

**Lord Lansdowne at the War Office (1895-1900)**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis investigates Lord Lansdowne's career at the War Office (1895-1900). At its core, however, is not a traditional biographical quest, but what does his career at the War Office tell us about late Victorian politics, civil-military relations, the reform discourse, the late Victorian Army and the war in South Africa? This is an especially relevant subject of historical study for two reasons: firstly Lansdowne as Secretary of State for War and a representative of his class, time and party epitomised late Victorian politics; secondly as Secretary of State he has been found wanting.

The thesis aims to re-examine these questions and force those who have written on the problems Lansdowne encountered to rethink their conclusions. By portraying Lansdowne as a man of his time and returning him to his proper position this thesis demonstrates that it is possible to reinterpret the career of a historical figure.

The main part of the thesis looks at how Lansdowne operated at the War Office and the complex inheritance he dealt with. It explores the political rivalries of those with power to influence military policy in Britain and the lack of interest in military matters both in and out of Parliament. Given these dynamics the thesis argues that the War Office and Army were unreformable.

The thesis also examines Lansdowne's legacy in relation to his three immediate successors. Despite the differences in the structure and professionalism of the British Expeditionary Force which performed in Flanders in 1914 and the Army Corps which embarked for South Africa in 1899 the social composition of both forces had not significantly changed. As the best equipped and trained Army to leave Britain for war the BEF vindicated the attempts of Lansdowne and his successors to provide the country with an Army fit for war.

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## **Preface**

In researching for this thesis thirty-seven public archives were approached, with approximately one hundred and forty collections for inquiry and six private archives with twelve collections for inquiry. Some archival sources were based in Ottawa, Washington, Durham N.C., Dublin and Paris, and these records were sourced either online or from a copy and postal service. No two archives are alike and in researching this thesis an important consideration has been to understand each archive, its records, how it was formed and who is employed there so as to make the best use of resources and time management. Printed primary and secondary sources that have been used include British Public Records, Parliamentary Papers, edited diaries, letters and papers, academic theses published and unpublished, primary and secondary books, newspapers, periodicals, journals and academic articles. Access to these works has been obtained from online sources, the British Library, the University of East Anglia Main Library and other specialist libraries, including the Templer Study Centre at the National Army Museum and the Liddell Hart Centre for Military archives at King's College London. It has not been necessary to undertake any interviews for this thesis and only one sound recording has been accessed.

The conceptual framework used in this thesis has comprised: themes and insight into how humans behave and how the world works, including authority and power, diffusion and disintegration. The thesis has explored: the actions, values and thinking that influence a historical figure; historical questions; and a chronological narrative providing a context within which to consider important themes and questions. A prosopographical approach was adapted from the works of Namier and Syme,<sup>1</sup> to demonstrate the cohesive strength of the ruling class in the late nineteenth century. It should be noted that this thesis is not only an examination of late Victorian politics as pursued by the ruling classes but also as experienced by the diplomats, governors, civil servants, soldiers and sailors. Prosopography does not attempt to provide all the answers but has been of use to this thesis in revealing the web of socio-psychological ties that bind a group together.

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<sup>1</sup> L. Namier, *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III* (2 Vols., London, 1929); R. Syme, *The Roman Revolution* (Oxford, 1939).

### **Acknowledgements**

For permission to examine collections of records in their care I am very grateful to all the archivists and librarians and that I have been privileged to speak to and meet.

I should like to acknowledge the gracious permission of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II to quote from material in the Royal Archives.

I would like to thank especially Dr William Frame at the British Library, Kate Fielden and Jo Johnston at Bowood House, Aidan Haley and James Towe at Chatsworth House, Mark Blunt at Hove Central Library, Vicki Perry at Hatfield House and Tony Pilmer at the Royal United Services Institution Library.

My warmest regards go to Professor Thomas Otte whose constant encouragement and interest in my research was inspiring.

## **Abbreviations**

Add MS	Additional Manuscripts
b.	Born
BH	Bowood House
BL	British Library
Bod	Bodleian Library
BUL	Birmingham University Library
CAB	Cabinet papers held at the National Archives at Kew
CH	Chatsworth House
CO	Colonial Office papers held at the National Archives at Kew
D.Phil	Doctor of Philosophy
Ed.	Edited by
Eds.	Editors
ENG. Hist	English History. Archive term used by the Bodleian Library, Department of Western Manuscripts
EUR	European manuscripts in the African and Asian Collection at the British Library
FO	Foreign Office papers held at the National Archives at Kew
GRO	Gloucestershire Record Office
HCL	Hove Central Library
HH	Hatfield House
HLRO	House of Lords Record Office
Ibid.	Cited previously
MS	Manuscript
MSS	Manuscripts
MP	Milner Papers
NA	National Archives, Kew

NAI	National Archives of Ireland, Dublin
NAM	National Army Museum
NLS	National Library of Scotland
p.	Page
pp.	Pages
PP	Parliamentary Papers
Private	Personal Correspondence
PRO	Domestic Records of the Public Record Office at Kew
RA	Royal Archive
RC	The Report of the Royal Commission on the War in South Africa
T	Treasury Papers held at the National Archives at Kew
‘the War’	The War in South Africa
VC	Victoria Cross
VIC	Queen Victoria
Vols.,	Volumes
WO	War Office papers held at the National Archives at Kew
WOO	War Office Organization Committee 1901 (Dawkins Committee)
WP	Wolseley Papers
3M/E	3 <sup>rd</sup> Marquess of Salisbury Papers, Series E.

## **Introduction**

Lord Lansdowne occupied an important, but hitherto strangely neglected, position in the history of Britain's armed forces. Studies of civil-military relations, the reform discourse, the late Victorian Army, and the war in South Africa (hereafter referred to as 'the War') suggest that flaws in Lansdowne's personality caused the unbusinesslike methods of the War Office and unpreparedness for 'the War'. Thomas Pakenham observed, 'the Army needed fire and steel in the man at its head. Lansdowne, pillar of state that he was, had neither - nor the faintest spark of imagination.'<sup>2</sup> John Gooch noted that Lansdowne 'neglected logistical and administrative considerations of using military force,'<sup>3</sup> and David Steele believed 'Lansdowne was not sufficiently forceful to adapt a cumbersome and intensely Conservative military machine to the requirements of a new age or to those of an impending South Africa campaign.'<sup>4</sup> A belief has thus persisted that Lansdowne was a weak Secretary of State unwilling to take a wider view of his responsibilities and opportunities. A re-interpretation of the archival evidence presents a different picture. Many assumptions about Lansdowne at the War Office overlook that his decisions were not made in a vacuum but that they were taken in consultation with his Cabinet colleagues and his military advisers.

Many assessments about Lansdowne's career as Secretary of State for War overlook the questions relating to his purpose and intent and the degree to which he recognised the need for a progressive approach to War Office and Army reform which secured the strategic requirements of the Army. This thesis aims to redress the view that Lansdowne was found wanting. It is the opinion of this thesis that Lansdowne's career at the War Office can act as a prism through which late Victorian politics and its successes and weaknesses and a well ordered society where people had responsibilities qua their position in society can be examined. Lansdowne was a man of his time operating in a contemporary system which he both shaped and was moulded by. It is not the aim of this thesis to claim he was or was not a great

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<sup>2</sup> T. Pakenham, *The Boer War* (London, 1992), p.72.

<sup>3</sup> J. Gooch (ed.), *The Boer War: Direction, Experience and Image* (London, 2000), p.xiv.

<sup>4</sup> D. Steele, 'Salisbury and the Soldiers', in J. Gooch (ed.), *The Boer War: Direction, Experience and Image* (London, 2000), p.3.



man but to locate him in his time and context and show how he dealt with contemporary pressures and factors that influenced his thinking. It is hoped that by drawing Lansdowne out of the shadows and placing him in his own social, political and intellectual milieu this thesis will not only open up the debate about late Victorian politics including civil-military relations, the reform discourse, the late Victorian Army and 'the War', but be suggestive of how historical figures can be re-interpreted in general.

To begin with it is important to note that uniquely among late Victorian politicians Lansdowne has received little attention and does not have the biography he deserves. Newton's *Lord Lansdowne*<sup>5</sup> is the only extant biography and is itself very much a product of its time, written when memories of Lansdowne's part in the House of Lords stand-off in 1911 and his controversial 'Peace' letter of 1917 were still fresh in the public imagination. Since Newton's work was written a few modern historians including Zara Steiner,<sup>6</sup> Hugh Cecil,<sup>7</sup> George Monger<sup>8</sup> and P.J.V. Rolo<sup>9</sup> have examined aspects of Lansdowne's career, most notably at the Foreign Office. Interestingly only one study has been made of Lansdowne at the War Office and this work, by Keith Surridge, has a specific focus on 'the War'.<sup>10</sup> In more mainstream works of late Victorian and Edwardian political history including W.S. Hamer, T.G. Otte, Halik Kochanski, and Gwyn Harries-Jenkins<sup>11</sup> Lansdowne has a presence but it is shadowy.

Although it is not the aim of this thesis to present Lansdowne and his career as Secretary of State as a traditional biographical quest, nevertheless a biographical introduction is required. Henry Charles Keith Petty-Fitzmaurice was born at Lansdowne House, London on 14 January 1845, his parents' first child. His father was Henry Shelburne (b. London 1816), second surviving son of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Marquess of

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<sup>5</sup> Lord Newton, *Lord Lansdowne: A Biography* (London, 1929).

<sup>6</sup> Z.S. Steiner, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy, 1898-1914* (London, 1986).

<sup>7</sup> H. Cecil, *Lord Lansdowne: From the Entente Cordiale of 1904 to the 'Peace Letter' of 1917: A European Statesman assessed.* (London, 2004).

<sup>8</sup> G.W. Monger, *The End of Isolation: British Foreign Policy, 1900-1907* (London, 1963).

<sup>9</sup> P.J.V. Rolo, 'Lansdowne' in K.M. Wilson (ed.), *British Foreign Secretaries and Foreign Policy: From Crimean War to First World War* (London, 1987).

<sup>10</sup> K.T. Surridge, *Managing the South African War, 1899-1902: Politicians v. Generals* (Woodbridge, 1998); D. Judd and K.T. Surridge, *The Boer War: A History* (London, 2002).

<sup>11</sup> W.S. Hamer, *The British Army: Civil-Military Relations, 1885-1905* (Oxford, 1970); T.G. Otte, *The China Question: Great Power Rivalry and British Isolation, 1894-1905* (Oxford, 2007); H. Kochanski, *Sir Garnet Wolseley: Victorian Hero* (London, 1999); G. Harries-Jenkins, *The Army in Victorian Society* (London, 1977).

Lansdowne. His mother was Emily Mercer-Elphinstone de Flahaut (b. Edinburgh 1819) eldest of five daughters of Auguste Comte de Flahaut, himself an illegitimate child of Charles de Talleyrand-Perigord and Adelaide de Flahaut and Margaret Mercer-Elphinstone, 2<sup>nd</sup> Baroness Keith.

His father's family, the Fitzmaurices, settled in Ireland in the twelfth century. The first twenty Lords of Kerry were largely a law unto themselves. The marriage of the twenty-first Lord of Kerry to Anne Petty, only daughter of William Petty the Physician-in-Chief to the Commonwealth Army in Ireland, brought the family a peerage and possession of the Petty estates. Their second child's eldest son William was the first Lord Lansdowne. Born in Dublin, he later joined the Army, rapidly reaching the rank of Colonel. On leaving the Army he entered politics and served in the Cabinets of Grenville, Pitt the Elder and Rockingham, becoming Prime Minister himself in 1782 with the death of Rockingham. Lansdowne's grandfather, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Marquess, was also politically active and served in the Cabinets of Grenville, Canning, Earl Grey, Melbourne, Russell, Aberdeen and Palmerston. He was Chancellor of the Exchequer at the age of twenty-six and served as Home Secretary and Lord President of the Council three times during a ministerial career spanning forty-eight years. After his death he was affectionately regarded as the 'Nestor of the Whigs.'<sup>12</sup> Lansdowne's father had a shorter and less illustrious career in politics serving as Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs under Palmerston.

His mother's family were of Scottish and French origin. Emily's grandfather Admiral Lord Keith had commanded the Channel Fleet and supervised Napoleon's removal to St. Helena. Lord Keith's daughter Margaret married Auguste de Flahaut, Napoleon's ADC and the illegitimate son of Talleyrand-Perigord. De Flahaut also served as Ambassador to Vienna and London and strongly influenced his grandson in foreign affairs. Lansdowne was educated at Eton (1858-1862) and Balliol College, Oxford (1863-1867) where he achieved a second class in Literae Humaniores. Greater than any other influence on Lansdowne's political career was that of Benjamin Jowett. It was while studying classics at Oxford under Jowett, in the years before Jowett became Master of Balliol, that Lansdowne came to appreciate the

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<sup>12</sup> C.J. Wright, 'Petty-Fitzmaurice, Henry, Third Marquess of Lansdowne', *Dictionary of National Biography* online, (Oxford, 2003), <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ueaezproxy.uea.ac.uk:2048/view/article/22071?docPos=3>

ability to think for himself. Jowett, who was a great picker, trainer, and placer of able young men, instilled in Lansdowne the virtue of hard work. After Lansdowne left Oxford he advised him to ‘get into political life as soon as possible. A man of energy and character ought to find some real work to do.’<sup>13</sup> It was Lansdowne’s opinion that his life might have turned out quite differently but for Jowett’s influence.<sup>14</sup> He believed ‘I had no more constant friend, and I cannot express the gratitude with which I look back to his unfailing interest in all that befel me and to his help and guidance at times when they were most needed.’<sup>15</sup>

In 1862, he followed his father into the Royal Wiltshire Regiment of the Yeomanry, joining as a Cornet. His father thought it did young men ‘good and they learn a little of their neighbours.’<sup>16</sup> He had no direct experience of military service while with the Wiltshire Yeomanry, but as a Wiltshire nobleman was promoted to an Honorary Colonelcy in 1897. With no desire to pursue a career in the military, Lansdowne devoted himself to a life in politics which his private means and good connections enabled him to do. Political service was part of the patrician family tradition in which he had been brought up. To Lansdowne and many individuals of his class it was a responsibility adopted qua their position in society. Lansdowne accepted his responsibility at the age of twenty-one when in 1866 his father died and he inherited Bowood Estate of 11,145 acres, estates in Ireland of 121,349 acres, Lansdowne House in Berkeley Square, London and the Lansdowne heirlooms. He was also entailed through his mother to her Scottish estates of 10,418 acres. At this time Lansdowne, who was still studying at Oxford, received a letter from Jowett in which Jowett wrote: ‘when I pass by your splendid house in London I feel a sort of wonder that the owner should be reading quietly at Oxford. But you could not do a wiser or better thing for besides the value of the distinction & the knowledge plus increased power which is thus gained you show to the world that you are not going to be at the mercy of them.’<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Jowett to Lansdowne (private), 17 November 1868, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS 88906/20/9.

<sup>14</sup> Lansdowne to Dowager Lady Lansdowne, (private), 6 October 1893, BH. Lansdowne (5) MSS, uncatalogued.

<sup>15</sup> Lansdowne to F. Nightingale (private), 11 October 1893, BL. Nightingale MSS, Add MS. 45778, f.238.

<sup>16</sup> Henry Petty-Fitzmaurice (Fourth Marquess of Lansdowne) to William Fox Talbot (private), 19 March 1863, Fox Talbot MSS, Add MS. 21742, f.8672. <http://foxtalbot.dmu.ac.uk/>

<sup>17</sup> Jowett to Lansdowne (private), 2 April 1867, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/20/9.

Becoming a peer in the House of Lords at such a young age meant that he had no early exposure to the hard political world of the House of Commons that many of his contemporaries experienced, and it is notable that during his career most of his contact with MPs came through the Cabinet. That he was not exposed to the ruthless atmosphere of the House of Commons did not diminish his awareness that the power of that House had risen beyond all measure during the nineteenth century and that political leadership was increasingly tending to come from that House. However, like Salisbury, he looked to the ‘establishment, the monarchy and the House of Lords for inspiration and resistance to popular pressures.’<sup>18</sup>

Before his appointment to the War Office in 1895 Lansdowne’s political and imperial experience provided him with a solid foundation for understanding matters of military policy. He entered political life in 1869 when Lord Granville, the then Colonial Secretary and almost as important an influence on his career as Jowett, arranged his appointment to the vacant position of Junior Lord of the Treasury. Lansdowne’s political beliefs were strongly influenced by his family’s Whig traditions and support for moral reforms. After the Whig party merged with the Liberal party in 1859 Lansdowne’s political allegiance shifted to the Liberals. At this time the former Whig Liberal peers in the House of Lords were disappointing both in their numbers and their enthusiasm. Similarly, in the House of Commons, ‘the bulk of the Liberal M.P.s were neither Whigs nor Radicals but simply commonplace wealthy Englishmen whose political actions were bound neither by affiliation to great houses nor by theoretical intransigence.’<sup>19</sup>

Lansdowne never fully embraced Liberalism. During Gladstone’s second premiership he broke from the Liberals over Gladstone’s Irish policy and joined the Liberal Unionists. In 1895, he and his fellow Liberal Unionists aligned themselves with Salisbury’s Conservative party. From the extant archive it is difficult to identify the exact date when Lansdowne officially offered the Unionists his support. In January 1887 Salisbury invited him to join the Cabinet as either Secretary of State for War or for the Colonies.<sup>20</sup> At the time he was serving as Governor-General in

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<sup>18</sup> M. Bentley, *Lord Salisbury’s World: Conservative Environments in late Victorian Britain* (Cambridge, 2001), p.170.

<sup>19</sup> J.R. Vincent, *The Formation of the British Liberal Party, 1857-1868* (Harmondsworth, 1972), p.34.

<sup>20</sup> Salisbury to Lansdowne (private), 3 January 1887, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/12/4/3.

Canada. Declining the offer, he told Goschen, a fellow Liberal Unionist who had joined Salisbury's Cabinet and with whom he would have liked to have served,<sup>21</sup> that 'the temptation to accept was immense.'<sup>22</sup> His reasons were partly because of home politics and partly because of Canadian politics. He had no desire to separate from Hartington or his Liberal Unionist friends. With no knowledge of the constructive side of Salisbury's Irish policy,<sup>23</sup> he was concerned as to what might be his position if on joining the Unionists' he later found himself in disagreement. 'I might have had to choose between resignation, which would have been bad for me and not good for the Govt., or the retention of office under circumstances thoroughly distasteful to me, and perhaps detrimental to my political prospects.'<sup>24</sup> Furthermore he did not entirely trust some of the other members of the Unionist Cabinet.<sup>25</sup> The first official occasion on which Lansdowne appeared on a public platform in support of the Unionist party was on 31 January 1895 at a Unionist demonstration in the Town Hall at Calne in Wiltshire. Stating, 'I have been told that my presence on this platform requires explanation. I have nothing to explain. It is not the platform, it is not the party designation, it is the principles which signify. I am not conscious of having changed mine; some of those with whom I used to act have changed theirs and I have refused to follow. It is the betrayal of 1886 which has brought me here.'<sup>26</sup>

Just as he never sat comfortably among the Liberals it is notable that after 1895 as a Unionist minister Lansdowne never fully accepted Unionist party ideology. This was observed by Harold Macmillan,<sup>27</sup> of a story told to him by Victor Devonshire of an occasion when he [Devonshire] and Lansdowne were caught in a rain storm on their way from the House of Lords to their London houses in Mayfair. Devonshire's suggestion that they take refuge in the Carlton Club<sup>28</sup> was 'most distasteful' to his

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<sup>21</sup> Lansdowne to Dowager Lady Lansdowne, (private), 6 January 1887, BH. Lansdowne (5) MSS, uncatalogued.

<sup>22</sup> Lansdowne to Goschen (private), 4 January 1887, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/12/4/3.

<sup>23</sup> Lansdowne to Devonshire (private), 4 January 1887, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/12/4/3.

<sup>24</sup> Lansdowne to Dowager Lady Lansdowne, (private), 6 January 1887, BH. Lansdowne (5) MSS, uncatalogued.

<sup>25</sup> 'I do not to tell you the truth quite trust Beach and Ashbourne.' Lansdowne to Goschen (private), 4 January 1887, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/15.

<sup>26</sup> Lansdowne, 'Great Unionist Demonstration at Calne', *The Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*, 31 January 1895, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/16/30.

<sup>27</sup> Harold Macmillan married Lansdowne's granddaughter, Dorothy Cavendish.

<sup>28</sup> The Carlton Club was and still is a London Gentleman's Club associated with the Conservative party.

father-in-law who was the then Unionist Leader in the House of Lords. Devonshire told Macmillan, 'Lansdowne looked at him with horror.'<sup>29</sup> According to Richard Haldane, 'A Whig he was to the end of time, the old type of Whig, and when the time changed he found himself naturally associated with a certain form of Conservatism.'<sup>30</sup>

In 1872 a fellow Whig and the then Liberal Under-Secretary of State for War, Lord Northbrook, left the War Office for the Viceroyalty of India and Lansdowne was offered the post. He told Gladstone, 'if Mr Cardwell did not consider my complete ignorance of War Office matters an obstacle...I would accept the post.'<sup>31</sup> Cardwell assured him that 'when he came to the office he did not know a gun from a sword.'<sup>32</sup> Lansdowne's two years in the post provided a useful foundation and influence to his later work as Secretary of State. In Cardwell he found a master in his own house. In his administration of the War Office he always encouraged efficiency and was ever ready to avail himself of the advice and opinions of experts, even if they were not connected with the War Office. He filled his department with the best men he could find, whether soldiers or civilians and he expected them to 'work with him and in subordination to his policy.'<sup>33</sup> Although Cardwell's principal reforms were mostly completed before Lansdowne arrived they were still on trial and relations between the civilians and the senior officers in the department were divided over the question of control. Attempting to grapple with this issue, Cardwell instructed Lansdowne to chair a committee to ascertain the points on which friction arose.<sup>34</sup> Among the innovations introduced during his Under-Secretaryship the Intelligence Department and a system of Army reserve were established. Cardwell's reforms were successfully put to the test by the Ashanti War during the final months of the Liberal government.

Although Lansdowne's tenure as Under Secretary of State was brief he was given a further opportunity to acquire knowledge of military administration in 1883

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<sup>29</sup> H. Macmillan, *The Past Masters: Politics and Politicians, 1906-1939* (London, 1975), p.194.

<sup>30</sup> R.B. Haldane, 'Lords Debate', 'Tributes to the Late Marquess of Lansdowne', 16 June 1927, *Hansard 5<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.67, c.716.

<sup>31</sup> Lansdowne to Dowager Lady Lansdowne, (private), 24 April 1872. BH. Lansdowne (5) MSS, uncatalogued.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> O. Wheeler, *The War Office Past and Present*, (London, 1914), p.114.

<sup>34</sup> 'Lansdowne Committee on Army Control, Transport and Supply', BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/13/5.

when he chaired a select committee on the Channel Tunnel. Whereas most senior officers and the public regarded the tunnel as a danger to the national existence of England, Lansdowne disagreed. Aside from the practical findings of the committee the inquiry raised awareness of the inadequacies of the military provisions for home defence and Britain's dependence on the Royal Navy; issues that required Lansdowne's attention twelve years later. It also served as an example of Lansdowne's willingness to take a stand against the majority; a conviction he maintained throughout his career. A short time after the inquiry ended he rather self-deprecatingly observed:

A friend, usually very calm in his judgement but I am told the acute sufferer of sea sickness, met me in the street: "If you stop this tunnel – look out for yourself." I took refuge in my club and met another very old friend of the military persuasion. He put his fist inconveniently near my face and said "Old fellow, if you allow this \*\*\* tunnel ... none of us will ever speak to you again." Bedlam ... was the mildest form of punishment with which we were threatened, whether we went for or against.<sup>35</sup>

Unable to betray his convictions Lansdowne resigned from the position of Under-Secretary of State for India in Gladstone's second ministry in 1880 after only two months in office. He was unable to accept the Prime Minister's policy towards Ireland and the effect it had on his position as an Irish landlord. As an Irish landowner he was deeply involved in the land question all through his career and in the 1880s was an outspoken critic of Gladstone. It can be speculated that his appointment as Governor-General of Canada in 1883 was made so as to remove him from Westminster just when Irish affairs were beginning to dominate political thinking in the Liberal party. From 1883 until 1888 Lansdowne's attention was largely dominated by Canadian commercial affairs and the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway, but with the Riel rebellion and Metis uprising in 1885 he experienced the interplay between military preparation and action and diplomacy. The incident impressed on him that as a civilian he 'cannot interfere in the direction of military operations.'<sup>36</sup> The rebellion was more important in its results than in itself. The leading rebels were tried and Riel with Lansdowne's approval was sentenced to death. That this verdict was disapproved of by Queen Victoria and most other officials was a further example of his willingness to place himself at odds with

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<sup>35</sup> Speeches 1883-1888, August 1883, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/14/19.

<sup>36</sup> Lansdowne to Elliot-Murray-Kynnmound (private), 10 April 1885, NLS. Minto MSS, MS. 12550, f.76.

the general consensus based on this conviction. Lansdowne not only proved himself to be a successful administrator during the crisis but a statesman with courage and conviction.

While Canada impressed on Lansdowne the chain of decisions behind military administration in time of peace and war, India imparted on him a similar lesson but on a larger stage. During his five years as Viceroy of India between 1889 and 1894 he was regarded by Mortimer Durand as 'a fighting Viceroy'. To Lansdowne the defence of the Indian Empire and the North West Frontier in particular were key components of his administration. During his Viceroyalty he faced problems and successfully oversaw 'small colonial wars' over Burma, Siam, China, Tibet, Afghanistan, Persia, Chitral, Hunza, Kashmir and Manipur. These military operations varied widely in scale and extent. He believed such 'complications of this sort are unhappily inevitable, and we cannot expect entire immunity from them.'<sup>37</sup> As Viceroy, he exercised supreme authority over the soldiers in India which in 1888 numbered 100,000 British soldiers and 180,000 native soldiers. In contrast to the British Army it was a non-Parliamentary Army and its numbers were not limited by an annual vote. To Lansdowne 'the efficient working of the machine depended entirely on the personal qualities of the officers who are for the time being Commander-in-Chief and Military Member of Council.'<sup>38</sup> Overseeing the efficiency and professionalism of the Indian Empire taught Lansdowne the importance of selecting and retaining the best people. He was acutely aware that an injudicious selection among the military officers 'would be a positive calamity and would enormously add to the difficulty of my position here.'<sup>39</sup>

His experience in India strongly shaped his views on defence matters. Economy and efficiency were central to his Indian policy. Faced with a currency crisis during his Viceroyalty he maintained the defence of India based on the resources the country then had. Faced with a similar concern for financial consideration in 1900 he repeated this pattern while at the War Office. He also set about reorganising the Presidential Army system in India. Attempting to remove the friction and waste of power caused by the way in which control exercised over the

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<sup>37</sup> Lansdowne, 'St Andrew's Day Dinner at Calcutta', 29 November 1891, *The Times of India*, 30 November 1891.

