot War preparations. There were significant questions raised about the length of any future Hot War because of the impact of nuclear weapons. The paper speculated that after a few weeks of fighting of ‘unparalleled intensity’ the UK and Russia ‘will have suffered terrible damage’ which may result in a ‘long-drawn-out period of intermittent struggle’.<sup>479</sup> They argued that after this initial exchange there would be a period of ‘broken backed warfare’. The COS also stated because that the UK was geographically small and densely populated it could not be adequately defended against nuclear attack. What was driving these assumptions was the American Government’s decision to press on with their hydrogen bomb programme. At the time the British were carrying out nuclear tests at Monte Bello islands and would shortly become a nuclear power themselves. On entering office Churchill’s Government had decided to reduce the rearmament plan which it had inherited from the Labour Government on the grounds that it was too ambitious. On 3 October Lord Alexander, the Minister of Defence, wrote a memorandum to the Cabinet stating that in view of the implications of the COS Defence Policy and Global Strategy Paper it was now possible to reduce the rearmament programme to a more manageable level.<sup>480</sup> The reduced programme was going to focus on improving air defence and strategic air forces and re-equipping the active divisions in the Army. The amount of war stocks, ships and the number of tanks on order would be reduced. The Government also acknowledged that the Lisbon forces goals were unrealistic and it was decided to only re-equip four of the reserve divisions. The Government had no plans to reduce the active Army which it pointed out was fully employed on Cold War duties.

During the summer Leo Amery decided to recruit new members to the study group. On 8 July Leo Amery sent copy of *The Task of the British Army* to Sir Desmond Morton who was a senior civil servant at Ministry of Civil Aviation. Morton joined the Army in 1911 as an artillery officer. He was badly wounded at the battle of Arras and subsequently served as the aide-de-camp of Field Marshal Douglas Haig. After 1919 he became an intelligence officer at the FO. From 1929 until 1939 he was head of the imperial committee of defence’s industrial intelligence committee. He was the source of information to Churchill on German rearmament during the early 1930s. In 1939 he was made principal assistant secretary, Ministry of Economic Warfare. However, when Churchill became Prime Minister in 1940, he

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<sup>478</sup> PREM 11/49, COS (52) 362, ‘Report by the Chiefs of Staff on Defence Policy and Global Strategy’, 15 July 1952.

<sup>479</sup> *Ibid* para 32.

<sup>480</sup> CAB 129/55, C. (52). 316, ‘Cabinet Defence Programme’ Memorandum by the Minister of War, 3 October 1952.

became Churchill's private assistant. In this capacity he administered the flow of intelligence information to the Prime Minister. In 1949 he served on the Middle Eastern Economic Survey Mission before joining the Ministry of Aviation. Amery asked Morton 'as a old soldier who has not served the whole time you may possibly like to look at notes on the possibilities of a real simplification of our military system'.<sup>481</sup> This statement is revealing because it shows that Amery was probably concerned that Lindsell was looking at the problem in a conventional way. Liddell Hart's approach was radical but Lindsell had experience of running major military operations in wartime which Liddell Hart did not. Amery invited Morton to attend study group meetings where they could get the 'benefit of your views'.

On 10 July Julian Amery wrote to Liddell Hart asking whether he could recruit any high-profile members to contribute to the report and replace departures to the Government.<sup>482</sup> On 11 July Julian Amery wrote to Beddington-Behrens asking him to join the study group.<sup>483</sup> Beddington-Behrens replied that his was happy to become a member but had little knowledge of recent military developments.<sup>484</sup> The letter also discussed the impact of atomic weapons on military policy which Beddington-Behrens confessed to having little comprehension of beyond what the papers were printing. On 11 August Leo Amery wrote to Major General Sir Percy Hobart explaining the work of the League and whether he would like to join the study group. Hobart also accepted. Hobart had been mercurial exponent of armoured warfare of the 1920s and 1930s. He also courted controversy during his career by clashing with his superiors and contemporaries. He also had a affair with one of his junior officer's wife (whom he later married) which seen as a breach of his authority and strictly forbidden. This did not end his career but it did cause him and his wife to be socially excluded. In 1938 he was sent to Egypt to command the new mobile division being formed there; however, he quarrelled with the commander of British forces in Egypt and was removed in November 1939. He retired from the army in 1940 but was recalled in 1941 and given command of the 79<sup>th</sup> armoured division for the remainder of the war. He retired in 1946. In 1948 he became from 1948 to 1953 his was Lieutenant-Governor of the Royal Hospital Chelsea. Hobart was a close friend of Liddell Hart.

Leo Amery also contacted Lieutenant General Sir Brian Horrocks about joining the League. Horrocks joined the army in 1914 but spent virtually the whole of the First World as a prisoner war after being captured at the battle of Ypres in October 1914. Horrocks spent

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<sup>481</sup> AMEL 1/7/83, Letter from Amery to Morton, 8 July 1952.

<sup>482</sup> AMEJ 512, Letter from Julian Amery to Liddell Hart discussing new members ,12 July 1952

<sup>483</sup> AMEL 1/7/83, Letter from Julian Amery to Beddington Behrens, 11 July 1952.

<sup>484</sup> AMEL 1/7/83, Letter from Beddington-Behrens to Julian Amery,13 July 1952.

fifteen years as a captain but remained in the Army and was rapidly promoted in 1939 when the war started. By 1942 he was given command of the 13<sup>th</sup> Corps in the western desert campaign. After being wounded in 1943 he was side lined until July 1944 when he was given command of 30<sup>th</sup> Corps during the battle of Normandy. Horrocks became general officer commanding western command in 1946 and then in 1948 he became commander of the BAOR. He retired from the Army in 1949 due to ill health. He was Gentleman Black Rod of the House of Lords from 1949 until 1963. Horrocks also agreed to join the study group. On 17 July the matter of Julian Amery's 'salary' was resolved when it was decided that he would shortly receive £500.<sup>485</sup> The League had £1100 in cash on account it was decided that £1000 would be invested in bonds and the remaining £100 left for use by the study group. Julian Amery was spending £25 a year on secretarial material for the study group. No funds were released for the report in a separate account. This would mean that any publicity campaign would have to be paid for by releasing funds from the bonds which would incur tax. This was a potential problem because the League was not receiving any income from its members. Any sort of publicity campaign would require considerable amount of expenditure.

At the end of August Leo Amery circulated a short paper on 'modern warfare'.<sup>486</sup> He also wanted the study group to consider the most economic way of achieving British security objectives. The paper asked the study group to deliberate on whether the Government needed to construct fighter aircraft or bombers; if it was possible to employ airborne forces against Soviet cities or strategic sites rather than bombing; how important bombing had become because of atomic weapons. Amery posed the question whether the role of land forces would be radically altered by atomic weapons. He noted that the lineal defence line might have become obsolete because of airborne forces and the armoured break through. He envisaged the deployment of a quincunx formation which allow elastic defence in depth and reduce manpower requirements. On the question of weapons he postulated whether it was feasible to reduce the number of weapons in a division which would reduce training cadres and transport requirements. He wondered if the tank was 'still worthwhile' and if so what sort of tank needed to be produced. Amery queried the worth of AA artillery against modern high speed jet aircraft and what were the possibilities of 'directed anti-aircraft projectiles'. On sea warfare Amery argued that the aircraft carrier had superseded all other forms of surface ships but he noted that the use of islands and overseas bases from which to launch air attacks on aircraft carriers was now a major policy consideration. He believed that the navy should no longer manpower and resources to attack submarines. This was because the Soviet Union was predominately a land power.

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<sup>485</sup> AMEL 1/7/83, Letter from Coventon to Amery, 17 July 1952.

<sup>486</sup> AMEL 1/1/83, Army League, August 1952.



However, the study group did not meet again until the 2 December 1952. Hobart was invited to discuss his thoughts on modern warfare; however, there is no record of what he said.<sup>487</sup> It also was decided that a new version of *The Task of the British Army* should be prepared in the new year. On 11 February 1953 the study group met for its first meeting of the New Year and discussed the report.<sup>488</sup> Julian Amery circulated a copy of *The Task of the British Army* which contained new passages on the conduct of Cold War operations with references to recent operations in Kenya, the Canal Zone and Malaya. The colonial authorities had called a state of Emergency in Kenya in October 1952. The British had been negotiating with the Egyptian Government of King Farouk for several years about retaining use of the Canal Zone base after 1956 when the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty expired. However, the Egyptian Government wanted the British to unconditionally withdraw. Between 1951 and 1952 the British garrison in the Canal Zone was under constant attack from insurgents. Canal Zone was also blockaded by the Egyptian Government. However, in July 1952 King Farouk was overthrown by military coup. This put a stop to the attacks for several months and the blockade was rescinded. However, in October 1952 after talks between the new Government and the British broke down the blockade and the attacks on the garrison resumed. The security situation in Malaya began improving in 1952 but the situation was still uncertain. Julian Amery described operations in Malaya and Kenya as ‘not strictly military operations at all. They are police operations’.<sup>489</sup> He argued ‘that it was questionable whether the Army is suited by its structure to undertake such operations’. The answer, according to Amery, was to create an imperial gendarmerie for use in counter insurgency operations. The force would not be under military control but civil and would be used in conjunction with local forces and police.

On 11 February the study group held a meeting which discussed a paper by Liddell Hart regarding the use of air borne troops behind Soviet Lines to disrupt their advance or to knock out or hold strategic points until relieved by mobile armoured units.<sup>490</sup> They also began considering the type of army needed in the future to meet different operational requirements. Hobart said that even regular troops took a long time to adapt themselves to different forms of warfare and mentioned British troops on the North West frontier and how useless they were compared with the Indian army. Leo Amery stated that individual troops ought to be trained in different forms of warfare, but Liddell Hart pointed out that there was very little time to teach a soldier a great deal in two years (the length of national service). They also discussed

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<sup>487</sup> AMEL 1/7/83, Minutes of the meeting of the Army League, 2 December 1952.

<sup>488</sup> AMEL 1/7/83, Minutes of the meeting of the Army League, 11 February 1953.

<sup>489</sup> AMEL 1/7/83, Draft copy of the *Task of the British Army*.

<sup>490</sup> AMEJ 457, Study Group Meeting, 11 February 1953.

the need for more air transport capability which could deliver two divisions from the UK at short notice to 'any-where'. It was unanimously agreed that the present air transport situation was unacceptable. By now Julian Amery had become a member of the Conservative Parliamentary Committee for Defence Army sub-committee. This gave Julian Amery access to Anthony Head, Secretary of State for War, who briefed the committee before making announcements to the House of Commons.<sup>491</sup> He also received information from the Conservative Party Research Department on military matters concerning the Army. However, much of this material was produced by Faviell. Julian Amery was rapidly becoming known as an expert on defence issues within the Conservative Party.

On 9 March Julian Amery, Paget and Wyatt contributed to the annual Army estimate debate. Anthony Head confirmed that the maximum number of active divisions which could be formed in peacetime was 11 plus 2 brigades; however, he confirmed that with 'present commitments' this was 'just too small for the job'.<sup>492</sup> Julian Amery used the debate to attack the Labour Party's advocacy of a negotiated settlement with the Egypt Government to end the deadlock on the future of the Canal Base. Labour believed that the blockade of the Canal Zone had shown that the British position in the Canal Zone was politically untenable.<sup>493</sup> Julian Amery believed that the British military action in January 1952 when they had disarmed the Egyptian Police at Ismailia had shown that using pre-emptive force had improved the situation. However, after the battle there had been riot in Cairo which had resulted in the widespread looting and destruction of British homes and businesses and the death of British citizens. It is true that attacks on the garrison subsided after the incident at Ismailia but the military coup and the removal of King Farouk in July had a far greater effect on the military situation than the action at Ismailia. However, by October 1952 the new military Government re-established the blockade and the attacks resumed. However, on 16 February 1953 Eden circulated a memorandum to the Cabinet arguing that Britain could not afford to keep 80,000 troops in the Canal Zone 'indefinitely'.<sup>494</sup> Julian Amery's position on the validity of the base was clearly at odds with Government's. Wyatt raised questions about whether the Government was cutting the number of men from headquarter units.<sup>495</sup> Paget was concerned that regulars on short service enlistments (three years) were being unfairly penalised because national servicemen (two year enlistment) served for less time with the reserve and were less

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<sup>491</sup> AMEJ 457, The Conservative Parliamentary Committee for Defence Army sub-committee briefing on Army Estimate, 18 February 1953.

<sup>492</sup> Head in 'Army Estimate debate' in *Hansard*, Vol. 512, col.846, 9 March 1953.

<sup>493</sup> Strachey in 'Army Estimate debate' in *Hansard*, Vol. 512, col.881, 9 March 1953.

<sup>494</sup> CAB 129/59, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 16 February 1953.

<sup>495</sup> Wyatt in 'Army Estimate debate' in *Hansard*, Vol. 512, col.851, 9 March 1953.

likely to be recalled in an emergency.<sup>496</sup> It is interesting to note the Labour members of the study group used the debate to discuss matters which affected the army and its personnel, while Amery concentrated on strategic policy and attacks on Labour's position on the Canal Zone.

On 14 April 1953 the study group held a meeting to discuss colonial security issues. They agreed that the use of more special forces, such as the Special Air Service (SAS)<sup>497</sup> and the creation of a fully mobile special gendarmerie force of about 10,000 men which could assist 'local forces' in dealing with insurgents in the colonies should be formed as a matter of urgency.<sup>498</sup> These forces would be 'specially' selected and have an aptitude for languages and an ability to adapt to local customs and would be able to work in small groups and live off the land, in other words using guerrilla tactics against the insurgents. They also argued that national servicemen as being 'unsuitable' for counterinsurgency operations. Paget stated that such operations should be carried out by regulars or foreigners who would be formed into a foreign legion. However, Liddell Hart countered that foreigners might not be 'controllable' in a 'police action'. They also thought that 'strong arm methods' were in the long run counter-productive and advocated a 'British police approach' to deal with insurgents. Pessimistically, Leo Amery argued that Britain faced 'many years' of counterinsurgency operations in Africa and 'possibly in Middle East'. The study groups meeting was taking place three weeks after the Uplands massacre in Kenya when the Mau Mau murdered and mutilated 157 men, women and children. Paget and Julian Amery both spoke in the House of Commons about the massacre. Amery used the debate to state, 'What I am going to suggest is rather outside the scope of this debate, but it has to do with the matter. We have a cold war developing and insurrectionary undertakings in different parts of the world. Should we not therefore contemplate the formation of some new corps, something between the Commandos and a gendarmerie that would be equipped and divided into the right size of squadrons and units to cope with this kind of activity?'<sup>499</sup> Julian Amery had been developing the idea of specialist counter insurgency force for some time. The Uplands massacre caused a wave of revulsion and calls for tougher action by the police and military to deal with the insurgency.

The study group placed considerable faith in the intervention of British troops either in a Cold War role or counter-insurgency operations; however, they echoed the complaints of the WO and senior officers that British troops should not be tied up on operations in the colonies. The

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<sup>496</sup> Paget in 'Army Estimate debate' in *Hansard*, Vol. 512, col.890, 9 March 1953.

<sup>497</sup> The SAS had been reconstituted after 1950 for operational duties in Malaya.

<sup>498</sup> AMEJ 471, Meeting of the study group, 14 April 1953.

<sup>499</sup> Julian Amery, 'Kenya Uplands Massacre' in *Hansard* vol.513, col.1132, 30 March 1953

study group also recommended the creation of a Strategic Reserve in the UK. This had been discussed for some time as a solution to the problem of reinforcing local garrisons at short notice to snuff out any disturbance before it became a major emergency or for limited war operations. On 26 April, Julian Amery wrote to Tucker for his views on the League's proposals for an imperial gendarmerie.<sup>500</sup> Tucker argued that the cost of training an 'imperial police' would be as much or more than the costs involved in providing regulars and it was much better to train and pay local men to police specific areas. Tucker, a retired Indian Army officer, urged Amery to use the empirical experience of policing India, which had seen 'the most successful experiment in administering a huge country by a few foreigners the world has yet seen' as a template for dealing with the Mau Mau and the Malaya communists, whom he dismissed as inconsequential compared to the 'terrible potentialities' that had been present in India. Amery had also circulated a memorandum from Tucker in March which had stated, that it was 'ridiculous' that British troops were being used in Kenya 'to settle internal unrest' and questioned when more colonial troops would be raised to 'save money' and 'replace our men overseas and save manpower'.<sup>501</sup> A re-occurring theme within conservative and right wing writings on the strategic implications of the Empire at this time is the apparent lack of control and planning of utilising resources to retain the British sphere of influence and the power that flowed from it. Unlike in the past, when a short sharp campaign would inflict a lesson and ensure submissiveness by indigenous peoples, such a course of action would have brought international and domestic condemnation in the 1950s.

## **Suez Canal Base**

On 27 March Julian Amery circulated a five page paper on the Suez Canal Base.<sup>502</sup> Since the start of the crisis in the Canal Zone Julian Amery had become one of the most vocal opponents of coming to a compromise with the Egyptian Government within the Conservative Parliamentary Party. His position was that the base was vital to Commonwealth security and could not be abandoned at any cost. The paper argued that the Suez Canal Base served several strategic purposes; it was the main base for the defence of the Middle East against Soviet attack; it was the strong point underpinning all other British bases and treaties in the Middle East. The paper also noted that it protected East-West communications and the oil supplies. Amery believed that the base protected British possessions in Africa and was vital to defend India and Pakistan from Soviet attack. The paper argued the Indian and

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<sup>500</sup> AMEJ 471, Letter from General Tucker to Julian Amery 26 April 1953.

<sup>501</sup> AMEJ 471, Memorandum from General Tucker on the Army Estimates, 27 March 1953.

<sup>502</sup> AMEL 1/7/83, Suez Canal Zone memorandum 27 March 1953.

Pakistani Governments attached great importance to the maintenance of the base. Amery dismissed other alternatives like Cyprus or the Gaza strip as being inadequate. He argued that the cost of replacing the bases facilities made the transfer to any other location impracticable and too costly. He was convinced that once British forces left the base the Canal would be subject to sabotage. Amery argued that 'Egyptian hostility' had not seriously disrupted the base's operational status and that the 'base can function at very little cost to British lives'. But, he did acknowledge that the withdrawal of Egyptian labour from the base zone had created problems.<sup>503</sup> By 1952 the garrison numbered 80,000 troops. Amery argued that this was sustainable in the short-term but needed to be 'addressed'. His solution was to achieve a negotiated agreement or if this was not possible, which increasingly looked the case, by 'imposing' a settlement on the Egyptian Government. This 'settlement' would remove the Canal Zone from Egyptian sovereignty and into a 'trustee territory' run by the British. By 1954 Julian Amery and his fellow members of the Suez Group were opposed to any sort of agreement with the Egyptian Government which did not include the continuing presence of British troops in the Canal Zone.

On 16 June the study group met to discuss the Canal Zone and Julian Amery's paper.<sup>504</sup> However, Julian Amery did not record the discussion or any remarks concerning his paper it just gives a brief summation of the agenda. This practice of heavily editing the record of study group discussions appears to have been a deliberate ploy by Amery to protect the member's thoughts and disagreements on contentious issues from being scrutinised by non members. We know that Lindsell was in favour of retaining the Canal Zone because he wrote article for the *Brassey's Defence Annual* in 1954 calling on the British Government to retain the base.<sup>505</sup> Liddell Hart's copy of the paper has accompanying notes or annotations on the subject of the Canal Base.<sup>506</sup> Predictably, Leo Amery supported Julian Amery's position on the base. On 5 March Paget disagreed with Julian Amery in the House of Commons over the viability of the base if it was permanently under siege.<sup>507</sup> On 29 July 1954 during the Suez Canal Zone Anglo-Egyptian agreement debate in the House of Commons Paget stated that the British should have evacuated the zone in 1952.<sup>508</sup> Wyatt's position on the Canal Zone was ambiguous. His attitude was that the base was vital to Western security and should be retained

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<sup>503</sup> *Ibid* p3.

<sup>504</sup> AMEL 1/7/83, Study Group meeting 16 June 1953.

<sup>505</sup> Lindsell 'The Suez Canal Base' in *The Royal United Services Institute The Brassey's Annual* 1954 p200.

<sup>506</sup> LH 5/4/1, Suez Canal Zone.

<sup>507</sup> Paget, R, 'Defence Debate' in *Hansard*, Vol. 512, col. 648, 5 March 1953.

<sup>508</sup> Paget, R, 'Suez Canal Zone Anglo-Egyptian agreement debate' in *Hansard*, Vol. 531, col. 747, 29 July 1954.

but he favoured a negotiated settlement.<sup>509</sup> Like Paget he poured scorn on Amery and the other members of the Suez Group for their obdurate position on the Canal Zone Base. The Government argued that the advent of the thermo-nuclear weapons had rendered a large static base area like the Canal Zone vulnerable to attack which had contributed to their decision to withdraw. Julian Amery used the debate to argue that the Government's position was not plausible, because it assumed that all bases, including those in the UK, were now indefensible.<sup>510</sup> The substance of Amery's argument was that the base fulfilled a vital strategic role within the Cold War, was a symbol of British prestige in the Middle East and Africa and guaranteed the cohesion of the Commonwealth both in peace and war. However, the vast base was configured and intended for use in Hot War. On 9 February the COS calculated that there were 11,000 vehicles, 1,000 units of rolling stock (including locomotives) and half million tons of stores in Canal Zone which covered a vast area of several hundred square miles.<sup>511</sup> Amery was quite right to state that the withdraw from the Canal Zone was a failure of British foreign policy to reach a rapprochement with Egyptian Government but his prescription for the problem was the use of force and covert agitation to deal with Egyptian intransigence which was a solution more applicable to the period of Splendid Isolation than the realities of a Cold War. The international system was dominated by the Soviet Union and the United States and without America support the British position was untenable. Although, Amery and other Conservative MPs were calling for the Government to adopt a *realpolitik* solution to the problem, any military action designed to remain in the Canal Zone after 1956 would breach international law.

However, the implications of the blockade of the Canal Zone and fact that 80,000 British troops were needed to defend the base presented a major problem for those who were advocating its retention. Either a political settlement was needed or a large garrison in a state of permanent siege would be required for an indefinite period. On 8 April Lord Alexander, Minister of Defence, stated that it might be possible to retain a minimum garrison of 15,000 in the Canal Zone but only if the size of the base area was drastically reduced.<sup>512</sup> Defence of the Canal Zone was becoming a drain on already overstretched manpower resources. It was Government policy to gradually decrease the size of the Army by reducing overseas commitments.<sup>513</sup> However, this only amounted to a reduction of 15,000 over two years. There

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<sup>509</sup> Wyatt, W. 'Suez Canal Zone negotiations' in Hansard, Vol. 521, col. 351, 25 November 1953.

<sup>510</sup> Julian Amery in 'Suez Canal Zone Anglo-Egyptian agreement debate' *Hansard*, Vol. 531, col. 772, 29 July 1954.