<sup>38</sup> Lansdowne to Cross (private), 15 September 1891, BL. Cross MSS. Mss. EUR E243/31.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*



Indian forces was divided between the Government of India and the local governments he suggested putting under the immediate control of the Government of India the different departments of the Presidential Armies.<sup>40</sup> In similar ways the decentralisation of authority he introduced in India was also attempted at the War Office in 1897. How India influenced his War Office administration can also be seen in his willingness to innovate and adapt Anglo-Indian military practices through the formal establishment of the Imperial Service Troops. One can speculate whether he had their formation in mind when helping to establish the Imperial Yeomanry in 1900. It was also during his Viceroyalty that he learnt from Roberts the important role of transport and logistics in mobilising an Army. He was certainly not unaware of logistical and administrative considerations of using military force. He believed that ‘any properly organised Army depended on its transport. Without that, no body of troops no matter how disciplined could be successfully employed.’<sup>41</sup> During ‘the War’ Roberts found that transport was the British Army’s principal difficulty. In his reorganisation of the system he held that the existing transport system, which had never been tried before on a large scale ‘did not reflect discredit on any individual, but...defects of the system should be made public when personal blame cannot reasonably attach to anyone.’<sup>42</sup>

That Lansdowne was offered and rejected a dukedom on his return from India, says much for his modesty and common sense. Like his own grandfather before him<sup>43</sup> such an offer ‘was less acceptable to him than might have been supposed,’ and accepting the Garter was ‘more than sufficient recompense’ for his service in India.<sup>44</sup> A similar example of his humility was his decision to be buried in the local village churchyard rather than in the family mausoleum so as to be with his people. Lansdowne was pragmatic, hard-working, and positive even about his opponents. According to Sir John Macdonald, Prime Minister in Canada during his Governor-Generalship, he was one of the most perspicacious of the governors he had known.

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<sup>40</sup> Lansdowne to Cross (private), 26 July 1890, BL. Cross MSS, Mss. EUR E243/29.

<sup>41</sup> Lansdowne to Cross (private), 19 November 1890, BL. Cross MSS, Mss. EUR E243/26;

‘Lansdowne at Jeypore’, *The Pioneer*, 18 November 1890.

<sup>42</sup> Roberts to Lansdowne (private), 4 May 1900, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/22/20.

<sup>43</sup> ‘Triplet and Toast’, *Punch*, 3 October 1857, p.144.

<sup>44</sup> Lansdowne to Queen Victoria (private), 25 February 1894, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/ 18/3.

He and his ministers were struck by his quick grasp of the complex, often difficult nature of British-Canadian relations.<sup>45</sup>

Lansdowne disliked formality. This was particularly evident during his period in India where he found himself attending events ‘with all sorts of preposterous formalities,’<sup>46</sup> where even an informal visit into the Indian countryside was accompanied by numerous tents and retainers of all sorts.<sup>47</sup> Harboured no racial prejudices he was an excellent negotiator and dealt with questions in a candid manner.<sup>48</sup> Having an interest in the machinery of departments he took pains to discover how offices under his authority operated. Disliking red tape and administering on party lines, he was dextrous, cool-headed and knew his own mind.<sup>49</sup> He was capable of withstanding the insults of his opponents with humour and pluck. Denying extravagance he administered his estates and diplomatic posts with financial moderation. Subject to this consideration he allowed his subordinates a free hand. Although it was reputed that in India he was strongly influenced by his officials,<sup>50</sup> there is no evidence of this in his later career. Presumed to be a good listener he could also appear aloof and impassive, and because he never vindicated himself when attacked many people imagined and saw what they were predisposed to see. According to his nephew Ernest Hamilton he was:

Not one of those who lay bare their souls for the inspection even of intimates. I don't think that he had any more desire to shine luminously at the dinner-table among his relations and friends than he had to shine luminously in the eyes of the public... In [his] very occasional anecdotes, he was never his own hero - not so much...because of lack of self-esteem as because the applause or appreciation of this man or that had little value for him... He was never one of the “jolly good fellow” fraternity. In eating and drinking he was restrained and careful which in the days of which I speak, was not only unusual but came very near ranking as a reproach... His sense of duty and his meticulous observance of rectitude were quite remarkable. I think those were the two standards at which he ceaselessly aimed... and so long as he consciously made

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<sup>45</sup> P.B. Waite, ‘Petty-Fitzmaurice, Henry Charles Keith’, *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*.

<sup>46</sup> Lansdowne to Dowager Lady Lansdowne, (private), 16 December 1888, BH. Lansdowne (5) MSS, uncatalogued.

<sup>47</sup> Lansdowne to Dowager Lady Lansdowne, (private), 17 May 1889, BH. Lansdowne (5) MSS, uncatalogued.

<sup>48</sup> Northbrook, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘Military Reorganisation - Recruiting in Scotland, etc.’, 25 May 1900, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.83, c.1269.

<sup>49</sup> Meath, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘Military Lands Bill [H.L.]’, 18 May 1900, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.83, c.539.

<sup>50</sup> Roberts and Mortimer Durand in particular.

good on both counts, the voice of the public raised either in hoots or cheers, left him unmoved.<sup>51</sup>

Cheap popularity had no value for him and this limited his ability to operate in a political environment increasingly dominated by machine politicians weaving and dealing and dishing the opposition. As a pragmatist he believed that public opinion was another expression ‘for the common sense of the country.’<sup>52</sup> Owing to his patrician values and position in society he was also more willing than most of his contemporaries to perform duties others would shy away from. While in Bombay on a Viceregal visit he and his wife Maud visited a leper asylum and inspected one of the crowded steamers that carried pilgrims to Mecca.<sup>53</sup> Neither a Jingoist nor an annexationist,<sup>54</sup> he believed Britain had an Army system ‘the outcome, not of any deliberate plan of construction, but of gradual and spontaneous growth; our Regular Army, our Militia, our Volunteers have grown up side by side, at first with scarcely any connexion, upon no definite plan’.<sup>55</sup> While the Army had grown up piecemeal he also realised that Britain’s military requirements were probably more extensive geographically and more complicated than any other European nation. As such he acknowledged a need to add to the strength of the Army. The widespread view that the Navy was the first line of defence he acknowledged, but he denied that it was a substitute for a strong Army. His view of war, as shaped by the events in South Africa, was that ‘we are fighting not about words, but about things; about the substance, and not about the form. It is the substance that we mean to retain.’<sup>56</sup> As an advocate of modern military thinking he shared much in common with the reformers in and out of the Army. He believed that a British officer, ‘was the most valuable military asset that we possess,’<sup>57</sup> but he deprecated their participation in politics. As Secretary of State he believed that he alone was responsible for the Army to Parliament.

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<sup>51</sup> E. Hamilton, ‘A Personal Sketch’, in Lord Newton, *Lansdowne: A Biography* (London, 1929), pp.506-511.

<sup>52</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘Military Works (Money) Bill, 5 April 1897, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.48, c.494.

<sup>53</sup> Lansdowne to Dowager Lady Lansdowne (private), 1 April 1892, BH. Lansdowne (5) MSS, uncatalogued.

<sup>54</sup> Lansdowne to Fitzpatrick (private), 11 August 1891, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Mss. EUR D558/21.

<sup>55</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lord Lansdowne on the Army’, *The Times*, 7 June 1898, p.13.

<sup>56</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lord Lansdowne in Sheffield - The Cutler’s Feast’, *The Belfast News-Letter*, 3 November 1899.

<sup>57</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘Territorial and Reserve Forces Bill’, 26 June 1907, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.176, c.1336.

In using Lansdowne as a prism through which to study late Victorian politics, an opportunity has been taken to explore the question of responsibility and the state. From the mid-1890s until Tariff Reform overshadowed it, a campaign of ‘National Efficiency’ assumed populist force.<sup>58</sup> Although Lansdowne was not close to the informal network of members involved in the movement he knew and respected many of them. By concentrating their energies on a quest for Imperial efficiency they attempted to shake up laissez-faire habits and shame the government into modernising itself. The concern that Britain was falling behind other countries resonated with many politicians. Adopting certain ideas from the ‘National Efficiency’ movement they tried to shape debates around these ideas and use the argument to establish intellectual dominance and ultimately to win elections. Although the principal ideas of ‘National Efficiency’ were directed largely at education and social welfare, military and naval capability also merged in this ideology.<sup>59</sup> It can be speculated that the movement tacitly influenced Lansdowne’s decision to relocate the War Office under one roof, to decentralise and reduce red tape, and to provide better conditions of service in the Army. Although the movement achieved little immediate success, an interest in the new ‘sociology’ that emerged during and after ‘the War’ brought with it a redefinition of the words ‘individual’ and ‘society.’<sup>60</sup> An example of this, noted during ‘the War’, was public recognition of the physical inadequacy of recruits from working class backgrounds found to be living below the poverty line. Reflecting on these ideas at the time the Unionists divided into on the one hand those eager to prioritise ‘economy’ and on the other those in favour of greater unity of the Empire, while the Liberals recast their thinking about Imperial society and the role that the state should play within it.<sup>61</sup>

While the role of the state and responsibility was subject to scrutiny during this period, so the role of Britain in international affairs underwent a transformation. After the Congress of Vienna, the stability of Europe was assured by a rough balance of power. What existed in 1895 was a system in which any attempt by a European power to increase its relative strength or to dominate the continent tended to result in

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<sup>58</sup> G.R. Searle, *A New England? Peace and War, 1886-1918* (Oxford, 2004), pp.302-306.

<sup>59</sup> B. Semmel, *Imperialism and Social Reform: English Social-Imperial, 1895-1914* (Cambridge, Mass., 1960), pp.53-54.

<sup>60</sup> M. Bentley, *Politics Without Democracy, 1815-1914* (Oxford, 1999), p.234.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p.226

the formation of a grouping to oppose it. Protected by geography and the Royal Navy, Britain had a degree of freedom in foreign policy denied to the other powers.<sup>62</sup> It was the British Empire that complicated matters. Lying outside Europe, but connected to it by Imperial rivalries, the Empire was both a British strength and a possible strategic liability. On the one hand, it provided prestige, trade and a safe haven for investment and on the other hand Imperial clashes with European powers might have repercussions for British policy in Europe. Moreover keeping the Empire intact was an expensive and difficult business. Whereas in Europe, were Britain to oppose another power's attempt at obtaining hegemony, Britain would be certain to have allies to share the burden with, overseas this was not the case.<sup>63</sup>

With the return of the Unionists to power in the summer of 1895 the electorate expressed its confidence in Salisbury and his government. Salisbury's retention of the Foreign Office, combined with Chamberlain's choice of the Colonial Office 'gave an implicitly higher profile to overseas than domestic affairs.'<sup>64</sup> Major international developments had placed British foreign policy on a new footing. The conclusion of the Franco-Russian alliance of 1894 had unsettled the British Cabinet and raised fears that Britain's Imperial defence might be inadequate. The Sino-Japanese war of 1894-1895 and with it the prospect of the collapse of China and the emergence of Japan was an indication of how events in the periphery might impact on relations between the great powers.<sup>65</sup> The first indication that Britain's traditional foreign policy was no longer incontestable emerged when a Cabinet majority overruled Salisbury during the Armenian Crisis of 1895. Salisbury's inability to carry his Cabinet with him not only damaged his own authority but raised questions about traditional British foreign policy. Even though traditional British foreign policy was under assault it was slow to change, and so too was British military policy. This unwillingness to recognise change, this thesis will conclude, made 'total' reform of the War Office and Army unworkable during Lansdowne's administration. Although this supposition will be examined in more detail even if there had been more appetite for 'total' change, internal and external political rivalries and the complex nature of

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<sup>62</sup> K. Neilson, 'The Anglo-Japanese Alliance and British Strategic Foreign Policy, 1902 -1914' in P.P. O'Brien (ed.) *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1902-1922* (London, 2004), p.48.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p.49.

<sup>64</sup> P.T. Marsh, *The Discipline of Popular Government: Lord Salisbury's Domestic Statecraft, 1881-1902* (Hassocks, 1978), p.273.

<sup>65</sup> T.G. Otte, *The Foreign Office Mind: The Making of British Foreign Policy, 1865-1914* (Cambridge, 2011), p.209.

the state made it impracticable. Caught up in protecting their own self interests there was no spirit of collaboration between individuals.

Investigating the spirit of collaboration is the aim of Chapter One which considers the organisation of the War Office that Lansdowne inherited in 1895. It explores how it operated and who the civilians and senior officers were. It describes the relations that existed between these individuals and what impact that had on Lansdowne's ability to reform the department. The chapter juxtaposes the principal military reformers and their views with those of the civilians at the War Office. Highlighting that individual prejudices and rivalry were not only shaped by personalities but by the physical location of the department, the chapter describes how Lansdowne managed an office scattered across twelve different locations in London and three outside. In addressing how Lansdowne operated within this system the chapter explains the lines of command and how they were linked to him. It explains how he worked with and through his Under-Secretary of State and his other officials. It explores the various divisions of power in the department and how he dealt with the problems that this created. As military technology experienced profound changes the role of experts was essential and the chapter explores how technical issues influenced Lansdowne's decisions and ability to shape and be shaped by the system he managed.

The nature of personalities is also the subject of Chapter Two. This chapter interrogates the principal individuals outside the War Office, including the Cabinet, the Liberal opposition, the service parliamentarians, the defence intellectuals and the press. Exploring how Lansdowne's aspirations and values did or did not connect with these groups, it aims to describe to what extent Lansdowne embodied a clear distinction between civilians and experts and his own reforming instincts; explores how and why Salisbury chose Lansdowne and how Lansdowne justified his position within the Unionist Cabinet as one of the five Liberal Unionists. It shows how the field of intellectual endeavour functioned in and out of Parliament and the contribution of thinking that lay beyond military policy. By intellectualising the subject, military policy is shown as less about brass buttons and more about strategic thinking. How far Lansdowne got into the current of intellectual force fields is explored as well as who were the individuals who opposed him and used intellectual arguments to block his proposals that did not suit their interests. The chapter

explores these interests within the context of the movement for War Office and Army reform before and during ‘the War’. An examination of how Lansdowne used the reform discourse and this movement as a means to an end in order to get his proposals through Parliament is also made. Although it is not within the scope of this thesis to examine the small colonial wars fought during this period it will be shown how the success achieved by the British Army overseas created national heroes and cultivated a sense of complacency in Britain’s invincible Army. The chapter demonstrates that this complacency made Lansdowne’s task more challenging.

Lansdowne’s ability to manage the reform discourse was partly shaped by his reorganisation of the War Office system in 1895, which is the subject of Chapter Three. By examining the Order-in-Council of 1895 this chapter describes the debate about the subordination of the Commander-in-Chief and the responsibility of the senior officers. The continuity of the Cardwell system under both Liberal and Unionist administrations is highlighted by reviewing previous War Office and Army reforms between 1870 and 1895. Lansdowne’s autonomy, statescraft and willingness to take tough decisions and be criticised for them is demonstrated. The chapter examines his encouragement for consultative bodies within the War Office and suggests that the creation of the Defence Committee of the Cabinet is indicative of the importance he attached to how the British might plan and organise for war. This need for forward planning, the chapter demonstrates, was not collectively accepted by the Cabinet and ultimately an opportunity was missed.

In Chapter Four the unwillingness of the senior officers to pull together with their civilian counterparts and among themselves is shown to affect Lansdowne’s management of the reform discourse and his ability to implement his army proposals. Highlighting the approaches Lansdowne and Wolseley, the Commander-in-Chief, both took to defend the existing military system, the chapter shows that they shared much in common. But it also suggests that Lansdowne in his defence of the system was willing to introduce elasticity far beyond that envisaged by his War Office colleagues. The chapter shows that Lansdowne had not only the right political and managerial skills to implement change but also an awareness and respect for public opinion. His ability to manipulate the agitation for ‘total’ reform in 1897 and 1898 is outlined. It is shown that by focusing largely on increases in men and better conditions he reduced the scope of the discourse and deflected his critics in their

attempt to abolish the Cardwell system. Demonstrating how Army reforms are contextualised the different views between the civilians and military of the purpose of the Army are highlighted. Conflicting personalities, pressures and self-interests both within the War Office and outside are described and suggest it was slow to change. By detailing the gradual reforms Lansdowne did implement the chapter illustrates that he had a clear vision of how the Army ought to be administered and that he envisaged it as a single force in which Regular and Auxiliary forces were linked. The chapter shows how Lansdowne's whiggish values influenced his genuine interest in improving the conditions of service and the popularity of the Army.

Lansdowne's ability to control his critics is examined in Chapter Five in the context of the origins of 'the War'. The chapter demonstrates the uneasy relationship between diplomacy and military planning. An examination is made of how Lansdowne arrived at solutions and what practical problems he encountered in implementing these. By using Lansdowne as a prism through which to study late Victorian politics, the chapter explores the nature of civil-military relations. The chapter will contrast the strategy of decision by crisis taken by the Cabinet with that of planning for war adopted by the military and show how each party played off each other under public scrutiny.

With the breakdown in negotiations in October 1899, Chapter Six investigates the impact of 'the War' and its effect on the War Office and Lansdowne. It describes who his critics were and how he responded to them. While the British Army was good at dealing with small wars the chapter shows that it was far less well equipped for war on a large scale. It investigates how and why Lansdowne's War Office and Army system did not break down and how he used the popularity of 'the War' to introduce permanent and temporary reform measures that both diverted his critics from their quest to abolish the Cardwell system and raised awareness of the under-utilised skills of the Auxiliary Army. Using Lansdowne as a prism through which to study 'the War', the chapter also intends to give a general description of the challenges facing the War Office and Army in bringing 'the War' to a conclusion. It shows that Lansdowne's willingness to allow the generals a free hand in no way reduced civilian supremacy at the War Office but satisfied the senior officers that their demand for greater autonomy was acknowledged.



Loosening the authority held by the civilians over the military is explored in the final chapter which assesses Lansdowne's legacy. By an analysis of the War Office and Army reforms of Lansdowne's three immediate successors, the Unionists St John Brodrick and Hugh Arnold-Forster and the Liberal Richard Burdon Haldane, the chapter shows how Lansdowne's vision for the War Office and Army was continued. It is not within the scope of the thesis to examine each scheme of reform in depth. The chapter shows the way in which both Unionist and Liberal policy was made in and out of office. It locates each Secretary of State and his advisers within the general political background of the period and summarises some of the political factors that shaped their decisions. The chapter intends to highlight Lansdowne's own thoughts on his successors' reforms and how in his capacity as a respected statesman he was able to continue to influence the reform discourse. By demonstrating that the failures of his Unionist successors to implement a popular reform made it more urgent for their Liberal successor, the chapter shows how these failures played into his hands. Seen in the context of a continental commitment, it is speculated that Haldane's creation and the subsequent deployment of the British Expeditionary Force and the Territorial Army during the First World War were influenced by Lansdowne's earlier schemes.

It is ironic that, after leaving the War Office, Lansdowne, satirised as the White Knight in Saki's adaptation of *Alice in Wonderland*, went on to serve as Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs until 1905 and Leader of the House of Lords until 1916 with a certain degree of success. He was even acknowledged in 1904 as the only member of the Cabinet suitable to replace Arthur Balfour, the then Prime Minister, were anything to happen to him.<sup>66</sup> Not long after leaving the War Office Lansdowne self-deprecatingly remarked 'I fear it would be very difficult to make anything out of my five years at the War Office. The subjects dealt with there are so dry and technical that a popular and at the same time sufficient account of them would be nearly impossible to write.'<sup>67</sup> By using Lansdowne as a prism through which to study late Victorian politics, including civil-military relations, the reform discourses, the late Victorian Army and 'the War', this thesis aims to re-examine

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<sup>66</sup> Brodrick to Curzon (private), 1 February 1904, BL. Curzon MSS, Mss. EUR F111/162.

<sup>67</sup> Lansdowne to Forrest (private), 23 April 1901, Bod. Miscellaneous Letters MS. Eng. Let. d.275, f.84.

Lansdowne in his own context and restore him to his proper position. This will begin in the next chapter by focusing on how Lansdowne operated at the War Office.

## **Chapter One - The Organisation of the War Office**

The War Office was the nerve-centre for the military policy of the country and the military government of the Army. It was a highly complex department and continually in the eye of a political storm raging around its operation and organisation. Broad political, social and economic considerations compelled Lansdowne to try to reform the War Office and these acted as both a deterrent and a stimulant to his ability to achieve change. Among the principal constraints that hindered Lansdowne's ability to manage the reform discourse was the physical structure of the department itself and the rivalry between the civilians and the senior officers within it. In the literature the number of works detailing the organisation of the War Office is limited and Lansdowne's term of office has not received a proper assessment.<sup>1</sup> In order to understand how he operated at the War Office this thesis has made an interrogation of the extant archive with a particular focus on War Office records at Kew. Using this material this chapter will attempt to explain the War Office Lansdowne inherited and managed in 1895 and the complexities he had to grapple with.

The department itself was established in June 1854 with the separation of the Colonial and Military business of the Secretary of State for War and the Colonies and the appointment of a Secretary of State for War.<sup>2</sup> From 1854 until 1858 all the previously independent branches of the civil administration of the Army were brought together within a single department and as the department evolved it took over a number of different premises across London. It was Lansdowne's opinion that the accommodation at the War Office was 'most unsatisfactory, partly owing to the fact that the different departments were so scattered and partly to the unsuitability of

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<sup>1</sup> O. Wheeler, *The War Office Past and Present* (London, 1914); G. Hampden, *The War Office* (London, 1935); M. Roper, *The Records of the War Office and Related Departments, 1660-1964* (Kew, 1998); Hamer, *The British Army*, Ministry of Defence, *The Old War Office Building - a History* (London, 2001); J.W. Fortescue, 'History and War Office Reform' *The Nineteenth Century and After*, 54 (1903), pp.908-18; A. Griffiths, 'The War Office: Past, Present, And To Come', *The Fortnightly Review*, 73(436) (1903), pp.665-78; Scrutator, 'War Office Reform', *Contemporary Review*, 85 (1904), pp.370-85. A.H. Atteridge, 'The War Office', *The Windsor Magazine: An Illustrated Monthly for Men and Women*, 7 (December 1897), pp.545-52. T. Wintringham, 'The War Office', *The Political Quarterly*, 13(2) (1942), pp.117-29; Togatus, 'The War Office', *The Contemporary Review*, 79 (1901), pp.38-48.; M. Tadman, 'The War Office. A Study of its development as an organisational system, 1870-1904' (PhD thesis, London, 1992).

<sup>2</sup> Roper, *The Records of the War Office*, p.95.

the main structure.<sup>3</sup> It was ‘an intolerable state of things, which interferes to an extent which I do not suppose anybody realises with the efficient conduct of business.’<sup>4</sup> It added greatly to his difficulties in the department.<sup>5</sup> The main structure housed at 80-91 Pall Mall comprised ‘a tiresome jumble of rambling passages, sudden stairs and confusing turns.’<sup>6</sup> Its rooms were permeated by the odours of colza lamps and leather fire buckets. Beyond Pall Mall the department was housed in buildings at eleven other sites in London as well as at Enfield Lock, Birmingham and Waltham Abbey.<sup>7</sup>

By the time Lansdowne left the War Office in 1900 it was regarded as probably the largest administrative establishment in the world.<sup>8</sup> It was remarked that the fortifications branch ‘is a day’s journey - so to speak - from the Adjutant-General’s room and we do not believe that the members of the Horse Guards staff even know where the Intelligence Branch is to be found.’<sup>9</sup> The facilities were so poor and ill-health of the 1,140 members of staff so well known that one of the first decisions taken by Lansdowne was to establish a new War Office building which would bring the principal administrators under one roof.<sup>10</sup> Lansdowne’s experience of administering his estates and his offices in Canada and India had ingrained in him the importance of economy and efficiency. Towards the end of the nineteenth century in Britain these ideas merged in an ideology of ‘National Efficiency.’<sup>11</sup> Although Lansdowne was not directly involved in the campaign it can be speculated that its consideration shaped his administration of the War Office.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> PP, 1896, X, (310), ‘Report from the Select Committee on government offices (appropriation of sites); together with the proceedings of the committee, minutes of evidence, and appendix’, 291, p.14; ‘The New War Office’ *The Times*, 10 July 1896; Wintringham, ‘The War Office’, pp.117-29.

<sup>4</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘The New War Office- Models of public buildings’, 4 August 1899, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.75, c.1440.

<sup>5</sup> Lansdowne to Salisbury (private), 4 January 1898, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/6.

<sup>6</sup> H. Gordon, *The War Office* (London, 1935), p.76.

<sup>7</sup> See Appendix I, p.266.

<sup>8</sup> H. Thring ‘Place the War Office in Commission’ ‘Lessons of the War’ *Nineteenth Century*, 48(285) (November 1900), p.697.

<sup>9</sup> ‘Wanted a War Office’, *The Broad Arrow, The Naval and Military Gazette*, 55(1414), 3 August 1895, p.130,

<sup>10</sup> PP, 1896, X, (310), ‘Report from the Select Committee on government offices (appropriation of sites); together with the proceedings of the committee, minutes of evidence, and appendix’, 295, p.14; ‘The New War Office’, *The Times*, 10 July 1896.

<sup>11</sup> Semmel, *Imperialism and Social Reform*, p.63.

<sup>12</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Colston’s Day in Bristol’, *The Times*, 14 November 1896, p.8.

The physical separation of the different buildings within the War Office estate was also reflected in divisions between the civilian and senior officers employed in the department. At the head of the War Office was the Secretary of State for War. The Cabinet position was first created in 1794 and in 1801 became the Department of the Secretary of State for War and the Colonies. The position of Secretary of State for War was reinstated in 1854. Between 1661 and 1854 the War Office was administered by the Secretary at War. This person had no responsibility over military policy and was subordinate to the Secretary of State. In 1854 the office of Secretary at War was combined with that of Secretary of State for War. As a Minister of the Crown, Lansdowne was responsible to Parliament for the whole conduct of Army policy and administration. His role comprised wide duties and responsibilities. As well as attending debates, meetings, committees and the War Office Council, he was responsible for the Army's supplies, equipment and readiness for the management of wars and military expeditions, and for decisions on technical questions which involved large sums of money. He was also accountable to Parliament for the Army estimates which might be submitted in draft to the Cabinet with or without the prior agreement of the War Office and Treasury. In administering his department he was influenced by Cardwell's view of a Secretary of State for War as a Roman farmer 'vigorously pruning his fruit trees, amputating the useless boughs, and inserting in their place grafts of a happier growth.'<sup>13</sup>

Unlike his predecessor, Campbell-Bannerman, who was distinctly lazy, hated detail<sup>14</sup> and was content to leave the management of the department to his civil servants, Lansdowne took a personal interest in the administration and staffing of the office.<sup>15</sup> There is no record of the hours Lansdowne kept at the War Office, although as one of the non-Saturdayites in Salisbury's Cabinet he did almost all his work at the office from Monday to Friday, snatching the weekend away.<sup>16</sup> Although there is no evidence that he conducted his duties with his senior War Office officials at Lansdowne House in the same way that he did as Foreign Secretary, when he routinely spent the morning at Lansdowne House meeting with foreign diplomats

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<sup>13</sup> Lansdowne 'Lords Debate', 'Territorial and Reserve Forces Bill', 26 June 1907, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.176, c.1334.