<sup>511</sup> CAB 129/65, C. (54). 45, Cabinet Egypt Memorandum by Lord Chancellor, Appendix 'Reduction of the British forces in the Canal Base Report by the Chiefs of Staff', 9 February 1954.

<sup>512</sup> CAB 129/67, C. (54). 137, Cabinet Egypt: Concentration and Contraction of the Canal Base Zone Memorandum by the Minister of War 8 April 1954.

<sup>513</sup> Command 9075, *1954 Statement on Defence*, HMSO: London p6.

were also no plans to reduce national service which was providing much of the manpower needed to maintain overseas commitments. By 1954 the Army had 218,000 national servicemen serving for a period of two years. The Regular Army had strength of 234,000. With the Army's overseas commitments requiring a manpower commitment of 454,000 it appeared that national service would become a permanent feature of post-war society. Although, conscription was widely accepted by the public as a necessary condition of the Cold War there were concerns among some politicians about the length of service and the fact that conscripts were being used in Egypt, Malaya, Korea and Kenya on active operations.<sup>514</sup> A reduction in the length of service of six months would effectively stop conscripts from serving in the Far East and one of twelve months in the Middle East. However, utilising another source of manpower would allow a reduction in the length of service of national service or even see its abolition which politically was an attract proposition, because peacetime conscription was grudgingly tolerated by the public.

## **An African Army**

On 3 July Julian Amery circulated a paper on using Africa manpower to create an 'Imperial Africa Army'.<sup>515</sup> As early as November 1951, Julian Amery had written to Anthony Head, the new Secretary of State for War, setting out a proposal for an increase in East African forces.<sup>516</sup> The Leo and Julian Amery proposed greater use of manpower from colonies arguing that the strategic needs of the Middle East, Far East and Africa could be met by utilising this great resource. There was nothing new in this idea, which had been a feature of the British manpower debate since the expansion of the Empire in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>517</sup> In 1949, the COS undertook a comprehensive review of colonial forces which formed the basis of a post-war policy.<sup>518</sup> This review argued that the WO should retain control and administration of regular colonial forces and that they be organised for rapid expansion

<sup>514</sup> Brockway, F. 'Colonial Territories' debate' in *Hansard* vol. 535, col, 2889, 22 December 1954.

<sup>515</sup> AMEL 1/7/82, Notes on the Army League Memorandum, 3 July 1953,

<sup>516</sup> AMEJ 457, Letter from Julian Amery to Head setting out proposal for African Forces, 21 November 1951.

<sup>517</sup> See for example Lascelles, E, 'The Colonies and Imperial Defence' in *RUSI Journal*, February 1906; Strang, H. (1919). *The Empire in Arms: an account of the British Army, the British Navy, and the Indian and Colonial Forces: their works, weapons, and organisation for war* London; HMSO; Gooch, J, 'Sir George Clarke's Career at the Committee of Imperial Defence, 1904-1907' in *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 18, No.3 (1975); Barclay, G, S. (1976). *The Empire is Marching: A study of the Military Effort of the British Empire, 1800-1945*; Killingray, D, 'The Idea of an Imperial African Army' in *Journal of African History*, Vol.20, No. 3 (1979); Clayton, A. (1986). *The British Empire as a Superpower, 1919-39*; Killingray, D and Omissi, D. (eds). (1999). *Guardians of Empire: armed forces of the colonial powers, c1700-1964* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

<sup>518</sup> CAB 21/2924, 'Future of Colonial Forces' Policy up to present', Colonial Office paper, January 1955.

during a major conflict. The primary function of the colonial forces was internal security and local defence. On this basis colonial Governments paid for forces equipped and trained for internal security whilst the WO from their estimate covered the costs of headquarters units or forces equipped for imperial defence. In 1950, COS argued that the further use of colonial forces to relieve British manpower was not possible or practicable.<sup>519</sup> In 1951 Slim had argued that it was impossible to produce quickly African formations capable of holding their own in battle against a well-equipped enemy but they could possibly be used in Cold War operations.<sup>520</sup> Slim noted that this would be possible as a long-term project if schools and a programme of education for indigenous NCOs were developed which would mitigate the fact that nearly all African soldiers had no or very little education on entry to colonial forces. In the late 1940s and early 1950s there was a shortage of experienced British officers and NCOs on the establishments of colonial forces and this problem was often used as a reason why it was impossible to increase the number of colonial forces. Slim stated that it would be possible to create two divisions, one from West Africa and another from East Africa, but because of the problems associated with education and training the costs of such forces would mean that they would be more expensive than the equivalent British troops.

On 21 May 1951 John Strachey, Secretary of State for War, noted that the WO thought that 'colonial recruits did not settle down well in the Army'.<sup>521</sup> However, Strachey did make a prescient observation that direct recruiting for the British Army in the colonies 'might interfere with recruitment to local colonial forces'. Considering the perceived weakness of colonial forces, and the fact that as early as 1949 COS had identified a requirement to strengthen the internal security capability of colonial forces, denuding them of their best personnel would have seriously undermined this policy. There was a perception in the press at that time that the Kings African Rifles (KAR) could be expanded and that West African forces would be available in the future, but as the *Observer* defence correspondent noted on 18 February 1951 'strong resistance from African nationalist leaders' was being generated to the operational deployment of African colonial forces to Malaya or the Middle East.<sup>522</sup> This adverse political dimension was beginning to impact on British imperial policy considerations. Additionally, battalions of the KAR which were recruited in Tanganyika were also prohibited from service outside of East Africa by the UN utilising exclusion clauses imposed by the conditions of the Mandate and the Trust.<sup>523</sup> A subsequent report produced by

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<sup>519</sup> CO 537/5323, 14504/66/50, 'Planning for the use of manpower in the colonies in a major war', December 1950.

<sup>520</sup> CO 573/6829, COS (51) 45, 'Use of Colonial Manpower in Cold War'

<sup>521</sup> CO 573/6829, 'Recruitment of Colonials to the Armed Forces', 21 May 1951.

<sup>522</sup> *The Observer* 'African Army Proposals', 18 February 1951 p8.

<sup>523</sup> Clayton, A. and Killingray, D. (1989) p256.



the Standing Committee of Service Ministers in March 1951 rejected the direct recruitment of colonial subjects to UK forces on the grounds that those found to be medically unfit on arrival in the UK prior to training or on discharge, on completion of service, would present difficulties during resettlement because they might choose to 'remain' in the UK. They stated that this would add 'to the problems presented by the colonial people already in Great Britain'.<sup>524</sup> In 1952 another study had been undertaken in the MOD because of repeated calls in the Houses of Parliament that the Government make greater use of colonial manpower in the services.<sup>525</sup> This report noted that 'non-Europeans' were not excluded from seeking direct entry but there were several conditions which had to be met before such an individual could be considered; that they attained the requisite standards; satisfy the authorities that they were likely to hold their own in the corporate life of the Services; and were resident in this country. Obviously the last condition presented a problem unless the recruit had already arrived in the UK. Additionally any large-scale recruitment in the colonies or overseas would require an overseas recruiting team which was rejected in 1951 as being financially and politically impracticable.<sup>526</sup>

On 13 July Julian Amery presented his paper on a African Army to the study group. He stated, 'the basis for the argument for forming an African Army is that we have at present no strategic reserve because our only strategic reserve is tied up in the Suez Canal. It's the kind of use that an African Army could serve'.<sup>527</sup> Leo Amery considered that Britain's present manpower problem to be 'permanent' 'resulting partly from the loss of the Indian Army and from the change in the world balance of power and the rise of nationalism in Asia and Africa'. Pessimistically, he stated that 'nor is the situation likely to improve by a détente in international affairs since this might lead to pressure at home for a reduction in the term of National Service. The question, therefore, arises: are we tapping all available sources of manpower for the Army?' Increasing the amount of manpower for the Army from what Amery called 'other sources' would make the Army immune from 'pressure at home'. Julian Amery thought that 'doubts' were being raised by industry, the public and the press about the value of the national service scheme because a wider perception was being created about the validity of conventional forces in the nuclear age. However, Leo and Julian Amery considered Africa to be the principal source of British strategic power in the Cold War. During the Second World War the African colonies had provided 374000 men for service in the armed

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<sup>524</sup> CO 573/6829, S.M/P(51) 29, 'Ministry of Defence Standing Committee of Service Ministers Recruiting of Colonials to the Armed Forces', 17 May 1951.

<sup>525</sup> DEFE 7/1225, 'Recruiting of Colonials for the Armed Forces', 11 Jun 1952.

<sup>526</sup> DEFE 7/1225, S.M/P(51) 29, 'Ministry of Defence Standing Committee of Service Ministers Recruiting of Colonials to the Armed Forces', 17 May 1951.

<sup>527</sup> AMEJ 512, Notes on a meeting of the Army League study group, 13 July 1953.

forces.<sup>528</sup> Julian Amery also thought that if the international situation improved calls to reduce the length of national service would be hard to ignore.<sup>529</sup> Information for his paper had been gained on a recent parliamentary trip to East and Central Africa where he had spoken to officers in the KAR and General Headquarters Nairobi. Amery stated that he had spoken to General Tucker in command of British forces in East Africa and 'leading European politicians' in central and East Africa about increasing the size of the African Army. Amery stated that 'after what Walter Monckton, Minister of Labour and National Service 1951-1955, had said about the shortage of man-power in this country, the arguments for enlarging the Colonial Army would seem stronger than ever'. He calculated that it would be possible to raise three divisions in East Africa and two in West Africa which represented a threefold increase.

The group discussed the political consequences of using African troops outside Africa. However, the question of overseas deployment and acquiring political agreement from African territories was considered to be a 'minor stumbling' block in comparison to the situation with the Gurkhas; this was because Leo Amery argued that Nehru, the Indian Prime minister, had been forced by the Indian Government to make assurances that there was no active recruitment of Indian nationals by the British for Gurkha units on Indian soil or that there would be.<sup>530</sup> The force envisaged would be an African Army that would not be based on regional affiliations and nationalist Government's which would circumvent local hostility to units serving outside of their regions. This was the case with West African forces which had not been permitted to serve in Malaya by the newly-formed nationalist Government.<sup>531</sup> This was in contrast to the KAR which deployed in Malaya between 1950-52 as part of the British response to the emergency.<sup>532</sup> Clayton and Killingray argue that the decision by the Western African governments to refuse the participation of their troops in Malaya effectively killed any idea of an 'Imperial African' army after 1952. Julian Amery argued that the cost of an African Army would have to be borne by the British; however, this allowed greater control over the force because most colonial forces were either partially or entirely financed by colonial Government's which gave them some political control over 'their forces'. Even though the West African Government had refused the use of their troops in Malaya Julian Amery considered the plan viable.

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<sup>528</sup> Cmd 7167, *The Colonial Empire 1939 -1947* July 1947, Appendix III, London: HMSO p116.

<sup>529</sup> AMEL 1/7/83, An African Army.

<sup>530</sup> AMEJ 512, Notes on a meeting of the Army League study group, 13 July 1953.

<sup>531</sup> Clayton & Killingray, D. (1989). *Khaki and Blue: Military and Police in British colonial Africa*. Dayton: Ohio University p147.

<sup>532</sup> *Ibid* p173.

Leo Amery saw African manpower as a logical replacement for loss of the Indian Army which he argued was the main reason why Britain was hard-pressed to fulfil its post-war obligations. An African Army was the cornerstone of the Amery's plans for solving Britain's manpower problems. It was envisaged that the new army would duplicate the Indian Army. During the discussion Leo Amery, Paget and Wyatt developed a paternalistic argument which stated that Africans entering the service would be given an education and that this would be the basis for a new upwardly-mobile group in African society which, as Wyatt pointed out, is precisely what had happened with the men of the Indian Army.<sup>533</sup> George Wigg, a Labour Party defence expert, consistently argued in this period for an African Army which could be used as a source of education and social change among Africans as well as a source of military manpower.<sup>534</sup> The study group was very conscious about the post-colonial period which can be best inferred from this quote by Paget 'one can't build nations only of states'. They considered that one of the core groups in future African civic society would be British-trained ex-servicemen, which presumably meant that they would be pro-British. There is some debate among historians whether service in the Armed forces in the Second World War had radicalised ex-servicemen increasing their interest in politics or support for nationalism and anti-colonialism.<sup>535</sup> However, the Army that Julian Amery wanted to create would only have British officers and NCO's who would serve with the force for their entire career. However, he did state that officers of the KAR had told him that their men did make good NCO's and some were capable of gaining a commission. Killingray states that the idea of an African Army was shelved by the Conservatives when they came to power in 1951 because it would cost too much money and there were insufficient British Officers and NCOs available.<sup>536</sup>

Similarly the extent to which service made the soldiers more pro-British is difficult to judge. Clayton notes that discipline and loyalty among the men serving in the KAR was not a issue

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<sup>533</sup> AMEJ 512, Notes on a meeting of the Army League study group, 13 July 1953.

<sup>534</sup> Killingray, D. (1979) p435.

<sup>535</sup> See for example Mazrui, A and Rothschild, D, 'The Soldier and the State in East Africa: Some Theoretical Conclusions on the Army Mutinies of 1964' in *The Western Political Quarterly*, Vol.20, No.1 (1967) pp82-96; Welch, C, 'Soldier and State in Africa' in *The Journal Of Modern African Studies*, Vol.5, No.3, (1967), pp305-322; Olusanya, G, O, 'The Role of Ex-serviceman in Nigerian Politics' in *The Journal of Modern African Studies* Vol. 6, No. 2 (1968) pp221-32; Killingray, D, 'Soldiers, Ex-servicemen, and Politics in the Gold Coast, 1939-1950, in *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 21 (1983) pp523-34; Easterbrook, D, (1975) 'Kenyan Askari in World War II and their Demobilisation, with special reference to the Machakos District' in *Three Aspects of Crisis in Colonial Kenya* New York: Faber; Killingray, D. and Rathbone, R. (eds). (1986). *Africa and the Second World War* Basingstoke: Macmillan; Omissi, D and Killingray, D. (eds). (2000). *Guardians of Empire: the armed forces of the colonial powers, c1700-1964* Manchester: Manchester University Press; Parsons, T. (2000). *The African Rank and File: social implications of colonial military service in the in the Kings African Rifles, 1902-1964* Oxford: J Curry.

<sup>536</sup> Killingray, D, 'The Idea of an Imperial African Army' in *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 20, No.3, (1979) p435.

for the military authorities.<sup>537</sup> However, Jackson notes that there was ‘tension and unrest’ among men who served in the Southern African High Commission Territories (HCT) units as labourers in Europe and the Middle East; there was much resentment over the different pay rates which existed between African and British soldiers; a lack of promotion, especially the nearly nonexistent potential for commissioning; issues about seniority between African NCOs and their British counterparts.<sup>538</sup> The abolition of corporal punishment did not occur in the African colonial forces until 1946. It had been abolished in the British army in 1881, except for where it ceased in 1907. Killingray notes that kinds of field punishment carried out in West African forces during the Second World War would not have been tolerated in the British Army, which in 1939 took over judicial and administrative responsibility for the colonial forces from the CO.<sup>539</sup> Leo Amery also stated that white politicians within the Central African Federation and East Africa could additionally be attracted to the project because it would attract potential new settlers in the form of white Regular Army officers and NCOs who would increase their communities by bringing their families with them. Paget argued that it was essential to have a counter-balance to the existing white settler population over the issue of ‘federation’. Leo Amery argued that ‘an element of ex-servicemen settled among the ordinary settlers and bringing wider responsibilities could be invaluable’. The secondment of serving British officers and NCOs within the control mechanisms of the security and defence organisations would have possibly allowed the British more control of this key political area and a source of white settler power. The other factor was that the British officers would have commanded African troops which could have constituted a powerful block on any unilateral nationalistic aspirations. The comments made by Amery and Paget could also be construed to mean that a fresh input of new British colonists would increase pro-British sentiment within Central and Eastern Africa and dilute increasingly South African white supremacism which was on the increase in Southern Rhodesia.

It was also agreed in theory that an African Army might be raised alongside a British Regular Army,<sup>540</sup> the implication of this statement being that the African forces would act as additional manpower for use in Africa for counter-insurgency operations and as a consequence conscription could be dispensed with. This they, considered, had merit in two ways: first it meant that equipment costs could be minimised as the African units would be lightly armed and therefore initial expenditure would be reduced. Secondly, the pay costs

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<sup>537</sup> Clayton, A. (1989) p237.

<sup>538</sup> Jackson, A, ‘African Soldiers and Imperial Authorities: Tensions and Unrest During the of Service High Commission Territories Soldiers in the British Army, 1941-46 in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol.24, No. 4 (1999).

<sup>539</sup> Killingray, D, ‘The Rod of Empire’: The Debate over corporal punishment in the British African regiments 1888-1946’ in *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 35, No.2 (1994) p211.

<sup>540</sup> AMEJ 512, Notes on a meeting of the Army League study group, 13 July 1953. p 4.

involved for African troops would be greatly less than those for British personnel which meant that a division of African troops was potentially more cost-effective than British troops. Additionally, African troops would be restricted to operational areas outside Europe, where European troops needed time to acclimatise, such as in the Far East or Middle East. This would reduce movement costs which were considered to be excessive and mean that more troops were available in theatre. The study group estimated that at any one time at least 30,000 British troops were in transit either by land, air or sea as a consequence of diverse overseas commitments. The League concluded that having large static African units based in close proximity to their operational areas would be advantageous in reducing the cost and waste of manpower in transit. The Julian Amery argued that the creation of a minimum of three African divisions would be of immense political, economic and military value both in the short and long-term for the British government. Nevertheless, Leo Amery would lament that 'the formation of an African Army would not, of course take the place of the old Indian Army. For one thing, we should have to pay for it'.<sup>541</sup> Clearly a committed imperialist like Amery would make a statement like this, especially as the Indians had been fiscally liable for 'their' own defence until 1939.

Whether Amery was advocating the creation of a system of paramountcy similar to that which had existed in India in the African colonies is uncertain, but this 'new' African Empire was to be used to raise manpower and raw materials for military use and retain British prestige and global power. This arrangement would have necessitated the 'co-operation' of the indigenous population, and more importantly that of their elites and the suppression of anti-British nationalism. This latter consideration is troubling because the League were pragmatic enough to realise that constitutional development was a key political consideration but they appeared to be advocating the creation of a state within a state based on military hegemony. The KAR were recruited across East and Central Africa with the recruits being garrisoned in different territories from their enlistment areas after basic training.<sup>542</sup> Traditionally tribal, religious and regional differences were exploited to ensure that local sympathies would not detract from the soldier's loyalty to the British. An African Army would and could have asserted powerful political influence for the British. It was a logical step to advocate an African Army both for internal security duties in colonies and for deployment in the Middle East and Far East. Whether such an Army would have been able to maintain internal stability against widespread anti-colonialism or nationalism in Africa is doubtful. The Julian Amery argued that the present nexus of strategic bases could be retained and garrisoned by regional Strategic

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<sup>541</sup> AMEL 1/7/82, Notes on the Army League Memorandum, Letter from L Amery to J Amery, 13 July 1953

<sup>542</sup> Clayton, A and Killingray, D. (1989). *Khaki and Blue: Military and Police in British Colonial Africa* Ohio: Ohio University pp200-205.

Reserves both of indigenous and British troops. Exponents of African manpower argued that they would make excellent light infantry. The primary role envisaged for light infantry in this period was for use in Cold War operations in a counter-insurgency role; elements of the KAR did serve in Malaya during the emergency and in Kenya against the Mau Mau as light infantry where they gained a very good reputation as practitioners of jungle warfare.<sup>543</sup> A large-scale building programme would have been necessary to construct training facilities in Africa or alternatively large numbers of recruits would have to be moved to the UK for training. Both these options were expensive and there were issues regarding the health of African recruits in a Northern European climate because of empirical experience gained in the First and Second World Wars showing that they were susceptible to influenza and other related viral diseases associated with the winter months.

The use of African troops appeared to be the panacea which would solve the manpower problem and reduce conscription. Julian Amery considered the creation of an Imperial African Army a vital policy which would have eased many of the UK's strategic problems in the Middle East, Far East and Africa. It was decided that the idea of an imperial African Army should be included in any final report the League published. There is no record of another study group meeting taking place in 1953. By March 1954 Julian Amery had prepared a draft copy of the *What Kind Of An Army do we Need?* It was decided that the report should be published the following year. By November Liddell Hart had prepared additional material on nuclear war and its effect on defence policy which was passed on to the study group.<sup>544</sup> Liddell Hart's questioned the logic of British defence planning which was overwhelmingly dominated by 'atomic and thermo-nuclear weapons' use. He argued that the 'super revolutionary' effects of the 'H-bomb' had created a gap between planning for conventional defence and massive retaliation. Liddell Hart argued that once the H-bomb had been used all forms of warfare would probably cease. He concluded that the concept of broken backed warfare was essentially redundant. As he pointed out five H-bombs would be sufficient to totally destroy all the centres of industry while killing or injuring half the population in the UK. He calculated that the effect of such a strike on the UK might be sufficient to cause 'paralysis and collapse' across the rest of Western Europe without the Soviets having to use atomic weapons on our allies. NATO policy in 1954 was based on the concept of massive retaliation. It was envisaged that tactical nuclear weapons could be deployed to counter the larger Soviet conventional forces. Liddell Hart was concerned that this nuclear exchange would not be limited to the battlefield but would be used against civilian and industrial targets and would spiral out of control to the point where thermo-nuclear weapons would be

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<sup>543</sup> Clayton, A. and Killingray, D. (1989) p257.

<sup>544</sup> AMEL 1/7/83, 'Some reflections on Present Defence Planning' by Liddell Hart, 30 November 1954.

deployed. At this point he argued mutual suicide had occurred. He went as far as to suggest that NATO remove all its tactical nuclear weapons because the temptation to use a 'new toy' would risk increasing all out nuclear exchange.

However, he thought that both sides could now use this situation to induce a 'rational reluctance to launch a suicide retort'. In his opinion this would allow increased scope for aggression that 'shrewdly limits its aims and actions'. Under such circumstances NATO's conventional forces needed to be large enough and technically strong enough to be able to deal with a Soviet assault without depending on tactical nuclear weapons. In his opinion NATO conventional forces had become a 'supplement' to the deterrent and were seen as an economic burden. However, Liddell Hart argued that the most likely form of aggression was 'political subversion with guerrilla action'. He wanted highly mobile and efficient 'fire brigade' units and an 'extensive gendarmerie' to deal with this problem. In his opinion short service conscripts were not suited to this type of war. This reflected Liddell Hart's aversion for conscription and his advocacy of highly trained and equipped mobile armoured forces. He argued that a European Home Guard should be created which could supply manpower for local defence and be a more practicable reinforcement to active forces than reserve units whose mobilization and transportation would be subject to 'bomb-disruption'. This was the last paper circulated to the study group before Julian Amery began writing the League's first report of the Cold War.

On 8 December 1954 the League Council met to discuss the possible publication of the draft report. Hore-Belisha stated that he thought that the League had not been supporting the Army and should include information about nuclear weapons and the EDC within the report.<sup>545</sup> He also stated that he had read the draft report which he thought was a valuable document but he was concerned that it would be out of date by the time it was published. In his opinion the League needed to state the case of the Army which he obviously thought it was not doing. Leo Amery countered that the League needed to publish its report and then 'recreate itself' as a larger movement. Julian Amery pointed out that he was talking to Head about gaining support for the League from the WO but had not received a 'satisfactory reply'. It was agreed that Julian Amery should attempt to 'whip up support' for the League in the Commons and find 'active supporters' of the Army who might be prepared to 'throw their weight behind' it.<sup>546</sup> It was at this point that Julian Amery said that he would speak to Harold Macmillan, Minister of Defence, on the 'whole question of the recreation of the army League'. On 16 December 1954 Julian Amery wrote to his father in law Harold Macmillan about the League study group and

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<sup>545</sup> AMEL 1/7/83, Minutes of the League Council Meeting, 8 December 1954.

<sup>546</sup> *Ibid* p2.

enclosed Liddell Hart's paper on nuclear weapons and its effect on conventional defence policy.<sup>547</sup> The letter merely stated that Amery was secretary of the League which was thinking about publishing a paper on the Army. However, he was more concerned to get Macmillan to look at Liddell Hart's paper on need to retain conventional forces rather than concentrate on the nuclear deterrent. On 20 December Macmillan wrote back stating that Liddell Hart's paper over simplified the problem but he thought that it raised interesting questions concerning a future 'stalemate situation' when both sides had nuclear parity.<sup>548</sup> There was no reference in letter to the League or its activities. It is possible that they spoke privately about the League over the Christmas period but there is no record in Julian Amery's diary of a conversation about the League or any more letters on the subject within their respective archives. In fact, this is the only correspondence on military matters in the Macmillan's papers between Julian Amery and Macmillan.

Members of the study group began scrutinising the report and making recommendations. Sir Desmond Morton had joined the League at the beginning of 1954 and prepared a brief analysis of the draft report.<sup>549</sup> Morton was concerned that the report made far too many assumptions about the number of Western superiority nuclear weapons that might 'not be true'. He considered this to be inadvisable and he wanted references to bacteriological weapons removed for 'reasons of prudence'. However, the most important contribution was received from Liddell Hart. Liddell Hart considered Morton's belief that the West had fewer nuclear weapons was an import point which needed emphasising.<sup>550</sup> Liddell Hart wanted all suggestion of the possibility of winning a war in the H-bomb era removed.<sup>551</sup> He was concerned that much of the information on Soviet force numbers was out of date and needed revising upwards. Julian Amery had linked the loss of the Middle East in the same order of importance as the loss of Central Europe. Liddell Hart disagreed with this because the loss of Central Europe was in his opinion decisive, while the loss of the Middle East was serious. He did not want conventional and tactical nuclear weapons linked in any way because tactical nuclear weapons should not be considered a normal weapon 'on any definition'. The report advocated the concept of broken backed warfare; however, Liddell Hart argued that it was now completely redundant since the advent of the H-bomb. He was also concerned that the Suez Canal Zone Base and Singapore were described as 'vital land bases'. Liddell Hart's ideas concerning the revolutionary aspect of nuclear weapons on conventional defence were

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<sup>547</sup> Harold Macmillan MSS, Oxford University, Bodleian Library, Western collection, C296, Filo 30, Letter from Julian Amery on the League and Liddell Hart's Paper, 16 December 1954. Hereafter C296.

<sup>548</sup> C296, Filo 40, Letter from Macmillan to Julian Amery, 20 December 1954.

<sup>549</sup> AMEL 1/7/83, Notes on the League Report by Sir Desmond Morton.

<sup>550</sup> LH 5/4/1, Letter from Liddell Hart to Julian Amery, 3 January 1955.

<sup>551</sup> AMEL 1/7/83, Notes on the League Report by Liddell Hart.



significant enough for the title of the report to be renamed *The Army in the Nuclear Age a Report by the Army League Study Group*. On 30 November Tucker wrote a letter to Julian Amery about the draft report.<sup>552</sup> Tucker focused on the need of the report to reiterate the necessity for a permanent continental commitment. He also argued that by the time NATO had examined the whole problem of nuclear warfare it then would be appropriate for the Government to decide on the type of formations an army needs for the future. On the question of imperial security he wanted the report to emphasise the need for SAS type units and armed imperial police organization skilled in guerrilla work. He also thought that a better imperial police intelligence network should be developed to identify and contain security threats before the army was needed to deal with it.

On 21 December Julian Amery circulated a letter stating that he would revise the report adding the different points raised by members.<sup>553</sup> However, Julian Amery went away on business to Rhodesia for the whole of January 1955 which meant that no work was done on revising the report. On 6 January Major General the Viscount Bridgeman, the former Conservative Defence spokesman in the House of Lords wrote to Faviell stating that he had attended a League meeting in November 'as requested'.<sup>554</sup> Bridgeman stated that he written to the secretary of the League regarding its future activity after the meeting, but had heard nothing back. He also told Faviell that he thought the League was not being resurrected as he had been led to believe. This of course coincided with Julian Amery's business trip to Africa which might account for his lack of response. It also reflects the fact that the League was still closely associated with the Amerys' and Liddell Hart. Over the next few months Julian Amery began writing the final draft of the report. On 23 March 1955 the League's Council released £1000 toward the publication costs of the final report.<sup>555</sup> However, in April Churchill resigned and the new Prime Minister, Eden, called a general election. This of course put back all work on completion of the report because Julian Amery was campaigning for his seat in Preston. The most contentious defence issues in the campaign were whether the length of national service should be drastically reduced or even abolished and the effect of the H-bomb on the international situation.<sup>556</sup> The Conservative position on national service was that should not be reduced until after disarmament talks at Geneva took place in July. Reducing the length of service became a central election pledge of the Labour Party during the election. On 26 May the Conservatives won the election securing a majority of 61.

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<sup>552</sup> AMEJ 459, Letter from Tucker to Julian Amery, 30 November 1954.

<sup>553</sup> AMEL 1/7/83, Letter from Julian Amery on revising the report.

<sup>554</sup> CRD 2/41/5, Letter from Major General Viscount Bridgeman to Faviell, 6 January 1955.

<sup>555</sup> AMEL 1/7/83, Letter From the League Council to Leo Amery, 23 March 1955.

<sup>556</sup> AMEJ 156, Daily notes, General Election material by the Conservative Research Department, May 1955.

In May Julian Amery sent a draft copy of the report to the WO for their opinion. On 14 June Fitzroy Maclean, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for War, wrote back to confirm that Harold Macmillan had read the report and it had been studied by officials at the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and ‘was being considered’.<sup>557</sup> However, there is no record of there being an official study in the WO or MOD files or a record of their appraisal being received by Julian Amery. On 28 May Harold Macmillan became Foreign Secretary which closed one direct avenue of approach for Julian Amery and the study group to the MOD and WO. The new Minister of Defence was Selwyn Lloyd, and Head remained as Minister of War. On 19 July the League Council held a meeting to discuss who should publish the report.<sup>558</sup> It was decided that J H Leach a retired businessman with connections in printing industry should be approached about managing the project. Leach agreed and was placed in charge of publishing the report.

On 20 July Julian Amery and Liddell Hart, who had been invited by Amery, had lunch with Selwyn Lloyd.<sup>559</sup> Lloyd did not record what was said but he noted that they had a ‘long talk’. Clearly Amery’s decision to bring along Liddell Hart must have meant that the subject of defence was discussed. We can construe that Amery was using the lunch to lobby Selwyn Lloyd about something. This kind of personal lobbying was accepted part of political culture in the 1950s. At this point the League had not found a public relations company to advise them on their publicity campaign for the reports launch. However, it was decided to use the public relations firm Voice and Vision Ltd. Voice and Vision Ltd which was a subsidiary of Colman, Prentis and Varley. Colman, Prentis and Varley had advised the Conservative Party and Army for many years on advertising and public relations.<sup>560</sup> On 28 July John Metcalf from Voice and Vision wrote to Beddington-Behrens stating that he had read the report but wanted the League to make some changes.<sup>561</sup> He stated, ‘with an opposition attack on the length of National Service already brewing up I should like to see a closer analysis of reasons for the present period of National Service, its value to the country and so on. Need it remain at two years? Could it be brought down?’ This was a problem for the study group because its stance on conscription was ambiguous and divided. Liddell Hart was opposed to conscription by wanted the Army to have at least 11 divisions which required 400,000 men. The Amerys’ supported national service but thought it should be reduced and used for home defence. This

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<sup>557</sup> AMEJ 256, Letter from Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State For War, 14 June 1955.

<sup>558</sup> AMEL 1/7/83, Minutes of the League Council Meeting, 19 July 1955.

<sup>559</sup> Churchill College Archive Cambridge, Selwyn Lloyd MSS, SELO 4/5, Dairy entry 20 July 1955. Hereafter SELO 4/5.

<sup>560</sup> Sampson, A. (1965). *Anatomy of Britain Today* London: Hodder and Stoughton p642.

<sup>561</sup> AMEJ 485, Letter from John Metcalf of Voice and Vision to Beddington Behrens, 28 July 1955.

is why the League argued for the creation of an imperial Africa Army because it appeared to guarantee a source of plentiful manpower during the Cold War. On 2 August Leach wrote to Julian Amery telling him that the study group needed to incorporate Metcalf's ideas into the report before publication.<sup>562</sup> However, on 9 August Julian Amery wrote to Metcalf stating 'National Service is of course political dynamite just now and I rather doubt whether we can get the study group to make any great pronouncement on it. I am inclined, therefore, to add nothing to the report on that score'.<sup>563</sup> On 25 August John Metcalf wrote to Amery stating that he thought that the report would either make no money or a loss.<sup>564</sup>

It was decided that the report should be published in November to coincide with the new legislative year. Over the winter Leo Amery had been making suggestions about the final shape of the report to Julian Amery.<sup>565</sup> Leo Amery thought that NATO would hesitate to use nuclear weapons against Western European cities which had been overrun by Soviets forces. He thought that it was essential that the report emphasised this uncertainty about using nuclear to explain why it was important to have large conventional force levels. On the wider strategic questions he argued that once NATO forces had been fully reconstituted it would be possible to turn the British commitment in Germany into a purely training component and allow the regular army to concentrate on the Middle East and Africa in the future. However, on 16 September Leo Amery died peacefully in his sleep at 112 Eaton square aged 81. The report was published on 11 November 1955.

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<sup>562</sup> AMEJ 485, Letter from Leach to Julian Amery, 2 August 1955.

<sup>563</sup> AMEJ 485, Letter from Julian Amery to John Metcalf, 9 August 1955.

<sup>564</sup> AMEJ 485, Letter from John Metcalf to Julian Amery, 25 August 1955.

<sup>565</sup> AMEL 1/7/82, Letter from Leo Amery to Julian Amery, November 1954.

## Chapter Five: Army League Report 1955

The League's Report had taken four years to prepare. It set out a vision for the Army which reflected the strategic problems and technological advances that had occurred in that period. The report was divided into nine sections and was forty pages long.<sup>566</sup> It also contained three annex's one by Liddell Hart on the divisional slice and reducing the tail; another by General Westphal on the same subject and third by Colonel Slone of the US Army on the American division. All of these papers had been circulated in 1951 when the study group were discussing the divisional slice. The first section posed the question is an army really necessary; the second looked at the tasks of the British army; the third the world distribution of military power; the fourth the British contribution; the fifth and sixth argued 'can' the army be strengthened; the seventh what kind of army do we need; the eighth the pattern of commonwealth defence; the ninth was a summary and conclusions.

The first section discussed the advent of nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons which the report stated had transformed the pattern of warfare. It pessimistically noted that the USA and the USSR would in due course have enough H-bombs to destroy civilisation. It warned that a saturation point would soon be passed which would confer no advantage to either side. It noted that the Soviet union need not have as many thermo-nuclear weapons as the West because the US Air Defence Command calculated that just 50 was enough to paralyse the United States. The study group calculated that as little as 12 thermo-nuclear bombs would destroy all organised resistance in the UK. It also noted that there was no real defence against this type of attack and that one out of four bombers might be intercepted. They argued that the supremacy of the offensive over the defensive might last for a considerable time.<sup>567</sup> Under such circumstance they thought that total war 'would offer the probability of almost total destruction for all participants'. If this was the case they posed the question are ground forces any longer any use. In the opinion of the study group the answer was yes, because there would be an inevitable increase limited wars and 'local acts of aggression'. Although, nuclear weapons acted as deterrent against a general war they expected the Soviets and Chinese to overrun 'undefended territory' and present the West with a 'fait accompli'. Under such circumstances it would be highly unlikely that the West would risk total war to regain

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<sup>566</sup> The Army League (1955). *The Army in the Nuclear Age A Report by the Army League Sub-Committee* London: St Clements

<sup>567</sup> *Ibid* p2.

occupied territory. Under such circumstances the Communists might attempt the 'piecemeal destruction of the Free World by local and limited acts of aggression'.<sup>568</sup>

The report argued that the Soviets might gamble that if Western conventional forces in Europe were weak it might be possible to overrun the continent and break down the 'American will to go on fighting'. They also argued that Western forces might not use nuclear weapons against occupied territory. Under such circumstances the h-bomb was not an effective deterrent without adequate conventional forces. However, they noted that if Western forces could hold Soviet aggression it might be possible to use the threat of thermo-nuclear attack as a means to end the fighting. The report also argued that it might be possible to 'win' a thermo-nuclear exchange if your state had the 'superior survival value'. However, this was based on the assumption that the scale of destruction would be crippling and require many years of reconstruction. But, if the West was to prepare its population, infrastructure and resources to limit the extent of damage it might be possible to emerge from a nuclear as an 'effective fighting force'. Under such circumstances the report argued that ground forces, civil defence and internal security had an essential role to play in a thermo-nuclear war. They considered the likelihood of a major war as slight but noted that the natural 'extension of politics' will be the promotion of subversion, revolutionary movements and civil war in opponent's territory during the Cold War. However, the report argued that the scale of these 'insurrections' might develop on an 'unprecedented scale' which would require large numbers of ground troops to maintain internal security. The report wanted a specialist reserve created which could be used as fire brigade to rapidly deal with 'emergencies' before they developed in to major counter-insurgency operations.

In the next section 'on the tasks of the British Army' the report noted that most of the countries of the British Commonwealth have no land frontiers with the exception of Canada which was closely allied to the United States. It concluded that the Africa colonies 'are so remote as to be scarcely in danger of overland attack'. Malaya could be securely held if the isthmus of Kra was secured against land attack. However, it noted that many of the countries in the Middle East which Britain was responsible for protecting had long land frontiers. But Middle Eastern terrain presents a formidable obstacle to a potential attacker. It concluded that British Commonwealth can only be successfully attacked by a power or group of powers strong enough at sea or in the air to invade them. They argued that the British and Commonwealth defence effort should focus on a combination of sea and air power which was calculated to prevent invasion and the bombing of vital centres of population and

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<sup>568</sup> *Ibid* p4.

production.<sup>569</sup> The report reiterated the historical first task of the British army to provide an 'adequate organisation' for the land defence of the UK. The next task was to 'provide similar garrisons to assure the land defence and the internal security of the main bases on the Commonwealth lines of communications'. Because of improvements in aircraft range the report argued that everywhere was becoming the front line. The report noted that future development in rockets and guided missiles made it essential that Soviets were denied launching sites which would threaten the British Isles and Commonwealth countries from attack. They argued that it was essential to create 'situations of strength on the main approaches to our territories or essential interests'. These included Central and Western Europe which the report described as the 'glacis to our island defence'; the Middle Eastern approaches to the oilfields, the Suez Canal and Africa; and the South East Asian approaches to India, Malaya and Australasia. These were depicted as 'the keys to the struggle for the world'.

However, these situations of strength required 'alliances' and the 'creation of collective military organisations'. The report argued that if Britain wished to retain influence within these collective organisations 'she must be prepared to make an adequate contribution to them'. Because of this the British needed to provide in peacetime a requisite number of ground forces to maintain regional defence systems. However, the report pointed out that manpower and economic constraints and the need to maintain strong naval and air forces placed a limitation on the size of the Army. The Army also had to train the population for Home and Civil defence which was an additional pressure. The size of the British army was placed in context against the distribution of military power across the world. The principle threat was the Soviet Union, China and the Eastern European satellites. The report admitted that it was impossible 'to establish accurate statistical standards of comparison between the armies of the different powers'.<sup>570</sup> Also they noted that differences of organisation, equipment, morale, training and 'natural fighting quality' make it extremely difficult to compare armies. The report estimated Soviet land forces strength at 3,200,000 or 175 active divisions and 40 artillery and anti air-craft and 125 reserve divisions; the Soviet satellites 1,210,000 or 60-80 active divisions and 20 reserve; China 2,500,000 or 80 active divisions. The total Communist forces were 6,910,000 and 480 divisions. The report calculated the strength of the 'free world' at 3,660,000 and 214 divisions. The largest Western power was the United States which had 1,500,000 and 20 active divisions and 27 reserve divisions. In total Western Europe strength was 1,676,500 which included 436,500 British troops. In the Far East the League calculated that there were 900,000 South Korean and Formosan troops.

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<sup>569</sup> *Ibid* p5.

<sup>570</sup> *Ibid* p8.

The West could also rely on 500,000 'Balkan' troops. The report calculated that the Commonwealth could provide 250,000 troops.

The report argued it was important that Japan and West Germany rearmed as rapidly as possible. It also wanted the 'uncommitted' nations such as India and Pakistan to be integrated into the Western security system. Pragmatically the report argued that although Communist forces were numerically superior it was important to note that there were manifest differences in equipment, training and morale which could distort the military situation. The ability to bring available strength to bear in particular area was considered to be essential to ensure that British interests were defended. The report argued that there were three main areas of strategic importance that warranted particular attention: Central Europe, Middle East and South East Asia. The report noted that there was a disparity of 92 divisions in Western and Central Europe in favour of Communist forces over those of the 'free nations'. This disparity could only be reduced by NATO adopting the use the tactical nuclear weapon during the opening stages of a major war. The report noted that most 'military authorities' in the Western Europe argued that the minimum number of divisions required after three weeks of fighting would be 80. However, Lisbon had set a target of 50 by 1954 which had been 'raised though no specific figure' announced.<sup>571</sup> The disparity would not be redressed after West German rearmament, because, as the report noted, there would be a shortfall of 20 divisions from the revised target. The report concluded that NATO would no choice but to 'contemplate' using tactical nuclear weapons to stop a Soviet attack.

Defence of the Middle East presented many strategic problems. The report stated that there were no 'estimates of the strength which the Soviets could deploy south of the Turco-Iranian mountain barrier'. It was assumed that geographical, climatic and supply difficulties would restrict Soviet forces to 15 divisions. West would have to disrupt 'communications' from the Transcaucasia which would further restrict Soviet deployment and resupply. The main forces in the region were the Turkish Army; however, the report argued that Pakistan 'could' send troops to assist the Persia Army and Iraqi forces. The report argued that South Africa and the Central African and East African colonies could provide forces for Middle Eastern defence in the event of a major war. In South East Asia the report again stated that it was difficult to assess the number of Chinese which would be deployed against allied forces. However, it argued that unlike in 1941 when Japanese forces had overrun Malaya and Burma the Chinese do not have local air and naval superiority. This would make the defence of Malaya easier. Because of the ongoing emergency in Malaya the British had 23 battalions which included

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<sup>571</sup> *Ibid* p12.

Gurkha and locally raised troops in the region. However, the report stated that without American and Indian military support it would not be possible to hold any territory north of the Kra Isthmus which included Burma and Thailand. Although, the report thought that the South East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO) was a move in the right direction, it argued without American support of ground forces it was ineffectual.

The British contribution to the 'strength of Free Nations' was 11 active divisions and 11 reserve divisions. The report argued that this 'appeared substantial', however, it then stated 'a survey of their dispositions gives ground for anxiety rather than complacency'.<sup>572</sup> The problem was that six active divisions were 'absorbed on the maintenance of internal security in the Colonies, and guarding the main bases defending Commonwealth communications'. While 4 active divisions were based in Germany, plus one in reserve (in the UK) and two brigades were in Korea which were described as being available to oppose a 'Soviet attack'. This meant that half of the active army was committed to fighting the Cold War or in 'essential garrison duties'. Optimistically the report argued that in 'it may be possible in the next few months to overcome the insurrections in Malaya and Kenya altogether'. However, during a 'major crisis' it was expected that the internal security problem in the colonies would be 'greater than today'. This meant that the question of apportioning manpower for internal security had to be carefully considered both in terms of the Cold War but also in a Hot War as well. The report concluded that during a period of 'dangerous international' tension British forces would be tied down suppressing local insurrections rather than being available to defend against external attack. The reinforcement of the Middle East and South East Asia was assumed to be now more difficult because of the development of nuclear and thermo-nuclear weapons which would disrupt communication and transportation routes. Therefore, the report argued, traditional mobilisation schemes needed to be reconsidered. The solution to this problem was that Britain must in peacetime have two strategic reserves each of 2 divisions permanently based in the Middle East and South East Asia or 'near these areas'. However, the report observed 'at present such formations are not available. Our military power, as now organised, is, in fact, insufficient in the circumstances of modern warfare to underwrite our worldwide commitments'.<sup>573</sup>

The report then provided the Government two choices; 'either we could effect such changes in our Army as will make it an adequate instrument for the fulfilment of existing commitments'; or 'we can reduce our commitments and conform to existing military limitations'. Conversely, it stated that in latter case 'Britain would cease to act as a world

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<sup>572</sup> *Ibid* p14.

<sup>573</sup> *Ibid* p15.



power and would concentrate her strength in Europe and Africa. The political and economic consequences of such a course, however, would be momentous and incalculable.’ The economic benefits of remaining a world power were accessed as being more beneficial than reductions in ‘defence estimates’. The report concluded ‘our group has accordingly preferred to concentrate on the other alternative and consider the possibilities of increasing the strength of the Army without adding to its numbers. In this way, and this way alone, we can match our Army to our policy’. The report then discussed way in which the Army could be strengthened. However, the report pragmatically noted that it was impossible for the UK with its limited manpower resources to increase the size of the Army. Therefore, it stated, that the ‘central problem’ was increasing the number of fighting formations from available manpower resources. However, the report revealed that their discussions had not reached a ‘final conclusion’ on how best to achieve this. This highlighted the disagreements which had arisen over Liddell Hart’s plan to reduce tail units. The report noted that since 1950 the divisional slice had been reduced from 42,000 to 38,500. However, the report stated that a special committee should be convened to look at war establishments and advise on structural reorganisation of the Army. The report also argued that entirely new approach to the ‘problems of transport and equipment’ was needed.