<sup>14</sup> G.D.A. Fleetwood Wilson, *Letters to Somebody: A Retrospect* (London, 1922), in J. Wilson, *CB: A Life of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman* (London, 1973), p.175.

<sup>15</sup> E.M. Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army* (Manchester, 1992), p.48.

<sup>16</sup> Earl of Midleton, *Records and Reactions, 1856-1939* (London, 1939), p.49.

and the afternoon at the Foreign Office, it can be speculated that the demands of the War Office required more of his attention in Whitehall. He was considered to be a hard-working Secretary of State, and during the first six months of 'the War' did not take leave from London.<sup>17</sup> Determined to understand how his department functioned he took an especial interest in administrative problems, often upsetting his civilian and military officials by his perceived interference.

Between June 1854, when the office was created, and July 1895 there were fifteen Secretaries of State for War.<sup>18</sup> Six ministers were Conservative and one a Peelite, seven ministers were Liberal and one a Whig. Aged fifty, Lansdowne was five years younger than the average age of his predecessors. The oldest to hold office was Viscount Cranbrook, who held the post for two weeks in 1886 when aged seventy-one, and the youngest was Lord Hartington, who held the office in 1866 at the age of thirty-two. Generally, the Secretary of State was a civilian with no military service. Lansdowne was one of eleven ministers to have held the office with no previous career in the Army, although having served in the Royal Wiltshire Regiment of Yeomanry since 1863 he did have experience of the Auxiliary Army. Eight ministers had, like Lansdowne, graduated from Oxford and four had also been to Eton. He was also one of eleven who prior to becoming Secretary of State had held junior posts in the Colonial, India or War departments.

The office was regarded by many as one of the toughest in government and many Secretaries of State struggled with their duties. To Lansdowne's predecessor Campbell-Bannerman the office was 'the best abused, and most freely denounced department in her Majesty's service.'<sup>19</sup> The path of a Secretary of State for War according to Crewe was 'not strewn with roses but rather resembles one of those caravan routes across the African desert, strewn with whitened bones which show the disasters of those who have passed that way before.'<sup>20</sup> Of the occupants from June 1854, when the Duke of Newcastle entered 'that sink of iniquity'<sup>21</sup> and

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<sup>17</sup> Lansdowne to Minto (private), 4 March 1900, NLS. Minto MSS, MS 12568, f.212.

<sup>18</sup> See Appendix II, p.267.

<sup>19</sup> Campbell-Bannerman, 'Commons Debate', 'Army (Supplementary) Estimates 1899-1900', 20 October 1899, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.77, c.421.

<sup>20</sup> Crewe, 'Lords Debate', 'Territorial and Reserve Forces Bill', 26 June 1907, *ibid.*, Vol.176, c.1344.

<sup>21</sup> Weaver, 'Commons Debate', 'Army Estimates, 1899-1900', 17 March 1899, *ibid.*, Vol.68, c.1165.

‘epitome of organization run mad,’<sup>22</sup> until November 1900, when Lansdowne was promoted to the Foreign Office, only three, Cardwell, Stanhope and Lansdowne himself, spent more than five years in office. Lansdowne believed that of all the departments of the public service ‘the War Office was par excellence the department of dilemmas,’<sup>23</sup> and, although it had imperfections in its theoretical constitution, the actual practice was better than the theory.<sup>24</sup>

Lansdowne employed a private secretary and two assistant private secretaries at the War Office who were career civil servants.<sup>25</sup> From 1895 until he resigned in 1899, Sir Charles Welby was Lansdowne’s private secretary, disseminating his decisions and organising appointments. He was twenty years younger than Lansdowne and had been educated at Eton and Christ Church, Oxford. As Private Secretary to Edward Stanhope at the War Office between 1887 and 1892 he understood the inner workings of the department. He was a loyal supporter of Lansdowne and a close colleague of Arthur Haliburton, the Permanent Under-Secretary.<sup>26</sup> His successor H.P. Harvey, who had been Assistant Private Secretary since 1895, was in Lansdowne’s view ‘one of the best of the junior men in the office.’<sup>27</sup>

Lansdowne was assisted in Parliament by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for War. As Lansdowne sat in the House of Lords his Under-Secretary had to be a member of the House of Commons. Against the wishes of Queen Victoria who had wanted the post filled by someone impartial to Army affairs and able to work with the soldiers, Salisbury appointed St John Brodrick.<sup>28</sup> Brodrick was anything but impartial in military matters. Younger than Lansdowne by eleven years he had remarkable brain power and belief in himself.<sup>29</sup> He had also been to Eton and Balliol College. Having ‘revelled in military history from his boyhood’ and ‘probably read

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<sup>22</sup> Chesney quoted by Rasch, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Army (Supplementary) Estimates, 1900-1901’, 27 July 1900, *ibid.*, Vol.86, c.1552.

<sup>23</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lord Lansdowne on the Army’, *The Times*, 14 July 1898, p.10.

<sup>24</sup> Lansdowne, ‘The Guildhall Banquet’, *The Times*, 11 November 1895, p.6.

<sup>25</sup> See Appendix III, p.269.

<sup>26</sup> J.B. Atlay, *Haliburton: A Memoir of his Public Service* (London, 1909), p.151.

<sup>27</sup> Lansdowne to Salisbury (private), 13 December 1900, HH. Salisbury MSS, 3M/E, Lansdowne correspondence, f.613.

<sup>28</sup> Middleton, *Records and Reactions, 1856-1939*, p.92.

<sup>29</sup> ‘The War Office. I. Exit Mr Brodrick’, *Army and Navy Gazette* 154 (2281) (10 October 1903).

more Napoleonic literature than most civilians' before he was twenty,<sup>30</sup> and served as Financial Secretary to the War Office between 1886 and 1892 he was well prepared for his position. Brodrick and Lansdowne had known one another socially for many years and Lansdowne was sure that they would work well together.<sup>31</sup> Salisbury made it clear in appointing him that Lansdowne would be his chief, 'but as he is in the Lords the main Parliamentary burden will be on you.'<sup>32</sup>

Brodrick earned his success in the office as a master of the art of estimate framing and was reputed to have been one of the principal authors of the Army proposals scheme of December 1897.<sup>33</sup> He was unpopular with the senior officers who accused him of having an evil spirit of optimism and self-complacency.<sup>34</sup> Wolseley suspected him of dominating Lansdowne.<sup>35</sup> Wolseley had 'a horror of having to work with that prig of prigs' and 'clever talking ass with no shade of a statesman's instinct about him.'<sup>36</sup> In the House of Commons and the War Office Brodrick recognised how little the opinion of any civilian was worth on military questions but in certain matters, such as sending Guards to Gibraltar, it was not merely a question of military organisation. It was to some extent a question of military sentiment and a sentiment which civilians had as much right to share in as military men.<sup>37</sup> Giving evidence to the Royal Commission on the War in South Africa in 1903 (hereafter referred to as the Royal Commission), he remarked that the two things that 'the War Office has suffered from most in the past have been the division of military and civilian interests...and the isolation of War Office Departments from similar civilian services.'<sup>38</sup> In October 1898 Brodrick accepted an

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<sup>30</sup> Middleton, *Records and Reactions, 1856-1939*, p.74.

<sup>31</sup> Lansdowne to Salisbury (private), 1 July 1895, HH. Salisbury MSS. 3M/E, Lansdowne correspondence 1882-1896, f.83.

<sup>32</sup> Salisbury to Brodrick (private), 30 June 1895, NA, Middleton MSS, PRO. 30/67/3.

<sup>33</sup> 'The Government and the Army', *The Broad Arrow, The Naval and Military Gazette* 60(1549), 5 March 1898, p.257.

<sup>34</sup> 'The Position of the Commander-in-Chief and Army Reform.' *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 169 (1026) (April 1901), p.581.

<sup>35</sup> A.H. Page, 'The Supply Services of the British Army in the South Africa War 1899-1902' (PhD, thesis, Oxford, 1976).

<sup>36</sup> Wolseley to Lady Wolseley (private), 2 July 1895, HCL, Wolseley MSS, WP. 24/60.

<sup>37</sup> Brodrick, 'Commons Debate', 'Brigade of Guards', 12 February 1897, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.46, c.306.

<sup>38</sup> PP, 1904, XLI, Cd. 1791, 'Royal Commission on the War in South Africa' (hereafter referred to as RC. - Full details in list of abbreviations and bibliography.), 21757, p.552.



offer from Salisbury to move to the Foreign Office. Lansdowne thought he would be an immense loss to the War Office.<sup>39</sup>

While making enquiries about a potential successor for Brodrick, Balfour advised him that the ablest candidate was George Wyndham who had been his Private Secretary. The appointment was a surprise to many who believed other and more favourable candidates would have been generally more palatable to the service parliamentarians in the House of Commons.<sup>40</sup> Although this group of parliamentarians were unsatisfied by his appointment the defence intellectuals were pleased. Dilke remarked 'One of the great testimonies of the ability of [Wyndham] is the fact that, while we may have our differences with the Secretary of State when he speaks in this House we are always inclined to believe that he really agrees with us beforehand, and that we should be in a better position if he had his way. I do not know whether that is so or not, but he gives us that impression, and we always speak with the feeling that we are speaking to one of ourselves.'<sup>41</sup> Wyndham accepted, as he explained to his mother, '(1) Because it will please you and Papa. (2) Because I have set my heart on being a minister of Victoria.'<sup>42</sup>

Eleven years younger than Lansdowne Wyndham also had an Eton education. After leaving the Royal Military College at Sandhurst he was commissioned in the Coldstream Guards where he served in Egypt in 1885 and later joined the Auxiliaries as a Yeoman. Entering the House of Commons in 1889 he quickly acquired a reputation as a skilful debater and fluent speaker, urbane, confident and easy of manner.<sup>43</sup> As a member of the 'Souls' he was intimately connected with a new generation of parliamentarians including Balfour, Selborne and Curzon whose own political ideals differed from those of Lansdowne and his contemporaries. It has been noted that the 'Souls' set themselves a little apart from and above the rest of their class - the ruling class. They claimed keener intellect, better judgement, greater

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<sup>39</sup> Lansdowne to Balfour (private), 5 October. 1898, BL. Balfour MSS, Add MS. 49727, f.58.

<sup>40</sup> 'The Changes at the War Office', *The Broad Arrow. The Naval and Military Gazette*, 61(1582), 22 October 1898, p.441.

<sup>41</sup> Dilke, 'Commons Debate', 'Army (Supplementary) Estimates, 1900-1901', 27 July 1900, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.86, c.1548.

<sup>42</sup> J.W. Mackail and G. Wyndham (eds.), *Life and Letters of George Wyndham* (2 Vols., London, 1925), Vol.1, p.67.

<sup>43</sup> J.A. Thompson, 'George Wyndham' in J.A. Thompson and A. Mejia, *Edwardian Conservatism. Five Studies in Adaptation* (London, 1988), M. Egremont, *The Cousins: The Friendship, Opinions and Activities of Wilfrid Scawen Blunt and George Wyndham* (London, 1977).

social audacity and a defiance of conventions imposed by others.<sup>44</sup> Like Lansdowne Wyndham was passionate about ideas and politics and had a very keen sense of honour. As an Imperialist he also defended the interests of colonials so zealously that he was known briefly as ‘the Member for South Africa.’<sup>45</sup> Lansdowne and Wyndham developed a close working relationship, especially after the outbreak of ‘the War’. Given considerable freedom by Lansdowne as a spokesman and official representative of the Army in the House of Commons his courage and tenacity confounded his critics, most notably Sir Charles Dilke, and earned him Lansdowne’s respect.

Below the Parliamentary Under-Secretary in the War Office hierarchy was the Permanent Under-Secretary with responsibility for the day to day management of the Central Office of the department. As principal policy adviser to the Secretary of State he was a career civilian and non-political officer. He maintained the tradition of the office from one ministry to another<sup>46</sup> and regarded all governments as being more or less the same.<sup>47</sup> Acting as the channel of communication between Lansdowne and the various departments, the smooth running of the War Office was dependent on his knowledge and skills. He protected the financial and political superiority of Lansdowne’s office while respecting the role of the Crown and the military functions of the Commander-in-Chief. It was his task to draw a line between the powers of the Commander-in-Chief and those of Lansdowne. Using his own discretion it was not uncommon in matters of minor importance for the Permanent Under-Secretary to sometimes make decisions without necessarily referring the matter to Lansdowne.<sup>48</sup> It was the view of Ralph Knox, Permanent Under-Secretary of State for War from 1897-1901, that he could relieve his chief of a ‘great deal of his routine work so as to give him more time to attend to questions of greater issue.’<sup>49</sup> At the same time as Lansdowne began his duties at the War Office, the

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<sup>44</sup> A. Lambert, *Unquiet Souls: A Social History of the Illustrious, Irreverent, Intimate Group of Aristocrats Known as the “Souls”* (London, 1984), p.204.

<sup>45</sup> Egremont, *The Cousins*, p.189.

<sup>46</sup> A.H. Atteridge, *The Windsor Magazine: An Illustrated Monthly for Men and Women*, 7 (December 1897), p.550.

<sup>46</sup> Middleton, *Records and Reactions*, p.74.

<sup>47</sup> ‘Civil Servants Permanent and Parliamentary’, *Army and Navy Gazette*, 56(1454) (16 May 1896), p.555.

<sup>48</sup> PP, 1904, XL, Cd.1790, RC, 1310, p.61.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 1308, p.60.

existing Permanent Under-Secretary, Sir Ralph Thompson, reached the age of sixty-five and retired.<sup>50</sup>

Thompson was succeeded by Sir Arthur Haliburton who was thirteen years older than Lansdowne. Entering the War Office in 1871 as assistant to the Director of Supplies, he was rapidly promoted and was considered a ‘permanent official of the old style, but more broad-minded than some of his class, and with a considerable gift of lucid literary expression.’<sup>51</sup> As an expert in his field, particularly regarding short service and adept at marshalling facts,<sup>52</sup> he developed a close working relationship with Lansdowne who valued his knowledge and continued to draw on this even after he retired in 1897. As a career civilian Haliburton believed that ‘the Government of this country being Government by the civil power, it follows that the administration of the great departments of state must be under the direct control of the civil power, advised and aided by such technical and expert assistance as the nature of the various administrations may demand. The extent to which the Secretary of State for War requires expert assistance to a military and of a civil character to enable him to secure the efficiency of the Army while guarding and preserving the prerogatives of the Crown and the interests of the public must be the measure of the division of duties between the civil and military employees of the War Department.’<sup>53</sup>

Haliburton’s successor was Sir Ralph Knox who was older than Lansdowne by eleven years. Entering the War Office in 1856 he rose to become Accountant-General in 1882. With a mastery of financial details, he earned the respect of his colleagues and chiefs. Lansdowne’s predecessor Campbell-Bannerman was closer to Knox than anyone else in that office during his tenure, and Knox was largely his own master.<sup>54</sup> Such praise was not shared by the Duke of Cambridge, the former Commander-in-Chief, who described Knox in 1871 as ‘having not a military idea in

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<sup>50</sup> ‘The Position in Pall Mall’, *The Broad Arrow, The Naval and Military Gazette*, 55(1410), 6 July 1895, p.1.

<sup>51</sup> Wheeler, *The War Office*, p.129.

<sup>52</sup> ‘Sir Arthur Haliburton on the Army’, *The Broad Arrow, The Naval and Military Gazette* 59(1537), 11 December 1897, p.621.

<sup>53</sup> Haliburton to Dawkins, ‘Minute,’ 14 January 1901, PP, 1901, XL, Cd. 581, ‘Minutes of evidence taken before the committee to enquire into War Office organisation together with appendices, digest and index’ (hereafter referred to as WOO. – Full details in list of abbreviations and bibliography.), Appendix 1, p.409.

<sup>54</sup> A.V. Tucker ‘Army and Society in England 1870-1900’, *Journal of British Studies*, 2(2) (May 1963), p.118.

his configuration.<sup>55</sup> Lansdowne was less willing to give Knox a free hand and he consequently found working with Lansdowne difficult. As an official of the strongest type<sup>56</sup> Knox was especially resentful of the manner in which business was sometimes transacted directly between Lansdowne and the senior officers.<sup>57</sup> He also thought Lansdowne was weak<sup>58</sup> and that because of his method of operating at the War Office civilian authority was damaged and military authority strengthened.

Although their knowledge of military matters varied these civil servants had spent their entire careers in the War Office and had acquired an intimate knowledge of how the machine worked. They had been instrumental in the deliberations of the Northbrook Committee which devised Cardwell's scheme for Army reform in 1870 and in subsequent years were influential in maintaining the military system as then laid down with its short service and linked battalions. Having known Lansdowne since he served in the War Office between 1872 and 1874 they were acquainted with some of his working practices. Unlike in the case of Campbell-Bannerman, the Permanent Under-Secretary never dominated Lansdowne. And it was noted that he maintained his own voice in War Office matters.<sup>59</sup>

Immediately subordinate to the Permanent Under-Secretary were the Assistant Under-Secretary and the clerical staff of the Central Department which dealt with registration of correspondence, editing of regulations and orders, Parliamentary questions and printings. Between 1895 and his death in 1898 the post was occupied by Sir George Lawson. His successor, Guy Fleetwood Wilson, held the post for ten years. Lawson was senior to Lansdowne by seven years and Fleetwood Wilson was younger than Lansdowne by five years. Fleetwood Wilson entered the Paymaster-General's Office in 1870 and subsequently served as Private Secretary to four Secretaries of State for War (1883-1893), before becoming Director of Clothing. His appointment was a surprise as he had seen little of the routine work in the Central

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<sup>55</sup> W. Verner and E.D. Parker, *The Military Life of H.R.H. George, Duke of Cambridge* (2 Vols., London, 1905), Vol.2, p.54.

<sup>56</sup> 'The Under-Secretaryship at the War Office', *The Broad Arrow. The Military and Naval Gazette*, 59(1522), 28 August 1897, p.229.

<sup>57</sup> PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21466, p.533.

<sup>58</sup> Knox to Campbell-Bannerman (private), 18 October 1899, BL. Campbell-Bannerman MSS, Add MS. 41221, f.261.

<sup>59</sup> Editorial, 'Our Correspondent Reform', *The Times*, 22 December 1897, p.9.

Office but as ‘a gentleman possessed both of “go” and ability’ he proved a valuable addition to the department.<sup>60</sup>

The Financial Secretary of the War Office was historically a member of the House of Commons. He was charged with managing the Civil Department of the office. In 1895 Salisbury appointed Joseph Powell Williams, a Liberal Unionist Member of Parliament from Birmingham South and a Chamberlainite. Older than Lansdowne by five years he was a businessman, fresh complexioned, clean shaven and with an aristocratic mien. ‘Meeting him in the street one might have taken him for a great scholar or artist.’<sup>61</sup> He was reputed to have played a key part in Joseph Chamberlain’s success in Birmingham and might have achieved more as Financial Secretary but for his tendency to be humorous, as on one occasion when meat was being discussed in the House and he remarked that he was not a butcher.<sup>62</sup> His jocular replies in the House of Commons drew attention to himself and suggested that he was not quite equal to his responsibility, especially in negotiations with contractors. Lansdowne knew him only very slightly,<sup>63</sup> and there is no record of the quality of their relations. The Civil Department of the War Office comprised the Contract Division, the Finance Division, the Ordnance Factories, the Income Duty Subdivision and the Clothing Division, until the latter was transferred to the Ordnance Department in 1899.<sup>64</sup>

In contrast to the civil side of the War Office which was organised under the Central and Civil Departments, the Military Departments in July 1895 were all under the office of the Commander-in-Chief of the British Army who at that time was the Duke of Cambridge. One month before Lansdowne came into office the Duke announced his intention to retire from office the following October,<sup>65</sup> and it was Salisbury’s wish that Garnet Wolseley should succeed him. Prince George, 2<sup>nd</sup> Duke of Cambridge, was Queen Victoria’s first cousin and twenty-six years older than Lansdowne. Having joined the British Army in 1837, he became Commander-in-

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<sup>60</sup> ‘The War Office Staff’, *The Broad Arrow, The Naval and Military Gazette*, 60(1552), 26 March 1898, p.341.

<sup>61</sup> ‘Obituary Mr Powell Williams, M.P.’, *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 8 February 1904.

<sup>62</sup> *Northampton Mercury*, 12 February 1904.

<sup>63</sup> Lansdowne to Salisbury (private), 1 July 1895, HH. Salisbury MSS, 3M/E, Lansdowne correspondence 1882-1896, f.83.

<sup>64</sup> Roper, *The Records of the War Office*, p.103.

<sup>65</sup> His retirement date was subsequently postponed until November.

Chief in July 1856. The Duke's natural conservatism was increased by his distrust of political interference in the Army which he feared would make military advancement dependent on party politics. His first loyalty was the Crown.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, believing previous reforms had damaged the prestige and status of the Army, he questioned whether the Army needed reform. Lansdowne knew the Duke in both a personal and professional capacity. Professionally the Duke often disagreed with Lansdowne's opinions; the most notable occasions being over the Channel Tunnel in 1883, Canadian Military appointments in 1884 and the Indian Presidential Armies in 1889.<sup>67</sup>

The Duke's successor, Wolseley, was twelve years older than Lansdowne. Born and educated in Dublin, he joined the Army in 1852 as an ensign in the 12<sup>th</sup> Foot. Serving with distinction in the Crimea, the Indian Mutiny, Canada, Ashanti and South Africa he became Adjutant-General in April 1882, aged forty-eight. After service in Egypt he was created Viscount Wolseley and in 1890 was appointed Commander-in-Chief in Ireland before being promoted to Field Marshal in May 1894. As a prominent advocate of reform Wolseley used political initiatives to achieve his aims. Although senior officers swore an oath of loyalty to the Crown and appeared above party politics they were entitled to speak and write openly on military matters. Yearning for a time when 'a new Cromwell will clear the country of these frothing talkers,<sup>68</sup> and the soldiers will rule',<sup>69</sup> Wolseley was by temperament strongly opposed to politicians, whom he disliked for 'conforming to the democratic system of the day.'<sup>70</sup> By 1895 his public criticism of politicians, the Duke of Cambridge and the state of the Army had earned him a reputation as a moderniser and zealous Cardwellian. Lansdowne first encountered him while serving as Under-Secretary of State at the War Office. In 1883 they met again during Lansdowne's chairmanship of the Channel Tunnel Committee when Wolseley's

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<sup>66</sup> B.J. Bond, 'The Retirement of the Duke of Cambridge' *RUSI Journal* 106 (1961), pp.544-553.

<sup>67</sup> Duke of Cambridge, 12 June 1883, Channel Tunnel Committee 1883; 'Notes on evidence of HRH the Duke of Cambridge before a Joint Committee of Parliament', BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/23/1; Lansdowne to Duke of Cambridge (private), 31 March 1884, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/14/16/1; Duke of Cambridge to Lansdowne, (private), 17 May 1889, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Mss. EUR D558/11.

<sup>68</sup> He was referring particularly to Gladstone, Harcourt and Morley.

<sup>69</sup> Wolseley to Lady Wolseley (private), 1 November 1890, HCL. Wolseley MSS, WP. 19/51.

<sup>70</sup> Wolseley to Ardagh (private), 19 July 1892, NA. Ardagh MSS, PRO 30/40/12.

unwavering views on the threat of invasion pitted him against Lansdowne.<sup>71</sup> Further differences between the two men on military matters emerged soon after they began working together in 1895.

The military department of the office of the Commander-in-Chief was based in Pall Mall and in July 1895 exercised duties over ten divisions including: the Military Secretary, Military Intelligence, the Adjutant-General, The Quartermaster-General, Works, Armaments, Medical, Military Education, the Chaplain-General and the Veterinary.<sup>72</sup>

Until 1895 the Military Secretary dealt with the appointment, promotion and retirement of officers. Sir Reginald Cripps was Military Secretary when Lansdowne started at the War Office. Fourteen years older than Lansdowne, he had entered the Scots Guards in 1849 and had fought in the Crimea. Unlike his predecessors, of whom not one was still living, he did not leave office in poor health or broken down. Readily accessible to the War Office officials and in attendance to the Commander-in-Chief the Military Secretary's duties were onerous. In May 1896 Cripps was succeeded by Sir Coleridge Grove under a modified position with fewer duties. Grove was older than Lansdowne by six years and had served under Wolseley in the Egypt campaign of 1882. Having shown loyalty, intellect, bravery and experience of war to his 'Chief', he was one of Wolseley's 'Ring.' This was a group which comprised military reformers and Army officers loyal to Wolseley. Among officers in the 'Ring' were William Butler, Redvers Buller, Henry Brackenbury, John F. Maurice, and Evelyn Wood. The 'Ring' itself developed from Wolseley's appointments for the Ashanti Campaign of 1873 and 1874. The 'Ring' succeeded because patronage was a way of Victorian life, promotion in the Army was governed by seniority and not by selection and the Staff College did not produce a sufficient number of staff officers.<sup>73</sup> The 'Ring' has been the subject of criticism for dividing the late Victorian Army. This argument rests on its competition with Lord Roberts' 'Indians.' The 'Indians' were Roberts' cadre of military officers whom he had patronised in India. Regarded as 'a man with the courage of his opinions and plenty

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<sup>71</sup> Wolseley, 21 June 1883, 'Channel Tunnel Committee 1883', 'Remarks on the notes of military evidence on the Channel Tunnel.' BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/23/1.

<sup>72</sup> Roper, *The Records of the War Office*, p.103.

<sup>73</sup> H. Kochanski, 'Wolseley Ring' - *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* online (Oxford, 2004). <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/69913>.

of common sense' Grove's appointment was satisfactory to both civilians and senior officers at the War Office.<sup>74</sup> As a Wolseleyite he shared his 'Chief's' dislike of Lansdowne and the encroachment of civilians on the military in the War Office.

The Intelligence Department was supervised by the Director of Military Intelligence who in 1895 was Lieutenant-General Edward F. Chapman. Older than Lansdowne by five years he had served in Abyssinia in 1868 and the second Afghan War in 1878. Having shown exceptional ability as Quartermaster-General in India from 1881 until 1889 he was one of Lord Roberts' 'Indians.' Having held the post since 1891 he was succeeded at the end of his five year term by Sir John Ardagh. Ardagh, who had been Lansdowne's private secretary in India, was five years his senior. He had entered the Royal Engineers in 1859 and was attached to the Intelligence Branch of the War Office in 1875. Reputed to be the Army's 'foremost politico-military officer',<sup>75</sup> he enjoyed the friendship and patronage of Lansdowne and the respect and goodwill of senior political and military figures. Being in the confidence of Wolseley and admired by his staff for his industrious and taciturn nature he successfully negotiated the middle ground between civilians and senior officers in the office. Lansdowne chose him for his private secretary in India because 'he has made his reputation quite as much by civilian as by military work.'<sup>76</sup> Above all, he believed that Ardagh would not get himself or the Viceroy into difficulties with the military in India.<sup>77</sup>

The Adjutant-General was charged with the enlistment and discharge of men, the discipline and training of the forces, the maintenance of statistics relating to personnel and patterns of clothing. In 1895 General Sir Redvers Buller held this position. He was senior to Lansdowne by six years and had also been educated at Eton. He was commissioned into the 60<sup>th</sup> Rifles in 1858, seeing service in Canada in 1870, Ashanti in 1873, the Cape Frontier wars in 1875 and Egypt in 1882. Appointed Adjutant-General in 1890 he was one of Wolseley's 'Ring.' Popular with the Duke of Cambridge and some members of the Liberal Party he was independently minded with Liberal sympathies. He was in many ways the archetypal squire, returning as

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<sup>74</sup> 'The New Military Secretary', *The Broad Arrow. The Naval and Military Gazette*, 61(1454), 9 May 1896, p.521.

<sup>75</sup> T.G. Fergusson, *British Military Intelligence, 1870- 1914: The Development of a Modern Intelligence Organisation* (London, 1984), p.105.

<sup>76</sup> Lansdowne to Ilbert, (private), 9 November 1888, HLRO. Ilbert MSS, ILB/3/1-6, f.320.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.



frequently as his career permitted to his 5,000 acre Devon estate. He excelled at country sports and was a man of great physical strength and endurance, although by 1895 good living and long hours at the War Office had weakened his physique. Known for the very determined way in which he expressed himself,<sup>78</sup> Buller disliked Lansdowne and rarely agreed with the other civilians at the War Office, most notably Haliburton and Knox whose authority he regularly questioned.

Buller thought the civil and military sides of the War Office should be kept quite distinct in their routine work and that Haliburton treated him with ‘extreme discourtesy and insincerity’ and told him so.<sup>79</sup> To Haliburton, ‘the service would be a poor thing if officials never differed and a lamentable thing if they could not differ without losing their respect...for each other.’<sup>80</sup> His view of Buller was that he had ‘many good points, though in a rough exterior and an explosive interior’, and that it was ‘a pity such an able man should have so little judgement where he himself is concerned!’<sup>81</sup> As an excellent businessman Buller knew the rules of the War Office and carried them out,<sup>82</sup> such that he was very popular with the other senior officers at the War Office, and the officers and soldiers in the Army. In 1892 Brackenbury, the then Military Member of the Viceroy’s Council, recommended him as ‘a first rate man all round’ and advised Lansdowne, the then Viceroy, that he should succeed Roberts as Commander-in-Chief in India, being ‘the only man I know who would help me to bring about a more economical administration than that which now exists.’<sup>83</sup>

Three months before Buller’s term of office as Adjutant-General ended in 1897 discussions about his successor began. Among the candidates was Prince Arthur Duke of Connaught who was Queen Victoria’s favourite son and a career soldier. Lansdowne had known Connaught officially since the latter served as Commander-in-Chief in Bombay during Lansdowne’s Viceroyalty. His abilities were not of a

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<sup>78</sup> Pirie, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Military Forces (Maintenance)’, 8 February 1897, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.45, c.1612.

<sup>79</sup> Buller to Haliburton (private) 20 September 1897, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/18.

<sup>80</sup> Haliburton to Buller (private), 19 September 1897, *ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> Atlay, *Lord Haliburton*, p.119.

<sup>82</sup> ‘Lord Wolseley and his work’, *The Broad Arrow, The Naval and Military Gazette*, 59(1535), 27 November 1897, p.565.

<sup>83</sup> Brackenbury to Lansdowne (private), 15 August 1892. BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Mss. EUR D558/23.

high order, he was very conservative and had a reputation as a martinet.<sup>84</sup> Lansdowne was relieved that the Queen, who wished him to become Commander-in-Chief of the British Army, did not press his candidature. Lansdowne explained this was wise because his prospects of becoming Commander-in-Chief later would not have improved had he been made Adjutant-General.<sup>85</sup> The Queen, however, did indicate her strong objection to the most favoured candidate Sir Evelyn Wood whom she argued would not be good for the Army.<sup>86</sup> Opposition to Wood's candidature was also voiced by the Duke of Cambridge and the Prince of Wales. As one of his 'Ring', Wolseley urged Lansdowne to appoint Wood remarking, 'I am sure he would serve you best, and would certainly be accepted by the Army as the best man for the place.'<sup>87</sup>

On 1 October 1897, Wood succeeded Buller as Adjutant-General. He was older than Lansdowne by seven years. Educated at Marlborough College he entered the Navy as a Midshipman in 1852, before transferring to the 13<sup>th</sup> Light Dragoons in 1855. He took part in the Indian Mutiny in 1858, the Ashanti campaign in 1873, the Cape Frontier war between 1877 and 1878 and South Africa in 1881. Although he was partially deaf, Lansdowne supported his promotion because he had been an excellent Quartermaster-General. His deafness did not prevent him from transacting official business and his 'curious jerky manner,' which annoyed some people, was just a fault of manner.<sup>88</sup> Although they remained on cordial terms, it is interesting that after leaving the War Office Lansdowne noted that Wood's deafness was a 'calamity to those that have to work with him.'<sup>89</sup> In contrast to the reserved temperament of Buller, Wood was lively and hardly ceased to draw breath, which according to Queen Victoria came from his 'inability to hear any general conversation.'<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Brackenbury 'Note', 19 July 1892, Bod. Kimberley MSS, MS. Eng. d.2467, f.237.

<sup>85</sup> Lansdowne to Bigge (private), 14 July 1897, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/18/5.

<sup>86</sup> Bigge to Lansdowne (private), 26 July 1897, *ibid.*, Add MS. 88906/19/6.

<sup>87</sup> Wolseley to Lansdowne (private), 4 July 1897, *ibid.*, Add MS. 88906/16/17.

<sup>88</sup> Lansdowne to Bigge (private), 14 July 1897, *ibid.*, Add MS. 88906/18/5.

<sup>89</sup> Lansdowne to Roberts (private), 28 September 1900, *ibid.*, Add MS. 88906/19/24.

<sup>90</sup> Queen Victoria's 'Journal', 9 September 1879, Vol.71, p.26.

<http://www.queenvictoriasjournals.org/search/displayItem.do?ItemNumber=1&FormatType=fulltext&mgsrsrc&QueryType=articles&ResultsID=2826736919486&filterSequence=0&PageNumber=2&ItemID=qvj17014&volumeType=PSBEA>

Among those suggested to succeed Wood as Quartermaster-General were Charles Clark, the then Commander-in-Chief in Madras, who had the support of Wolseley.<sup>91</sup> Henry Brackenbury, the then Military Member of the Viceroy's Council in India, and Sir George White, the then Commander-in-Chief in India. It was Lansdowne's view that the Quartermaster-General, who was charged with supplying the Army with food, fuel, horses and forage, with transport, sanitary services and administering the Army Pay Department, should have experience of the Army in India and its requirements.<sup>92</sup> Having supported White's appointment to Commander-in-Chief in India believing that the Army would trust and follow him and that he was keen, hard-working, tactful and would make no mischief,<sup>93</sup> he again supported his appointment for Quartermaster-General telling George Hamilton, his brother-in-law and Secretary of State for India, he 'would be glad to get him at the War Office. He is not a conjuror but he has plenty of regimental experience.'<sup>94</sup> To Lansdowne, maintaining an intimate connection between the headquarters staff and the Army and 'the great advantage which officers rising to high administrative posts' acquired from regimental experience was important.<sup>95</sup> In White's case he had served over thirty years in a regiment but had never been employed in the War Office.<sup>96</sup> Queen Victoria approved of Lansdowne's choice and White accepted the appointment, telling his sister that, 'though I hate London, I am too poor to refuse £2,000 a year and if I find the work and place intolerable, I must only make the best bargain I can out of it.'<sup>97</sup> Brackenbury saw nothing humiliating in White being preferred over him.<sup>98</sup> As the principal military officials in India, Brackenbury and White were on close personal and professional terms with each other.

Owing to unrest in India during 1897 White remained there until the following April. In his absence the post was temporarily filled by Major-General Charles

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<sup>91</sup> Wolseley to Lansdowne (private), 22 July 1897, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/16/17/3.

<sup>92</sup> Lansdowne to Queen Victoria (private), 26 July 1897, *ibid*, Add MS. 88906/18/5.

<sup>93</sup> Lansdowne to Godley (private), 17 January 1892, Bod. Kimberley MSS, MS. Eng. Hist. c.4325.

<sup>94</sup> Lansdowne to Hamilton (private), 22 August 1897, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/19.

<sup>95</sup> Brodrick, 'Commons Debate', 'Army Estimates, 1897-1898', 25 February 1898, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.54, c.57.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, c.57.

<sup>97</sup> M. Durand, *The Life of Field Marshal Sir George White VC* (2 Vols., London, 1915), Vol.1, p.446.

<sup>98</sup> Brackenbury to Lansdowne (private), 7 August 1897, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/20/6.

Burnett, an Australian born officer two years younger than Lansdowne.<sup>99</sup> It was Lansdowne's belief that constantly moving officers was objectionable. 'The result is that men do not settle down steadily to their work and are always looking out for transfers and officiating appointments.'<sup>100</sup> Burnett's short tenure at the War Office proved to be an exception to this view and he made good use of his time.<sup>101</sup>

White began his work at the War Office in the spring of 1898. Older than Lansdowne by ten years, he entered the Army in 1853, serving in the Indian Mutiny in 1858 and with Roberts in the second Afghan war of 1879, where he was awarded the Victoria Cross and became one of Roberts' 'Indians.' He was one of the most decorated officers in the British Army. White had been a great admirer of Lansdowne since his time in India. He thought he was 'straight and strong'<sup>102</sup> and that he and his Vicereine Maud were 'the most popular Vice-regal pair I have ever met.'<sup>103</sup> After White was sent to South Africa in October 1899 he was succeeded by Charles Clarke. Five years senior to Lansdowne, Clarke had been educated at Eton and entered the 57<sup>th</sup> Foot in 1856. He served in the New Zealand war 1861-66 and the South African war of 1879. Holding a series of administrative titles, he was appointed Assistant Adjutant-General at Aldershot on 8 February 1884, Deputy Adjutant-General in Ireland from 1886-1888, and Deputy Adjutant-General at the War Office in 1892. In 1893 he became Commander-in-Chief, Madras serving under Lansdowne until the latter left India in February 1894.

Among the other divisions within the Military Department was the Works Department, which in 1895 was headed by the Inspector-General of Fortifications, General Robert Grant. Based at the Horse Guards he managed an office of forty-four staff. He was charged with the construction and maintenance of forts, barracks, and other buildings, railways and telegraphs. He was eight years older than Lansdowne. Commissioned into the Royal Engineers, becoming Lieutenant in 1854, he saw service in British North America between 1859 and

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<sup>99</sup> R.K. Owner, *The A-Z of the Russo-Japanese War* (Plymouth, 2006), p.79.

<sup>100</sup> Lansdowne to Cross (private), 18 October 1891, BL. Cross MSS, Mss. EUR E243/29.

<sup>101</sup> 'Changes at the War Office', *The Broad Arrow, The Naval and Military Gazette*, 61(1582), 22 October 1898, p.441.

<sup>102</sup> White to Lady White (private), 13 July 1889, in Durand, *The Life of Field Marshal Sir George White*, Vol.1, p.388.

<sup>103</sup> White to Duke of Cambridge (private), 31 January 1894, in Durand, *The Life of Field Marshal Sir George White*, Vol.1, p.422.

1865 and in the Sudan in 1885. In 1898 Sir Richard Harrison succeeded Grant. Harrison was Lansdowne's senior by eight years. Having been commissioned into the Royal Engineers and becoming a Lieutenant in 1855, he saw service in the Crimean war in 1856, the Siege of Lucknow in 1857, the Cape Frontier wars in 1879 and in the Sudan in 1885.

The Arms or Ordnance Department of the British Army in 1895 was under the control of Lieutenant-General Sir Edwin Markham. As Inspector-General of the Ordnance Department, Markham was charged with the manufacture and supply of all warlike stores and other stores, clothing and with questions of armaments, patterns of stores, inventions and designs. He was twelve years older than Lansdowne. Commissioned into the Royal Artillery in 1850, he saw service in the Crimea in 1856 and in India in 1857. With his replacement in 1899 by Henry Brackenbury the post of Inspector-General of Ordnance was retitled Director-General of Ordnance. Brackenbury was older than Lansdowne by seven years. Educated at Eton, he became a Lieutenant in the Royal Engineers in 1856, later seeing service in the Indian Mutiny and the Ashanti Campaign where he was Wolseley's Military Secretary and made one of his 'Ring.' Wolseley described him as 'not one of the cleverest, but *the* cleverest man in the British Army.'<sup>104</sup> In 1891 he was sent to India as Military Member of Lansdowne's Council because Salisbury wished to introduce a degree of realism into Indian military planning. While in India he was converted to the strategic views of Roberts,<sup>105</sup> a conversion that Lansdowne approved of, noting, 'Nothing could be better...than the way in which Roberts and Brackenbury get on...an injudicious selection would be a positive calamity, and would enormously add to the difficulty of my position here.'<sup>106</sup> Forming a favourable impression of Brackenbury Lansdowne came to rely on him greatly. He found him full of energy and an asset.<sup>107</sup> He believed that his wider political horizon and experience of intelligence at the War Office meant he was familiar with the opinions of British public figures and could judge

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<sup>104</sup> F.B. Maurice, and G.C.A. Arthur, *The Life of Lord Wolseley* (London, 1924), p.224.

<sup>105</sup> I.F.W. Beckett, 'Brackenbury, Sir Henry', *Dictionary of National Biography* online (Oxford, 2008), p.3. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/32021?docPos=4>.

<sup>106</sup> Lansdowne to Cross (private), 15 April 1891, BL. Cross MSS, Mss. EUR E243/31.

<sup>107</sup> Lansdowne to Dowager Lady Lansdowne (private), 28 April 1891, BH. Lansdowne (5) MSS, uncatalogued.

questions from the House of Commons.<sup>108</sup> He also became a ‘great friend of Lady Lansdowne’s.’<sup>109</sup> On his return from India in 1896 Brackenbury was appointed by Lansdowne as President of the War Office Ordnance Committee and acted as his principal point of contact for armaments advice. He held this post until becoming Director-General Ordnance in 1899.

The other support services within the Military Department at the War Office were the Army Medical Department, the Education Department, the Chaplain-General and the Army Veterinary Department. Across all of the military departments the senior officers employed principal and senior clerks most of whom were civilians and according to Grove, Wolseley’s Military Secretary, did ‘most excellent work.’<sup>110</sup>

The nature of the functions between the civilian and senior officers at the War Office were so different that they resulted in widely differing types of organisation. The military department served to govern the Army and the civil department to oversee all matters of military finance. Almost every aspect of the senior officers’ activities had political implications and cost money and as the guardians of finance the civilians exercised their right to know the reasons for that expenditure. Exercising authority in this way often caused friction between the two divisions. Lansdowne was aware that this friction was of long standing.<sup>111</sup> In 1895, when he re-entered the War Office, he remarked that the friction was less acute than when he had been there during Cardwell’s tenure.<sup>112</sup> It was his view that ‘there will be differences between the civil officials at the War Office and military officials. It will be so to the end of time.’<sup>113</sup>

The tensions within the department were the result of a culture of disharmony and distrust developed over more than a century. Two related problems were at the root of this tension. The first was the issue of Royal authority over the Army. As a largely constitutional question this involved the conflict between the Crown and Parliament for supremacy over the military

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<sup>108</sup> Lansdowne to Godley (private), 17 January 1892, Bod. Kimberley MSS, MS. Eng. Hist. c.4325.

<sup>109</sup> J.B. Lyall to A.C. Lyall (private), 7 August 1891, BL. Lyall MSS, Mss. EUR F132/68.

<sup>110</sup> PP, 1901, XL, Cd.581, WOO, 6878, p.278.

<sup>111</sup> Lansdowne to Salisbury (private), 19 May 1897, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/6.

<sup>112</sup> Lansdowne to Forrest (private), 3 December 1895, Bod. Forrest MSS, MS. Eng. Let. d.275, f.57.

<sup>113</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’ ‘War Office Administration - Duties of Commander-in-Chief’, 4 March 1901, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.90, c.356.

forces, most of whom regarded themselves as first and foremost loyal to the Crown. For good discipline and impartiality in the Army the soldiers believed that the Crown had to be the source of all military honours.<sup>114</sup> The second was the extent to which civilians and soldiers should collaborate in deciding questions of a professional or technical nature and was related to the interference of Parliament on Royal authority.

In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Royal authority had barred civilians from probing too closely into technical matters which soldiers believed they, as civilians, were not qualified to discuss. By the late nineteenth century, the question of expertise in military matters was largely focused on the Secretary of State for War. To compound the problems this question raised the soldiers argued that because this person was constantly changing, establishing any continuity of military policy was impossible. 'The difficulty at the War Office is that the heads of it are civilians who are constantly changing.'<sup>115</sup> Lansdowne's view of the soldier's complaint was entirely pragmatic. He believed that the hand of the politician could not be forced by the senior officers and that a more or less ignorant civilian Secretary of State should not profess to be an expert but rather should 'gather the best information he can from the experts.'<sup>116</sup> This approach the senior officers believed was abused and that there was a 'tendency for the civilians to express opinions on military subjects and consequently to take away from the military people the direct responsibility which ought to rest on them.'<sup>117</sup> Lansdowne disagreed. In his evidence to the Royal Commission he remarked that, when he found his civilian financial officers expressing their own opinions on the merits of military proposals and taking it upon themselves to 'criticise the purely military merits of the proposal,' he always 'supported the military authority.'<sup>118</sup>

In managing his department Lansdowne both listened to and was guided by his senior officers. Decisions were not taken without prior consultation and Lansdowne never found the senior officers diffident in expressing their

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<sup>114</sup> Hamer, *The British Army*, p.6.

<sup>115</sup> PP, 1887, XIX, C.5226, 'First Report of the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the civil establishments of the different offices of state at home and abroad', 5160, p.192.

<sup>116</sup> PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21438, p.531.

<sup>117</sup> PP, 1901, XL, Cd.581, WOO, 6982, p.284.

<sup>118</sup> PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21560, p.537.

opinion.<sup>119</sup> In response to allegations that War Office civilians alone had framed the ‘Emergency Measures’ during ‘the War’, Lansdowne stated to the Royal Commission that since ‘the War’ had begun ‘there has not been a week, there has scarcely been a day, in which the civilian and military members of the War Office have not met at the same table in order to discuss from time to time the arrangements and the military measures that were being taken.’<sup>120</sup> While Lansdowne referred all technical matters to both his civilian and military advisers, in matters of a non-technical nature he deferred to the expertise of the civilians and in particular his Permanent Under-Secretary and Under-Secretary of State.

Just as the constantly changing position of Secretary of State was believed by the senior officers to be disadvantageous to the efficiency of the War Office so Lansdowne believed many of the five year appointments given to the senior officers disadvantaged them. To Lansdowne the smooth running of the War Office depended on the extent to which civilians and military officials were willing to share their expertise with each other. Many of the men who entered the War Office during his tenure to take up their appointments were experts in their field but did not know the back history of defence and military questions in the department. As such he believed that it was advantageous to them to have career civilians in the department with years of experience and knowledge of different cases and their difficulties.<sup>121</sup>

To the parliamentarians and civilians of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries financial control over the Army was the most powerful lever against abuse of Royal power. To these individuals it was in their own interest to maintain the division as to fail to do so might weaken their control. Objections to uniting the Horse Guards and the Civil Departments continued until the late 1860s,<sup>122</sup> when partly in response to Gladstone’s own suspicions of the ‘praetorian’ ambitions of military men, Cardwell established by Order-in-Council a war department under the general authority of a Secretary of State for War with three principal divisions. These being: supply, finance and military command.

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 21532, p.536.

<sup>120</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘Position of the Commander-in-Chief’, 3 August 1900, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.87, c.599.

<sup>121</sup> PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21502, p.535.

<sup>122</sup> Hamer, *British Army*, p.7.



Although the Order-in-Council of 1870 resolved the constitutional issues then dividing the Army, the nature of warfare had changed and new issues in supply, administration, defence planning and strategy further widened the division between civilians and soldiers for the control of professional questions.

The removal of the Horse Guards to the War Office at Pall Mall in 1871 put additional pressure on civil and military relations as it meant that the Horse Guards was over-run with civilian clerks and politicians. The following year, while Lansdowne was acting as Under-Secretary, the senior officers were further alienated when the Finance department was given authority to audit the accounts of Army commanders and the Surveyor-General became a political appointment. Throughout the 1870s and 1880s civilian domination of the War Office was fiercely condemned by the soldiers. Wolseley noted, 'our system of military administration has been growing more and more civilian in character since the days of Wellington...soldiers don't think the arrangement a good one.'<sup>123</sup> As in the past their fear was that the manufacture and supply of equipment was being supervised by civilians who had no knowledge of the uses for which that equipment was needed.

Concerns that the administration of military affairs by civilians was weakening the Army were brought to public attention in December 1886 when the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lord Randolph Churchill, resigned over the defence budget. In his resignation statement he called for a select committee to examine and report on the Army and Navy estimates. The committee was established and Churchill as its first Chairman conducted a full inquiry.<sup>124</sup> It led to many revelations but failed to capture the public imagination.<sup>125</sup> Witnesses were, however, able to convince him that there was no waste or mismanagement of military expenditure, but that after years of civilian management the Army was in a state of unpreparedness for war with a European power. Converted to the side of the senior officers, Churchill argued that the politicians were to blame and that political necessity had put national security at risk. Although many of his accusations were derived from

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<sup>123</sup> Wolseley, 'The Standing Army of Great Britain', in *The Armies of today: a description of the armies of the leading nations at the present time* (London, 1893), p.93.

<sup>124</sup> PP, 1887, VIII, 216 (216-1), 'First report from the Select Committee on army and navy estimates; together with the proceedings of the committee, and minutes of evidence'.

<sup>125</sup> R.F. Foster, *Lord Randolph Churchill: A Political Life* (Oxford, 1981), p.335.

hearsay and authoritatively contradicted, his conversion strengthened ties between the economists and the senior officers, and restored some of the power Cardwell had taken from the latter in the early 1870s.<sup>126</sup>

As the controversy over civil and military relations worsened, and the fear that the Army was unprepared for war continued, several inquiries and commissions were instituted, some of which favoured the military case over that of the civilians. Of three commissions that reported during 1887 on different aspects of the Army's administration the most important was chaired by Sir James Stephen to inquire on Warlike Stores.<sup>127</sup> Supportive of the senior officers, his commission noted that soldiers were disillusioned with the state of the Army and that on account of Cardwell's reforms it was 'physically and morally impossible' for the Secretary of State to perform all his tasks satisfactorily.<sup>128</sup> The commission reported that too much authority was centred in the civilian Secretary of State. Highlighting that an efficient Army and a constitutional Army were dissimilar and that national security might be compromised with a party politician at the head of the military,<sup>129</sup> they suggested the soldiers should be invited to submit an annual statement to Parliament stating the needs for national security.<sup>130</sup>

Under pressure from reformers, senior officers and economists the government announced a reorganisation of Army administration in September 1887. The result in 1888 was that the Army was reorganised by a War Office board, referred to as the Committee on the lines of Communication of an Army. This drew a distinction between soldiers and civilians, giving Stanhope, the then Secretary of State, just two official advisers: the Commander-in-Chief and the Financial Secretary. Reorganising the Surveyor-General's department and assigning responsibility for supplies,

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<sup>126</sup> Hamer, *British Army*, p.113.

<sup>127</sup> The reports of the three inquiries were: The Report of the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the system under which patterns of warlike stores are adopted and the stores obtained and passed for Her Majesty's service. (C.5062) XV; The report of the Committee appointed to inquire into the organization and administration of the Manufacturing Departments of the Army; with minutes of evidence, appendix and index. (C.5116) XIV; The report of the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the civil establishments of the different offices of state at home and abroad, with minutes of evidence, appendix. (C.5226) XIX.

<sup>128</sup> PP, 1887, XV, C.5062, 'Report of the Royal Commission to enquire into the system under which patterns of warlike stores are adopted and the stores obtained and passed for her Majesty's service', 40, pp.ix-x.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 48, p.x.

<sup>130</sup> I.F.W. Beckett 'The Stanhope Memorandum of 1888: A Reinterpretation', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 56 (1983), p.241.

transport and lines of communication to the Commander-in-Chief appeared to give the senior officers greater freedom from political interference for the preparedness of the Army, but by keeping the finances and manufacture under civilian control the reality was different. The reorganisation did little to increase the individual responsibility of the subordinate officers and also made the senior officers principally responsible for maintaining an efficient Army. Neither the Duke of Cambridge nor Wolseley were willing to accept responsibility for an Army they both knew to be in a weak state. Their complaints did not go unheard and when the invasion scare of 1888 awakened public attention to the state of the Army a deputation called on Stanhope to push for a clearer definition of priorities.<sup>131</sup> The results of this were a full scale Cabinet enquiry into the possibility of invasion, the Stanhope Memorandum of June 1888 and the appointment of a Royal Commission chaired by Lord Hartington to inquire into the Civil and Professional administration of the Naval and Military Departments, and the relation of those Departments to each other and the Treasury.