The structural reorganisation would be based on creating ‘economies in manpower’ within the framework of the ‘existing organisational structure’ of the Army. The report posed the question of whether brigades and Corps were still necessary. The report argued that Liddell Hart’s system of five would achieve considerable savings of manpower and increase the number of fighting formations. The better employment of available manpower resources was a central theme running through the report. The report estimated that there were 20-30,000 men in transit at any given time. This they described as being in the ‘pipeline’. The solution to this problem was the ‘large scale development of air transport’. The report argued that all troops and their equipment, except tanks, should be flown from the UK to their main bases overseas. The use of air-transport was considered to be ‘swifter and thus more economical in manpower, as well as far less vulnerable either to infiltration and guerrilla techniques or to nuclear and thermo-nuclear bombing’. The report argued that the development of air transport would thus seem an essential element in any solution of the problem presented by the combination of our shortage of manpower and long lines of communication’. <sup>574</sup> The envisaged air transport fleet was to be strong enough to air lift a division at a time. The report wanted there to be additional air lift capacity developed in the commercial air transport sector by the Government, so the military air transport fleet could be rapidly expanded at the

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<sup>574</sup> *Ibid* p19.

beginning of a major war. The report recommended that the design of civil transport aircraft be supervised by the state to ensure that it could be quickly adapted for use by the military. On the question of whether the RAF or the Army should take over operational control of air transport, the report noted that the RAF was inclined to attribute more importance to strategic bombing and fighter interception requirements than transport.

The need for simplification of equipment was also considered to be an important means of reducing manpower. The report argued that fighting formations were 'overloaded' with equipment which might be used in any 'foreseeable circumstance'. However, this, they argued, increased difficulties associated with supply, maintenance and the provision of spare parts which in turn required additional manpower resources. The report recognised that the 'multiplicity of weapons has advantages' but thought that to 'cover everything tends to lead to the fatal mistake of not being strong enough anywhere'. This was Liddell Hart's argument. The solution was to prepare 'tailor-made' units which were equipped and trained for operation in specific areas. This would allow a rationalization of weapons, tactics and organization to suit local conditions. The report noted that in the past there had been considerable resistance to the idea of specialisation because orthodox thinking argued that all formations needed to be trained and equipped for operations anywhere. However, the report argued that the validity of this argument had been greatly reduced by the advent of the h-bomb which had made 'it very doubtful whether it would ever be possible to move troops stationed in the Middle East or S.E. Asia to other theatres of operations'.<sup>575</sup> The report recommended that all overseas strategic reserves should only be equipped and trained for warfare their respective regions.

The next section looked at the question of finding additional manpower resources external to the UK to improve the 'task of Commonwealth defence'. The report argued that the loss of the Indian Army had created many of the difficulties which the UK had meeting its overseas obligations. The report stated the only 'major' source of additional manpower were the African colonies. They noted that East and West Africa had produced 474,000 troops (including labour units) during the Second World War but in 1955 there were only 26,000 men serving 'under British command'. The report estimated that it was possible to expand this force and create four divisions (80,000 men). The report argued that this could only be achieved by increasing the amount of finance which came from the UK, because the African colonies would be unable to afford additional contributions. The construction of accommodation was also a problem due to the fact that there was a shortage of building

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<sup>575</sup> *Ibid* p20

materials in Africa. However, the report argued that equipment was less of an issue, because African troops 'did not require the most modern equipment'.<sup>576</sup> The report argued that service in African forces for European officers and NCOs should be for life which was not the case at that time when officers and NCOs were on temporary secondment (usually three years or nine months for national servicemen). They argued that if a 'lifetime' career structure was adopted it would produce officers and NCOs who would be experts in 'African conditions and languages' which would 'win the personal loyalty of their men'. However, European officers and NCOs would continue to receive additional training in the UK or with British Army units abroad. The report argued that incentives like tax free employment, higher standards of living and opportunities for sporting and outdoor pursuits would make service in an African Army an attractive proposition for respective recruits.

On the question of the value of an African Army the report argued that it was 'confidence in their officers' which would increase efficiency and improve standards. The report admitted that officers of the KAR had stated that their men struggled with coming to terms with using the most modern equipment. On the question of making Africans officers it was noted that in West Africa where educational standards were higher this would be a more rapid process but in East Africa the numbers were 'smaller'. It was also noted that Africans made good NCOs. This process was described as 'dilution' which would allow a reduction in the number European officers and NCOs within each unit. The report argued that if formations contained a fixed component of British troops, like the Indian Army, it might be possible to field African formations against any enemy. If it was not the case African troops could be employed as garrison troops in the Middle East or in counter insurgency operations in Kenya and Malaya. On the question of political control the report argued that forces raised in East Africa could be directly controlled by the WO. However, West African forces could not, because the Gold Coast and Nigeria were 'so far advanced towards self-government' that defence issues could not remain 'a reserved matter'. The report concluded that this would appear to make the formation of forces from West Africa doubtful. However the report argued that it would be many years before Africanization would be complete meaning that West African forces would require British assistance. This could be used to conclude agreements which might allow the deployment of West African forces outside their territories. The report cited the example of Nepal and India where an agreement was reached for the recruitment of manpower. Similarly, they argued that the nascent Central African Federation might also be 'convinced' to employ their forces outside their territories.<sup>577</sup>

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<sup>576</sup> *Ibid* p22.

<sup>577</sup> *Ibid* p25.

The report argued that 'European leaders' in East and Central Africa 'seemed ready to support an expansion of an African Army', and 'they show little anxiety about placing rifles in African hands'. The report thought that service in an African Army would be seen in a positive light by Africans, because it would mean access to education and training which would improve their long-term employment prospects. Another idea to induce recruitment was the allocation of a land grant on completion of service which would raise the social status of ex-servicemen. The report also thought it was time to consider the possibility of creating a foreign legion. However, the report noted that at the end of the Second World War there had been an opportunity to create a foreign legion out of the exiled Polish, Czech and Yugoslav soldiers who had remained in the UK and large numbers of displaced persons. As the report pointed out the majority of these men were experienced soldiers with extensive military training. Additionally, there was a cadre of British officers and NCOs who had served in foreign units during the war.

However, the report noted that the situation after the war contrasted with the present circumstances because there were fewer displaced persons and 'unplaceable' people which would mean less 'dramatic' opportunities for recruitment. But, the report thought it might be possible over a period of years to create a division from foreign sources of manpower. The use of civilians to release military manpower was also considered to be an area which the WO should be investigating. The report argued that jobs like mechanics, drivers, fitters and other skilled and semi-skilled jobs could quite easily be civilianised. The report stated that it was wasteful to train National Servicemen for such jobs. However, they recognised that employing civilians would mean competing against industry in the labour market which was very competitive. To counter act this they proposed the creation of an auxiliary service corps which would be open to 'colonial subjects and foreigners as well as to UK subjects'. This would be a uniformed service which would encompass the RAF and Army. Recruits would be engaged on a long term basis. The report pointed out that a similar unit had existed in the BAOR comprised of German nationals. The report argued that it might be possible to increase the 'fighting power of the Army' by six divisions if African and foreign manpower resources were used.<sup>578</sup>

The report argued that operations in Kenya and Malaya were not military operations, but police operations. The report proposed creating a special service force or an imperial gendarmerie to deal with counter insurgency operations. These units would be specifically trained in riots, guerrilla operations, terrorism and the 'scientific guarding of key

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<sup>578</sup> *Ibid* p29.

installations'. The report described these units as a cross between the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the SAS. They would operate as the 'hard core' around which local police and 'levies' would work and would be under civil control. The nucleus of the gendarmerie would be formed of long term regulars. Because this force would be configured for a 'single role' the report argued that it would allow its organisation to be more economical with manpower than Army units employed on the same duties. The report argued that it might be possible that some of this force might be comprised of national servicemen. The unit would also be given a hot war role of maintaining security behind the lines or within colonial territories. Also it could be employed to carryout sabotage and guerrilla war behind enemy lines. The report noted that having such a force in existence in peacetime would be advantageous at the outset of a war. The report argued that Commonwealth participation in collective security schemes would also allow a better distribution of British manpower. Although, historically Commonwealth countries had been reluctant to accept overseas peacetime commitments, the report commented that British recognition of the 'equality of status of different members of the Commonwealth' had changed this perception. The report argued that it was now possible that Commonwealth forces may become involved the garrisoning different bases on the 'main lines of inter-Commonwealth communications'. They also expected Commonwealth countries to contribute to regional strategic reserve forces.

The final section of the report looked at how the Army needed to develop in the coming years to fulfil its obligations. The report stated that the Army had to perform four major functions at the same time.<sup>579</sup> These included Cold War operations such as those in Kenya and Malaya; limited war in Korea; preparing for immediate and general war; adapting to the conditions of the new industrial revolution which was transforming contemporary strategic and tactical conceptions. The report argued that the limited war in Korea had resembled the pattern of operations from the Second World War. However, the report noted that if a major war broke out in Europe this pattern would not be repeated; allied forces would be on the defensive and they would not have complete air superiority which was the case in Korea. Atomic weapons would be used against ports, bases and industrial centres. The report argued that more work needed to be carried out on the effects of atomic weapons on the organisation of the Army. As the report noted the blast radius of an atomic bomb was 3 to 10 miles, while the blast radius of an h-bomb was up to 50 miles. Similarly, the effects of radiation and blast damage needed careful consideration. The report argued that it might be necessary to construct deep underground shelters to house military forces, essential industries, aircraft and other key installations. The development of missiles and longer ranged bombers was seen as giving a

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<sup>579</sup> *Ibid* p31.

decisive edge to the attacker. This was compounded by the fact that the blast radius of the h-bomb meant that a near miss would be sufficient to destroy a target.

The report argued that strategic nuclear and thermo-nuclear bombing was likely to interfere with all communications; this would probably destroy harbours, airfields, railway junctions and roads. This would mean dispersing aircraft, lighters and vehicles to protect them from the initial attack. The report argued that a network of secondary airfields should be created. Because of the expected massive disruption to transport and communication networks, the report argued military units should become more self-supporting. This would mean having men who could carry out numerous tasks and greater reliance on conserving fuel and munitions by units in the field. This would also alleviate the vulnerability of large formations to attacks by tactical nuclear weapons. The report predicted that troop movements would have to be conducted across country and that supply and administrative units would have to be dispersed. More resupply would have to be carried out by air and greater use of helicopters made. The report argued that it was too soon to state whether tactical nuclear weapons 'had spelt the end of the heavy tank'. However, the report thought that lighter tanks might be more survivable on a nuclear battlefield. Another, effect of greater dispersal might be a reduction in the 'number of rifled barrel artillery' which additionally would reduce supply and manpower requirements. The report noted that guided missiles had rapidly made the anti-aircraft gun 'virtually obsolete'.<sup>580</sup>

The report thought that the 'loosening of the front' would encourage deep raids into enemy territory against military, industrial and political targets. This would require SAS type units, armoured and airborne formations. These formations would have to live off the land and be resupplied by air. The report concluded that modern warfare would by necessity become dispersed. According to the report the present structure of corps, divisions and brigades would not be suited to this kind of warfare. The report assumed that smaller task force formations would emerge based on the battalion. These forces would become 'highly equipped, highly trained and highly mobile elite troops'. Troops of this elite active army would form armoured units, paratroops, commandos, and jungle and mountain task forces. To defend rear areas and strategic points and provide garrisons units of second line troops and home guard would be recruited and trained for this specific role. The report argued that this kind of work was better suited to the Territorial Army. The report stated that the elite army should 'probably' be composed entirely of Regulars. National service would be designed solely to train civilians for static defence. This would allow national service to be reduced. However, the report noted

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<sup>580</sup> *Ibid* p29.

that it may be sometime before it might be possible to recruit enough regulars which would mean that national service might have to be retained to fill commitments in Europe and the Middle East for 'many years to come'. The report pointed out that if more colonial resources were utilised it might be possible to reduce national service quicker. On the question of recruitment of regulars the report argued for better pay, food and living conditions. The report also argued that a three tier army should be created which allow a recruit the possibility of joining at 18 and retiring at 55. The first tier being the elite army; the second the static defence army or service in the Territorial Army; and the third the home guard. The report also believed that it would be possible to attract more recruits if service in the elite army was publicised as being an 'adventure'.

The conclusion stated that the recommendations and proposals in the report 'must be of a tentative nature'. This was because the study group had no access to official material. However, they believed that a revolution in military thinking caused by the advent of the hydrogen bomb required a 'searching re-examination of the organisation of the Army. To achieve this, the report thought that a new Esher Committee should be convened. The study group were also concerned that the Army (WO) was producing too few active fighting formations. The creation of strategic reserves in the UK, Middle East and Far East was also considered to be a top priority. The final comments of the report were designed to provoke a reaction from the WO. However, the general tone of the report was not overtly political. The report was generally well received by the press. *The Times* reported that the League's most striking proposals were those regarding the creation of an African Army, a Foreign Service corps and a foreign legion to deal with the 'manpower problem'.<sup>581</sup> Similarly the *Manchester Guardian*<sup>582</sup> and the *New York Times*<sup>583</sup> focused on the League's manpower solutions based on colonial and foreign manpower sources in their evaluation of the Report. *Army Quarterly* described the League's Report as 'comprehensive', which bore the 'stamp of authority' and was based on the knowledge and research of a distinguished group who had an 'unusually wide range of experience' in military and political matters.<sup>584</sup> *The Times* Defence Correspondent and the *Army Quarterly* editorial picked out the creation of an African Army and an Imperial Gendarmerie to deal with 'police operations' as 'certainly worth considering'.

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<sup>581</sup> *The Times* 'British Foreign Legion Proposed', 12 November 1955 p4.

<sup>582</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 'Plan for British Foreign Legion Easing the Manpower Burden', 12 November 1955 p2.

<sup>583</sup> *New York Times* 'A FOREIGN LEGION URGED ON BRITAIN; Army League Experts Also Urge Service Auxiliaries and 5 African Divisions', 12 November 1955 p9.

<sup>584</sup> *The Army Quarterly* Editorial, January 1956 p132.

*The Daily Telegraph's* military correspondent was Lieutenant General Martin who had contributed to the study group by looking at its study group papers and suggestions. He thought that the creation of a foreign legion, African Army, a three tier army and the imperial gendarmerie were the most striking proposals.<sup>585</sup> But, he thought that a new Esher committee should be convened to investigate the effects of nuclear war on the Army's organisation before changes were made to its structure. *The Daily Mail* stated that 'Britain might get a French style foreign legion', and that an African Army could be raised in Africa to ease the manpower problem.<sup>586</sup> *The Daily Mirror* also ran with the headline about the foreign legion, but considered proposals for reducing manpower problems as welcome.<sup>587</sup> *The Daily Express* also highlighted the foreign legion idea and the creation of an African Army.<sup>588</sup> All of the newspapers described the report as the 'return' of the Army League to the defence debate. The study group were described as being renowned experts on defence matters. Julian Amery told the press that he hoped that the report would be studied in the 'right quarters'. However, the WO refused to comment on the report.

On 10 November Beddington-Behrens wrote to General Templer, CIGS, enclosing a copy of the report.<sup>589</sup> Beddington-Behrens also offered the services of the League to Templer. The government had been given advanced warning of the contents of the final report from Faviell. On 23 November Julian Amery briefed the Conservative Parliamentary Committee for Defence Army Sub-Committee on the contents of the report.<sup>590</sup> The notes of this meeting were sent to Head by Faviell. The meeting agreed that cuts should, and could, be made to the tail and headquarters staff's. However, many on the committee thought that the plans to increase African manpower resources were 'overoptimistic'. The formation of an Auxiliary Service unit was considered to be a good idea and worthy of further investigation. The plan for a foreign legion was dismissed as still being too provocative and the committee thought that maintaining a steady flow of recruits to be a major problem. The committee thought that a three tier army was unworkable because most elements in the elite army would be serving overseas for extended periods. The committee argued that it would be better for the WO to focus on improving the ratio between home and overseas service. This problem was often cited as a reason for the poor retention of regulars. The committee endorsed the report's proposals for the creation of strategic reserves in the Middle East and the Far East, because

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<sup>585</sup> *The Daily Telegraph*, 'Atomic study group calls for a three tier army', 12 November 1955 p6.

<sup>586</sup> *The Daily Mail*, 'British Foreign Legion French style', 12 November 1955 p7.

<sup>587</sup> *The Daily Mirror*, 'Let's have a foreign legion', 12 November 1955.

<sup>588</sup> *The Daily Express*, 'Revolutionary plans on land', 12 November 1955.

<sup>589</sup> National Archive WO 32/16266, Letter from Beddington-Behrens to Templer 10 November 1955. Hereafter, WO 32/16266.

<sup>590</sup> WO 32/16266, Conservative Parliamentary Committee for Defence Army Sub-Committee minutes of meeting, 23 November 1955.



they would augment the 'general deterrent policy'; however, they argued that these forces should not be used for garrison duties or for internal security. On the question of internal security the committee endorsed the creation of a gendarmerie but wanted it to be an integral part of the existing colonial forces and recruited locally. British officers and NCOs would be used as a cadre.

The committee considered the simplification of equipment a 'subject well worthy of further examination'. They also thought that equipping units for a single task would be more efficient and save manpower. The increasing the use of air transport was described as an 'important subject'. However, the committee thought that the report had given the impression that at the start of a nuclear war there would be no 'movement of any sort'; the committee argued that after an initial period of time transport would have to continue because it was 'essential for continuing war-like operations of any sort, or indeed continuing the life of these islands'.<sup>591</sup> The committee stated that the only alternative was the construction of 'dumps of materials' which was 'impracticable in peacetime'. The committee concluded that the report 'formed a valuable basis for study'. On 7 December the committee met again to discuss the paper. The committee looked at a gendarmerie as alternative to using the Army in counterinsurgency operations and whether it should be controlled by the WO.<sup>592</sup> The committee agreed that the Army was being used to deal with 'police duties' which were of limited value to prepare troops for normal military operations. They also stated that in the future 'the probable developments of the 'cold war' techniques were so diverse that they were beyond the military sphere and a 'gendarmerie' might be better controlled from a special organisation outside the War Office'. The committee stated that soldiers were 'basically unsuitable' for counterinsurgency operations. However, the committee thought that it would be difficult to find sufficient numbers of recruits. In the past higher pay and other inducements had been used to attract volunteers to the Palestine Police and the Black and Tans. The Black and Tans and the Palestine Police were both para-military police units formed after the First World War. When in 1921 the Black and Tans were disbanded many members transferred to the Palestine Police which was then being formed. The notorious Black and Tans gained a reputation for indiscriminate brutality because of their reprisal attacks on the civilian population in Ireland during the war of independence 1920-21.

The League's proposals for the creation of specialist units which could perform 'fire brigade duties' was dismissed as being a waste of manpower. The committee argued that it was better

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<sup>591</sup> *Ibid* p2.

<sup>592</sup> WO 32/16266, Conservative Parliamentary Committee for Defence Army Sub-Committee minutes of meeting, 7 December 1955.

to have two divisions based in the UK which could be rapidly transported by air to deal with emergencies. This force would also be more flexible and able to deal with a variety of operational requirements. The committee also considered the three tier army system to be flawed because service up to the age of 55 was excessive and unattractive to potential recruits. On the question of national service the committee noted that the study group had avoided making any 'concrete proposals' because they had not been 'unanimous' on the issue. The committee debated the issue and concluded that it was possible that another 'major operation' might arise which required the maintenance of considerable reserves. The Committee thought that it might be better to rely on a volunteer TA for such a reserve and dispense with national service. However, like the study group the committee was divided on the issue because there were concerns that regular recruitment would not be sufficient enough to meet commitments. The committee argued that the abolition of conscription could only be considered after a increase in regular recruitment or a reduction in commitments. They also thought that once it was abolished 'it would never be possible' to bring it back again, unless a third world war was about to start. The study groups proposals for recruiting and training of colonial troops in substitution of British personnel was thought practicable on a small scale but would not be possible to the extent that the report claimed because it would not be possible to recruit adequate numbers of qualified men. The committee also thought that the training of a large force of colonial troops would tie up as many, if not more, regulars as were presently deployed on training national servicemen. However, the committee thought that it might be advisable for the WO to make a study of the problem because it might produce more manpower.

On 14 December Brigadier Prior-Palmer, Chairman Conservative Parliamentary Committee for Defence Army Sub-Committee, wrote to Head enclosing the minutes of both meetings and his observations on the report.<sup>593</sup> Prior-Palmer told Head that the creation of a gendarmerie was based on experience of the situation which had existed in Malaya and Kenya; he then stated, 'I want to make quite clear that as you know this is largely my idea'. He also stated that he believed that the Army should not be used in counter-insurgency operations which is why he thought important that the gendarmerie idea be considered by the WO. However, he deviated from the study group proposals by arguing that the formation be 'recruited for the period of the emergency only'. He did think that the force should be trained in the 'art of jungle and guerrilla warfare'. Leo Amery had approached Prior-Palmer in 1950 about joining the study group but had declined. However Julian Amery had been a member of the Conservative Parliamentary Committee for Defence Army Sub-Committee since 1951,

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<sup>593</sup> WO 32/16266, Letter from Brigadier Prior-Palmer to Head, 14 December 1955.

and therefore was in close contact with Prior-Palmer. Faviell supplied a considerable amount of information to the committee and was active in the study group. It is conceivable that Julian Amery asked for Prior-Palmer's opinions on the draft report and his views on the Army. However, Prior-Palmer comments about this being my idea, and you knowing about, indicate how the activity of the study group was being discussed and monitored by the Conservative Party and Head. On 21 December Head wrote to Prior-Palmer thanking him for his letter and offered to brief the committee on the findings of the WO into the report when it was completed.<sup>594</sup>

However, Head was not the only minister interested in the report. On 24 November Selwyn Lloyd, Minister of Defence, wrote to Head stating that he had read the report which he thought could not be entirely 'disregarded' because the study group contained some influential figures.<sup>595</sup> He thought that the plan for an African Army was attractive but noted that it had been rejected on numerous occasions by the COS and was therefore impracticable. Similarly, he argued that the plan for the gendarmerie was already being met within the Army by the organisation and training of a brigade group in the UK. However, he was interested in the proposal for an Auxiliary Service Corps because it might reduce the demand for national servicemen. Lloyd stated that creating a Auxiliary Service Corps 'would be an important step towards our ultimate objective all regular armed forces and the abolition of national service'. The WO completed its analysis of League's report on 31 January 1956. The report was examined by various departments in the WO who were asked to comment on a proposal which was their responsibility. A memorandum on the report was passed along to the Army Council to make a decision on any further action which might be required. The proposals concerning the creation of a Auxiliary Service Corps were given the most attention by the WO which was undertaken in a separate and more comprehensive study.

## **Auxiliary Service Corps**

On 9 December 1955 the Army Council Committee discussed the Army League Report and the Adjutant-General, General Sir Cameron Nicholson, noted that they considered the Auxiliary Service Corps numbering 32,000 could be a 'consideration as a step toward an all regular army'.<sup>596</sup> Nicholson also stated that a feasibility study of the possibility of forming an Auxiliary Service Corps should be undertaken in tandem with the deliberations of the Hull

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<sup>594</sup> WO 32/16266, Letter from Head to Brigadier Prior-Palmer, 21 December 1955.

<sup>595</sup> WO 32/16266, Note from Selwyn Lloyd to Head, 24 November 1955.

<sup>596</sup> WO 32/15997, A, C/G (55) 13, 'The Army in the Nuclear Age', 9 December 1955.

Committee, which had been tasked with examining the 'future size and shape of a wholly Regular Army'. The Army Council set up a committee, headed by the Director of Manpower Planning, Major-General G. R Dalton, to investigate the possibility of creating an Auxiliary Service Corps, and another to consider the rest of the Army League Report based on representatives from departments within the WO. On 20 December the MOD widened the Auxiliary Service Corps Committee to become an inter-service examination. Before the Committee met, Dalton broadened the possible recruitment field to include British nationals. The Committee was invited to consider especially the problems of 'Trade Unions, racial differences and status' within an embryonic Auxiliary Service Corps. The Committee invited representatives from other Whitehall departments such as the CO, FO, Home Office (HO) and the Ministry of Labour and National Service to contribute to this investigation. The FO observed that the Auxiliary Service Corps equated to a British version of the 'French Foreign Legion'.<sup>597</sup> The CO was asked to provide assistance and advice, because it was envisaged that the recruitment of such a unit would be carried out predominantly in the colonies. The HO was involved because of issues regarding the legal aspects of having foreign or colonial subjects living in the UK but enlisted in the UK's armed forces.

Dalton's Committee argued that the armed forces already used, or had employed, considerable numbers of locally-raised manpower for unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled labour in overseas establishments for many years in peacetime and in prodigious numbers during the Great War and the Second World War.<sup>598</sup> The League proposed to take this a step further by increasing the technical expertise and ability of entrants and ensuring that they had a 'worldwide liability' to nullify the parochial limitations of employing local labour. There were considerable numbers of civilians employed by the Services in overseas stations. For instance in 1956, the BAOR employed 21,000 German and 7,000 'stateless' persons as drivers, watchmen and labourers in the German Service Organisation; in Korea 100 Koreans had been employed per infantry battalion on a variety of jobs. The envisaged new Corps would cut across the responsibilities of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME), Royal Engineers, Royal Army Service Corps, Mixed Service Organisation, Royal Army Medical Corps, German Service Organisation and the Royal Pioneer Corps. Some of jobs being discussed included Cooks, Storemen, Clerks, Drivers, General Duty Men, Vehicle Mechanic and Fitter. According to the FO, the WO's main reasons for wanting to form the Corps were to release British manpower and have a force which was uniformed and subject

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<sup>597</sup> FO 371/123207, 'Service liaison file, Permanent Under-Secretary's Department', April 1956.

<sup>598</sup> FO 371/123207, MISC/P (59), 'Working Party on the formation of an Auxiliary Service Corps', note by Chairman, 28 March 1956.

to military law and able to be posted to areas where it would be 'desirable' to replace local civilian employment or where it was in short supply.<sup>599</sup>

However, the scheme ran into difficulties straight away because it was too ambitious. The Army wanted 10,000 English-speaking 'skilled men' at once, 12,000 'semiskilled men' who could be easily trained and 10,000 'unskilled men' from the colonies for general duties or labouring. The Admiralty representative, Captain McMullen, stated that the Royal Navy was not interested in the scheme because it already employed and recruited members of the Commonwealth and people from the Colonies directly; for many years, overseas establishments, dockyards and ships had contained locally-recruited ratings with a limited service liability or locally-employed civilians.<sup>600</sup> The Royal Navy did not want to alter this arrangement, which they pointed out supplied ample amounts of manpower for the evolving 'small-ship navy' and they were concerned that the introduction of a new Corps would create 'administrative difficulties'. The Air Ministry Official, Mr Roberts, agreed with the Admiralty stating that the RAF preferred to maintain the status quo but they did have concerns that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tactical Air Force was reliant on the German Service Organisation (GSO) and therefore any alteration to this understanding would mean a re-examination of the RAF's position on the issue. Clearly the Army and Navy did not want to disrupt their existing overseas manpower arrangements which meant that the Army had no support for the formation of an Auxiliary Service Corps. The RAF and Navy were not the only Whitehall departments that had objections to the Corps.

The FO legal department argued that it was not illegal under international law to recruit manpower in other countries for military purposes but in such circumstances it was governed by local judicial conditions and the goodwill of particular foreign governments; however, there was a concern that British Embassies or consulates should not be used as recruiting offices or that recruitment practices affect 'international comity' or the sovereignty of other states. The use of the Embassy or consulate in these circumstances was construed as constituting a possible 'abuse' of trust and status.<sup>601</sup> It was also assumed that the only place where recruitment could realistically take place was either in the UK or in British territories overseas; the FO noted that it was unlikely that any country other than Nepal would allow recruitment of manpower within its territory. The Western Department of the FO did argue that there were some advantages in the scheme; mainly because the cost of the GSO was

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<sup>599</sup> FO 371/123207, ZS 13/5, 'Minutes', 11 May 1956.

<sup>600</sup> FO 371/123207, AC/M (56) 61, 'Working Party on the Formation of an Auxiliary Service Corps', 10 April 1956.

<sup>601</sup> FO 371/123207, ZS, 13/5, 'Minutes', 11 May 1956.

rising and the Government at the time were looking to reduce overseas foreign exchange expenditure and defence costs associated with the BAOR and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tactical Air Force. Overseas exchange losses generated by defence expenditure, especially those associated with NATO, were a constant source of annoyance both to Eden and Macmillan during their Premierships.<sup>602</sup>

There was also anxiety about the effect of full employment in West Germany undermining future recruitment of manpower. It was noted that under such circumstances pay and conditions of service would have to be drastically improved 'at a cost we cannot afford'. It was thought that the stationing of an Auxiliary Service Corps in Germany would be more economical in terms of foreign exchange and would 'protect us against the demands of the German labour market'. However, Western Department warned that the West German Government should be warned in advance and would be amenable if economic conditions were conducive and local communities and German workers were not unduly disadvantaged by the British dispensing with their services. Another concern was that the German government should be consulted about the use of 'colonial subjects', because French colonial troops were 'very unpopular' in Germany.<sup>603</sup> It was also noted that 'German opinion was very touchy' on the subject of recruitment of its citizens for foreign armies because of 'excessive French recruitment' in their occupation zone since 1945 for their Foreign Legion.

Another possible source of manpower was the considerable numbers of UN refugees from Eastern and Central Europe living in Displaced Persons Camps in Austria and Germany. The General Department was concerned that UN refugees might be not be suitable because they would technically still be under the protection of the UN and therefore the UN 'would be entitled to have a voice in their welfare'. This situation, they argued, could be rectified by giving them British citizenship. However, it was maintained that the Communists would 'seize on this', arguing that the West was 'forcing refugees from behind the Iron Curtain into the role of tame followers of NATO by denying them any other prospects of resettlement'.<sup>604</sup> They also considered that many of the men involved might have a 'grudge', because of the length of time they had spent in the refugee camp, leaving them with a 'propensity for carrying on émigré political intrigues' that 'might prove embarrassing to the military authorities'. The African Department pessimistically noted that 'none of the nations who have recently achieved independence are likely to permit recruitment in their territories'; this perception was prevalent throughout Whitehall departments. They additionally argued that the

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<sup>602</sup> Hennessy, P. (2007) p575.

<sup>603</sup> Botting, D. (1985). *In the ruins of the Reich* London: Unwin pp16-18.

<sup>604</sup> FO 371/123207, ZS, 13/5, 'Minutes, A, F, Comfort, General Department', 17 May 1956.

Russians and Egyptians would exploit the formation of an Auxiliary Service Corps for propaganda purposes. But they did think that the 'Paperless Palestinians' who had recently been employed in the Canal Zone could be used or might be willing to serve in the Corps.<sup>605</sup> It was noted that there would be 'difficulties with language' if Africans were recruited. The FO argued that all these sources of manpower posed an infiltration threat to the Armed Services by Communists; they especially singled out 'colonial nationals' as being a 'hazard'.

These arguments formed the basis for the rejection of the League's idea of an Auxiliary Service Corps. On 26 October 1956 the Principal Personnel Officers Committee (PPOC), which was a joint service committee composed of senior officers, rejected the scheme based on the working committee's observations.<sup>606</sup> The principle reasons given were fears over security issues concerning the employment of 'foreigners' in HM forces; political difficulties with other Governments (including Commonwealth and colonial territories) over recruiting their citizens for a 'regular enlistment' in the British Army; the poor education standards of potential recruits from the colonies; and objections from European or other Governments to the employment of 'coloured' troops in British military formations in their countries.<sup>607</sup> Dalton remarked that the Army had approached the whole exercise with an 'open mind' but found the idea of an Auxiliary Service Corps 'distasteful'. The PPO Committee concluded that a more in-depth study in the future could be undertaken into the use of colonial manpower if their 'recommendation was not politically acceptable'. Dalton's volte-face of the Army's position on the possibility of using overseas manpower to that of aggrieved party is odd, given that previously he and the WO had identified a requirement to find additional manpower for the expected 'smaller' Army of the future. From July 1956 Dalton was also involved in the Cabinet Committee on National Service as a principle official representative of the WO on an inter-departmental working party which had been tasked with looking at manpower requirements for reduced Armed Forces of 450,000.<sup>608</sup> Dalton and the Army needed to find manpower, especially, as Dalton recommended to the National Service Committee, technical personnel, if conscription was to end. However, the PPOC and Dalton's comments are revealing because they can be construed as showing that there was resentment about being required by politicians to meddle with 'their' existing structures and practices for the employment and use of overseas manpower. This remark about political acceptability

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<sup>605</sup> FO 371/123207, ZS, 13/5, 'Minutes, Ramsden, African Department', 22 May 1956.

<sup>606</sup> DEFE 10/416, 'Auxiliary Service Corps', 26 October 1956.

<sup>607</sup> *Ibid* para 2.

<sup>608</sup> CAB 130/120, Gen 544/2, Cabinet Committee on National Service: Future of National Service Note by Secretaries, 19 July 1956.

derives, in part, from the fact that at that time the COS were being subjected to more political control from politicians.<sup>609</sup>

## African Army

The memorandum next looked at the proposal to form a African Army. The WO noted that General Templer's Colonial Security Report had recently reviewed the role of African colonial forces and had decided that in future their role would be restricted to internal security.<sup>610</sup> Templer had completed his report on 23 April 1955.<sup>611</sup> It was a wide ranging and comprehensive appraisal of colonial police and military forces and their ability to carry out Hot War and Cold War operations. The Templer's report was discussed by a Cabinet committee through the summer of 1955. On 4 August 1955 the Committee stated that Ministers had 'accepted' that the role of colonial forces was to provide for 'their' internal security and local defence.<sup>612</sup> The wider 'Cold War' role of colonial states was to provide installations for 'Commonwealth strategic employment' and 'reserves of manpower' to 'draw on after a first phase' of a nuclear war.<sup>613</sup> To this end they had agreed that responsibility for colonial forces should be transferred to the colonial Governments which would then have to provide finances for their own forces. However, this would be applied on an 'individual' basis as colonies approached independence and after consultation with the existing colonial governments. This meant that colonial forces would in effect have a limited Hot War role in future. Rather than being able to provide manpower for operations in the Middle East and the Far East as the study group were arguing the Government were in fact planning to reduce the capabilities of colonial forces in Africa. Also transferring financial control of colonial forces to local administrations would probably mean reductions in manpower, training and equipment.

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<sup>609</sup> Strachan, H. (1997). *The Politics of the British Army* Oxford: Clarendon Press; Broadbent, E. (1988). *The Military and Government From Macmillan to Heseltine* Basingstoke: Macmillan; Holden Reid, B, 'Civil War Between Services' in *Military History* (1984); Gordon, C, 'Duncan Sandys And The Independent Nuclear Deterrent' in Beckett, I and Gooch, J (eds). (1981). *Politicians and Defence Studies in the Formulation of British Defence Policy 1845-1970* Manchester: Manchester University Press; Snyder, W, P. (1964). *The Politics of British Defence Policy, 1945-1962* Ohio: Ohio University Press; Martin, L, W, 'The Market for Strategic Ideas in Britain: The "Sandys Era" in *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 56, No. 1, (1962).

<sup>610</sup> WO 32/15997, A, C/G (55) 13, 'The Army in the Nuclear Age', 31 January 1956.

<sup>611</sup> CAB 21/2925, Report on Colonial Security, 23 April 1955.

<sup>612</sup> CAB 130/111, Gen 501/2 the 'Official Committee on the Military Implications of General Templer's Report', 'Proposals for the co-ordination of Forces in West Africa', 4 August 1955,

<sup>613</sup> *Ibid* p4.



The WO stated that West and East Africa colonies would at best provide a brigade in future operations in the Middle East. The study group were arguing that it would be possible to provide two divisions. The WO agreed with the study group that the creation of an African Army had many advantages. However, it stated that there were political and racial objections to the use of African manpower in some European and Asiatic countries. The constitutional progress in some African countries made it difficult to guarantee that in the future newly independent states would allow African troops to be deployed outside of their territories. This they concluded meant that African troops could not be used in a emergency which made them a poor substitute for equivalent British forces. It was also noted that in other parts of the world British forces preferred recruit locally enlisted manpower to augment their strength. The study group proposed using African troops in the Middle East but the WO argued that the in the future British forces would be comprised of small armoured force which African troops were 'not suited' to.

## **Foreign Legion**

Similar arguments were used to disregard the idea of a foreign legion. The idea of forming a foreign legion was not a new and had been discussed several times since 1939. On 7 September 1939 it was anticipated by the CIGS War Committee that 'ex-enemy volunteers' might be enlisted in a Foreign Legion but the scheme was deemed too impracticable and dropped before it got off the ground. In January 1946 Attlee had asked the Service Ministers to carry out a feasibility study regarding the employment of foreign nationals while he decided whether to continue conscription into peacetime to cope with overseas commitments.<sup>614</sup> The WO dismissed the idea as being politically and administratively difficult and argued that there was a shortage of officers and NCOs if the units were raised and it would be too expensive.<sup>615</sup> The WO noted that the League's report had stated that a Foreign Legion could have been 'easily' formed in 1946 and seemed to point the finger at Government inactivity rather than the objections of WO (Army Council) which had dismissed the idea. However, the idea was again considered in 1948 after it was raised in the House of Commons by a number of MPs and was rejected by the WO on the grounds of cost.

In 1949, the question was again posed and this time rejected because there was a concern that the nationality status of the personnel and their dependents after service in a Foreign Legion

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<sup>614</sup> WO 32/15997, Annex I to A.C /G (55) 13, 'Formation of a Foreign Legion or Foreign Ancillary and Technical Units'.

<sup>615</sup> WO 32/15997, (DO), (46) 29), 'War Office Working Party findings'.

made the idea unworkable; the FO used the same argument to denigrate the possibility of an Auxiliary Service Corps in 1956. The WO thought that the UK would have a 'moral responsibility for offering a home to such individuals and their dependents' which they argued posed too many questions to make the scheme workable. As with the Auxiliary Service Corps they considered such a force to be a security risk. In 1950 it was decided by Service Ministers that it might be possible to recruit more 'aliens' into the services particularly in the technical Corps (where there were manpower shortages) or in a Foreign Legion but again a WO working party stated that the present arrangement of allowing a maximum of 2% of aliens into the services should be continued and no extra effort be made because of 'administrative difficulties' involved in creating a Foreign Legion or increasing the number of aliens in the armed forces.<sup>616</sup> In 1952 another study was undertaken about admitting 'aliens' into the Army and was rejected by the Army Council on administrative and security grounds. During the Second World War large numbers of Poles and other Europeans and colonial peoples of all races and creeds had served in the British Armed forces. However, in the Cold War security risks regarding Eastern or Central Europeans and Aliens and the reaction of the Soviets to a Corps comprised of manpower from their sphere of influence were all considered to be insurmountable; fears that foreign troops would not be loyal if deployed in the colonies or as the Army Council put it 'take sectional interests before that of the British Commonwealth' and 'cease to be impartial' effectively ended the prospect of a foreign legion.<sup>617</sup> And of course the perennial problem of financial cost and a lack of British officers and NCOs were also limiting factors.

## **Structural Reorganization of the Army**

The study groups plans for a structural reorganization of the Army based on Liddell Hart's five battalion scheme was dismissed because it would not save manpower. The WO conceded that a five battalion division would be more mobile but would not have the same 'organic firepower' of an existing infantry division.<sup>618</sup> They also argued that existing division contained self-contained task forces which were better suited to fighting in dispersed on a nuclear battlefield. WO officials also argued that one headquarter staff would have to deal with an increased number of formations which would slow down the direction and control of scattered units not improve it. The WO expected that the nuclear battlefield would have loose

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<sup>616</sup> WO 32/15997, (SM ./P (51) 6), War Office Working Party, February 1951

<sup>617</sup> WO 32/15997, A.C. ./P (56) 3, The Army Council The Army in The Nuclear Age Report of the Army Sub Committee Annex A.

<sup>618</sup> WO 32/15997, A.C. ./P (56) 3, The Army Council The Army in The Nuclear Age Report of the Army Sub Committee Appendix D.

fronts requiring more localised control of formations; fighting would also take place in a small area. The WO argued that it would be preferable for divisional commanders to have more 'intimate' control of brigade commanders which would be more dispersed under a five battalion system. The WO also pointed out recent training exercises had shown that it was more preferable to have a reserve headquarters which was situated well back from divisional headquarters in case they were destroyed by nuclear attack.

The study group plan would have meant that the reserve headquarters would have been removed. The same arguments were deployed against increasing the number of divisions commanded by a corps commander. The WO thought that increasing the number of divisions in a corps would mean that larger formations would have to be deployed for a task which would increase overheads rather than reduce them. However, the WO recognised that during the last war higher headquarter staffs were too large but at the time it was deemed 'desirable for reasons of national sentiment'. The WO argued that it might be possible from an administrative point to remodel supply organisation and remove corps links and save manpower. This would mean that Army headquarters would deal directly with divisions. However, the WO was opposed to any reduction of tactical control of formations from corps headquarters. In fact they suggested that corps commanders have all administrative responsibilities removed which would increase their tactical control. The WO pointed out that during the Second World War there were many examples of corps commanders who had seized opportunities presented by rapid turn of events in mobile operations. However, they were concerned that a corps commander having to control six or seven widely dispersed divisions which were involved in simultaneous actions might find impossible to have much personal control of a battle. The WO officials recommended no further action is taken over the five of five scheme.

However, the study group's ideas concerning the future structure of the Army were not entirely out of step with the WO. In February 1956 the Committee on the Organisation of the Army under the chairmanship of Lieutenant-General Sir Richard Hull was created and given the task of rationalizing the Army. The committee argued that there was considerable scope for reductions in the administrative tail of the Army. The Committee stated that greater use of civilians would allow a reduction in the uniformed manpower requirements in the UK base and in some overseas bases.<sup>619</sup> Hull had been told to plan for a all regular army of 200,000 men which was considerably lower than the study groups plans. The committee also argued that it wished to improve the balance between home and overseas service which the study

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<sup>619</sup> WO 32/17321, The Committee on the re-organisation of the Army: Part One General Recommendations.

groups plans would not have achieved. However, the committee also advocated the creation of 'tailor made units' which could be based overseas and used as strategic reserves. It was expected that the proportion of teeth to tail would be 54% to 46% which was in line with what the study group projected. This would be achieved by reducing headquarter units and transport, again a study group suggestion.

## **Air Transport**

The next section of the memorandum looked at the study group proposal for air transport. The study group noted that a considerable number of service personnel were in transit and that to ease this problem greater use could be made of transport aircraft and charter flights for air-trooping. The League also argued that a 'fleet of transport aircraft' should be constructed to increase the tactical mobility of the Army and Armed Forces. In fact the WO calculated that there were 16,470 men in transit in November 1955; 9,000 on embarkation or disembarkation leave or being prepared for movement; 1,830 in transit by sea to the BAOR; 5,640 in transit by sea to overseas units of whom 260 were being transported by air. The WO stated that movement times could be decreased by utilising more charter flights if the money was made available and there was an 'increased capacity' to cope with demand. Limiting factors included a lack of air-freight capacity to carry units with their equipment and the problem of over-flight restrictions on certain routes.<sup>620</sup> The WO calculated that at the start of a global war all civilian transport and freight aircraft would be utilised enabling the Army to move 125,000 troops or 17,500 tons of stores a week to the Northern European theatre of operations. The WO disconsolately noted that the present air fleet of 87 aircraft (38 Hastings, 35 Shackletons and 14 Valettas) was 'inadequate' to move the newly-formed strategic reserve in one lift which the League and the WO stated was vital to support overseas garrisons in an emergency. The WO calculated that if all the RAF's transport aircraft were used and the civilian charter capacity (18 aircraft) then the UK would be able to lift 4,000 troops or 2,500, with 50x5 cwt vehicles and trailers and 65 tons of stores in one lift.<sup>621</sup> However, they pointed out that there was at that time a 'serious' shortage of heavy-lift aircraft capable of moving vehicles and stores both over long and short distances.

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<sup>620</sup> WO 32/15997, A.C. /P (56) 3, The Army Council The Army in The Nuclear Age Report of the Army Sub Committee, Annex E.

<sup>621</sup> WO 32/15997, A.C. /P (56) 3, The Army Council The Army in The Nuclear Age Report of the Army Sub Committee, Annex E.

Given the problems associated with production of new aircraft and a declining amount of expenditure and resources available for new or existing defence projects the Army could only expect the minimum number of aircraft required to do the job. There was simply no room for manoeuvre either in the allocation of budget resources or in the management of equipment usage. Indeed it was noted by the WO that to 'justify the cost' of an air-transport fleet in 'peacetime conditions' the majority of the aircraft would have to be employed on 'air trooping and other tasks'. In July 1956 as part of the Defence Review an inter-service committee, the Bingley Committee, was convened by the COS to study the problem of air-transport. However, Transport Command had been neglected in the early 1950s and the COS had only made a half-hearted attempt to sort out its deficiencies between 1954 and 1956.<sup>622</sup> Darby, among others, argued that the V-bomber programme had swallowed up a considerable amount of resources and production facilities and was therefore the main focus of the Air Staff who neglected air transport as a consequence.<sup>623</sup> This was confirmed publicly in 1964 by Hugh Fraser, the Secretary of State for Air, who stated that between 1959 and 1964 Transport Command, had received 13% of RAF expenditure on new aircraft, engines and weapons, whilst Bomber Command had 43% and Fighter Command 28% respectively.<sup>624</sup>

The traditional method to move troops and their families was the troopship, which was operated by civilian charter companies and the Ministry of Transport.<sup>625</sup> Ironically, in 1956 a large new troopship was commissioned into service, the *Nevasa* followed in 1957 by a second the *Oxfordshire*, although both were withdrawn in 1962. In 1961 a Parliamentary Committee on trooping concluded that 'trooping by air is cheaper' and 'that on every route sea transport costs more than air transport'.<sup>626</sup> In 1951-1952 423,000 military personnel, their families and civilians working for the services were moved by sea and 18,500 by air; in 1962 148,000 were moved by sea and 284,000 by air.<sup>627</sup> In 1951 there were 18 troopships; in 1960 there were three. In 1960 all the overseas bases from Gibraltar to Singapore could be reached by air in one day, by contrast it took four days by sea to reach Gibraltar and twenty three to reach Singapore. During the mid-1950s the Government began encouraging civilian companies to undertake air-trooping to stimulate the aircraft industry and create an airfreight

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<sup>622</sup> Bartlett, C. J. (1972). p107; Wynn, H. (1996). *Forged in War. A History of RAF Transport Command 1943-1967* London: Stationary Office.