After a year's deliberation the Hartington Commission issued two reports: the first on 10 July 1889 and the second on 11 February 1890.<sup>132</sup> Having found that there was practically no communication between the War Office and Admiralty the commissioners proposed that a defence committee comprised of Cabinet ministers, soldiers and sailors should be established.<sup>133</sup> It stated that the committee should be empowered to examine the estimates of the two services before they were submitted to the Cabinet, to examine questions of defence policy and to determine the requirements of the services from an overall plan of Imperial defence.<sup>134</sup> It suggested that consultative, executive and administrative duties were over-centralised in the office of the Commander-in-Chief. Moreover, that the Commander-in-Chief, by standing between the Secretary of State and the subordinate heads of military departments, in effect prevented the Secretary of State from acquiring adequate professional advice. Hence the commissioners recommended that the post of

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<sup>131</sup> Hamer, *British Army*, p.135.

<sup>132</sup> PP, 1890, XIX, C.5979, 'Preliminary and further reports (with appendices) of the Royal Commissioners appointed to enquire into the civil and professional administration of the Naval and Military Departments and the relation of those departments to each other and to the Treasury'.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 20, p.viii.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 20, p.viii.

Commander-in-Chief should be abolished,<sup>135</sup> a War Office Council should be created,<sup>136</sup> and that five senior officers including the Adjutant-General, Quartermaster-General, the Director of Artillery, Inspector-General of Fortifications and a Chief of the Staff should be responsible to the Secretary of State for the efficient administration of their departments.<sup>137</sup> It also mentioned that a General Staff should be established enabling the military defence of the Empire to be considered as a whole.<sup>138</sup> The new Chief of the Staff would be head of the department and advise the Secretary of State on all matters of general military policy, liaise with the First Lord of the Admiralty on inter-service questions and provide the Secretary of State with an annual report of the requirements of the Empire.<sup>139</sup> Two members of the Commission, Randolph Churchill and Henry Campbell-Bannerman, dissented from the majority of the report. Churchill, under Wolseley's influence, argued for a drastic change to free the handling of military matters from party interference.<sup>140</sup> Campbell-Bannerman opposed the concept of a General Staff.<sup>141</sup> In his view the military 'may be made good servants, but they would be bad masters.'<sup>142</sup>

Four years later and under a Liberal government Campbell-Bannerman, the Secretary of State for War, instructed his civil servants headed by Ralph Thompson to prepare a scheme on defence management. In carrying out their task the senior officers were not consulted and no indication was given of what the civilians intended to implement until after the proposals had matured.<sup>143</sup> The result was a modified version of the Hartington proposals and the most important finding was that too much power was concentrated in the Commander-in-Chief. Campbell-Bannerman was strongly against the creation of the new office of Chief of the Staff as proposed in the report of the Hartington Commission; as such an office was 'not only unnecessary, but undesirable.' As such they would maintain the appointment as General Officer Commanding. He would be the 'principal adviser of the Secretary of

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 94, p.xxvi

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 100, p.xxvii.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 96, p.xxvi

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 71, p.xxii.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 72, pp.xxii-xxiii

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., R.H.S. Churchill, 'Memorandum', 15 May 1889, pp.xv-xvii.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., H. Campbell-Bannerman, 'Minute', 10 February 1890, pp.xxix-xxxi.

<sup>142</sup> Campbell-Bannerman to Nash (private), 14 September 1903, BL. Campbell-Bannerman MSS, Add MS. 41236, f.164-5.

<sup>143</sup> J.A. Spender, *The Life of the Right Hon. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman* (2 Vols., London, 1923), Vol.1. p.147.

State' and associated with him would be four other military heads of department, each 'directly responsible' to the Secretary of State, forming a 'deliberative council' [Army Board] with responsibility for the discipline of the Army given to the Adjutant-General.<sup>144</sup> For this proposal to succeed, the resignation of the Duke of Cambridge was essential, and for that to happen the Queen had to give her approval. As Wolseley later put it, 'he was the grit that prevented our machinery from working.'<sup>145</sup> She reluctantly agreed providing that his resignation would not preclude the Duke of Connaught from the role of Commander-in-Chief in the future. Somewhat unusually the politicians found themselves in accordance with the Queen and Wolseley.<sup>146</sup>

On 21 June 1895 the government announced the proposed changes and the resignation of the Duke. Removing the Duke was complicated by the question of his succession and because the government's own future in power was uncertain the Liberals were keen to fill the post swiftly.<sup>147</sup> It was their intention to appoint Redvers Buller, the Adjutant-General, but he refused the offer, telling Campbell-Bannerman, 'I feel my appointment to such a post would possibly pain Lord Wolseley...I think moreover that you may not have quite taken into consideration that I have never really been tried as a head man and personally I am always inclined to think myself a better second fiddle than a leader of thought. Lord Wolseley I think the contrary and I should hope that the responsibility of a head place might find him better fitted for it than perhaps you think.'<sup>148</sup> Lord Roberts' candidature was easily discounted because of his perceived lack of knowledge of British military affairs. On 21 June before Campbell-Bannerman could complete the arrangements for reorganising the War Office and military departments the Liberal government fell from office.

Unlike his predecessors, Lansdowne held a less punitive view of the senior officers. He believed that whether soldiers or civilians 'we are all of us animated by a common desire to make the Army efficient and to study its requirements.'<sup>149</sup> But as

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<sup>144</sup> Campbell-Bannerman, 'Commons Debate', 'Army Estimates 1895-96', 21 June 1895, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.34, c.1677.

<sup>145</sup> Wolseley to Ardagh (private), 10 October 1895, NA. Ardagh MSS, PRO 30/40/2.

<sup>146</sup> Hamer, *British Army*, p.161.

<sup>147</sup> B.J. Bond, 'Retirement of the Duke of Cambridge', p.551.

<sup>148</sup> Buller to Campbell-Bannerman (private), 18 June 1895, BL. Campbell-Bannerman MSS, Add MS. 41212, f.228.

<sup>149</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lord Lansdowne on the Army', *The Times*, 14 July 1898, p.10.

the Crown's representative to Parliament he objected to any intrusion from the senior officers in politics. It was his experience that 'the soldier who is also a politician is apt not to be very much trusted in the Army.'<sup>150</sup> He believed the constitutional position made it incumbent that 'the Secretary of State and the Secretary of State alone is responsible to Parliament, and the Commander-in-Chief is responsible to the Secretary of State as his principal military adviser.'<sup>151</sup> As such he believed that while the 'Commander-in-Chief has a perfect right to appear in this House and address your Lordships when it may please him to do so, I confess I think he is well advised in sticking to his desk in the War Office, and leaving the Parliamentary representatives of the Department to say what is to be said on its behalf in Parliament.'<sup>152</sup> He also recognised that the right mode of conducting business in the War Office, meant that 'the soldiers and civilians should, as far as possible, sit side by side, and not occupy different branches of the office and occupy their time in controversies with one another.'<sup>153</sup> However, 'both soldiers and civilians recognize that they have their own special sphere of utility, and endeavour to keep within it. The civilians may sometimes think that they have picked up a good military inspiration, and I am not going to admit that all good military reforms are the work of military reformers. The soldiers may occasionally take it into their heads that they could handle the Army Estimates better than the civilians, and, perhaps, they are right; but each side knows perfectly well that it must sometimes give way, and it does so with good humour.'<sup>154</sup> To Lansdowne, whatever the senior officers thought were advisable military measures, they had to reckon with the Secretary of State and he with the Cabinet and with the Chancellor of the Exchequer. As such they received 'something notoriously a great deal less than they would have liked to have and they had to make the best of it.'<sup>155</sup> It was his view that the Army could not be organised on any other lines than those of finance.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lords Debate', 'The Position of the Commander-in-Chief', 3 August 1900, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.87, c.602.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid; Lansdowne, 'Lords Debate', 'Officers' Uniforms', 24 March 1898, *ibid.*, Vol.55, c.726.

<sup>152</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lords Debate', 'The Position of the Commander-in-Chief', 3 August 1900, *ibid.*, Vol.87, c.603.

<sup>153</sup> PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21489, p.534.

<sup>154</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lord Lansdowne on the Army', *The Times*, 14 July 1898, p.10.

<sup>155</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lords Debate', 'Territorial Artillery', 18 May 1908, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.188, c.1581.

<sup>156</sup> Lansdowne, 'Minute', 'Proposals contained in Wolseley's Minute of 22 April 1896', 10 July 1896, CAB 37/42/32, paragraph 2, p.2.

Rather than receive a ‘great deal less’ it was common for each senior officer to exaggerate needs. The problem this caused however was that the general financial interests of the Army were ignored and conflicts and suspicion increased. As such the finance division behaved like an outpost of the Treasury and rejected many proposals. Although Lansdowne knew many military men who were excellent financiers he recognised that ‘many did not have quite a sufficient appreciation of the financial difficulties in administering the Army.’<sup>157</sup> Some of the senior officers such as Grove accepted they were poor financial administrators. ‘I have no wish of course to make out that my own profession is more wasteful or unwise than is really the case but I do think that there is a very considerable tendency in soldiers to think only of what they want to get and not what it will cost.’<sup>158</sup> The majority of soldiers supposed that the War Office was guided by economy and as such they themselves could not be held accountable for national security. It was this attitude that motivated them to constantly attempt to transfer financial functions from the civilian side to their own department. Such persistence was noted by Knox remarking that ‘the soldiers are determined to make a long pull, a strong pull and a pull together to get rid of anything like an independent financial control in the department and Lord L[ansdowne] is so weak and Mr W[yndham] so sympathising that I fear we shall go to the wall.’<sup>159</sup> During Lansdowne’s term of office Knox’s fear was not realised and the traditional view that the soldiers at the War Office were dominated by civilians remained.<sup>160</sup> That Lansdowne organised the Army on lines of finance prompted Ardagh to note, ‘the War Office is in reality but a subordinate branch of the Treasury which holds the purse strings of the nation and inexorably refuses to open them until forced to do so by public opinion.’<sup>161</sup>

The tense relations at this time between civilians and senior officers over administrative issues were further complicated by petty jealousies and rivalries among the senior officers themselves. While they were united in wishing to transfer financial and supply functions to their own side of the War Office, they were by no means united on broader issues of Army reform and reorganisation. This conflict

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<sup>157</sup> PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21502, p.535.

<sup>158</sup> PP, 1901, XL, Cd.581, WOO, 6877, p.278.

<sup>159</sup> Knox to Campbell-Bannerman (private), 18 October 1899, BL. Campbell-Bannerman MSS, Add MS. 41221, f.261.

<sup>160</sup> PP, 1901, XL, Cd.581, WOO, 6984, p.284.

<sup>161</sup> Ardagh to Gowan (private), 4 November 1900, NA. Ardagh MSS, PRO. 30/40/3 f.15.

was mainly one of personalities but it also had its roots deep within the social and class structure of the Army. On the one hand were the regimental officers or traditionalists, including the Duke of Cambridge, and on the other were the reforming officers including men such as Wolseley and Roberts. Different views on regimental organisation, education, training and staff planning divided these two groups. The Duke failed to understand the reformers. He ‘always hated Sir E. Wood. He never could understand the work of any practical soldiers like Wood.’<sup>162</sup> Such failure to empathise frustrated Wolseley who made no attempt to conceal his dislike for the Duke and his traditional views: ‘I have always despised as a poor useless mass of cowardly flesh and the greatest enemy the Army has ever had, I mean of course, the Duke of Cambridge.’<sup>163</sup> The Duke was more sympathetic to the officer class than Wolseley, who was determined to correct the unattractive habits of social prejudice, professional jealousy and the high cost of living it promoted. So long as the regimental system continued unaltered the possibility of a cohesive officer corps with shared ideals and values lay dormant and any disposition on their part to intervene politically was inhibited and restricted their ambitions.<sup>164</sup> Moreover military life and the nature of the Army conditioned officers to accept the status quo and not question regulations. In a system that rewarded those who feared that the rapid changes in society were eroding the status and prestige of the Army, the number of ‘practical’ officers remained in a minority. Unable to comprehend that regimental *esprit de corps* was remarkably resilient the traditionalists fell back on tried and tested methods.

Just as these two groups were divided, so among the reformers themselves there were notable differences of opinion on military policy and the purpose of the Army. Whereas Roberts and his clique advocated reforms and strategic priorities modelled by service in India, experience in Africa and Britain was the model for Wolseley and his clique.<sup>165</sup> Furthermore, although Buller, Wood and Brackenbury were regarded as part of Wolseley’s ‘Ring’, by 1895 the value of his patronage had diminished and the ‘Ring’ held less influence than it had previously. By 1895 the senior officers in the War Office were at the pinnacle of their careers and as

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<sup>162</sup> Wolseley to Lansdowne (private) 22 July 1897, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/28.

<sup>163</sup> Wolseley to Lady Wolseley (private), 22 July 1895, HCL. Wolseley MSS, WP. 24/70i.

<sup>164</sup> M.E. Howard, ‘Soldiers in Politics’, book review of S.P. Huntington, ‘Changing Patterns of Military Politics’ in *Encounter*, XIX(3) (September 1962) pp.77-80.

<sup>165</sup> Beckett, ‘The Stanhope Memorandum of 1888’, p.245.



Lansdowne suspected he, as Secretary of State, was ‘less alarming to them as one military officer was to another.’<sup>166</sup> Moreover with age and ill health Wolseley harboured petty jealousies against many of his ‘Ring’ colleagues which undermined their ability to work as a cohesive group towards reforming the War Office and the Army. While Brackenbury might have been one of the cleverest men in the Army Wolseley believed his selfishness made him very unpopular.<sup>167</sup> His recommendation to the Hartington Commission in 1890 that the office of Commander-in-Chief should be abolished and replaced with a Chief of the Staff was, Wolseley suspected, an attempt by an embittered rival who would never become Commander-in-Chief but who had accumulated experience as head of the Intelligence Division which would have served him admirably as a future Chief of the Staff.<sup>168</sup> Buller he argued had ‘never urged great reforms upon either the Duke or the War Minister [Campbell-Bannerman] that would displease the former or entail an increase to the latter’s budget.’<sup>169</sup> Wood he described as ‘such a firework that I cannot rely on him.’<sup>170</sup>

The appointment of Roberts and Kitchener to take command in South Africa revealed many more prejudices between the different cliques in the department. Wolseley remarked with a hint of jealousy, ‘I have no real confidence in little Roberts for I always feel him to be a play actor more than a soldier,’ and that ‘the Hindoo element is now in the ascendancy.’<sup>171</sup> While Roberts considered White:

the best general officer I know and I sincerely trust he will get the GCB, I feel sure, however, that there will be very great opposition at the Horse Guards, where I am afraid Indian services are not measured by the same standard as those performed under the auspices of the authorities at home. The Duke of Cambridge and all the higher officials at the War Office look upon White as an officer whom they have been forced to honor against their wish, he is consequently a *persona ingrata* to them, and they will resist his being given any further reward. Then Evelyn Wood, Redvers Buller and some other officers senior to White but whose services cannot, in my opinion, be compared to his, will make a tremendous fuss. Wolseley will back them up.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21438, p.531.

<sup>167</sup> Wolseley to Lansdowne (private), 22 July 1897, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/16/17/1.

<sup>168</sup> Wolseley to Lansdowne (private), 8 October 1895, *ibid.*

<sup>169</sup> Wolseley to Lady Wolseley (private), 19 July 1895, HCL. Wolseley MSS, WP. 24/66i & ii.

<sup>170</sup> Wolseley to Lady Wolseley (private), 25 July 1900, *ibid.*, WP. 29/48.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>172</sup> Roberts to Chesney (private), 6 May 1889, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Mss. EUR D558/16.

Roberts' suspicions were realised when, after White became besieged at Ladysmith, Wolseley noted 'he has proved himself to be an utter failure - he would take no warning from me.'<sup>173</sup> Departmental divisions in London were also reflected in the field in South Africa. When Buller met Roberts in Pretoria in July 1900 he noted, 'I found Roberts sitting in one building with his Hindu staff, Kitchener in another with his Egyptian staff, and Kelly Kenny in a third with an English staff, all pulling against each other.'<sup>174</sup> Such divisions weakened the professional soldiers and enabled the civilian authorities to exploit them and impose a system of divide and rule. As Secretary of State, Lansdowne might have been in a position to dispel some of the disharmony between the senior officers and the civilians. That he was unable to bridge this divide will be explored in the next chapter through an analysis of his relations with the Cabinet, the opposition Liberal Party, the service parliamentarians, the defence intellectuals and the press.

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<sup>173</sup> Wolseley to Lady Wolseley (private), 3 November 1899, HCL. Wolseley MSS, WP. 28/73.

<sup>174</sup> Middleton, *Records and Reactions*, p.120.

## **Chapter Two - The Environment Outside the War Office**

It might have been expected that Lansdowne would have performed a greater role as a conduit between the senior officers and those outside the War Office. That this was not the case was due to his refusal to dissociate his position as Secretary of State from his position as a member of the Cabinet. In operating the War Office Lansdowne not only had to contend with its inefficiency and the lack of cooperation between the civilians and the senior officers but also with his colleagues in Cabinet, the opposition Liberal Party, the service parliamentarians, the defence intellectuals and the press. An appreciation of these groups and Lansdowne's relations with them can help to explain how he managed the reform discourse. A large number of studies and biographies on the personalities within these groups exist in the historiography. Since the 1970s a new generation of political historians has re-examined the role of prominent individuals in the light of new sources. Political history has not disappeared even if some individuals such as Lansdowne did.<sup>1</sup> A wide range of monographs from the late nineteenth century to the present deals with the subject of public discourse on defence matters, but Lansdowne's presence remains shadowy.<sup>2</sup>

When the Liberal government fell in June 1895 there was a hope that the War Office and Army reforms of the incoming administration would be more thorough than those proposed by their predecessors. It was remarked that the land defences were handed over in a 'shocking condition.'<sup>3</sup> *The Edinburgh Review*, summarising the military record of the previous government remarked:

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix IV, p.270.

<sup>2</sup> C.W. Dilke, and H.S. Wilkinson, *Imperial Defence* (London, 1892); H.S. Wilkinson, *The Brain of an Army* (London, 1890); *The Nation's Awakening* (London, 1896). *War and Policy* (London, 1900); H.O. Arnold-Forster, *The Navy and the Colonies* (London, 1895); *Our Home Army* (London, 1892); J. Luvaas, *The Education of an Army: British Military Thought, 1815-1940* (Chicago, 1964); R. Williams, *Defending the Empire: The Conservative Party and British Defence Policy, 1899-1915* (New Haven, 1991); I.F.W. Beckett, *Politicians and Defence: Studies in the Formulation of British Defence Policy* (Manchester, 1981); N. D'Ombrain, *War Machinery and High Policy: Defence Administration in Peacetime Britain, 1902-1914* (Oxford, 1973); J. Ehrman, *Cabinet Government and War, 1890-1940* (Cambridge, 1958); S.E. Finer, *The Man on Horseback: The Role of the Military in Politics* (Harmondsworth, 1976); J. Gooch, *The Prospect of War: Studies in British Defence Policy, 1847-1942* (London, 1981); E.H.H. Green, *The Crisis of Conservatism: The Politics, Economics and Ideology of the British Conservative Party 1880-1914* (London, 1995); W.L. Guttsman, *The British Political Elite* (London, 1963); J.S. Omond, *Parliament and the Army, 1642-1904* (Cambridge, 1933); G.H.L. Le May, *The Victorian Constitution: Conventions and Contingencies* (London, 1979).

<sup>3</sup> Churchill, 'Mr Winston Churchill and Army Reform', *The Times*, 18 August 1900.

Real defects have been disclosed; real remedies must be found for them; and no little dissatisfaction will be caused if it appears that merely nominal changes are to take place of the fundamental reforms approved by the Hartington Commission. As in 1870, a Government powerful in statesmanship is rendered trebly powerful by the great majority which supports it in the House of Commons. It is in administration not less than in legislation that we expect the country to benefit by the change brought about by the general election. And it is perhaps in its treatment of the great subject of Imperial defence in all its branches that the administrative quality of the Unionist government will first be tested.<sup>4</sup>

Among the soldiers Francis Grenfell noted, 'there were few of us, that were not glad to see a Conservative government in again.'<sup>5</sup>

Salisbury's Cabinet had an average age of fifty-six, which was regarded by some members of the press and public as too old. Lansdowne, who as already mentioned was fifty years old, was one of the younger men in the Cabinet. Eight ministers were from the upper classes and eleven were from the middle classes.<sup>6</sup> Six ministers including Lansdowne had been to Eton, four to Harrow, three to other public schools and six were privately educated. Ten ministers including Lansdowne had been to Oxford, three to Cambridge and one to Trinity College Dublin. Four ministers including Lansdowne had some form of military experience either having served in the Regular Army or the Auxiliaries.<sup>7</sup> While the average age of the Cabinet was 'too old', it was also marked by a generational gap, which partially restricted Salisbury's freedom to lead. As the late Victorian era drew close to an end this generational gap affected the lines of friction in the resulting foreign and Imperial policy debates and bonds were created by shared political experiences, a common policy outlook and shared assumptions.<sup>8</sup>

Salisbury was fundamentally a mid-Victorian optimist. He was confident in Britain's power and conscious of the weaknesses held by her possible enemies. In 1877 he had compared British foreign policy to 'floating lazily downstream

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<sup>4</sup> 'Reports of the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the civil and professional administration of the Naval and Military departments and the relation of those departments to each other', *Edinburgh Review* 182(374), October 1895, p.544.

<sup>5</sup> I.F.W. Beckett, *Rifleman Form: A Study of the Rifle Volunteer Movement 1858-1908* (Barnsley, 2007), p.137.

<sup>6</sup> Roberts, *Salisbury*, p.604.

<sup>7</sup> See Appendix V, p.277.

<sup>8</sup> T.G. Otte, 'A Question of Leadership: Lord Salisbury, the Unionist Cabinet and Foreign Policy Making, 1895-1900' *Contemporary British History*, 14(4) (2008), p.4.

occasionally putting out a diplomatic boat hook to avoid collisions.<sup>9</sup> Twenty-two years later little had occurred to change his view. Many of his Cabinet including Lansdowne were not so sure. They were *fin de siècle* pessimists and worried that Britain was under attack.<sup>10</sup> In so far as the function of the Cabinet was concerned, its primary tasks were to decide on policy and to provide leadership. It was the operative centre of public and political power.<sup>11</sup> Although it was not his habit to hold regular Cabinet meetings Salisbury was guided by the principle that all final decisions in questions of policy lay with the Cabinet. He accepted that it was the duty of the Prime Minister to provide leadership, but by intention as well as temperament he avoided the role of prima donna. He treated the Cabinet as a council of ambassadors with whatever personal talents, came from various classes, interests and regions within the electorate.<sup>12</sup> Lansdowne's decision-making ability was directly impacted by his relations with his Cabinet colleagues. His upbringing and experience in Canada and India had provided him with the skills to operate and manage a network. He knew the right people and how to use his network to help him get policy through Parliament. Within the Cabinet Lansdowne was part of an inner circle of ministers comprising Salisbury, Balfour, Devonshire, Chamberlain, Goschen, Hicks Beach and Hamilton.

In 1895 Salisbury's reputation at home and abroad was at its height. Aged sixty-five years old he was fifteen years older than Lansdowne. The trust he inspired was renowned, he exerted his leadership lightly, by wit and a capacity for work rather than by persuasion.<sup>13</sup> He allowed his ministers broad freedom of action, frequently letting important matters be decided by a small majority of votes, even against his own judgement.<sup>14</sup> Combining the office of Prime Minister and the tenure of the Foreign Office, Salisbury, like Lansdowne, was cautious, reserved, disliked insincerity and public praise. Lansdowne knew him both personally and professionally and he believed he could not have had a kinder or more indulgent

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<sup>9</sup> Salisbury to Lytton (private), 9 March 1877, in G. Cecil, *Life of Robert, Marquis of Salisbury* (4 Vols., London, 1921-32), Vol.2, p.130.

<sup>10</sup> Otte, 'A Question of Leadership', p.4.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2.

<sup>12</sup> P.T. Marsh. *The Discipline of Popular Government: Lord Salisbury's Domestic Statecraft, 1881-1902* (Hassocks, 1978), p.243.

<sup>13</sup> Marsh. *The Discipline of Popular Government*, p.144.

<sup>14</sup> Otte, 'A Question of Leadership', p.2.

Chief.<sup>15</sup> In January 1887 while holding the office of Governor-General of Canada, Lansdowne, then a Liberal Unionist, was pressed by Salisbury to enter the Conservative government. He declined based on both Canadian considerations and a concern that he might later find in government that he could not agree with his new party and colleagues. He explained to his mother, ‘the offer was in some respects a very tempting one. I should like to find myself inside the Cabinet and to re-enter political life at home and besides this I am much drawn towards Goschen and should have liked to serve with him and to meet his wishes. My first impulse was to say ‘yes’ and to begin to pack my trunks, but reflection brought hesitation and finally an adverse decision.’<sup>16</sup> His reluctance was based on both Canadian considerations and a belief that ‘I have to bear in mind that I was in complete ignorance of the policy of the government on many important points notably as to Ireland and what would have been my position if after abruptly “scuttling out” of this country and crossing the floor of the House of Lords, probably alone, I had found that I disagreed with my heterogeneous colleagues?’<sup>17</sup>

Salisbury respected and valued Lansdowne’s ability even though politically Lansdowne’s thinking was more Liberal. During Lansdowne’s Viceroyalty, Salisbury, who feared that the ideas which the dominant western world exported to the East would be turned against it sooner or later,<sup>18</sup> questioned Lansdowne’s desire for a small measure of liberalisation in Indian government. Lansdowne, he complained privately, was still judging the world ‘from the fireside at Brooks’s’, a Whig stronghold in clubland.<sup>19</sup> Salisbury had very little interest in defence policy and an ‘inborn horror of warfare’,<sup>20</sup> although this did not preclude him from remarking to Lansdowne on Kitchener’s request for officers to serve in Egypt, ‘I believe officers are more necessary when you have poor niggers to lead than when you have good ones.’<sup>21</sup> He initially offered the post to Joseph Chamberlain, Lansdowne’s Liberal Unionist colleague. Chamberlain declined to take it. Having

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<sup>15</sup> Lansdowne to Salisbury (private), 11 July 1902, HH. Salisbury MSS, 3M/E, Lansdowne correspondence, f.695.

<sup>16</sup> Lansdowne to Dowager Lady Lansdowne (private), 6 January 1887, BH. Lansdowne (5) MSS, uncatalogued.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> D. Steele, *Salisbury: A Political Biography* (London, 1999), p.267.

<sup>19</sup> Salisbury to Cross (private), 21 July 1892, Cross MSS, Add MS. 51264, f.89.

<sup>20</sup> R. Mackay and H.C.G. Matthew, ‘Arthur James Balfour’ in *Dictionary of National Biography* online (Oxford, 2011). <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30553?docPos=2>

<sup>21</sup> Salisbury to Lansdowne (private), 25 March 1896, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/6.

secured Lansdowne's acceptance he informed Devonshire, another Liberal Unionist he had brought into his Cabinet, that 'he [Lansdowne] is a devoted follower of yours and would work with you very well on Army matters.'<sup>22</sup>

Like Lansdowne Salisbury was opposed to military interference in politics. He did not believe it was the place of senior officers to comment on government policy.<sup>23</sup> It was his supposition that 'any attempt to take the opinion of the expert above the opinion of the politician must, in view of all the circumstances of our constitution, inevitably fail.'<sup>24</sup> Salisbury's attitude resulted as much from the poor opinion he held of senior officers as it did from his Parliamentary constitutionalism. During the Dongola campaign in the Sudan he was determined to limit the interference of the Horse Guards with the soldiers on the spot, informing Lansdowne, 'I shall assent to anything which commends itself to you, but my advice will be not to pay too much attention to your military advisers.'<sup>25</sup> He had a 'strong belief that seniority goes for a great deal too much in the Army and that machinery of promotion by merit is sorely wanted.'<sup>26</sup> The only officer to impress him was Herbert Kitchener whose cautious ways resonated with his own views.

Salisbury purposively encouraged weakening military control and increasing civilian authority. He recognised that 'in every foreign country except our own the Minister of War is in the hands of a military man and not a partisan. But that is because the constitution of this country differs essentially from every other constitution. In this country the Government is conducted and the Departments are ruled by Parliament.'<sup>27</sup> In contrast to the War Office, the Foreign Office which he administered enjoyed a degree of autonomy and was relatively inexpensive to manage. Until ill health caused him to take a break, the office was his personal fiefdom. Relations between his department and Lansdowne's were, if not close, at least not distant and in certain Imperial campaigns the Foreign Office occupied an

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<sup>22</sup> Salisbury to Hartington (private), 26 June 1895, in Steele, *Salisbury*, p.296.

<sup>23</sup> 'I am astounded at reading the recommendations of Sir J. Ardagh. I suppose he reflects the dominant view of the Horse Guards.' Salisbury to Sanderson (private), 21 April 1897, NA. (5) Lansdowne MSS FO 800/145.

<sup>24</sup> Salisbury, 'Lords Debate', 'Administration - Duties of Commander-in-Chief,' 5 March 1901, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.90, c.545.

<sup>25</sup> Salisbury to Lansdowne, undated, in Lord Newton, *Lansdowne. A Life* (London, 1929), p.139.

<sup>26</sup> Salisbury to Lansdowne (private), 26 October 1896, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/16/9.

<sup>27</sup> Salisbury, 'Lords Debate', 'The Position of the Commander-in-Chief', 3 August 1900, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.87, c.609.

influential administrative role. When Cromer implored Salisbury to deliver him from the hands of the War Office in planning the expedition to reconquer the Sudan, the latter needed no convincing, and Lansdowne raised no objection. The successful campaign was planned as Cromer later wrote ‘a Foreign Office war.’<sup>28</sup>

The deep distrust of government enterprise held by Salisbury was shared by his nephew Arthur Balfour. Balfour, who was younger than Lansdowne by three years, had known him since they were at Eton, where Balfour had been Lansdowne’s fag.<sup>29</sup> He assumed an aristocratic nonchalance which masked a razor sharp intelligence. As one of the founder members of the ‘Souls,’ he was part of the new generation of political thinkers. Entering Parliament in 1874 Balfour became First Lord of the Treasury and Leader of the House of Commons in 1891, positions he once again assumed in 1895. He had a deep interest in defence matters, later establishing the Committee of Imperial Defence. He was one of the few politicians to realise the need for cooperation between the military and naval services in support of a comprehensive policy of defence. As he explained, ‘I am always one of those who take special interest in any organization which shall concentrate and coordinate the administration of the forces of the Admiralty and the War Office.’<sup>30</sup> However, he recoiled at the idea that a single Minister of Defence should exist over the service departments, ‘for the Navy the First Lord and he alone, must lie responsible to this House; and similarly, for the Army that the Secretary of State for War, and he alone must be responsible to Parliament.’<sup>31</sup> Lansdowne’s ability to manage the reform discourse and his Cabinet colleagues was strengthened by Balfour’s support. During ‘the War’, when his reputation was greatly weakened, Balfour joined him at the War Office to help to formulate the government’s strategy. He noted at the time ‘I know this war has never been out of my thoughts for one moment for the last two months, that I sacrificed my whole holiday to assisting to the best of my ability those colleagues in whose special department the conduct of the war rests, and that the time of anxiety I have been going through is far greater than anything of which I

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<sup>28</sup> ‘The War Office and the War’, *The Broad Arrow. The Naval and Military Gazette*, 61(1576), 10 September 1898, p.269.

<sup>29</sup> Fagging was part of Eton’s caste system whereby ‘older boys supervised and were waited upon by younger ones’. R.J.Q. Adams, *Balfour: The Last Grandee* (London, 2007), p.13.

<sup>30</sup> Balfour, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘War Office Reorganisation’, 31 August 1895, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.36, c.1385.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* c.1386.



have had experience, even the worst periods of our Irish troubles.’<sup>32</sup> In 1929, Balfour was interviewed by his biographer Blanche Dugdale about Lansdowne and said ‘I shouldn’t call him very clever. He was I don’t quite know how to put it - better than competent.’ Dugdale asked: ‘sort of typical “governing classes” kind of ability, do you mean?’ Balfour replied, ‘Yes, that’s what I do mean I think. Lansdowne had the mentality of the Great Whigs - remember he was descended from a great line of them. But one must qualify even that a little, he wasn’t quite an Englishman. His mother was French. She was a Flahaut. I always felt a sort of continental quality of mind in Lansdowne. I was always very fond of him.’<sup>33</sup>

Among other members of the Cabinet who were supportive of Lansdowne was Spencer Compton, 8<sup>th</sup> Duke of Devonshire. Older than Lansdowne by eleven years, he was self-contained, unemotional and prone to self-doubt.<sup>34</sup> He never deviated from the Whig view in which he was raised ‘that a vigorous Parliament, active in legislative reform, was key to the working of the British constitution, forcing government to take account of public demands, but filtering those demands in the course of discussion by independently minded men of property and education.’<sup>35</sup> Lansdowne had served under him in Gladstone’s second Liberal government as Under-Secretary of State for India in 1880. As Irish landowners both men were conscious of the need to defend the security of Irish property and exchanged regular correspondence on all Irish matters. Their relationship was further strengthened by the marriage of Lansdowne’s eldest daughter Evie to Devonshire’s nephew and heir Victor Cavendish in 1892. Like Salisbury, by 1895 Devonshire showed signs of age. Lansdowne once complained to Balfour when the Prime Minister had accused him of discrediting a Cabinet decision, ‘I was quite unaware of any such decision, but our decisions are very often impalpable and perhaps I ought to have been able to construct one from materials afforded by Devonshire’s yawns and casual interjections round the table.’<sup>36</sup> Known as Hartington until 1891, when he succeeded to the Dukedom and moved to the House of Lords, Hartington first entered

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<sup>32</sup> Balfour, January 1900, in M. Egremont, *Balfour: A Life of Arthur James Balfour* (London, 1980), p.191.

<sup>33</sup> B.E.C. Dugdale, *Arthur James Balfour: First Earl of Balfour* (2 Vols., London, 1936), p.335.

<sup>34</sup> J. Parry, ‘Cavendish, Spencer Compton, Marquess of Hartington and Eighth Duke of Devonshire’ *National Dictionary of Biography* online (Oxford, 2008), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/32331?docPos=7>.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Lansdowne to Balfour (private), 22 April 1900. BL. Balfour MSS, Add MS. 49727, f.129.

Parliament in 1857 as a Liberal. In 1895 Salisbury offered him the Foreign Office or the Lord Presidency of the Council. Devonshire accepted the latter. The attraction of this office was enhanced by Salisbury's proposal that Devonshire would chair a defence committee along the lines recommended by his Commission in 1890.<sup>37</sup> Devonshire's formidable prestige and seniority had a profound impact in reinforcing the importance of Imperial defence. It was his opinion that 'we take our Imperial position so much for granted that sometimes we almost forget that we have an Imperial position at all.'<sup>38</sup>

Among Lansdowne's other Cabinet colleagues with a broad view of Imperial considerations was Joseph Chamberlain who was also eleven years older than Lansdowne. Clean shaven in a predominantly bearded or moustached age his politics also looked fresh. He entered Parliament in 1876 and rose to power through his influence with the Liberal grassroots. Fiercely ambitious, with 'fearless tenacity of will',<sup>39</sup> he 'knows what he wants, but does not appreciate the difficulty of realizing his fond hopes.'<sup>40</sup> Lansdowne first met the Radical Liberal Unionist in an official capacity in Ottawa when Chamberlain stayed with the Lansdownes' at Rideau Hall during Christmas 1887. The visit to Ottawa was a success and converted Lansdowne from his view of Chamberlain as 'mischievous, dangerous and thoroughly dishonest',<sup>41</sup> to that 'he gives me the idea of knowing his own mind and not being afraid of speaking but frankly and I would far sooner deal with him, or let him deal with me, than Gladstone.'<sup>42</sup> That Chamberlain chose the Colonial Office in June 1895 was a surprise to many. His choice showed he was aware of another 'fertile field of opportunity.'<sup>43</sup> Chamberlain had little interest in the mechanics of Imperial defence. He thought of armed force as an intimidating tool in negotiation rather than for deployment in warfare.<sup>44</sup> The War Office and the Admiralty he believed were

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<sup>37</sup> *The Royal Commission on the Civil and Professional administration of the Naval and Military departments, and the relation of those departments to each other and to the Treasury*, known as the Hartington Commission.

<sup>38</sup> Devonshire, 'The Duke of Devonshire at Swansea', *The Times*, 21 May 1896.

<sup>39</sup> J. Morley, *Recollections* (2 Vols., London, 1917), Vol.1, p.143.

<sup>40</sup> Bertie to Bigge (private), 28 November 1899, in P.T. Marsh, *Joseph Chamberlain: Entrepreneur in Politics* (New Haven, 1994), p.479.

<sup>41</sup> Lansdowne to Dowager Lady Lansdowne (private), 18 October 1885, BH. Lansdowne (5) MSS, uncatalogued.

<sup>42</sup> Lansdowne to Gore (private), 4 January 1888, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/14.

<sup>43</sup> T.A. Jenkins, 'Hartington, Chamberlain and the Unionist Alliance, 1886-1895,' *Parliamentary History*, 11(1) (1992), p.138.

<sup>44</sup> Marsh, *Joseph Chamberlain*, p.470.

‘mostly occupied in preparations for the defence of our markets and for the protection of our commerce.’<sup>45</sup> As an Imperialist it was his view that after conquest ‘must come development.’<sup>46</sup> He made no secret of the fact that he did not agree with Lansdowne’s attempts to reform the War Office and Army but acknowledged after Lansdowne had left the War Office, ‘I do not believe that under the circumstances and with such a system and with such military advice and I may add under such political conditions the archangel Gabriel himself could have done better.’<sup>47</sup>

In administering the War Office Lansdowne was acutely aware of the need to keep his own estimates as low as possible. This he achieved by occasionally shifting the Empire’s defence burden onto the Colonies and India. Outside India, the British maintained garrisons at no fewer than seventy overseas stations by 1898. They spanned the globe from Halifax, Nova Scotia where 1,800 men were stationed, to Hong Kong, where 1,167 men were based.<sup>48</sup> The Colonial Office, which Chamberlain ran with unrestrained authority and which was responsible for the annual estimates of many Colonies, naturally attempted to tailor defence expenditures to a Colony’s ability to pay. When the interests of Great Britain and the Colonies clashed bitter disputes often developed,<sup>49</sup> and contentious issues between the two departments flared up often requiring the influence of other departments to smooth matters over.

While it was not uncommon for contentious issues to arise between Lansdowne and the Colonial Office, it was far more common for them to develop between Lansdowne and Sir Michael Hicks Beach, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and a longstanding political associate of Salisbury’s. Presenting a striking figure which his biographer described as ‘almost statuesque severity of feature,’<sup>50</sup> Hicks Beach was six years older than Lansdowne. To his colleagues in Cabinet this severity seemed to be too well reflected in his personality. Nicknamed ‘Black

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<sup>45</sup> Chamberlain, ‘Mr Chamberlain on British Commerce’, *The Times*, 14 November 1896. p.12.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> Chamberlain to Lansdowne (private), 19 September 1903, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/17/1.

<sup>48</sup> P. Burroughs, ‘Defence and Imperial Disunity’ in A. Porter (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire, Vol.3, Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 1999), p.321.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p.xiv.

<sup>50</sup> V. Hicks Beach. *The Life of Sir Michael Hicks Beach, (Earl St Aldwyn)* (2 Vols., London,1932), Vol.1, p.13; T.G. Otte, *Black Michael: Sir Michael Hicks Beach and the problems of Late Victorian Conservatism*, (Tunbridge Wells 2006), pp.3-24.

Michael' for his reputation for temper and thinking angrily,<sup>51</sup> he was known to indulge in sharp verbal attacks on colleagues. As a strong party Conservative and High Churchman he entered Parliament in 1864, becoming Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1885. He again received the seals of that office in 1895. Hicks Beach had military experience having served as Captain in the Royal North Gloucestershire Regiment of Militia.<sup>52</sup> In the archival record there is little evidence of the nature of relations between Lansdowne and Hicks Beach prior to 1895 with the exception of Lansdowne's 1887 comment mentioning his distrust of Hicks Beach. As guardian of the nation's finances Hicks Beach was determined to limit the inexorably rising demands for defence expenditure facing the country. It was his view that 'we were not, we never had been, and...we never should be, a great Military Power. Our first line of defence, our first line of attack, if attack be necessary was the Navy.'<sup>53</sup> He believed that 'compared to armies of foreign countries the British Army was expensive and there did seem to him ways and means of increased efficiency and economy in their Army expenditure.'<sup>54</sup> It was generally assumed in the press that the Treasury 'does not perform to the public' and 'rules the War Office.'<sup>55</sup>

Although the Treasury had the final word on Army estimates and acted as the final arbiter of military policy,<sup>56</sup> such a simplistic view concealed some of the complexity between the two departments. Before submitting the annual estimates to the Cabinet the War Office officials discussed them with the Treasury officials in person. If they failed to reach agreement the matter would be referred to the Cabinet where it was not uncommon for Hicks Beach to be overruled. While Lansdowne was more sensitive to questions of cost than many of his colleagues,<sup>57</sup> when he believed that real improvement in War Office and Army organisation was at stake he was unyielding, even threatening to resign in 1898. As such Lansdowne's relations with the Chancellor were uneasy, 'I admire Beach in spite of his atrocious treatment of

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<sup>51</sup> T.H. O'Brien, *Milner: Viscount Milner of St James's and Cape Town 1854-1925* (London, 1979), p.122.

<sup>52</sup> 'Sir Michael Edward Hicks Beach and his involvement in the Local Militia', GRO. Hicks Beach MSS. D2455/R1/7/6.

<sup>53</sup> Hicks Beach, 'Colston's Day in Bristol', *The Times*, 14 November 1896, p.8.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> 'The Decentralization Report', *The Broad Arrow. The Naval and Military Gazette*, 61(1570), 30 July 1898, p.117.

<sup>56</sup> G.R. Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency: A Study in British Politics and Political Thought, 1899-1914* (Oxford, 1971), p.49.

<sup>57</sup> M.M. Yakutieli, 'Treasury Control and the South African War 1899- c.1905' (D.Phil. thesis, Oxford, 1989), p.19.

me.’<sup>58</sup> In spite of their differences Lansdowne later described his relations with the Treasury to the Royal Commission, saying that ‘I have never heard that the Treasury was unfair to the War Office; on the contrary, although their business is to criticise, I have never heard that their criticism was unfairly exercised.’<sup>59</sup> A similar sentiment was endorsed by Frank Marzials, the Accountant-General. Having examined some 4,000 letters from the Treasury between January 1895 and December 1899 Marzials found ‘in a very few instances approval has been withheld and the decision adhered to in spite of the further representations made by this office, but in no case of real importance that we could discover has sanction been refused to any expenditure which the Secretary of State for War held to be urgently required in the interests of the public service.’<sup>60</sup>

The preferential treatment given to the Admiralty over the War Office by the Treasury was satisfactory to George Goschen, the First Lord of the Admiralty. Regarded as one of the ‘very cleverest men’<sup>61</sup> in the Cabinet, he was older than Lansdowne by thirteen years and was admired for his honesty and personal integrity. However, by 1895 his laissez-faire Liberalism seemed increasingly obsolete.<sup>62</sup> He first entered Parliament in 1863 as a Liberal MP for the City of London, having previously worked in his family’s bank. Leaving the Liberal Party he joined the Liberal Unionists, and not long after in December 1886 became the first Liberal Unionist to accept a Cabinet post from Salisbury. Lansdowne had known him professionally since he was Under-Secretary of State for War in 1872 and their relations were amicable. In 1887 he strongly encouraged Lansdowne to join him in Salisbury’s second ministry. Goschen managed the Admiralty on ‘what were called business principles’ or by personal responsibility, promotion by merit and rigid control of costs.<sup>63</sup> In 1896 the Admiralty accepted the responsibility of defending all overseas territory from seaborne invasion as part of the doctrine of naval supremacy.<sup>64</sup> For the British Empire to prosper not only had it to be well organised

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<sup>58</sup> Lansdowne to Balfour (private), 5 October 1898, BL. Balfour MSS, Add MS. 49727, f.58.

<sup>59</sup> PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21518, p.536.

<sup>60</sup> PP, 1904, XLII, Cd.1792, RC, Appendix 47, no.17, p.298.

<sup>61</sup> Morley, *Recollections*, Vol.2, pp.201-02.

<sup>62</sup> T.J. Spinner, ‘George Joachim Goschen, First Viscount Goschen’ *Dictionary of National Biography* online (Oxford, 2008), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/33478?docPos=2>

<sup>63</sup> C.I. Hamilton, *The Making of the Modern Admiralty: British Naval Policy, 1805-1927* (Cambridge, 2011), p.307.

<sup>64</sup> M.E. Howard, *The Continental Commitment* (London, 1989), p.23.

but it also had to exploit its strengths. In attempting to be strong everywhere, it was in danger of collapsing under the weight of its defences.<sup>65</sup> The Royal Navy did not 'defend' the Empire; it applied pressure wherever a potential enemy was most exposed.<sup>66</sup>

Applying pressure against the potential threat from Russia was one of the tasks for the India Office and George Hamilton, the Secretary of State for India. Hamilton who was ten months younger than Lansdowne had a strong sense of duty and loyalty to the Conservatives but limited political skills. He entered Parliament in 1868 and as a strong supporter of Salisbury rose rapidly. He was Lansdowne's brother-in-law, his sister Maud having married Lansdowne in November 1869. Initially Lansdowne found the strong party Conservatism of Hamilton overbearing, However, they both corresponded with each other on cordial terms fairly regularly throughout their political careers. Hamilton had little desire for the War Office. He rejected Salisbury's offer of the War Office in 1887 believing that an ex-regular subaltern would be far too junior to overrule the formidable Duke of Cambridge on Army reform.<sup>67</sup> He also believed it was 'the most difficult and invidious post in the Cabinet.'<sup>68</sup> Hamilton was one of the few members of the Cabinet with military experience having joined the Rifle Brigade in 1864 and served for four years abroad, partly with Wolseley in Canada. Knowledge of military men and their thinking did little to alter his view that if military authorities were given carte blanche the British Army would be worse off.<sup>69</sup> Hamilton looked upon Lansdowne as the best War Minister Britain had had since Cardwell.<sup>70</sup>

As Secretary of State for India, Hamilton was in constant communication with the War Office. In theory India offered Britain an almost limitless supply of soldiers that it could employ in Asia. In practice, however, Britain's ability to mobilise India's military resources was constrained by several factors. The first was that the British government believed that the costs of military occupation should fall upon

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<sup>65</sup> A.D. Lambert, 'The Royal Navy and the Defence of Empire, 1856-1918' in G. Kennedy, *Imperial Defence: The Old World Order 1856-1956* (Abingdon, 2008), p.120.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, p.124.

<sup>67</sup> J. Ramsden, Lord G. Hamilton, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* online (Oxford 2004), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/33667?docPos=7>

<sup>68</sup> G. Hamilton, *Parliamentary Reminiscences and Reflections, 1886-1906* (2 Vols., London, 1922) Vol.1. p.276.

<sup>69</sup> Hamilton, 'Lord G. Hamilton on India', *The Times*, 27 January 1898.

<sup>70</sup> Hamilton, 'Lord G. Hamilton in Marylebone', *The Times*, 29 September 1900.

the Indian taxpayer, not his British counterpart.<sup>71</sup> The second was that after 1858 the government established a principle that they would always need to have enough British troops on hand to suppress another mutiny.<sup>72</sup> Consequently about a third of the British Army was normally stationed in India. Together with the Indian Army these troops existed to perform two functions: to assist civil power internally when called upon and to constitute a field Army that could repulse any threats from either Russia, the Afghans or tribesmen on the North West Frontier.<sup>73</sup> The military department of the Government of India exercised general control over the ordnance, commissariat and other supply departments of the Army. According to Lansdowne:

The control of the Indian Army rests with the Governor-General in Council. One of his colleagues [the Military Member of the Viceroy's Council] who is virtually his Secretary of State for War, is responsible for the administrative work of the Army, "representing and issuing the orders of the Government of India." The command of the Army and the executive functions are intrusted to the Commander-in-Chief, who has...the privilege of attending the meetings of the Council as an extraordinary member...These two high officials are both subordinate to the Viceroy in Council whose duty it is to co-ordinate their work and hold the balance between them.<sup>74</sup>

Although the organisation and administration of the Army in India differed greatly from the British Army it can be speculated that Lansdowne's reorganisation of the War Office in 1895 was made with his experience of India in mind. That the two armies differed did not lessen the need for both the War Office and the India Office to collaborate in matters of the selection of officers for higher appointments, in maintaining sufficient troops to safeguard the country against internal and external threats, and in matters relating to the change of pay of the British soldier in India.

These were the ministers and their departments which Lansdowne, during his term of office, had frequent interactions with. Among the principal concerns Salisbury faced when forming his Cabinet in June 1895 was that the Parliamentary authority of the government to spend money was due to expire on 10 July and an Army vote had to be taken immediately. Without a ministry this was not possible.

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<sup>71</sup> D. French 'The British Army and the Empire, 1856-1956' in Kennedy (ed.), *Imperial Defence*, p.93.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, p.94.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, p.99.

<sup>74</sup> Lansdowne to Brodrick, 'Minute', 15 May 1905, BL. India Office Library Publication, W2940, f.21.

The second was a fear that before they left office the Liberals might appoint Redvers Buller as Commander-in-Chief to succeed the Duke of Cambridge: an appointment Salisbury was against. Owing to these military considerations Salisbury made haste to get into office. Having held no previous Cabinet post Lansdowne had to be sworn in as Privy Councillor before he could assume the seals of office from Queen Victoria. Although this was feared as being likely to delay Salisbury, no delay was caused and Lansdowne was sworn in and received the seals of office on the same day (1<sup>st</sup> July).

His appointment to the War Office was quietly well received. Queen Victoria who was twenty-six years older than Lansdowne and had known him all his life welcomed the appointment. There is no evidence to suggest she had pressed for his appointment in the same way that she had done for his appointment to the Viceroyalty of India in 1889.<sup>75</sup> Her interest in the Army was largely guided by her wish to preserve its special connection with the Crown.<sup>76</sup> In part due to the legacy of Prince Albert,<sup>77</sup> she favoured the pre-Cardwellian Army which her former husband had been connected with. However, by 1895 her ability to initiate or implement change in military matters was limited and she was obliged constitutionally to accept the advice of the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister, but she could exercise influence and occasionally delay a governmental proposal: 'The Queen is rather inclined to think that the Commander-in-Chief is the sovereign's Commander-in-Chief and that the Army is not the property of Parliament, but of course we know...'<sup>78</sup> As she listened to soldiers rather than to ministers Lord Esher noted, 'the task of the Secretary of State for War is never easy.'<sup>79</sup> She did, however, attempt to advance the career of her favourite son, Arthur, Duke of Connaught. Connaught, who was five years younger than Lansdowne, was a keen soldier, but his rapid promotion between entering the Army in 1867 and becoming Commanding Officer at Aldershot in 1895 caused hostile comment, and required Lansdowne's utmost diplomacy to conciliate the Royals. Lansdowne had demonstrated similar tact in 1890 during his Viceroyalty when confronted with the appointment of a new

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<sup>75</sup> Queen Victoria to Lansdowne (private), 15 March 1888, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/18/1.

<sup>76</sup> Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army*, p.6.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p.31.

<sup>78</sup> Bigge to Lansdowne (private), 26 August 1895, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/18/4.

<sup>79</sup> Lord Esher, 'Journal', 15 November 1900, in M.V. Brett (ed.), *Journals and Letters of Reginald Viscount Esher* (4 Vols., London, 1934-38), Vol.1, p.269.



Commander-in-Chief in India. At that time the Queen pressed for her son's appointment. Salisbury was determined the Duke of Connaught would not, at least for some years, become Commander-in-Chief in India and Lansdowne noted he 'is not in the running. He knows a good deal about the Army, is popular, would not quarrel and would probably do what Brackenbury told him. But if there was a row we should want someone else to lead.'<sup>80</sup> Although the Queen was unable to console herself that her son had not acquired a position at the War Office, she deferred to her Minister's advice.<sup>81</sup>

If Lansdowne was diplomatic in handling the demands of the Royals, he was also scrupulous in his relations with his Cabinet. Although he was naturally cautious he was used to making important decisions and had an instinctive awareness when to apply pressure. On all issues of military policy even relatively minor ones he consulted his colleagues before presenting his schemes. While he was popular and supported as a member of the Cabinet not all of his policies were met favourably. Given the Cabinet's divided views on the justification of amending military policy and defence matters, Lansdowne's ability to manage the reform discourse and persuade his colleagues of the need for a reorganisation of the War Office and Army was dependent on his ability to use public opinion. As a skilled negotiator Lansdowne often used public opinion as a bargaining lever with his Cabinet colleagues. The most notable occasion he adopted this approach was during the reform agitation in 1897 and the prewar crises in 1899. During the 1897 agitation, provoked by a concern as to the poor state of the Army, that Lansdowne succeeded in convincing his colleagues to accept his proposals was achieved by informing them that 'public opinion is apparently unanimous in demanding a large augmentation of the Force.'<sup>82</sup>

To Lansdowne public opinion was another expression 'for the common sense of the country,'<sup>83</sup> and in framing his measures he was motivated by the need to balance what 'he might call military considerations and the interests of the public.'<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Lansdowne to Godley (private), 17 July 1892, Bod. Kimberley MSS, MS. Eng. Hist. c.4325, f.1.