<sup>623</sup> Darby, P. (1971). p80.

<sup>624</sup> Fraser, H, 'New Aircraft and Equipment' House of Commons Debate in *Hansard*, vol. 690, col, 604, 27 February 1964, London: HMSO.

<sup>625</sup> Rogers, C. B. (1963). *Troopships and Their History* London: Seeley Service

<sup>626</sup> First Report from the Estimate Committee: Together with Part of the Minutes of the Evidence Taken before sub-committee E appointed by the Estimates Committee in sessions 1960-1961 and 1961-1962 and appendices Trooping, 20 December 1962, London: HMSO

<sup>627</sup> *Ibid* p4.

and transport fleet comparable with the RAF's.<sup>628</sup> As early as 1952 it was recognised by the Government that Air-trooping was cheaper and quicker but a combination of a lack of money, transport planes and unwillingness to completely replace a tried and tested method of movement among the various service departments protracted the process of change. The Treasury argued that since 1952 the greater use of aircraft for air-trooping had been achieved by the reductions in the overall size of the armed forces and a corresponding increase in available air- transport capacity both civil and military.<sup>629</sup>

The backbone of the early post-war Transport Command were the Handley Page Hastings, Shackleton and the short-range Valetta; the Valetta and Hastings were used at Suez where their short comings as modern tactical drop aircraft were very evident. However, the Hastings continued in service until 1969 as a long range air-freighter. Although used in an air-transport role, the Shackleton was primarily a maritime patrol aircraft, and in consequence was really unsuited to moving men and equipment great distances. There were new aircraft on order in 1955 or coming into service: the Beverley, Comet, Pioneer and the Britannia. The Britannia was the only transport aircraft coming into service with substantial range but it was hampered by not being able to carry heavy loads and was essentially a long-range passenger aircraft but its introduction into service was delayed by teething problems with the turbo-prop engines.<sup>630</sup> The Comet was designed as a revolutionary civil jet airliner and was used by the RAF as a passenger plane; after numerous fatal crashes involving Mark 1 Comets between 1953 and 1954 it had to be radically redesigned and all the early planes were grounded and then scrapped; the RAF began to receive modified mark 2 Comets during 1955 but the Comet did not go back into civil service until 1958.

The Beverley was designed at the outset as a military freighter which could carry heavy loads with a short take-off and combat drop capability but was hampered by being slow and medium-ranged. The Beverley replaced the Valetta as an in-theatre tactical aircraft after 1956. The Valetta could carry 20 paratroopers or thirty passengers but had no short take off ability and had limited cargo space. The Beverley could carry 94 troops or 70 paratroopers and drop vehicles or cargo on special pallets which was an innovation. The first Beverleys were delivered to the RAF on 11 March 1956 and overnight enhanced the heavy lift and tactical ability of British forces. In 1955 the over ambitious Vickers-1000 transport plane project was

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<sup>628</sup> *Ibid* p6.

<sup>629</sup> *Ibid* p76.

<sup>630</sup> The Britannia had been conceived in 1942 as a long range passenger aircraft capable of flying the long haul routes of the Empire. Its introduction into service with British Overseas Airways Corporation was delayed by design problems with the revolutionary turbo prop engines. Its importance to the British civil passenger aircraft industry was increased by the crash of the Comet Mark I in April 1953.

cancelled by the government, meaning that the Beverley was the only true military transport aircraft being placed in production in the mid-1950s but it was limited by its medium range and slow speed. The 1956 Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Air to accompany the Air Estimate devoted a considerable amount of space to the V-bombers, Hunter, Javelin, the English Electric P1, air to air guided weapons and the F.86 Sabre but the Britannia and Beverley were given negligible attention.<sup>631</sup> Obviously the RAF wanted to promote its cutting edge technology and the V-bombers and new fighter aircraft grabbed headlines and the public imagination but the less glamorous transport aircraft did not. There was also another reason why transport aircraft were low priority. The 1957 Air Estimate noted that the amount made available for new aircraft and equipment would decrease by £16 million and American aid would be cut by £28.5 million in 1957 and 1958.<sup>632</sup> The Air Force wanted new fighters and missiles and the V-bombers needed upgrading as soon as they became operational due to the fact that they had been designed in the late 1940s as high altitude bombers and were now rapidly becoming obsolete in that role because of advances in missile defence technology.

Also the new transport aircraft would need modern air-portable equipment. This meant replacing the large amounts of the existing equipment much of it dating from the Second World War. This modernisation programme was again hampered by a lack of money, resources and production facilities; many of the Army's heavy air-portable equipment requirements made in 1958 did not become available until after 1965. There is no doubt that Britain's tactical lift capacity increased after 1955 as more modern and capable aircraft entered service but like so many of the changes being undertaken at that time the problem of sustaining the expenditure needed to keep the forces and their equipment current and operational was increasingly beyond the economic capacity of the state. The study group wanted large numbers of transport aircraft to enhance the strategic mobility of British forces. However, inter-service rivalry hung over policy considerations and initially stunted the application of a unified policy. The study group argued that a unified inter-service and civilian board should be created to control and administer Air Transport Command. This idea was discussed by COS in 1957 but never put into practice. However, in 1960 38 Group was formed to control tactical operations.<sup>633</sup> Although 38 Group was commanded by a senior RAF officer, its planning and operational staff contained Army personnel. In 1956 there had been three airborne transport exercises involving the Army; in 1959 there were fifty. Wynn notes

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<sup>631</sup> Cmd 9696, *Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Air to accompany Air Estimates, 1956-57*, February 1956, London: HMSO

<sup>632</sup> Cmd 149, *Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Air to accompany Air Estimates, 1957-58*, April 1957, London: HMSO p3.

<sup>633</sup> Wynn, H. (1996). p121.

that between 1956 and 1957 Air Transport Command was poorly equipped and essentially in transition as more modern aircraft with greater lift capacity and range came into service.<sup>634</sup>

In February 1957, COS had argued in their report on Air Transport for the Defence Review that to offset any reductions in overseas garrisons increased mobility and air-freight capacity would be required.<sup>635</sup> The memorandum stated that ‘the greater the reductions in the size of overseas forces, the greater the need for air transport, which for a relatively small expenditure would make it practicable for fewer men to carry out more tasks’. Therefore the importance of the Strategic Reserve for use in ‘emergencies’ increased as it became apparent that overseas garrisons would be reduced. COS noted that the use of transport aircraft and the Strategic Reserve was in ‘keeping with future strategic policy and the current financial climate’.<sup>636</sup> The concept of increased mobility in the mid- and late 1950s was seen as the panacea for the manpower problem.<sup>637</sup> The COS report also stated that the use of transport aircraft would allow the ‘greater concentration of our overseas garrisons and enable the maximum use of reinforcements from the United Kingdom’; this, they argued, would also ‘represent a major contribution to the economical and efficient use of our forces’. The Bingley Committee argued in regard to internal security operations that the ‘timely arrival of a small force at an early stage of a potential danger may be sufficient to stabilise the situation, but if this force does not arrive in time, then a larger force will ultimately be needed’. The Committee also sent a shot across the bows of the Government when it stated ‘we cannot express too strongly the fact that, if we are to rely on the strategic mobility of our forces as a deliberate and economic act of political policy, it becomes essential that our forces should be provided with the means to exercise this mobility’.<sup>638</sup>

A Cabinet appraisal of the 1957 defence policy noted that capacity of Air Transport Command had to be increased if the new defence policy was going to be feasible.<sup>639</sup> The politicians and COS were both in agreement on the issue but the problem of providing the new aircraft and the money for the project were constant sources of friction. On 26 July 1957, as it became apparent that Macmillan and the Treasury were considering the possibility of more defence cuts, Sandys circulated a memorandum to the Cabinet Defence Committee on

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<sup>634</sup> Wynn, H. (1996). p67.

<sup>635</sup> DEFE 5/73, COS (57) 33, Chiefs of Staff Committee Long-term Defence Review –Air Transport Force, 5 February 1957.

<sup>636</sup> DEFE 5/73, COS (57) 33, Chiefs of Staff Committee Long-term Defence Review: Memorandum by the Chiefs of Staff, 5 February 1957.

<sup>637</sup> Brown, N. (1963). *Strategic Mobility* London: Chatto and Windus.

<sup>638</sup> DEFE 5/73, COS (57) 33, Chiefs of Staff Committee Long-term Defence Review: Memorandum by the Chiefs of Staff, 5 February 1957 p15.

<sup>639</sup> DSND 6/3, Future Defence Policy, Annex E.



the implications of further reductions in defence spending which emphasised the importance of keeping the air transport capacity large enough to ensure that the defence policy outlined in April was still viable and that reductions in manpower 'were still applicable'.<sup>640</sup> The principle tasks envisaged by COS for Air Transport Command and the Strategic Reserve after Suez were for an internal security emergency or a limited war in the Far East.<sup>641</sup> Even as late as 1959, RAF Transport Command was being referred to in the aviation press as the 'Cinderella' of the RAF.<sup>642</sup>

## **Simplification of Equipment**

The WO noted that the simplification of equipment was under 'constant consideration'.<sup>643</sup> At that time a study was being carried out to increase the mobility of British formations by reducing the number of weapons carried by soldiers. The WO argued that the equipment that units carried was designed to meet the requirements of global war. However, the WO study was considering what the requirements would be for limited war. The League wanted a to reduce equipment levels to improve manpower establishments. The WO argued that this was already taking place; the number and type of vehicles in units was being reduced. This would reduce the range of spares required. Similarly, the WO was attempting to reduce the number of different types of ammunition used. There were also 'continuous discussions with America and Canada on standardization of equipment' which the WO argued would reduce logistic problems. However, the WO stated that all plans regarding standardization, rationalization and simplification were influenced by financial and production factors. The problem of standardization was compounded by the different needs of the Army which was deployed diverse theatres of operations. In South East Asia unit's required tropical equipment and lighter units for limited and global warfare which had different organisation requirements.. In the Middle East large numbers of vehicles and armour was required which again meant a different organisation from units in South East Asia. However, forces in the Middle East also had a limited war role but this closely associated with its hot war role. This diversity had an effect on supply and logistical arrangements. The WO argued that this made simplification very difficult to achieve.

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<sup>640</sup> DSND 6/3, D. (57) 13, Cabinet Defence Committee Defence Expenditure Memorandum by the Minister of Defence, 26 July 1957.

<sup>641</sup> Churchill College Archives, papers of Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir William Dickson, DCKN 5/11, Joint Services Staff College Lecture 22 June 1959. Hereafter DCKN.

<sup>642</sup> *Ibid* p80.

<sup>643</sup> WO 32/15997, A.C. /P (56) 3, The Army Council The Army in The Nuclear Age Report of the Army Sub Committee, Annex F.

## Commonwealth Cooperation

The WO assessment of the study group's ideas on Commonwealth cooperation was equivocal because the League's report was ambiguous on the subject.<sup>644</sup> The WO noted that Australia and New Zealand were contributing to the creation of Strategic Reserve in Malaya. Canada provided an infantry brigade on the continent for NATO. Australia and New Zealand were members of SEATO, the Australia, New Zealand and United States Pact (ANZUS) and were committed to the Australia, New Zealand and Malaya Pact (ANZAM). The only major Commonwealth state which was not contributing to a collective security pact was South Africa. The WO argued that this would not likely occur in the future because 'she is obsessed with the idea of defending her territory from the Equator'. However, where the League and WO differed was on the status of India. The study group argued that India could be drawn into a security pact with the West or at the outbreak of a global war would provide military assistance. The WO argued that this was highly unlikely. Pakistan had joined SEATO and was also a member of the Baghdad Pact which had been formed in 1955. However, the WO noted that Pakistan was 'absorbed by internal problems and disagreements with her neighbours' and it was 'hoped she would' provide forces for the defence of the Middle East. The new formed Central African Federation was providing one battalion for operations in Malaya and would be expected to send one medium battery to the Middle East during a major war. The British position in Ceylon was tenuous because Ceylon was 'uncommitted in peace and war'. The WO noted that the British had 'succeeded in interesting Australia and New Zealand in defence to an extent never previously achieved in peace. It will be important to maintain this interest, particularly in view of the problems likely to be raised by the granting of independence to Singapore and Malaya'.<sup>645</sup> The WO argued that it was important to strengthen the defence of the Middle East which depended on the development of the Baghdad Pact. If the Baghdad Pact was seen to be stable, efficient and confident the WO stated, that it might be possible to entice South Africa and Central African Federation to join. However, the WO argued the League's proposal for the creation of a strategic reserve in the Middle East was not a 'practicable proposition within the next few years'.

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<sup>644</sup> WO 32/15997, A.C. /P (56) 3, The Army Council The Army in The Nuclear Age Report of the Army Sub Committee, Annex G.

<sup>645</sup> WO 32/15997, A.C. /P (56) 3, The Army Council The Army in The Nuclear Age Report of the Army Sub Committee, Annex G. p18.

## **The kind of Army we need**

The League's proposals for a major re-organisation of the Army based on their conception of future global war were not well received by the WO.<sup>646</sup> The study group's concept of a widespread dispersal of economic and industrial capacity and a loosely manned front was driven by their conceptual analysis of the effects of nuclear weapons on war. The study group argued that the army should be divided into three tiers (elite, Territorial Army and home guard) which would reflect the realities of nuclear war. However, the WO thought that the study group's concept of global war was 'debatable'. Conversely, they do not state why they think it is debatable. The WO thought that a formation of an elite army would create 'jealousies, envies, frustration and bitterness from those excluded from the elite. The WO stated that a corollary of the elite army was that the Territorial Army (TA) was 'low quality organisation'. If that was the case then it would be difficult to get recruits to join the TA or induce regular officers to serve in it. The study group stated that it would use national service men in both the elite and TA. However, the WO thought it wrong to plan on the assumption that conscription would be a permanent feature. The WO argued that having younger men in the elite army would create 'a lack of experience and mature judgement'.

The problem of experience was also applied to the technical issues. The WO argued that because of the growing complexities of modern weapons, trades man in the elite army would be inefficient through lack of experience. Also because the League envisaged the elite army spending most of time overseas the WO thought that highly skilled personnel would not join the army, because of the constant disruption.. The WO argued that this would also lead to exodus among married personnel as well. Another problem would be that the elite army would be predominantly armoured and contain specialised units. When a soldier moved from the elite army to the TA he would have undergo conversion to other arms which would mean a loss of efficiency and cohesion in the TA. The WO also noted that the study group had argued that reserve army would no longer reinforce the elite or TA armies in war. This, the WO argued, would mean that that was a shortage of essential specialised units which were provided by the reserve army. The WO stated that they did not believe that it would not be possible to mobilise reserve forces at the outbreak of a nuclear war. The study group argued that the TA would be employed on static defence. The WO argued that this would mean they would be subject to the full weight of the enemy attack which would include nuclear weapons. However, the WO believed that morale would be low in the TA comprised of

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<sup>646</sup> WO 32/15997, A.C. /P (56) 3, The Army Council The Army in The Nuclear Age Report of the Army Sub Committee, Annex P p21.

relegated soldiers which would affect their ability to withstand a major offensive against them. The only proposal the WO agreed with was that soldiers serving their last years in the home guard which was described as a 'sound' suggestion. However, it was deemed unworkable in peacetime because it would be unaffordable to keep a large number of officers and men of an 'older age' on full pay that had no operational function apart from in wartime.

## **Imperial Gendarmerie**

The study group's idea of forming an imperial gendarmerie to deal with counter-insurgency operations was already being considered by the WO. However, the WO was not proposing creating a dedicated security force. The Templer security report had recently recommended that an independent infantry brigade be created to deal with internal security problems in the colonies and to act as a strategic reserve. However, this idea had been periodically discussed since the end of the war. Churchill had minuted the Cabinet Defence Committee on 3 November 1954 stating that two and half divisions should in the future be based in the UK to act as a strategic reserve because doing so would be cheaper than stationing them abroad.<sup>647</sup> The WO noted that since 1948 forty three fighting units had been moved from the UK under 'emergency conditions' to deal with Cold War and internal security commitments.<sup>648</sup> The WO argued that the strategic reserve which was in the process of being formed would be given specialist training and equipment conducive to carrying out counter insurgency operations. The WO thought that it would be advantageous to have a specialised force solely trained and equipped for internal security operations. Another benefit would be that the force would be directly controlled by the CO which would reduce 'inherent delays' that existed in the present system where requests for the intervention of troops had to be referred to the COS and then to the WO. Also, the strategic reserve would not be constantly used for internal security operations and could be equipped and trained for limited and hot war operations.

However, the WO was concerned that it would be difficult to recruit sufficient manpower for the gendarmerie. The WO also noted that the report had not specified how large the force should be; they estimated that it would require a minimum operational strength of 2500. However, they thought that even this may be too small because of the number of operations which were ongoing at the time or might begin in the future. The WO thought that a specialist counter insurgency unit would be in competition with the regular army for recruits and would

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<sup>647</sup> CAB 129/71, C, (54) 329, Cabinet Defence Policy: Note by the Prime Minister, 3 November 1954.

<sup>648</sup> WO 32/15997, A.C/P (56) 3, 'An Imperial Gendarmerie' Annex K.

be limited operationally by its training, equipment and cost.<sup>649</sup> The gendarmerie would also require considerable facilities and an administrative organisation both in the UK and in the colonies. WO argued that even if the gendarmerie utilised existing Army facilities these overheads would initially be expensive. WO stated that if was forced meet the cost of the gendarmerie there would have to be a corresponding cut in the active army. This they concluded would mean creating a force which could only be used for special operations and replacing forces which could be used in any emergency. The WO also thought that it would be politically difficult to create a para-military force for use in the colonies which operated under civilian control. The Army Council concurred, and noted that it was 'not desirable to form a military or para-military force to operate under civil authority in colonial territories'. The WO stated that colonial police forces should form their own specialist units. This marked the end of the WO appraisal of the report.

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<sup>649</sup> *Ibid* p26.

## Chapter Six: The 1956 Defence Review and the Sandys White Paper

After the publication of the report Beddington-Behrens wrote several letters to Head stating that the League was willing to assist the WO in its efforts to publicise the work of the Army. On 5 February 1956 Head wrote back to Beddington-Behrens stating that he, the Army Council and Templer welcomed the return of an active Army League but would not give it official support or information.<sup>650</sup> Head stated that he thought the report was most interesting and would be useful to the WO. The WO had drawn up a memorandum on the benefits of being associated with the League for the Army Council.<sup>651</sup> WO officials stated that the League should not be a propaganda organization like the Navy League or Air League. However, they wanted the League to act as a kind of 'Brains trust' which could produce papers on defence matters. The primary function of the League was to inform the public of the role of Army and its continuing importance in the nuclear age. On 7 March Faviell wrote to the new secretary of the League Council Brigadier J.R. Vernham stating that the League needed to focus more on 'matters of the more personal aspect of the service' rather than strategic questions.<sup>652</sup> On 3 July 1956 the League Council held a meeting to discuss the impact of the report and the future direction of the League.<sup>653</sup> It was decided to make Hore-Belisha President of the League and Julian Amery became Chairman of the Council. The final cost of printing the report and distributing it was £661. The Council decided that because of the wide publicity which the report had received it would begin recruiting new members. It was also decided that the study group would start work on new report which would be completed in 1958.

The Council assumed that because America and Russia both possessed the H-bomb the likelihood of a world war was greatly reduced. They also noted that because the British H-bomb test was imminent. They considered that the strategic implications of this would be far reaching and would bring about 'large scale cuts in manpower and expenditure of the services'. The Council stated that the study group should examine whether 'trip wire' or the 'graduated deterrent' posture was the best strategic policy for the UK to adopt. The 'trip wire' policy advocated a conventional NATO force in Europe which if attacked would trigger American massive response with its strategic nuclear weapons. The graduated deterrent was

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<sup>650</sup> WO 32/16266, Letter from Head to Beddington-Behrens, 5 February 1956.

<sup>651</sup> WO 32/16266, AC/P (56) 2, Memorandum on the Army League.

<sup>652</sup> AMEJ 452, Letter from Faviell to Vernham, 7 March 1956.

<sup>653</sup> LH 5/4/1, Report of the Council of Management, 3 July 1956.

based on the use of tactical nuclear weapons primarily against military targets but in portion to scale of the enemy attack. This was based on the concept of economy of force and the possibility of limited nuclear war. The study group also decided to debate the merits of national service and whether it could be abolished. The study group were also considering the possibility of using African manpower, the expansion of colonial forces and a foreign legion. The League had no intention of focusing on the terms and conditions of soldiers. Any future study would focus on strategic issues. However, the Government was beginning a far reaching a comprehensive review of British defence and security policy.

On 4 June 1956 the Secretary of the Cabinet, Sir Norman Brook, circulated a Cabinet Paper which set-out to re-assess British defence policy in light of changes to Soviet objectives and aims.<sup>654</sup> Eden's often quoted contribution to this paper was to state, 'that we must now cut our coat according to our cloth. There is not much cloth'. Therefore, international and domestic economic pressures and the rapid enervation of British trade are key elements within all policy considerations in the late 1950s. This is undeniable and is a persuasive argument to explain both the decline of British prestige and her status as a global power after 1945. Darwin maintains that successive British governments in the 1950s were obsessed with restoring Britain's pre-war position as a centre of international finance, commerce and with the validity of Sterling and convertibility.<sup>655</sup> The subsequent Suez crisis destroyed any pretence (both within the government and internationally) that Britain could sustain Sterling as a viable international currency and secure oil supplies vital to British industry without the support of the United States.<sup>656</sup> Eden argued in June 1956 that the main threats to British interests and influence were 'political and economic and not military' and that 'our policies should be adapted to meet the changed situation'.<sup>657</sup> Eden and the government maintained that the risk of a major conventional war had diminished and that planning and allocation of resources for a significant confrontation constituted an unnecessary drain on the UK diminished resources and its future ability to counter threats to British influence across the globe. The seismic shifts in strategic policy and defence planning attributed to the immediate aftermath of the Suez Crisis, which the 1957 Defence White paper is often cited as being a prime example of, were in fact the product of the preceding two years of debate on defence, conscription and economic policies within the Cabinet and government departments.