<sup>81</sup> Bond, 'Retirement of the Duke of Cambridge', p.547.

<sup>82</sup> Lansdowne, 'Notes on Proposals made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer', 26 January 1898, CAB 37/46/13.

<sup>83</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lords Debate', 'Military Works (Money) Bill', 5 April 1897, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.48, c.494.

<sup>84</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lords Debate', 'Military Manoeuvres Bill', 2 August 1897, *ibid.*, Vol.52, c.77.

Although events such as the Franco-Russian alliance of 1894 prompted a renewed interest in the problems of Imperial defence and military matters there was a collective complacency in the invincibility of the British Army. Successful campaigns in Ashanti, Crete, Egypt and the Sudan encouraged this attitude. In their speeches in and out of Parliament the Cabinet extolled the virtues of the Navy and the Army. Such complacency did not go unnoticed by the press and Lansdowne, who rarely spoke with official optimism and was one of the few ministers to admit to weaknesses in both services, was also branded as ‘a statesman of a complacent type.’<sup>85</sup> It is understandable from a review of his speeches how such opinion got abroad. His remarks that the British Army’s ‘recent performance [in the Sudan] shows...that, whatever its imperfections, it contains soldiers who are able to uphold its great traditions under the most trying circumstances’, and ‘while we have in the British Army such leaders as Sir William Lockhart and Sir Herbert Kitchener we need never despair,’ certainly inflated the perception of Britain’s invincible Army.<sup>86</sup>

With little to threaten Britain from foreign and domestic affairs a natural antipathy of politicians towards reform developed which provoked the antagonism of some and secured the votes of none.<sup>87</sup> In such circumstances politicians appeared to have little appetite to debate defence and military matters and the reform discourse failed to capture the public imagination. In the House of Commons military debates were often held at the ‘extreme end of the session and in a jaded House’<sup>88</sup> or to ‘empty benches.’<sup>89</sup> Lansdowne attributed the neglect of the Army in Parliament as ‘I cannot help believing, due mainly to the comparative indifference of the public in the affairs of the Army and to the absence of that interest which is taken in the sister service.’<sup>90</sup>

That Parliament neglected the Army was not just complacency concerning Britain’s position in the world and the lack of public interest in military matters but also because the Liberal opposition were not interested in Army reform and igniting

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<sup>85</sup> ‘The Army Estimates for 1899-1900’, *The Broad Arrow. The Naval and Military Gazette*, 62(1597), 4 February 1899, p.121.

<sup>86</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Banquet to Medical Profession’, *The Times*, 5 May 1898, p.10.

<sup>87</sup> F.A. Johnson, *Defence by Committee: The British Committee of Imperial Defence 1885-1959* (Oxford, 1960), p.30.

<sup>88</sup> Dilke, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘War Office Reorganisation’, 31 August 1895, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.36, c.1382.

<sup>89</sup> Norton, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Army Estimates’, 3 March 1899, *ibid.*, Vol.67, c.1306.

<sup>90</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Colston’s Day in Bristol’ *The Times*, 14 November 1896. p.8.

debate. The whole trend of the Liberal Party was to limit Britain's military responsibility as far as possible.<sup>91</sup> It was their view that improving the efficiency of the Army would undermine the productive capacity of Britain and spark off a riotous spirit within the population.<sup>92</sup> It was Gladstone's belief that resistance to the militarist jingoes was the natural attitude of his party. Lansdowne's predecessor, Campbell-Bannerman, shared this sentiment - he had a low opinion of military experts and harboured fears of the military: 'You want to get the best professional advice but you must have the civilian control on the neck of it.'<sup>93</sup> Just as he had a poor opinion of the military he also thought little of Lansdowne. He believed he was 'weak and pleasant, but exceedingly secretive and anxious to get the credit for everything.'<sup>94</sup> Although he harboured these sentiments, he was rarely a threat to Lansdowne's ability to operate at the War Office. Without an alternative policy the opposition party largely resorted to destructive criticism and Lansdowne with his command of the subject and polite tone of language in the House of Lords and Brodrick with his confident manner in the House of Commons were easily able to deflect such criticism.<sup>95</sup> At the start of Lansdowne's term of office the opposition raised few objections to his reorganisation of the War Office which was in many respects a continuation of Campbell-Bannerman's own scheme.<sup>96</sup> However, during the 1896 session the opposition in the House of Commons did use dilatory tactics to obstruct three military bills.<sup>97</sup> While Asquith remarked that the session was distinguished by the 'steady discipline and sagacious strategy' of the opposition,<sup>98</sup> Lansdowne noted it was 'loquacious.'<sup>99</sup> It is of interest that, having obstructed the military policy of the new government, in subsequent years they allowed most

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<sup>91</sup> L.S. Amery, *The Problem of the Army: A Series of Articles Reprinted from The Times* (London, 1903), p.57.

<sup>92</sup> Spiers, *The Army and Society*, p.258.

<sup>93</sup> Campbell-Bannerman to Nash (private), 14 September 1903, BL. Campbell-Bannerman MSS, Add MS. 41237, f.163.

<sup>94</sup> Campbell-Bannerman to a friend (private), 3 September 1903, in J. Wilson, *CB: A Life of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman* (London, 1973), p.217; Also in G. Powell, *Buller a Scapegoat? A Life of General Sir Redvers Buller 1839-1908* (London, 1994), p.118.

<sup>95</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lords Debate', 'Rifle Ranges-applications for grants', 10 July 1900, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.85, c.1100; Lansdowne to Wemyss (private), 3 July 1899, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/16/28/3.

<sup>96</sup> Woodall, 'Commons Debate', 'War Office Reorganisation', 31 August 1895, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.36, c.1398.

<sup>97</sup> The three bills were for authorising a Military Works Loan, for Military Manoeuvres and for Volunteers to equip rifle ranges out of public funds. St.J. Brodrick, 'Mr Brodrick on Army Measures', *The Times*, 17 September 1896, p.10.

<sup>98</sup> Asquith, 'Mr Asquith at Galashiels', *The Times*, 20 October 1896, p.8.

<sup>99</sup> Lansdowne, 'Colston's Day in Bristol', *ibid.*, 14 November 1896, p.8.

measures to pass with barely a fight; and even after the outbreak of 'the War' the opposition in Parliament was, with few exceptions, more critical of the efficiency of the Army and the dissemination of information than with the origins of the conflict and the approach taken by the government.<sup>100</sup> One of their principal complaints was that the 'House of Commons and the public...have never been so badly informed...and what we complain of is want of information.'<sup>101</sup>

The fact that the opposition party's own position on military matters in the House of Commons was so undefined led one observer to the remark that Campbell-Bannerman's and Brodrick's speeches were 'suspiciously in accord.'<sup>102</sup> It can be speculated that Campbell-Bannerman's willingness to accept Unionist military policy was a result of his personal uninterest in military matters. A further factor in undermining the opposition's ability to challenge Lansdowne's position was their lack of unity on military and defence matters. As Sir Edward Grey observed during 'the War', 'there is one thing, and one thing only, in this situation on which I look with a thoroughly light heart and that is the differences of opinion which may exist among the opposition.'<sup>103</sup> But for all their differences they did agree there had been 'great mismanagement on the part of the government.'<sup>104</sup>

More significant than the opposition's disunity and lack of alternatives in impacting on Lansdowne's ability to reconcile Liberal opposition to his schemes of War Office and Army reform was that he preserved the basic structure of the Cardwell system which had remained overwhelmingly popular with the Liberals. As Campbell-Bannerman noted in 1900, 'looking back as very few of us in this House now can for thirty years to the days when Lord Cardwell carried his great measure through the House, it is a perfect marvel to us how much he was able to do in the course of a very few years against the very strongest opposition, and how satisfactory it is to find that although of course mistakes were made and

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<sup>100</sup> Spiers, *The Army and Society*, p.257.

<sup>101</sup> Campbell-Bannerman, 'Commons Debate', 'Army (Supplementary) Estimates, 1900-1901', 27 July 1900, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.86, c.1556.

<sup>102</sup> F.C. Rasch, 'Inefficient Army', *The Saturday Review*, 20 November 1897.

<sup>103</sup> Grey, 'Commons Debate', 'Address in answer to Her Majesty's Most Gracious Speech', 1 February 1900, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.75, c.374.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, c.374.

exaggerations were committed no doubt, still in the main it was a beneficial agent in maintaining the security and therefore the prosperity of the Empire.’<sup>105</sup>

While the tone of the opposition in the House of Commons was critical and blunt, that in the House of Lords was similarly critical but less hostile. Lord Rosebery, the Leader of the opposition in that House, ‘would gladly see the War Office non-political.’<sup>106</sup> Such an aspiration resonated with Lansdowne who it was claimed ‘administered the Army on no party lines.’<sup>107</sup> The truth to this claim can be supported from an interrogation of Lansdowne’s speeches in the House of Lords, many of which alluded to his frustration that the opposition did not offer more constructive support. Such cases are noticeably evident in Lansdowne’s replies to criticism from Rosebery, who was an old friend from Eton and Oxford. It was his opinion that in light of Rosebery’s ‘perpetual attempts to belittle and ridicule everything which is done by Her Majesty’s Government we have the right to ask that he should at least give us some indication as to the defects of what we ourselves propose and some indication of the measures which if he were called to power he would adopt.’<sup>108</sup> It can be speculated that Lansdowne purposively used such language, aware that his colleague would be silenced, but the tone of frustration is clearly evident. However such language was interpreted, as the opposition had no alternative policy on Army reform, Lansdowne’s position was unchallenged.

Those in Parliament that could offer alternative policies but were often reluctant to do so were the service parliamentarians. With the aim of challenging civilian power and advancing their family interests these former officers, many whom were acquainted with the senior officers in the War Office, brought diverse military experience into Parliament.<sup>109</sup> In 1870 there were approximately one hundred and eleven peers and one hundred and two MPs with military experience. In 1898 there were approximately one hundred and eighty-two peers and sixty-five

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<sup>105</sup> Campbell-Bannerman, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Army Estimates’, 12 March 1900, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.80, c.674.

<sup>106</sup> Rosebery, ‘Lords Debate’ ‘Position of the Commander-in-Chief’, 3 August 1900, *ibid.*, Vol.87, c.598.

<sup>107</sup> ‘Army Reorganisation’, *The Broad Arrow. The Naval and Military Gazette*, 59(1538), 18 December 1897, p.653.

<sup>108</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’ ‘Strength and Organization of Home Defences’, 27 July 1900, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.86, c.1474.

<sup>109</sup> Pirie, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Military Forces (Maintenance)’, 8 February 1897, *ibid.*, Vol.45, c.1612.

MPs with such experience.<sup>110</sup> In speeches and written word their political contribution during the late 1890s was as diverse and voluminous as any of the other political groups in Parliament.<sup>111</sup> Overwhelmingly Unionist in their political allegiance, they participated in the fall of the Liberal government in June 1895 and returned to the House of Commons confident that their opinion was of such weight and importance that it could not be disregarded by any government.<sup>112</sup> Their influence was certainly apparent to Lansdowne and the tactical appointments of Brodrick and Wyndham were made largely in consideration of these members. In debating the defence policy of the government both men proved themselves to be successful. That Campbell-Bannerman believed, '[Wyndham] will be clay in the hands of those formidable potters, the service members,'<sup>113</sup> was never realised. Whilst to dismiss the service parliamentarians would have been irresponsible, their actual impact on the reform discourse was fairly limited. Although some of them chose to question every military policy the government introduced, many of their number accepted that under the British system of government whereby the Secretary of State had to consider the 'real necessities of the Empire' and the 'exigencies of the Parliamentary situation', no Minister was able to provide them 'a wholly sound and true scheme.'<sup>114</sup>

Unable to provide a coordinated lead in the House of Commons, one of the service parliamentarians' most outspoken members, Cecil Norton, complained on one occasion after a military blunder that the fault was 'not at all either with the War Office or with those who direct the military portion of our Army; the fault is with the House of Commons in not bringing to the knowledge of the country the position in which we stand.'<sup>115</sup> Even when they addressed Lansdowne through the press and published a letter in *The Times* in January 1898 on conditions in the Army this impact was minimal. The incident merely allowed Lansdowne an opportunity to

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<sup>110</sup> 'The Background and Rank of the Military Interest in the House of Commons', Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army*, pp.162-164; Hansard 1803-2005, 'List of Parliament 1895-1900'; 'Army Reform', *The Broad Arrow. The Naval and Military Gazette*, 58(1511), 12 June 1897, p.685.

<sup>111</sup> 'Hansard Speeches'; *RUSI Journal*; 'Selected Committee Reports'.

<sup>112</sup> Havelock-Allan, House of Commons Debate, 'Military Forces', 23 July 1897, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.51, c.943.

<sup>113</sup> Campbell-Bannerman to Knox (private), 2 January 1899, BL. Campbell-Bannerman MSS, Add MS 41221, f.257.

<sup>114</sup> Colomb, 'Commons Debate', 'Army Estimates, 1904-05', 14 July 1904, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.138, c.98.

<sup>115</sup> Norton, 'Commons Debate', 'Army Estimates, 1898-99', 28 July 1898, *ibid.*, Vol.63, c.353.

reply publicly that their arguments had been ‘constantly before him.’<sup>116</sup> However, after the outbreak of war in South Africa, subjects that had previously been treated as part of an academic discussion took on a practical aspect, and the service parliamentarians in the House of Commons revealed a strong reluctance to accept change, forcing the government to make concessions and undermining civilian supremacy. This was most notable during the passage of the Volunteers Bill during 1900.<sup>117</sup>

In the House of Lords the service parliamentarians were similarly ineffectual in motivating the reform discourse. Wemyss’ attempts to bring forward the Militia ballot and Raglan’s and Blythswood’s objections to the manner in which the Militia forces were treated by the War Office did not force the government to amend their policy but did elicit from Lansdowne the view that his critics were ‘apt to perform one part of their task with the utmost vigour; they look through the strongest magnifying glass they can find at our faults and imperfections, but they consistently turn a blind eye to anything that is good.’<sup>118</sup> With their expertise in defence and military matters restricted very often to their individual knowledge of regimental life, as a group they lacked cohesion and leadership. As such they were unable to undermine Lansdowne’s position or challenge civilian authority.

While attempting to meet the aspirations of the service parliamentarians Lansdowne also had to reckon with the defence intellectuals and their reforming ideas. In shaping public discussion, these civilians, who included the Members of Parliament Charles Dilke and Hugh O. Arnold-Forster and the military historian and journalist Henry Spenser Wilkinson, were more prominent than the service parliamentarians. It was their belief that Imperial defence transcended party politics and that defence questions should be coordinated under one Minister with an officer from each service acting as professional advisers. They denounced the effects of short-service and deferred pay and condemned the Army reserve. Claiming that the break-down of the Army was due to the Cardwell system, they advocated its

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<sup>116</sup> Lansdowne to Brookfield, 21 January 1898, *The Times*, 28 January 1898, p.4.

<sup>117</sup> Wyndham, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Volunteers Bill [Lords],’ 23 July 1900, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.86, cc.934-36.

<sup>118</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘Military Reorganisation and Recruiting in Scotland’, 25 May 1900, *ibid.*, Vol.83, c.1252.

removal.<sup>119</sup> Acquiring military backing for their ideas from Roberts and his ‘Indians’ and relying on the assistance of the service parliamentarians for additional support in Parliament, they endeavoured to contest civilian supremacy.

Dilke was two years older than Lansdowne and as a Radical was a close friend of his brother, Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice. As a student of military history he had a natural interest in the British Empire and defence issues. He first began discussing the need for Army reform in 1885 and by 1887 he had begun to establish himself as a leading advocate of the reform discourse.<sup>120</sup> In 1888 he developed his ideas further with the publication of *The British Army* in which he outlined a scheme for a professional Army for India and for a citizen Army at home in which the bulk of the infantry would be Volunteers, while the special arms and the infantry of two Army Corps, destined to be an expeditionary force, would be short-service soldiers.<sup>121</sup> Although Lansdowne identified Dilke, with his colleague Roberts, as ‘high military authorities’<sup>122</sup> and it was acknowledged that there was probably no other non-military MP ‘who had given so much of his time or attention to the subject of Army organization’,<sup>123</sup> his ideas found little support in Parliament. This was mainly because it was contended that his information was based on the Army in India and was irrelevant to the rest of the Army.<sup>124</sup> Moreover he suffered from the unpleasant scandal that his divorce created and from dislike within the Army of his other recommendations on naval and military matters.<sup>125</sup> In the Cabinet it was Balfour’s view ‘there are no greater enemies to Army reform in my judgement, than those extreme Army reformers like [Dilke] who sneer at every change that is made, and are content with nothing but advocating revolutionary schemes by which the whole existing Army system would be upset.’<sup>126</sup> His regular interjections in military debates were often fanciful, particularly ‘when he invariably begins his speeches

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<sup>119</sup> Luvaas, *The Education of an Army*, p.261.

<sup>120</sup> C.W. Dilke, *The Present Position of European Politics: or Europe in 1887* (London, 1887).

<sup>121</sup> C.W. Dilke, *The British Army* (London, 1888).

<sup>122</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Outline of Army Proposals’, 2 December 1897, CAB 37/45/42, p.18.

<sup>123</sup> Brodrick, ‘Commons Debate’ ‘Military Forces (Maintenance)’, 8 February 1897, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.45, c.1582.

<sup>124</sup> Campbell-Bannerman, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Military Forces (Maintenance)’, 8 February 1897, *ibid.*, Vol.45, c.1594.

<sup>125</sup> J. Gooch, *The Plans of War: General Staff and British Military Strategy c.1900-1916* (London, 1974), p.17.

<sup>126</sup> Balfour, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Brigade of Guards’, 12 February 1897, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.46, c.315.



with complaints of the expense we incur and ends by proposing that we should have a much larger body of Regular forces.’<sup>127</sup>

In 1891 Dilke, who had been strongly influenced by Wilkinson’s views on the Navy and imperial defence, suggested that they should write a popular book on the subject. Wilkinson, who was younger than Lansdowne by eight years, had been contributing articles on military reforms to *The Manchester Guardian* and *Morning Post* since 1881. He argued that the Army suffered because civilians possessed power without knowledge and not until the senior officers had real authority could they be accountable for the condition of Britain’s defence.<sup>128</sup> By the mid-1890s he knew and was known by virtually everyone of influence. He corresponded with soldiers and politicians including Roberts, Haldane, Fisher, Kitchener, Hamilton and Lansdowne. His campaign to give the nation a military education, particularly his 1890 *The Brain of the Army* was instrumental in the creation of the British General Staff.<sup>129</sup> In 1894 he was one of the founders of the Navy League. Despite his pervasive influence it was not until 1904 that he was given an official voice when appointed a member of the Norfolk Commission.

The third defence Intellectual Hugh O. Arnold-Forster was junior to Lansdowne by ten years and a fierce critic of his.<sup>130</sup> He was ‘a critic who was determined to see the worst of everything that had been done by anybody who had anything to do with the administration of the Army.’<sup>131</sup> Entering Parliament in 1892 as a Liberal Unionist and one of Joseph Chamberlain’s followers, he quickly established a reputation for himself as an advocate of imperial defence, inter-service collaboration and Army reform. Committed to the doctrine of the primacy of the Navy and defence by the command of the sea, he worked in and out of Parliament to remove the barriers between political and military affairs.

Arriving at a consensus between these defence intellectuals, Lord Roberts and his ‘Indians’ and the service parliamentarians was a difficult challenge. However, on 12 February 1894, a letter on imperial defence and reform was drafted by Wilkinson

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<sup>127</sup> Brodrick, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Military Forces (Maintenance)’, 22 July 1901, *ibid.*, Vol.97, c.1206.

<sup>128</sup> H.S. Wilkinson, *The Command of the Sea* (London, 1894), p.66.

<sup>129</sup> Luvaas, *The Education of an Army*, p.259.

<sup>130</sup> Arnold-Forster, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Army Estimates, 1899-1900’ 21 July 1899, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.74, c.1615.

<sup>131</sup> Brodrick, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Army Estimates, 1898-9’, 28 July 1898, *ibid.*, Vol.63, c.345.

and signed by some of his colleagues.<sup>132</sup> It was addressed to Gladstone, Salisbury, Balfour, Chamberlain and Hartington. The letter succeeded in stirring controversy,<sup>133</sup> but failed to make any great impression on the Army because it threatened to leave the War Office at the mercy of the Blue Water School. This school believed that invasion would never be attempted until the enemy had established control of the sea. Their view that the Navy was the first line of national defence was unacceptable to most soldiers and senior officers. The military refused to believe the opinion of Sir John Colomb, the leading advocate of the school, that an Army of even 10,000,000 men would be useless to Great Britain unless she could also hold undisputed command of the sea.<sup>134</sup>

Despite their determined efforts to invigorate the reform discourse the defence Intellectuals' ideas found little support until the passage of events in 1897 shifted in favour of War Office and Army reform. In a series of letters to *The Times* Arnold-Forster set out a case against the War Office, arguing that the Army system had broken down. In defending the department Haliburton rejected Arnold-Forster's criticism of Cardwell's system but accepted there was a need for minor changes in the system. Some sections of the press dismissed Arnold-Forster's colleagues as 'either greater amateurs than himself who desire to have a share in the valuable advertisement which *The Times* is so kindly according his name, or they are military men, without knowledge or experience of Army organisation and administration.'<sup>135</sup> The press exposure raised the tone of the discourse and meant that it was no longer possible to ignore that military reform was now 'open to everyone to take an interest in.'<sup>136</sup> That the defence intellectuals and the reform discourse achieved a measure of success in late 1897 did little to undermine civilian supremacy. Lansdowne, as mentioned, used the agitation to push through Cabinet his Army proposals, measures which limited the scope of the discourse but were enough to satisfy his critics and deflect their attempts to abolish the Cardwell system.

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<sup>132</sup> The signatories were Dilke, Wilkinson, Arnold-Forster and Sir George Chesney, an army general and former Military Member in Lansdowne's Viceroy's Council in India.

<sup>133</sup> Luvaas, *The Education of an Army*, p.261.

<sup>134</sup> A.J. Marder, *British Naval Policy, 1880-1905: The Anatomy of British Sea Power* (London, 1940), pp.69-72.

<sup>135</sup> 'Sir Arthur Haliburton on the Army', *The Broad Arrow. The Naval and Military Gazette*, 59(1537), 11 December 1897, p.621.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

That the press and in particular *The Times* were willing to give valuable promotion to the reformers was not only that it shared some of their opinions but because it wanted to impose its own doctrinaire views on the War Office and Army reform debate. Among *The Times*' many complaints of Lansdowne's management of the War Office it opposed his Order-in-Council in 1895, condemned the continuation of linked battalions in the Army and red tapeism at the War Office, never ceased to inculcate the lesson that field troops organised and trained for war constituted the most important military requirement of the Empire and during 'the War' questioned whether Lansdowne's 'exceedingly crude yet peculiarly complicated scheme...will or will not stand in the way of future reforms.'<sup>137</sup> Its constant attacks on Lansdowne prompted Campbell-Bannerman to ask, 'what has happened to *The Times*? It used to be so reasonable and willing to support the present system in the main.'<sup>138</sup> Maintaining that their view was constructive, *The Times* acknowledged that, unlike most of his predecessors, Lansdowne 'has shown his willingness to accept reasoned criticism from the outside and to act upon it.'<sup>139</sup> That Lansdowne was willing to accept and act on comments from the press was not only because he listened to his advisors within the War Office, but because he took note of suggestions from a wide range of sources outside it. This was particularly notable during his reorganisation of the War Office during 1895 which will be discussed in the next chapter, when he remarked 'We have also been assisted by the abundant, I would say the copious, flood of advice and admonition placed at our disposal. There are two great schools of Army reformers, and they have told us what we ought to do and what we ought not to do. We are not of those who say "a plague on both your houses". No such petulant expressions cross our lips. We are ready to take advantage, I think, of any useful suggestion, no matter from what quarter it may proceed.'<sup>140</sup> Amongst the archival record up until 1899 there is evidence of Lansdowne communicating on military matters outside the War Office with both civilians and soldiers alike, including among others Haldane, Roberts, Methuen and Brackenbury.

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<sup>137</sup> 'The Military Year', *The Broad Arrow. The Naval and Military Gazette*, 61(1592), 31 December 1898, p.725.; Editorial, 'The Military Scheme', *The Times*, 13 February 1900, p.10.

<sup>138</sup> Campbell-Bannerman to Haliburton (private), 6 January 1898, in Atlay, *Lord Haliburton*, p.211.

<sup>139</sup> 'Changes at the War Office', *The Times*, 14 March 1899, p.13.

<sup>140</sup> Lansdowne, 'The Guildhall Banquet', *ibid.*, 11 November 1895, p.6.

While the influence of the press on public opinion cannot be ascertained with any degree of precision, its effects on parties and the ruling elite were always important. At the end of the nineteenth century newspapers were intimately bound to political organisations and individuals within them. They served those interests often to the detriment of their own commercial viability. Newspapers proudly affixed to themselves the labels Tory, Liberal or Irish Nationalist, and as new lights and party constellations changed newspapers modified their loyalties accordingly. Hungry for 'information', a literate working class transformed the press. Politics neither sold newspapers nor followed them.<sup>141</sup>

In tandem with these changes there emerged a new type of military correspondent attuned to the values and principles of particular officers they admired and determined to convert their readers to imperialism.<sup>142</sup> Newspaper adulation for these officers and their military campaigns created national heroes and fed the complacency in the invincibility of Britain's voluntary Army, making Lansdowne's task more challenging. Although it was the habit of many newspapers including *The Times*, to promote radical reform,<sup>143</sup> in giving wholesale condemnation to the entire system the press overlooked, that had it been 'judiciously managed it ought certainly to have succeeded.'<sup>144</sup> Although the lack of public interest in military matters limited the potential of the press to push the reform discourse and the question of civilian supremacy further, Lansdowne could not ignore them. That he was willing to listen to and occasionally act on their reasoned recommendations was indicative of his broad-minded approach to operating at the War Office. It was the view of one section of the press of Lansdowne that 'outside criticism...has its good effects.'<sup>145</sup>

Lansdowne was not exaggerating when he noted that the War Office 'is the best criticized department in the public service; our misfortune is that the criticism is as a rule, purely destructive.'<sup>146</sup> Although Lansdowne and the War Office were the focus of constant attacks between 1895 and 1900, attempts outside the War Office to

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<sup>141</sup> S.E. Koss, *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain* (London, 1981).

<sup>142</sup> Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army*, pp.195-197.

<sup>143</sup> 'The Recruiting Problem', *The Broad Arrow. The Naval and Military Gazette*, 58(1508), 22 May 1897, p.601.