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<sup>654</sup> CAB 134/1315, PR (56) 11 Policy Review Committee of Cabinet on assumptions for future planning, 15 June 1956.

<sup>655</sup> Darwin, J. (1988) p240.

<sup>656</sup> Treasury 236/4188, 8 Aug 1956, Memorandum from Sir Edward Bridges, the Permanent Secretary of the Treasury to Harold Macmillan Chancellor of Exchequer on the possible dire economic consequences if America did not support UK over Suez.

<sup>657</sup> CAB 134/1315, PR (56) 11, note by Prime Minister.

Eden stated in a minute to the Defence Policy Review Committee that it was 'vital' to protect overseas interests and prestige, and in particular access to oil.<sup>658</sup> This perception would subsequently lead to Britain and France protecting its 'national interests' by attacking Egypt in November 1956 and attempting to reassert their regional hegemony and humiliate Nasser's brand of Arab nationalism viewed as a threat both to British prestige and access to oil. Eden had also instructed officials from the three Service Departments, MOD, the Ministry of Supply and the Ministry of Labour and National Service to carry out an examination on the future of National Service.<sup>659</sup> The 'rationale' for the Government's study on Conscription was the perennial problem of finding manpower for the military and industry, or, as the Committee contended, 'the present paper examines various methods of reducing the demand made upon the manpower of this country by National Service'.<sup>660</sup> However, Selwyn Lloyd effectively limited the scope of the Committee's deliberations by stating that the envisaged size of the Armed Forces in 1958 (the year Conscription Act was due to expire) would be 700,000; armed forces of this scale could only be met by using conscription. Conversely, in 1954 the Government stated that it could only provide production and resources for new equipment for 8 regular divisions, instead of 10, and two TA divisions, rather than 4.<sup>661</sup> This rearmament programme was due to be completed between 1961-63. In 1955 the Army had 440,000 men, women and boys serving with the colours: the regular component of the army totalled 216,000 men and 8000 women, 5000 boys and there were 200,000 conscripts.<sup>662</sup> In other words, using the Government's 1954 figures, Britain could only afford or had the industrial capacity to re-equip 72% of the present army with modern weapons and equipment by 1963. In 1956 Major General BT Wilson (retired) argued in *Brassey's Annual* that Britain was only able to equip and maintain a regular Army of five or six divisions or 200,000 men based on available economic resources and production facilities.

In June 1955 a paper produced by the WO for *The Long Term Defence Programme* (LTDP) stated that a re-examination of the organisation and tactics of the Army because of the impact of tactical nuclear weapons was in progress.<sup>663</sup> The aim was to reduce the 'variety of weapons and transport' in the battle-zone and increase firepower. But it was anticipated that new equipment would be needed for both the Hot War and the Cold War roles, which the report

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<sup>658</sup> CAB 134/1315, PR (56) 11, Policy Review Committee of Cabinet on assumptions for future planning, 15 June 1956.

<sup>659</sup> DEFE 7/979, MISC/P(55)33, 'Future of National Service Scheme', 25 August 1955.

<sup>660</sup> DEFE 7/979, MISC/P(55)33, 'Future of National Service Scheme', 25 August 1955.

<sup>661</sup> CAB 129/69, C, (54) 250, 'Report by the Committee on Defence Policy', 24 July 1954.

<sup>662</sup> Cmd 9391, *Statement on Defence 1955 Annex 1 Analysis of Active Strength*, February 1955 London: HMSO p27.

<sup>663</sup> DEFE 7/979, COS (55) 59, 'The Long Term Defence Programme Paper by the War Office Part I', 18 June 1955.



stated would take time to produce and deploy. It was noted that this new equipment would be more expensive than existing equipment, and would require a 'bigger not a smaller re-equipment programme'. The scope of the rearmament programme included not only technologically advanced systems like missiles, armoured vehicles, Very High Frequency (VHF) radios, and radar firing systems but also small arms and ammunition. However, it did state 'that present day financial stringency' would govern the progress of the re-armament plan. This paper did not envisage drastic cuts in manpower over the next five years for the Army (from 400,000 to 380,000) or the termination of conscription, unless existing commitments were cut and new equipment became available after 1960. But at this point the Army was projecting a negligible change to its future manpower requirements, based on the fact that it had only just begun examining the impact of new weapons and tactics on the existing army organisational structure; and because they were envisaging a slow rearmament process because of economic constraints and production difficulties. This would mean that the army would be tied to its present logistical and administrative arrangements until new technology or cuts in commitments freed up manpower and equipment resources.

The Hull Committee recommended that reductions in manpower were achievable by civilianisation of base units both in the UK and, to a limited extent, in overseas bases and would result in a 1 to 1 ratio of teeth to tail units.<sup>664</sup> The study group argued along similar lines as the WO paper maintaining that there was still a case for having a viable reserve and that considerable numbers of troops should be retained overseas in strategic locations to mitigate the inevitable disruption to communication and transport routes by nuclear weapons at the outset of a major war. Essentially, the League was advocating a continuation of the policy of broken-backed warfare. Inadvertently, the 1955 WO LTDP paper presented a strong case as to why manpower and the overall size of the Army would have to be reduced if the scale and scope of the next phase of post-war rearmament and modernisation programme was going to be realised: because of the reduced amount of resources available for new equipment. Navias states that throughout 1955 and 1956, the services placed considerable emphasis on retaining multiple capabilities which would have required retaining conscription in some form.<sup>665</sup> In November 1955 the Middle East and Africa were still considered of prime strategic importance by the COS and the League both in the Cold War and a potential Hot War. However, the WO argued that between 1955 and 1963 the likelihood of a global war

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<sup>664</sup> WO 32/17321, ECAC/G (56) 6, 'Committee on the Organisation of the Army'.

<sup>665</sup> Navias, M. (1991). *Nuclear Weapons and British Strategic planning, 1955-1958* Oxford:Clarendon p97.

was slight: like the study groups, they thought that limited wars and Cold War operations would increase.<sup>666</sup>

On 8 June Sir Richard Powell, the Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Defence, sent a memorandum to Monckton, Defence Minister, setting out what problems he perceived would impinge on defence planning in light of Eden's present review. Powell argued, 'it was accepted' that Britain was 'over committed', and must therefore reduce its commitments 'of all kinds', he qualified this by statement by adding, 'including defence commitments'.<sup>667</sup> Clearly there was a perception that overseas commitments, presumably including colonial territories, must be dispensed with and that this had in theory been 'accepted'. However, Powell also argued, 'there is little prospect of any significant reduction in the near future of our defence commitments in the Middle or Far East' which alludes to a lack of timetable or coherent political direction at this stage other than a desire for wider reductions at some point when conditions were favourable. The only two areas that Powell thought could allow significant reductions in the defence programme were 'the forces maintained in Continental Europe in peace' and 'preparations for global war, including the defence of the UK and the accumulation of war reserves'.<sup>668</sup> However, Powell was adroit enough to recognise that any reduction in Britain's contribution to Europe could have adverse effects on the NATO alliance and its members, particularly the Americans. Powell also pointed out that any reductions would have to be made in light of the government's perceptions regarding the likelihood of the 'risk of war', which presumably meant a global conflict with the Soviet Union, these decisions he concluded were 'primarily a political matter'. Future direction of defence policy was increasingly linked to the government's assessment of the possible type of major conflict the UK would become involved in and whether that war would involve a nuclear exchange negating existing preparations.

The situation regarding NATO conventional forces, however, was possibly subject to alteration, due to the creation of the West German Armed Forces, which Powell argued could facilitate a reduction in Britain's present overall force levels. Powell did place a caveat on this by stating, that the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) and the NATO Military Committee would not allow any 're-examination' until the German forces were fully trained and brought to full operational efficiency which would take several years to achieve.<sup>669</sup>

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<sup>666</sup> DEFE 7/979, COS (55) 59, 'The Long Term Defence Programme Paper by the War Office Part I', 18 June 1955.

<sup>667</sup> CAB 21/3508, Defence Review Policy, Powell to Monckton, 8 June 1956.

<sup>668</sup> CAB 21/3508, Defence Review Policy, Powell to Monckton, 8 June 1956.

<sup>669</sup> The *Bundeswehr* was formed out of the Paris Agreements of October 1954. The newly formed forces were limited to 12 divisions and would come under the command of SACEUR. The forces were

Powell also added, that SACEUR would probably argue that there were insufficient conventional forces to completely defend the whole of the NATO area and as consequence would naturally block attempts at reductions. Powell was quick to point out that even a token show of resistance would be enough to 'warn of a situation' for the use of 'nuclear retaliation', although he qualified this statement by arguing, that SACEUR and the Americans would have to be consulted on this point before a policy based on the concept of trip wire could be formulated. Regarding the risk of war Powell was unequivocal, 'we believe' that the Soviet Union 'had concluded that the risk of nuclear retaliation is not worth running' and 'they have put aside any intention of realising by force their objective of making the world safe for Communism'.<sup>670</sup> The 'new' threat from the Soviet Union was perceived to be an economic and political one. Powell even described the recent outbreak of détente and moves toward unilateral disarmament as 'superficial' and trade agreements and cultural relations, as 'economic and political penetration'. Powell argued that NATO should not reduce its active military capacity in light of recent Soviet pronouncements but should remain vigilant. This perception was echoed by the study group report because they were concerned that public opinion might be swayed by Soviet gestures of peace and would undermine British defence policy considerations or decisions which appeared to be out of step with détente.

Powell argued that NATO policy had wider implications for British defence and economic policies, 'any reduction would make a significant reduction on military overheads, which is where the bulk of the money goes, would have to be large: two or three divisions at least'. Smaller reductions would in the long run actually increase the overall proportion spent on overheads due to inflation and the fact that running costs for over-sea garrisons were constantly on the increase and would in a short space of time amount to the same as the original costs. Therefore, it would have to be a rapid substantial reduction to constitute a real saving in economic terms which was conversely more politically difficult to achieve. Britain was entering a period of economic and political realignment which coincided with corresponding shifts in international systems (United Nations and bi-polarity) and perceptions regarding Cold War security and colonialism. Powell went on to state that Britain's forces should realigned to make them suitable to undertake operations for limited wars and Cold War operations, and that the 'principle fields of investigation' for the defence review were reducing bomber and fighter squadrons, stock piles of material for global war, the size and

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conscripted, with a cadre of professional officers and NCOs. The force was regulated by the enactment of the Soldier Law, which maintained the concept of civilian in uniform and extended the rights of the civilian to members of Armed Forces. By the end of 1956 there were 66,000 men under arms, by 1960 270,000 and 454,000 in 1966. See Simpson, K. (1983). 'The Bundeswehr: A new Army for a New Germany' in *War in Peace* Vol 2, No, 23. pp 460-462.

<sup>670</sup> CAB 21/3508, Defence Review Policy, Powell to Monckton, 8 June 1956.

composition of the peacetime navy, in particular aircraft carrier battle groups, and its role in limited war and the size of anti-submarine forces. The notable exception in this list is the size of the Army and its future manpower requirements for future operations.

On 13 June Sir Norman Brook, Secretary to the Cabinet, circulated a memorandum, entitled, *The Future of the United Kingdom in World Affairs: The Problem*, for consultation among the departments involved in the policy review. This memorandum contained outline proposals with how to deal with present and expected problems in the economic, foreign and military fields.<sup>671</sup> The paper stressed that there were two main factors why the government had undertaken this review, 'the external situation confronting us had changed' and 'it is clear since the end of the war we have tried to do too much- with the result that we have only rarely been free from danger of economic crisis'.<sup>672</sup> This could also apply to every government defence review since the war. The Cabinet considered that the external situation had been most recently been effected by the advent of hydrogen weapons which they argued had 'transformed the military' position. This assessment was correct and mirrored the strategic thinking of other governments and military commentators. This perception was qualified by stating that the Russians had recognised this as well and were 'adapting their actions to it'. But to emphasize that this was not a genuine act of détente by the Soviets they speculated that 'while objectives may remain unaltered, their methods of attaining them are changing'. This they concluded would diminish the importance of conventional forces, however, there was a recognition that they were of some value in 'certain situations'.

The economic vagaries, which had beset Britain since 1945, were blamed 'on attempting to do too much', which is a clear conformation of the overstretch theories that have dominated post-war studies of British foreign policy. However, this statement is only partially true and must be viewed as such, because there is a condition attached to their declaration, 'we must now concentrate on essentials'. The shedding of unimportant or redundant commitments was wholly expected occurrence derived from the normalisation of the post-war international situation after Korea and the re-emergence of West Germany, Italy and Austria as nation states again. The preceding decade had radically altered the international order and had seen the economic, strategic and political emergence and domination of the Soviet Union and the United States on the international stage. Although, Britain had been forced to attempt too much its options had been dictated by her status as a major victorious power in the Second

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<sup>671</sup> CAB 21/3508, Defence Policy Review, the Future of the United Kingdom in World Affairs: The Problem, 13 June 1956.

<sup>672</sup> *Ibid* p3.

World War and by the fact Britain was still responsible for governing and protecting the millions of people who lived in the Empire and giving leadership to the emerging Commonwealth. In fact the memorandum stated that the impetus for this review was not painful reassessment of a decade of overstretch, but a confirmation that the Soviet Union had changed its tactics, and that the hydrogen bomb had radically altered the international situation. The threat now poised by the Soviet Union was economic and ideological and Britain needed to stabilise its economy to meet this new threat, whilst maintaining a defensive posture based on 'massive retaliation' and flexible forces for operations outside of Europe.

On 6 June Sir Richard Powell wrote to the Minister of Defence, Walter Monckton, stating, 'we are overcommitted everywhere and must reduce our commitments of all kinds, including defence commitments'.<sup>673</sup> However, Powell was more cautious in his appraisal of the possibilities for reductions in overseas commitments in the Middle East and Far East which he considered to be long-term and would require considerable amounts of manpower and material. Although the Canal Zone had been evacuated Britain still had troops in Libya and a military presence in Jordan, Iraq and was building up the garrison on Cyprus and in Aden. The Suez Crisis would change many of the assumptions made in the memorandum, but the process of change had been instigated before the invasion. Hennessy contends 'that by October 1956 nothing could deflect Eden from his determination to topple Nasser. Whitehall had never experienced anything quite so bizarre'.<sup>674</sup> Eden and the Cabinet had been informed by the Foreign Office and the JIC and that hostile action against Egypt would result in an Anglo-American schism. The COS of Staff had argued that if a military operation was successfully mounted then Britain would have to leave an extensive garrison in the Canal Zone (at least 80,000) and carry-out major counter-insurgency operations in an attempt to govern the country.<sup>675</sup> The COS of Staff argued that the permanent retention of conscription would be the logical consequence of any successful military operation at Suez. This would provide the additional four divisions plus administration units required to control the Canal Zone and install a new regime in Cairo and then keep it power; even with the retention of conscription a division would have been indefinitely withdrawn from Germany as well as the permanent deployment of the UK strategic reserve.<sup>676</sup> The memorandum had argued that the retention of conventional forces for global garrisons and dealing with 'emergencies' was expensive and should be avoided at all costs.

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<sup>673</sup> CAB 21/3508, Defence Policy Review, note by Sir Richard Powell to Minister of Defence dated 6 June 1956.

<sup>674</sup> Hennessy, P. (2006). *Having It So Good Britain in the Fifties* London: Allen Lane p433.

<sup>675</sup> DEFE 4/91 Annex to JP (56) 160, 'The Military Implications of Mounting Operation Musketeer', 24 October 1956.

<sup>676</sup> PREM 11/1103, Chiefs of Staff Committee Annex, 25 October 1956.

The COS argued that the Canal Zone garrison would be subject to constant guerrilla attack by pro Nasser forces and therefore the occupation would be bloody and costly in human terms for both sides. This would have been politically disastrous for British prestige in the region and in the international community and would have left a bitter legacy in the region and would have been equally as divisive as the invasion had been both at home and abroad. Another factor was that there was potentially no time limit of extrication of the garrison. Although the Canal Zone Company lease ended in 1968, which meant that any tenuous legal claim of protecting British assets would in theory expire then, Britain possibly could have been committed for decades trying to maintain internal security within Egypt. A new puppet regime may have been persuaded to renew the Canal lease, but in the eyes of the world, and more importantly the United Nations, it would have been seen as a sham and the dictate of an aggressor. Success at Suez would have been in the long run more detrimental to Britain because it would have been economically and militarily profligate and destroyed British credibility on the international stage at a time when colonialism was at odds with United Nations and the aspirations of nationalists clamouring for constitutional change and independence.

Unlike the situation in June, when the process had begun, the events of the preceding months had radically altered the economic, political and military situation for the UK. On 26 July 1956 the Egyptian Government nationalised the Suez Canal Company. On 30 July the British announced that it was making precautionary measures of a military kind. However, the crisis quickly showed how inefficient military planning and forces were in respect of limited war. British planning and conventional forces were directed toward Europe and a Soviet attack. Another problem was that British forces were deployed on counter insurgency operations in Cyprus, Malaya and Kenya meaning that they were ill-equipped and trained for a limited war. This meant that period of training and re-equipping would be required before a task force of sufficient strength could be concentrated and dispatched. It would also take time to assemble landing craft and the naval power in the Mediterranean necessary to launch an amphibious assault. It would therefore take time to take military action against Egypt. The Government was forced to mobilize the Army reserve to find enough manpower for the operation. Deficiencies were found in the mobilization scheme. Much of the equipment used by British forces was dated and or a poor state of repair from constant use. A lack of heavy lift capacity reduced the mobility of British forces. The small number of available tank landing ships severely reduced the size of the armour units deployed.

On 29 October Israel attacked Egyptian forces. The next day the British and French delivered an ultimatum to Israel and Egypt to withdraw from the area around the Suez Canal. On 31 October British and French air forces launched attacks on Egyptian air fields by the 2 November the Egyptian air force ceased to exist as a fighting force. On 5 November British and French air borne troops landed around Port Said. The following morning British and French forces mounted an amphibious assault on Port Said. Militarily the operation had been a success but there were many questions raised about the state of equipment and the capabilities of the armed forces to rapidly mount large scale amphibious operations. What defeated the British was a run on the pound and the refusal of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to give Britain an emergency loan. Twenty four hours after the first landings Eden was forced to announce that he would accept a cease-fire brokered by the UN. The war had made it apparent that Britain could no longer act independently of the United States. Similarly, a considerable amount of military equipment needed modernising. Airborne operations had shown that greater emphasis should be placed on air portable systems. The navy needed new assault ships and specialist helicopters and aircraft carriers capable of handling assault forces would be needed. The war had shown how the air transport system was totally inadequate and that there was a complete lack of tactical transport aircraft capable of using primitive and small airfields. However, this modernisation required a realistic appraisal of British strategic and defence policy.

Ironically the Suez crisis allowed radical alteration to strategic policy without domestic recrimination or loss of international prestige because both had already occurred. Head replaced Monckton in October as Minister of Defence, mainly because Monckton had been the most vociferous opponent of military action to solve the Nasser question within the Cabinet, and John Hare<sup>677</sup> took over as Minister of War. On 24 November Head was placed in a difficult position by Macmillan, after the latter had sent a letter stating that major cuts in defence expenditure were needed due to the dire economic situation which was unfolding due to Suez and because of the need to finalise planning for the defence estimates in December. On the 30 November Head sent a terse reply and argued, that a 'clear cut agreement' had not been reached regarding the long-term defence plan, this he thought was the 'fact that really mattered' and that he was 'only too aware of the difficulties of our financial situation and of the circumstances which have prompted your letter'.<sup>678</sup> Given the dire economic position at that time Macmillan was clearly searching for instant public spending savings which could in

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<sup>677</sup> Hare was first appointed to government post in 1955 as Minister of State for Colonial affairs. Hare like Monckton was a dissenter over Suez but did not resign from the Cabinet. He stayed at the War Office until January 1958 when he became Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

<sup>678</sup> CAB 21/3508, Defence Policy Review, Letter from Head to Macmillan, 30 November 1956

the short term bring some relief, whilst Head was only too aware of Macmillan present economic concerns he sought to limit the damage which a snap decision could have on the Services. Macmillan had increasingly wanted to push through major defence cuts to save money since he had become Chancellor.<sup>679</sup> When Macmillan had been Minister of Defence felt that the post lacked real authority and was diluted by the other three service-ministers and service COS this in turn created inertia which he argued made change difficult to implement. Macmillan likened the post of Minister of Defence to that of a 'medieval king or emperor' whose authority was constantly being challenged by 'powerful feudatories'.<sup>680</sup> Head however, argued that the Minister of Defence if backed fully by the Prime Minister and the Defence Policy Review Committee could wield effect control of the Service Departments and Ministers. He did concede that the defence policy considerations were presently being discussed at 'great length' which had the effect of leading to compromise at Cabinet level. This was dissipating clear direction at Cabinet level and in the long run costing more money on defence procurement, due to delay and constant discussion delaying policy decisions. Head felt that unpalatable decisions should be imposed on the COS of Staff and Service Departments and backed by the Prime Minister and thrashed out at Policy Review Level and the objections of the Service Chief's should be ignored, even if they were vociferous.<sup>681</sup> In other words, greater political direction at Cabinet level and a stronger Minister of Defence responsible directly to the Prime Minister. .

Head further stated that the absence of the Prime Minister had left him impotent when dealing with the Service COS and departments until after Christmas when Eden was due to return. Clearly Head was attempting to resist Macmillan's pressure to impose wider ranging cuts on the armed forces to help dissipate the growing economic problem. Head did concede that adopting nuclear weapons would help reduce defence spending, but was adamant that Britain should rely on its own nuclear technology and not that of the American's to maintain independence in defence matters and the retain leadership of the Commonwealth. The area where the most savings in defence expenditure could, in Heads opinion, be made was in the reduction of manpower. Head argued that conscription was 'wasteful and inefficient' and that it tied up to many men in training and achieved high experience levels and involved considerable numbers of men in transit.<sup>682</sup> Head is clearly echoing what most military commentators at the time were saying including the League. He further argued 'that a reduction in manpower would not be as drastic as it might appear numerically, because in the

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<sup>679</sup> Macmillan, H. (1971). *Ridding the Storm 1956-1959* London: Macmillan p50.

<sup>680</sup> Macmillan, H. (1971) p50.

<sup>681</sup> CAB 21/3508, Defence Policy Review, Letter from Head to Macmillan, 30 November 1956

<sup>682</sup> *Ibid* p2.



Air Force and the Army the reduction would fall in the first instance on the National Service element'. This could be achieved by reducing commitments and after 'recent events' the Army's possible limited war commitments could be reduced as well. Head acknowledged that carrying out this kind of reduction would not allow 'massive' reinforcement in a limited war in the Far East or 'even' in the Middle East. Head described colonial operations as Cold War commitments and argued, 'I am inclined to think that they are apt, within certain limits, to be of the size and number of the Army Units available. If they are somewhat fewer, then the Colonial Governor will see to it that his intelligence and police arrangements are improved because he will realise that he cannot count on being able to call up rapidly two or three battalions of British infantry'.<sup>683</sup> This perception is important because it states that improvements in local security measures would be forced on Governors if they could not expect any substantial British military assistance. This would possibly negate wide scale security operations from occurring, which the Defence Policy Review argued were expensive and politically counterproductive.

In December Eden circulated a minute in which he stated that he had 'authorised' the Minister of Defence to work out a long-term defence plan based on the following assumptions; 'Our defence policy should be based on the principle of smaller Forces equipped with fully up to date weapons, Our commitments and overheads should be adjusted to match these smaller forces, the armed forces should be reduced to 450,000 (Army 200,000) by April 1961 or earlier'.<sup>684</sup> Eden further stated that the Armed Forces should make greater use of civilians and the UK should not be 'entirely' dependent on the United States for supply's of atomic weapons and equipment. The other net loser was to be the Royal Air Force which would have to brace itself for heavy cuts in day fighter air-craft and other air-craft. On 3 January 1957 Salisbury's Committee on National Service held its last meeting before Macmillan made his decision to terminate conscription on 27 January 1957. The Committee which now included Head and Ian Macleod, Minister of Labour and National Service and Viscount Hailsham, First Lord of the Admiralty. This meeting was dominated by the findings of a report submitted by the Central Statistical Office which confirmed what had been discussed on numerous occasions and what was common knowledge that regular recruitment would not sustain a force level of 200,000 for the Army.<sup>685</sup> The number of servicemen which regular recruitment would provide by 1960 was estimated at 320,000 or a short fall of a 130,000 of the government's proposed figure of 450,000. Although Macleod recognised that the short

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<sup>683</sup> CAB 21/3508, Defence Policy Review, Letter from Head to Macmillan, 30 November 1956

<sup>684</sup> CAB 21/3508, Defence Policy Review Committee. P.R (56) Eden minute on defence review, December 1956

<sup>685</sup> CAB 130/120, GEN 544/3, Cabinet Committee on National Service, 3 January 1957.

fall was a problem, he argued that a ballot system be adopted to find the 130,000.<sup>686</sup> This would have meant finding an annual draft of 75,500 men on a two year national service enlistment, at least in the short-term until regular recruitment reached projected force levels. However, Macleod argued that the ending of National Service should be 'seriously considered'. Macleod felt that the projected regular recruitment figure was 'conservative', and pointed out if the government did attempt to retain conscription for such a small number of men it would have to contemplate the abolition of the whole system because it would be 'inherently difficult' to convince the public and therefore politically problematic. Another factor which was going to be a problem, was that by the mid 1960s there would be 450,000 men eligible for National Service that the ratio of men called up for service which Macleod argued, 'would be too small to make national service either acceptable or workable'.<sup>687</sup>

On 11 January 1957 the COS of Staff acknowledged that a change in operational and overseas commitments had occurred in light of 'recent events in the Middle East'.<sup>688</sup> Smaller garrisons based in Cyprus, Aden, Kenya and Libya which would allow three battalions for internal security across the Middle East would be the norm from now on. The COS argued that most of the Middle East and North Africa and Sub Saharan Africa would now not allow over flights or staging rights for British aircraft. The importance of West Africa for British air movement therefore became critical post-Suez and the possible use of Turkish airspace as considered being vital. The various operational requirements of the Army and the Armed Forces such as operation HORTIAN, CAPITAL, JACKSON and LANDSEER which covered deployment of troops to Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and Trucial Oman respectively were still seen as essential. Each of these deployments would have involved the deployment of one battalion and were still pertinent post Suez because they would have been in support of indigenous regimes, whether from exogenous aggression or internal revolutionary activity in both cases British forces were obligated to intervene if requested. Although Suez had had a marked effect on unilateral action, however, as the COS quite rightly pointed out Britain still had considerable possible commitments and would require access to air movement and bases to project military forces for rapid deployment.

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<sup>686</sup> In 1954 the number of men called up for National Service was 147,975 the largest group was 17-20 which generated 106,825 and 21-26, 41,150 men annually. This created a National service element of 290,000 in the Armed Forces.

<sup>687</sup> CAB 130/120, GEN 544/3, Cabinet Committee on National Service, 3 January 1957.

<sup>688</sup> DEFE 5/73, Annex to C.O.S (57) 16 Review of the Commitments for the United Kingdom Strategic Reserve

On 5 February 1957 the COS Committee published their own appraisal of the Long Term Defence Review.<sup>689</sup> The COS argued that the proposed drop in service strength from 737,000 to 450,000 as being one of ‘considerable magnitude’ which ‘represented a heavy loss of operational units’. They further argued, that ‘there are no military or strategic grounds which justify considerable reductions from the resources at present devoted to United Kingdom defence’. The reason they felt that the government was undertaking this review and changing policy was driven by economic motives which they ‘accepted’ as a ‘justifiable risk’ made by the government.<sup>690</sup> The COS of Staff argued that the projected force levels would be the ‘minimum’ for Britain’s defence requirements and commitments until 1961. They also added a proviso that these revised forces should be fully equipped with modern weapons to achieve their projected operational requirements. The Chief’s stated that ‘the Cold War pervades almost all aspects of our defence policy’. When describing Britain’s colonial defence requirements the Chief’s appraisal is revealing because it has anachronistic tone, ‘the United Kingdom has colonies, dependencies and other interests throughout the world. Nearly all these interests are coveted by other states and many by neighbouring states’. This perception seems at odds with the realities of the Cold War because the only states realistically who could covert British interests were the Soviet Union or the United States and additionally there is no real understanding of Britain’s future colonial role or its relationship with the United Nations. The colonies still appear to be prestige assets which have significant strategic importance rather than being potential political and economic liabilities which was the conclusion that the government and more importantly the Cabinet was beginning make.

The COS also argued that British interests in East Africa could only be safe guarded by utilising forces from the Middle East in an emergency and conversely argued that the same was true for Africa. In all probabilities it was felt that in a major conflict the Suez Canal would be blocked to British warships and troop ships and that air routes would be denied as well. They considered that this problem ‘dominated’ British strategic planning. To close the expected gap in Britain’s strategic communications the Chief’s envisaged deploying a strong naval carrier group in the Indian Ocean which would have a the new innovation of a commando carrier which could deploy a Royal Marine Commando by ‘beach or helicopter’.<sup>691</sup> The COS also advocated the building up the British military presence in Kenya to Brigade level with additional equipment. This they stated would allow ‘stability and help to ensure the tranquil development of British and protected territories in East and Central

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<sup>689</sup> DEFE 5/73 COS (57) 34, Chiefs of Staff Committee, Long Term Defence Policy Memorandum by the Chiefs of Staff, 5 February 1957.

<sup>690</sup> *Ibid* p3.

<sup>691</sup> *Ibid* p4.

Africa'. The use of mobile sea borne forces was a pragmatic and historical way of imposing British interests and when combined with the strategic bases was a logical policy to adopt. The COS were primarily concerned to 'bring power to bear' by 'demonstrating' air and sea power. However, they argued that the ability of Britain to maintain 'a relatively independent line' would as a consequence of reducing conventional forces would be 'inevitably' be restricted.

This was the position regarding National Service and the wider issue of defence commitments when Macmillan became Prime Minister on 10 January 1957. On the 13 January Macmillan appointed Duncan Sandys, Minister of Defence. Heads removal was inevitable given his intransigent over the issue of reductions in manpower and his support for continuing some form of National Service until regular recruitment could maintain the Army and as Macmillan stated 'I felt doubtful whether he would agree to the level of defence expenditure for the following year'.<sup>692</sup> Macmillan in his memoirs stated that when he was Minister of Defence he had been frustrated by the apparent lack of control which could be exerted over the Service COS due to the fact that the Minister of Defence had no real authority over the three services and his first act as Prime Minister was to strengthen the authority of Sandys.<sup>693</sup>

Sandys like Head had been a member of the Army League and had a reputation for being difficult to work with; he liked to run his department by divide and rule pitting each of the Services Departments and Service COS against each other.<sup>694</sup> However, Sandys was greatly assisted by the fact that inter-service rivalry had been prevalent for years which made his task easier and suited his style of management. Strachan argues that Sandy's tenure at the Ministry of Defence was successful because he had the complete backing of Macmillan and when this waned Sandys position with the Service COS and his authority was dissipated. Heads letter to Macmillan on the 30 November 1956 had set out his prescription for an effective Minister of Defence who could dictate defence policy which had a central tenant the full support of the Prime Minister. Macmillan clearly understood this and Sandys was given his full support over the coming months. Macmillan was in full control of what was occurring at the MOD, this we can concur from comment made by Julian Amery in his diary, who became Under Secretary for War on 18 January 1957, on 10 September 1957 Amery attended a Defence Committee meeting to discuss nuclear weapons where he described the Prime Ministers demeanour, 'Harold [Macmillan] is quiet but fully in control analysing the problem and guiding the

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<sup>692</sup> Macmillan, H. (1971). p188

<sup>693</sup> Macmillan, H. (1971) p244.

<sup>694</sup> Strachan, H. (1997) pp 244-245.

discussion till he gets his way'.<sup>695</sup> Macmillan and Sandy's began preparing to abolish conscription and signal wide ranging cuts in conventional defence capacity, however, many of their subsequent decisions had been set in motion during 1956. Suez also allowed Macmillan to achieve many of the political and strategic considerations which were set out in the 1956 defence review.

Sandy's spent the coming months preparing his seminal white paper on defence. On 22 February 1957 Sandys minuted the Cabinet setting out his review of defence plans.<sup>696</sup> Sandys informed the Cabinet that the Government would abolish conscription as soon as it was 'practicable' and would not be extending the call up beyond 1960. Sandys believed that it would be possible find adequate numbers of recruits to maintain regular armed forces in the region of 380,000. However, he stated 'I must, however, emphasise that this plan, which is tailored to the possibilities of voluntary recruitment rather than to an independent assessment of defence needs, would appreciably affect our ability to exert military power in distant parts of the world and would inevitably reduce our influence in NATO, SEATO and the Baghdad alliance'. On 27 February Macmillan minuted that he agreed with the figure of 380,000. The implication of this decision was that the Army would have strength of 165,000. The COS proposed that the Army have a minimum strength of 180,000.<sup>697</sup> In March Julian Amery wrote to John Hare, Minister of War, stating that the White Paper should not include precise figures for the size of the armed forces.<sup>698</sup> Amery argued that the figure of 165,000 was 'uncertain' and might constitute a political 'millstone around our necks' if the Government published precise figures for the future size of the armed forces. However, this statement is disingenuous because not publishing precise manpower projections would have been unprecedented and roundly attacked by the press and the other political parties. On 14 March Amery sent Hare a memorandum which in his own words 'I venture from a purely party as distinct from departmental point of view to put forward certain suggestions regarding the draft White Paper on Defence'.<sup>699</sup> Amery stated that certain sections of the 'Party' would consider the paper was abrogating freedom of action to the United States which would cause 'anxiety'. He also wanted the White Paper to state that some form of national service would be retained until sufficient regulars had come forward. Clearly Amery was attempting to limit the extent of the cut to the manpower level of the Army and he was supporting the COS.

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<sup>695</sup> AMEJ 470/2, Julian Amery Diary, 10 September 1957.

<sup>696</sup> Churchill College Archive Cambridge Duncan Sandys MSS, DSND 6/52, Review of Defence, 22 February 1957. Hereafter, DSND 6/52

<sup>697</sup> DEFE 13/237, Long Term Defence Proposals

<sup>698</sup> AMEJ 216, Letter from Amery to Hare, March 1957.

<sup>699</sup> AMEJ 216, Memorandum from Amery to Hare, 14 March 1957.

On 25 March the COS complained that if they endorsed the Government's proposals it would appear that they approved the strategic rationale behind the decision.<sup>700</sup> On 1 April 1957 the Government published *Defence: Outline of Future Policy*.<sup>701</sup> The paper had been redrafted a considerable number of times before being published. The paper stated that British defence would be based on nuclear deterrence and that conscription would be terminated in 1960.<sup>702</sup> However, the paper noted that if regular recruitment did not produce sufficient recruits then the Government would be forced to reintroduce a form of conscription.

Conventional forces would be 'reshaped and redistributed' and British defence would rely on collective security. The paper noted that 'growth in the power of weapons of mass destruction has emphasised the fact that no country can any longer protect itself in isolation'. Sandys decided that there was no longer a requirement for 'self sufficient and balanced' forces. The paper stated that a central reserve would be created in the UK which would allow reductions in overseas garrisons. The central reserve would be backed by a 'substantial fleet of transport planes' which would allow rapid mobility.<sup>703</sup> The fleet would be supplemented by civil aircraft in an emergency. The paper noted that if a larger force was needed for an emergency then British forces from Germany would be dispatched as well. However, the paper argued that there would be a large reduction in day fighter strength of the 2 Tactical Air Force in Germany. Liddell Hart had always based his conventional forces levels in Germany on the assumption that there would be air parity with Soviet forces. Although, the League's report had argued for an increase in transport capability of the Army and the creation of a strategic reserve based in the UK the scale of the cuts to conventional forces was unprecedented. On 9 May Amery wrote to Hare stating that we are 'agreed' that an army of 165,000 will not be large enough to meet our requirements in 1962.<sup>704</sup> Amery suggested that the Government increase the number of Gurkha and KAR units which would provide additional manpower and allow the Army to increase its manpower target to 180,000 without relying on national service. He also suggested an expansion of colonial forces on the grounds that they were cheaper than equivalent British forces. He described this as an insurance policy against poor regular recruitment. However, Sandys was constrained by Macmillan's desire to reduce defence spending. The day Amery wrote to Hare Britain successfully detonated its first thermo-nuclear weapon. Julian Amery later remarked that having the h-bomb made Britain a major power again.

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<sup>700</sup> DSND 6/52, Minutes of Cabinet Defence Committee, 25 March 1957.

<sup>701</sup> Cmd 124, *Defence: Outline of Future Policy*, London: HMSO, April 1957.

<sup>702</sup> *Ibid* p11.

<sup>703</sup> *Ibid* p8.

<sup>704</sup> AMEJ 216, Memorandum from Amery to Hare, 9 May 1957.

Having Julian Amery inside the WO made it difficult for him to openly criticise Government policy. He was longer involved with the directly involved with the League. His acceptance of the reductions in conventional force levels was inevitable given his position within the Government and his remark concerning the detonation of the h-bomb. Amery was tipped be a potential Cabinet minister and his personal relationship with Macmillan gave him considerable political kudos. In 1958 the League published a second Report entitled *The British Army in the Nuclear Age* which stated that ‘we endorse the view that a return to a regular Army is now the best policy’.<sup>705</sup> But Darby stated that the League’s members had been divided over the issue.<sup>706</sup> By 1958 the Chairman of the League was John Strachey MP and Colonel Tufton Beamish MP. Tufton Beamish was briefly Conservative defence spokesman in the 1960s. In 1960 the League held a luncheon in honour of Secretary of State for War, Christopher Soames. The luncheon was designed to launch a donation drive to raise £50,000 which would assist the League to continue its work.<sup>707</sup> In February 1961 Liddell Hart resigned from the League to concentrate on his writing.<sup>708</sup>

In early 1962 the League published report on obtaining the right kind officers for the Regular Army called a *Challenge to Leadership*. However, Liddell Hart wrote to Brain Bond that he had read the report and thought that it would make little impact on the press or the public.<sup>709</sup> By this point the chairman of the League was General Sir Richard Gale. Gale had recently been deputy to the NATO supreme allied commander in Europe. However, Gale had out spoken views on retaining a form of national service. In 1964 the Army League issued a pamphlet called *The Army Britain Needs* which argued that Britain needed either to reduce commitments or introduce selective compulsory military service of 30,000 men a year. Paget wrote a letter to *the Times* stating that his name had been used a co-author because he was a member of the study group but he said he had not been consulted on the contents of the pamphlet and was publically dissociating himself from its contents. In 1966 the League published a report on the British Defence *Policy in South East Asia*. This was the last report of the Army League which disbanded in 1967.

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<sup>705</sup> Army League. (1958). *The British Army in the Nuclear Age* London: St Clements p53.

<sup>706</sup> Darby, P. (1972) p80.

<sup>707</sup> LH 5/4/2/3, Luncheon programmes 1960.

<sup>708</sup> LH 5/4/2/3, Resignation Letter to Beddington-Behrens, 6 February 1961.

<sup>709</sup> LH 5/4/2/3, Letter from Liddell Hart to Brian Bond, 9 December 1961.

## Conclusion

The Army League under the leadership of Leo and Julian Amery had no influence over Government policy. It did not affect any change in Government policy during its many years of lobbying. Its existence was a mild annoyance to the WO but its ideas did warrant two detailed examinations. Also its activities were monitored by the Conservative Party Research Department. Because of its well connected and influential members the League could not be ignored but it wielded limited political influence. Leo and Julian Amery used the League and its distinguished membership and their reports to court public and press attention and further their political aims. The League was created to assist the WO in its efforts to increase regular recruitment to the Army. However, Leo Amery soon used the assembled group of distinguished retired officers and noted businessmen to lobby the Government about its defence policy. After Munich Leo Amery argued that the League should concentrate on persuading the Government to introduce conscription. Although the League did not influence policy direction, the Government was clearly concerned enough to ask Leo Amery to discontinue its publicity programme. This period was the high point of the League's public activities. However, it was still small in comparison to other defence movements such as the Navy League and the Air League. The Army League was never embraced by the WO which probably stymied its growth into a larger more inclusive organisation. The League evolved into a small elitist group which saw its role as guardians of the Army. However, from its inception the League was beset by internal division over the direction of activities and the content of its reports. Many of the League council members wanted the League to concentrate on promoting the welfare and conditions of service of Army and away from strategic and policy matters.

However, under the leadership of Leo Amery the League was destined to become a political pressure group. Leo Amery was in many respects incapable of not using the League as a political mouth piece. His many years working as a journalist and his outspoken views on Army reform, imperialism, tariff reform and protectionism made this inevitable. Leo Amery understood the value of publicity as a means of increasing the political profile of an individual or an organisation. The 1937 report was small and inconsequential but it did provide publicity which Amery used to give the League a platform from which to build a case for a change in defence policy. The blend of retired senior officers, politicians and businessmen increased the credibility of the League and widened its appeal. It appeared to be an authoritative alternative voice regarding the Army to that of Government. The aims of the pre-war League were met by the rapid collapse of the international system after Munich. The League's shift of



emphasis away from the Army recruitment to the promotion of conscription and air defence was indicative of the rapidly changing political climate which was shifting toward a policy of military intervention against Germany. Leo Amery was one the principle detractors of Chamberlain's appeasement policy. His involvement in the League added legitimacy to his arguments and gave him another public platform to air his views on defence policy. However, the League did not shape or change Government policy in the 1930s.

The League which emerged after the Second World War was smaller and became an elite group. During the first years of the Cold War the League existed on paper only. Leo Amery decision to reform the League was again based on the assumption that the League would campaign on welfare issues for the Army. However, once again Leo Amery decided that League should increasingly focus on strategic issues. The study group which was formed in 1950 was now the core of the League. The inclusion of Liddell Hart increased the quality and breath of research and analysis within the League. Also the arrival of Julian Amery breathed new life into the League and gave it a presence within the House of Commons. Leo Amery with the help of Liddell Hart created new study group which included members of both the main parties. Leo Amery again sought official recognition and was rejected. However, the League did contribute to Templer Committee which appeared to bode well for future endorsement from the WO for their activities. However, the committee did not record their contribution in their final report. This is more evidence of the study group failure to elicit official recognition. The WO wished to consult because they were concerned that the League could be a potential source of trouble. The Labour administration was keen to keep the study group at arm's length but was astute enough to indulge the study group by giving them access to the committee.

By the end of 1951 the study group was beginning to work on a major report which would be its first published material since the 1930s. However, Leo Amery decided that the report should be focus on strategic policy as well developments in the sphere of nuclear weapons and conventional forces. This again led to Conservative party officials questioning the direction of the League and its motives. The involvement of Julian Amery who had assumed Leo Amery's mantel of arch-imperialist within the Conservative Party further complicated the real motives of the study groups report. The study group was becoming a vehicle for the conceptual ideas of Liddell Hart and the political and strategic vision of Julian and Leo Amery. Because of Julian Amery participation in the Suez Group and his outspoken views on foreign and defence policy the study group report developed a greater importance. Liddell Hart gave the 1955 report substance while the involvement of Julian Amery made it politically significant. The report also was the last significant political and strategic work

which Leo Amery participated in before his death. The death of Leo Amery signified the handing over of the imperialist flame to Julian Amery.

The report was the subject of WO scrutiny but was dismissed on the grounds that it was impracticable and unworkable. Many of Liddell Hart's ideas on reducing the tail and increasing teeth units were radical and would have necessitated a major re-organisation of the Army. The study group stance on a contentious issue such as national service was ambiguous. There was a strong strand of imperial continuity in the report which did not reflect the realities of the Cold War or the reduced economic and strategic position of the UK. The use of colonial manpower to supplement British manpower was at odds with the perceptions of the Templer Security Report which was advocating more local control of indigenous forces. Many of the study group's proposals were beyond the economic capacity of the UK. The report considered British economic and strategic problems to be temporary. However, the reality was that the Britain was living beyond its means and military spending was spiralling out of control. The report reiterated the importance of imperial bases and the retention of the African colonies as a crucial strategic consideration within the dynamics of the Cold War. This again did not reflect the realities of the political situation in West Africa or developments in Kenya. However, the report carefully considered the effect of nuclear weapons on the Army organisation and presented ideas which could be developed.

However, the WO rejected nearly all of the report's recommendations. The most significant study was carried out into the Auxiliary Service Corps, but the political uncertainty surrounding the use of overseas manpower meant that even this suggestion was dismissed. The Army League attempted to offer its services to the WO but this was rejected on the grounds that official recognition would not be appropriate. There was some debate within the WO that the League might be used for 'propaganda' but in the final analysis the League would have been hard to control and could have quickly become a liability. This diminished the usefulness of the League as a potential outlet for the WO to promote policy outside the usual channels of Government. However, it can be construed that the personal reputation of the members of the League increased as a consequence of their involvement with the group, because they received favourable press for the report from the media which made them appear to be 'defence experts' working analogously of the Government. However, this appears to be the limit of the League's influence. It is apparent that the WO listened to what the League had to say because the League had the ability to make life uncomfortable for Government. However, respectful indulgence is not the same as having influence. Clearly the League was not a pressure group which achieved any meaningful change on the Government

policy. The 1955 report represents a strategic vision which was too wedded to the past, yet was also too radical in its approach too effect army reorganisation.

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