<sup>144</sup> 'Army Reformers', *The Broad Arrow. The Naval and Military Gazette*, 60(1541), 8 January 1898, p.33.

<sup>145</sup> 'The Progress of Decentralization at the War Office', *The Broad Arrow. The Naval and Military Gazette* 63(1627), 2 September 1899, p.257.

<sup>146</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lansdowne on the Army', *The Times*, 10 December 1897, p.10.

reduce civilian supremacy and influence the reform discourse were largely unsuccessful. By listening to and using the diverse aspirations held by Liberal opposition, the service parliamentarians, the defence intellectuals and the press and by maintaining his allegiance to the Cabinet, Lansdowne pushed through his Army proposals while securing the system his critics wished to abolish. That the Cabinet was unwilling to weaken civilian authority over the military was a combination of tradition, economics and a collective complacency in the invincibility of the Army. The next chapter will aim to demonstrate how Lansdowne's ability to manage the reform discourse and the state of civil-military relations during his term of office were cast by his reorganisation of the War Office in 1895.

### **Chapter Three - The 1895 Reorganisation**

The War Office reorganisation of 1895 has been described as a compromise measure, containing the seeds of disarray,<sup>1</sup> and causing the mistakes of ‘the War’.<sup>2</sup> Such a view overlooks the sad truth, as Lansdowne noted, that the system itself was not at fault and that the failures during ‘the War’ were ‘due if anything to the fact that the system was not carried out as faithfully as it might have been.’<sup>3</sup> Wolseley in his zeal to strengthen the Army was too apt to forget the limitations which Parliamentary institutions then placed upon civilians and soldiers alike and he ‘failed correctly to apprehend the bearing of the system.’<sup>4</sup> What neither Lansdowne nor the Cabinet could have anticipated in November 1895 was that Wolseley was not sufficiently capable to cope with the demands which changing diplomacy was asking of him. By subsequently attempting to contravene the system he encouraged disharmony and distrust, and further divided the senior officers and civilians at the War Office, irrevocably damaging his own relations with Lansdowne and the Cabinet. With the exception of W.S. Hamer’s 1970 examination and accounts from biographical studies there is very little in the literature on Lansdowne’s 1895 reorganisation.<sup>5</sup> While Hamer examines the differences between the civilians and military he shows little curiosity about the individuals caught up in the reorganisation. It is the aim of this chapter to return the human element to Lansdowne’s reorganisation of 1895.

It was Lansdowne’s belief that reforming the War Office was a matter to be attacked first before the problem of Army organisation could be profitably approached,<sup>6</sup> and within weeks of his appointment to the War Office he prepared a scheme for its reorganisation. Prior to appointing Wolseley, Lansdowne telegraphed

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<sup>1</sup> Hamer, *The British Army*, p.170; Gooch, *The Plans of War*, p.20.

<sup>2</sup> Editorial, ‘Military Reform and the House of Lords’, *The Times*, 28 May 1900, p.9.

<sup>3</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘War Office Administration - Duties of Commander-in-Chief’, 4 March 1901, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.90, c.350.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* c.357.

<sup>5</sup> Hamer, *The British Army*, H. Kochanski, *Sir Garnet Wolseley: Victorian Hero* (London, 1999); F.B. Maurice, and G.C.A. Arthur, *The Life of Lord Wolseley* (London, 1924); E. Wood, *From Midshipman to Field Marshal* (London, 1907); T.J. Spinner, *George Joachim Goschen: The Transformation of a Victorian Liberal* (Cambridge, 1973); F.A. Johnson, *Defence by Committee: the British Committee of Imperial Defence, 1885-1959* (London, 1960).

<sup>6</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘Address in Reply to His Most Gracious Majesty’s Speech’, 14 February 1905, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.141, c.35.

him, 'you must clearly understand that changes in the position of the Commander-in-Chief are inevitable. The precise extent is not yet decided, but I think they will be on the lines indicated by the late Secretary of State in his House of Commons statement.'<sup>7</sup>

In this statement as explained in Chapter One, Campbell-Bannerman initiated recommendations for a reorganisation of the War Office, some of which were based on those suggested by the Hartington Commission. The most important of these aimed to redress civilian concern that too much power was concentrated in the office of Commander-in-Chief. It was Lansdowne's belief that Wolseley should be given 'full opportunity of discussing these with me, but it is necessary for me to have a free hand, and I could not agree to any conditions which might afterwards embarrass the government in carrying out the desired reform.'<sup>8</sup> While Wolseley accepted Lansdowne's offer, recognising that some changes would be inevitable,<sup>9</sup> it was soon apparent that he did not agree with Lansdowne's scheme, particularly regarding the modification to the role of his own office and the question of the discipline of the Army. Prior to Lansdowne's formal announcement of the new arrangements Wolseley expressed his opinion that 'whether in the field or on a peace establishment, his [the Commander-in-Chief's] first duty...is that the Army under his command should always be a thoroughly efficient fighting machine. This is a responsibility he cannot divide or share with an Adjutant-General or anyone else...It is the most important of his functions.'<sup>10</sup> Lansdowne's proposal, he argued, 'would leave the Army in doubt as to whom it should regard as primarily responsible to the Secretary of State for its fighting efficiency.'<sup>11</sup> It was his opinion that the duties of the Commander-in-Chief as provided for by Stanhope's Order-in-Council of 1888 were superior. As he explained in March 1901, under those terms:

The Commander-in-Chief - the military specialist - was charged with the discipline, education, military training, and fighting efficiency of all ranks of the military forces that are annually voted by Parliament. In other words, the Commander-in-Chief was held responsible by the

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<sup>7</sup> Lansdowne to Wolseley (private), 9 August 1895, HCL. Wolseley MSS, WP. 24/87/2.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> O. Wheeler, *The War Office*, p.128; Wolseley, 'Lords Debate', 'War Office Administration - Duties of Commander-in-Chief', 4 March 1901, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.90, c.335.

<sup>10</sup> Wolseley to Lansdowne (private), 22 August 1895, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/16/17/2.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

Secretary of State for War that those military forces were always thoroughly efficient, and, supposing the stores, guns, etc., voted were sufficient, that the Army was always ready for rapid mobilisation. This, I contend, was a practical, well working system...the military efficiency of the Army was secured by being placed under one man, the soldier-expert, the Commander-in-Chief. He was, in effect, as I have said, directly responsible to the War Minister for the discipline, military education, training, and fighting efficiency of all ranks.<sup>12</sup>

Wolseley's dislike of the scheme was shared by some of Lansdowne's closest colleagues at the War Office. Among the alternative suggestions made for reorganising the department, Brackenbury argued that the War Office's 'great defect was the want of a co-ordinating department' - in foreign armies, that of the Chief of Staff. If they were to retain the Commander-in-Chief, there should be a Chief of Staff, free from executive duties, under him. Campbell-Bannerman's plan would fail because it provided only for routine work, not for a department of 'thought.'<sup>13</sup> He advised Lansdowne, 'until you have such a 'brain of the Army' you can never have really systematic control.'<sup>14</sup> Lansdowne's private secretary, Charles Welby, also questioned the new scheme. He thought the real stumbling block with the proposal was the Adjutant-General. 'Surely Lord Wolseley's contention is sound. The Commander-in-Chief must and ought to be responsible for the efficiency at least of the personnel of the Army and how can he be if the essential duties of training, and discipline and perhaps above all, recruiting are controlled by or their systems liable to be radically modified by an independent great officer?'<sup>15</sup>

In light of his support for Campbell-Bannerman's scheme Lansdowne was unwilling to accommodate these suggestions. On 19 August, Lansdowne made his first parliamentary statement as Secretary of State. In a speech under five minutes in duration he announced changes in the administration of the War Office, the retirement of the Duke of Cambridge the following November after thirty-nine years of service and the appointment of Wolseley as Commander-in-Chief for a term of five years.<sup>16</sup> The following week he brought to public attention the changes envisaged in his reorganisation of the War Office with a 'brief and imperfect

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<sup>12</sup> Wolseley, 'Lords Debate', 'War Office Administration - Duties of Commander-in-Chief', 4 March 1901, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.90, cc.332-33.

<sup>13</sup> Brackenbury to Lansdowne (private), 1 July 1895, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/20/6.

<sup>14</sup> Brackenbury to Lansdowne (private), 7 July 1895, *ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Welby to Lansdowne (private), 23 September 1895, *ibid.*, Add MS. 88906/19/5.

<sup>16</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lords Debate', 'Lord Wolseley's Appointment', 19 August 1895, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.36 cc.245-7.



sketch.’<sup>17</sup> He announced that there was ‘no material difference of opinion’<sup>18</sup> between his own and Campbell-Bannerman’s scheme, announced the previous June, and that he intended to proceed on the main principles of the Hartington Commission. Speaking in the House of Commons a week after Lansdowne, Goschen remarked that the changes they were undertaking were ‘the crowning work of what has been done already, rather than anything entirely novel.’<sup>19</sup> He also believed that ‘for my part, I may say that I am desirous that the responsibility of the First Lord of the Admiralty and of the Secretary of State for War should be absolutely retained and kept unimpaired.’<sup>20</sup>

In outlining his scheme for the reorganisation of the War Office scheme Lansdowne both deflected criticism from the opposition Liberal party, and validated his Cabinet colleague’s Report [Hartington/Devonshire] as a ‘sufficient and authoritative exposition’ of the defects in the system of military administration. These defects fell under three heads: ‘That there was an excessive centralization of responsibility in the Commander-in-Chief’,<sup>21</sup> ‘that in the distribution of work amongst the heads of the great military departments no sufficient provision had been made for the consideration of the plans for the military defence of the Empire as a whole, or for the examination of larger questions of military policy’; and ‘that what the commissioners spoke of as the consultative element was not sufficiently represented at the War Office.’<sup>22</sup>

Although the Hartington Commission had recommended the creation of a central organising department under a Chief of the Staff and the abolition of the Commander-in-Chief’s office, Lansdowne, like Campbell-Bannerman before him, was opposed to taking such action. He believed that public opinion would not support the abolition of the post of Commander-in-Chief<sup>23</sup> which was so closely associated with the Crown and that a Chief of the Staff ‘entirely dissociated from

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<sup>17</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘War Office Reorganisation’, 26 August 1895, *ibid.*, Vol.36, c.774.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, c.769.

<sup>19</sup> Goschen, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Navy Estimates 1895-96’, 2 September 1895, *ibid.*, Vol.36, c.1484.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, c.1484.

<sup>21</sup> Lansdowne, in contrast to Wolseley, believed that Stanhope’s 1888 Order-in-Council had created ‘stupendous centralisation’ in the office of the Commander-in-Chief. Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘War Office Administration - Duties of Commander-in-Chief’, 4 March 1901, *ibid.*, Vol.90, c.347.

<sup>22</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘War Office Reorganisation’, 26 August 1895, *ibid.*, Vol.36, cc.769-70.

<sup>23</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Note on the report of the Elgin Commission’, 3 November 1903, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/22/11.

executive work, would be out of touch with the Army and would, in all probability, not secure its confidence.<sup>24</sup> Moreover such an officer would ‘inevitably become the real Commander-in-Chief.’<sup>25</sup> By appointing a Chief of the Staff, Lansdowne feared he would establish a system where the expert advice of the heads of the departments to the Secretary of State would be ‘liable to be set aside on the advice of such an officer.’<sup>26</sup> Essentially such a situation would have had echoes of Stanhope’s 1888 Order-in-Council whereby the expert advice of the heads of department had to percolate to the Secretary of State through firstly the Adjutant-General and then Commander-in-Chief which meant that the ‘responsible adviser was not the expert for the Secretary of State that person being the Commander-in-Chief.’<sup>27</sup>

Under Lansdowne’s scheme the department of the Commander-in-Chief would substitute for a General Staff.<sup>28</sup> He would hold his office under the usual rules affecting Staff appointments, would exercise general command over the British Army at home and abroad, issue Army Orders, and hold periodical inspections of the troops. He would be responsible for commissions, promotions, appointments, honours and rewards, for the departments of military information and mobilisation and for the general distribution of the Army. He would be the principal adviser of the Secretary of State, and would give him general as distinguished from departmental advice upon all important questions of military policy.<sup>29</sup>

The Adjutant-General would be charged with the discipline, education and training of the Army, with returns and statistics, enlistments and discharges. To the Quartermaster-General would be entrusted such matters as supplies and transport, Army quarters, remounts, the movement of troops, the Pay Department and the Army Service Corps. The Inspector-General of Fortifications would be responsible for barracks, fortifications and War Office lands and the supply and inspection of warlike stores and equipment for armaments, patterns, and inventions<sup>30</sup> would be

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘War Office Reorganisation’, 26 August 1895, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.36, c.771.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., c.771.

<sup>27</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘War Office Administration - Duties of Commander-in-Chief’, 4 March 1901, *ibid.*, Vol.90, c.348.

<sup>28</sup> Editorial, ‘We welcome with satisfaction and with hope’, *The Times*, 27 August 1895, p.7.

<sup>29</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘War Office Reorganisation’, 26 August 1895, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.36, c.771.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., cc.771-72.

entrusted to the Inspector-General of Ordnance. Drawing on the schemes of his predecessors Lansdowne recommended that these senior officers would be immediately responsible to the Secretary of State for the efficient administration of their departments and have direct access to him to provide advice regarding matters in which their particular department was concerned. Moreover they would be expected to take responsibility for the estimates of their own departments.<sup>31</sup>

Trusting that military opinion would emerge more distinctly in a military board without the presence of the Secretary of State,<sup>32</sup> he announced that the Commander-in-Chief and the other heads of departments would act together as an Army Board for the purpose of reporting on selections for promotion and certain staff appointments and for proposals for estimates<sup>33</sup> and ‘such questions as may be from time to time referred to them by the Secretary of State.’<sup>34</sup> When Lansdowne took office ‘regular meetings were attended by the Adjutant-General and the three other great military heads.’ These meetings which were then known as Adjutant-General’s meetings were not recognised by the constitution of the War Office. As Lansdowne later explained, he thought they:

May be regarded as having, to some extent, grown up in consequence of the somewhat special condition of the War Office at that time, when the Duke of Cambridge was Commander-in-Chief. The Duke of Cambridge gave a great deal of attention to certain parts of the business, and not so much to others, and the Adjutant-General consequently acquired a position of special authority in the office. It was his habit to convene his military colleagues and to confer with them as to various questions as they arose. I thought the arrangement a bad one, partly because it had no place in the constitution of the office. It was an irregular arrangement, because, when Lord Wolseley succeeded the Duke of Cambridge as Commander-in-Chief, it was quite clear that he would expect to have a voice in deliberations of that kind. I therefore regularised the matter by creating the Army Board, which consisted of the Commander-in-Chief and the four other military heads.<sup>35</sup>

In creating the Army Board Lansdowne was also motivated by a belief that, ‘since the larger military questions concerned more departments than one, it is...most important that the heads of those departments should be brought

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<sup>31</sup> PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21474, p.534.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 21436, p.531.

<sup>33</sup> PP, 1904, XL, Cd.1790, RC, 1140, p.53.

<sup>34</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘War Office Reorganisation’, 26 August 1895, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.36, c.772.

<sup>35</sup> PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21471, p.533.

together.<sup>36</sup> He maintained that a great deal of confusion would be avoided by consultations round a table between the soldiers and the civilians.<sup>37</sup> Although Salisbury wanted Lansdowne to preside over the Army Board Lansdowne himself was against this proposal. That he did not participate in the proceedings met with approval from Queen Victoria.<sup>38</sup> Balfour also urged Lansdowne to take part in Army Board meetings particularly when discussing the Army estimates.<sup>39</sup> It can be speculated that Lansdowne desisted from taking his advice as under the terms of his new system he was empowered to consider his senior officers' proposals and then indicate to the Board an 'approximate amount' within which the estimates should be kept and the proposals he wished them to report on. Aware of the sums involved the Board then made their report on the proposals based on their importance to the requirements of the Army. It was then at Lansdowne's discretion to decide which of these proposals to accept. With that decision taken the final estimates were prepared in the Finance Department for submission to the Chancellor of the Exchequer.<sup>40</sup>

In an attempt to create greater understanding between civilians and senior officers on the long term objectives which the annual estimates were sanctioned for and the cost of the various proposals Lansdowne decided that the Accountant-General should attend the Army Board. A few months after this change was implemented Knox, the Accountant-General, noted 'that the soldiers did not like the change, because they have to face one another and argue out their ideas instead of attempting to push them through independently, and they don't like my presence, because it makes them consider the financial aspects of affairs and also lets me know the differences of opinion.'<sup>41</sup> Although Wolseley did not believe in 'collective opinions',<sup>42</sup> the Board met 'very frequently during the late autumn and winter', when the estimates were under consideration.<sup>43</sup>

Just before the outbreak of 'the War' Lansdowne created a new Army Board which comprised the Commander-in-Chief, the Adjutant-General, the

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<sup>36</sup> Lansdowne, 'Minute', 12 August 1895, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS. Add MS. 88906/16/1.

<sup>37</sup> PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21502, p.535.

<sup>38</sup> Bigge to Lansdowne (private), 26 August 1895, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/18/4.

<sup>39</sup> Balfour to Lansdowne (private), 19 October 1895, BL. Balfour MSS, Add MS. 49727, f.32.

<sup>40</sup> Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army*, p.51; Hamer, *The British Army*, pp.267-268.

<sup>41</sup> Knox to Campbell-Bannerman (private), 26 December 1896, BL. Campbell-Bannerman MSS, Add MS. 41221, f.239.

<sup>42</sup> PP, 1904, XL, Cd.1790, RC, 9064, p.381.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 1149, p.54.

Quartermaster-General, the Inspector-General of Fortifications, the Director-General of the Ordnance Factories, the Accountant-General and Assistant Under-Secretary of State and such officers as were specially summoned to attend, to deal with matters necessary for maintaining the Army in an efficient and well-equipped condition. Unlike previously the proceedings of this new Board were noted and printed. Lansdowne believed it did its work 'extremely well and was a valuable addition to the machinery of the War Office at the time.'<sup>44</sup> Under the new system Knox observed 'the Army Board machinery had begun to work more effectively; Secretary of State seems satisfied but the soldiers can't bear it much preferring to paddle their own canoe in their own way if they can. However, matters are going with great smoothness, though with much fuss which I try to keep down.'<sup>45</sup>

While the Army Board provided part of the consultative element which the Hartington Commission recommended, the other part was filled by a War Office Council, presided over by the Secretary of State and comprising the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, the Permanent Under-Secretary, the Financial Secretary, the Commander-in-Chief, and the four heads of the great military departments, and other experts specifically summoned to attend the meetings.<sup>46</sup> This Council as reorganised in 1895 was similar to its predecessors of 1890 and 1892. The Secretary of State retained the right to determine the agenda and all decisions were in his name, not that of the Council. As a purely consultative body its purpose was to assist the Secretary of State in reaching consensus with his senior officers and civilian advisers. It was also understood that as the Secretary of State alone was responsible to Parliament it was with him that the final decisions of the matter under discussion would rest.<sup>47</sup>

During Lansdowne's term of office meetings were irregular and infrequent<sup>48</sup> as had been the case at the time of Campbell-Bannerman. Where records of discussions were kept it appears they had regard only for decisions made by the Secretary of State and not of opinions expressed or advice given by the other members.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21488, p.534.

<sup>45</sup> Knox to Campbell-Bannerman (private), 18 October 1899, BL. Campbell-Bannerman MSS, Add MS. 41221, ff.261-2.

<sup>46</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lords Debate', 'War Office Reorganisation', 26 August 1895, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.36, c.773.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* c.774.

<sup>48</sup> PP, 1904, XL, Cd.1790, RC, 1156, p.54.

<sup>49</sup> PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21477, p.534.

Although none of the members had any initiative, as Lansdowne later explained, ‘if any individual member desired to bring a matter before the War Office Council he certainly would not have been denied the opportunity of doing so.’<sup>50</sup> Disagreements between the Secretary of State and his advisers remained an official mystery. Lansdowne’s claim that senior officers gathered together would not give unreserved opinion was partly attributable to the failure of the War Office Council. This view was reinforced by the Director-General Ordnance that at such occasions ‘he might not be prepared to express an opinion which might not be shared by the President.’<sup>51</sup>

Lansdowne’s scheme was exposed to a cross-fire of criticism in and out of Parliament.<sup>52</sup> The persistence with which the attacks were repeated during August and September made it incumbent upon him that the actual wording of a new Order-in-Council would have to be very minutely considered. As one of the scheme’s fiercest critics, Wolseley was determined to force Lansdowne to redraft his reorganisation. Producing his own draft Order-in-Council, ‘as a sort of compromise between the extremely civilian views embodied in the Hartington Commission report, and the purely military view of the Army-men who have experience in Army administration’, Wolseley held firm to his belief that the Commander-in-Chief should be responsible for the discipline of the Army, and, if he were not, then ‘it is impossible he could be in any way responsible for that fighting efficiency.’<sup>53</sup> Military opinion was unanimous in holding that the attempt to dissociate the Commander-in-Chief, even in appearance, from the control of the discipline of the Army would be ‘fraught with danger’, and that ‘no scheme would work, or be understood by the Army which does not give the Commander-in-Chief an undoubted right of interference in questions of discipline.’<sup>54</sup> While Lansdowne understood Wolseley’s counter-argument he remained unmoved. Attempting to break Lansdowne’s intransigence a few weeks before the Order-in-Council was published, Wolseley made a further attempt to sway Lansdowne by bringing to his attention the issue of the proposed change in role of the Adjutant-General and warning him:

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<sup>50</sup> Lansdowne, 27 March 1903, *ibid.*, 21478, p.534.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 21435, p.531.

<sup>52</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Minute’, 31 October 1895, in Lansdowne, 27 March 1903, *ibid.*, 21425, p.528.

<sup>53</sup> Wolseley to Lansdowne (private), 02/03 October 1895, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/28.

<sup>54</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Minute’, 31 October 1895, in PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21425, p.528.

I have urged upon you, namely that the Adjutant-General should be the staff officer of the Commander-in-Chief. I do not know what Lord Roberts' opinion is, but although he may not know much about the English Army or about War Office administration I wish you could leave his opinion upon the proposal to disavow the discipline of the Army from the command of it. The discipline is the most important element in fighting efficiency. Now what I would like you to think of is this: that if you take away the Adjutant-General of the Army from the Commander-in-Chief and so divorce discipline from command you and your successors will leave no one to whom you can look as responsible for the fighting efficiency of the Army: you will do so in opposition to the whole sentiment of the Army, and in opposition to the views and opinions of every general I ever heard of, General Brackenbury I suppose exempted... You propose to make the AG responsible for the discipline of the Army. Now there can be no responsibility without power. In other words, he must be independent quâ discipline of the Commander-in-Chief if you mean to hold him responsible for it... Don't you think your military advisers... might be able to give you their individual opinions upon this purely military point.<sup>55</sup>

In ranging himself against Lansdowne's scheme, Wolseley sought out and received the support of Wood and Buller, assuring them that it was in their own interest to support him in his struggle to amend the Order-in-Council.

To Lansdowne the pre-eminence of the Commander-in-Chief was not in question; that officer had been made the principal adviser to the Secretary of State and given unlimited right of advising him on questions arising.<sup>56</sup> As to the question of the discipline of the Army he informed the Cabinet that, as in all other questions, 'the Commander-in-Chief would certainly have his say.' In wishing to preserve the attribute of command which 'in the eyes of the public most contributes to the dignity of his position,' he told his colleagues that he would frame his Order-in-Council as to 'unmistakeably show' that 'the Commander-in-Chief is in a position different from that of the other Heads of Departments, a position giving him a general power of supervising and directing the whole of the military work of the office.'<sup>57</sup> As he explained to Devonshire, 'the point on which our scheme has been most successfully attacked is the absence of an intelligible frontier between the province of the Commander-in-Chief and that of the Adjutant-General. I see only two ways of dealing with it:

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<sup>55</sup> Wolseley to Lansdowne (private), 15 October 1895, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/16/17/2.

<sup>56</sup> Lansdowne, 'Minute', 31 October 1895, in PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21425, p.528.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

(1). To make the Commander-in-Chief neither more nor less than your Chief of Staff - stripping him altogether of command.

(2). To give him, more distinctly than we have yet given him, a general right of supervising the military departments. I don't think public opinion would accept (1). The proposal to create a Chief of Staff has few supporters. We must therefore; it seems to me, fall back upon (2). This proposal would I believe have the support of all the soldiers and most of the civilians connected with this office, and is much more likely to work than the other. It will leave the heads of departments with as much practical responsibility, as, under the circumstances, it would really be possible to give them. Whatever is done, their responsibility must be limited (a) by the financial control exercised by the civil side of the office, the Cabinet, and Parliament, and (b) by military ideas of discipline which will generally lead an ordinary head of a department to keep pretty well in line with the Commander-in-Chief.<sup>58</sup>

Providing the appropriate attributes to the position of Commander-in-Chief not only with regard to discipline but also to all other military questions Lansdowne informed the Cabinet that he proposed defining his duties as 'principal adviser to the Secretary of State on all military questions' and 'charged with the general direction of the Military departments of the War Office.'<sup>59</sup> Although documented evidence of the Cabinet's opinion to the scheme is limited, Balfour was the most uncomfortable with the proposal and most determined to maintain civilian authority. He believed that:

If you put the Secretary of State for War in direct communication with the Commander-in-Chief alone I do not see how the Secretary of State for War can be anything less than the administrative puppet of the great soldier who is at the head of the Army. He may come down to the House and express the views of that great officer, but if he is to take official advice from the Commander-in-Chief alone it is absolutely impossible that the Secretary of State should be really responsible, and in this House the Secretary of State will be no more than a mouthpiece of the Commander-in-Chief.<sup>60</sup>

He concluded:

There are only two possible schemes of Army government under Parliamentary government. According to the one the whole machinery of Army administration centres in one soldier, who is the sole channel through which subordinate officers approach the Secretary of State and who is, in effect, the ruler of the Army, controlled only by the Secretary of State in

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<sup>58</sup> Lansdowne to Devonshire (private), 9 October 1895, CH. Devonshire MSS, 8<sup>th</sup> Duke group, 340.2656.

<sup>59</sup> Lansdowne, 'Minute', 31 October 1895, in PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21425, p.528.

<sup>60</sup> Balfour, 'Commons Debate', 31 August 1895, 'War Office Reorganisation', *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.36, c.1387.



those cases in which for financial or other reasons, he is likely, to come into conflict with the House of Commons. The second...is one in which the centre and focus of Army administration is not in the Commander-in-Chief but in the Secretary of State...Now the scheme of the Orders in Council is an attempt to combine fragments of both the other plans, and as a result is neither very coherent or logical.<sup>61</sup>

He advised Lansdowne to cut out the sentence ‘and shall be charged with the general direction of the Military Departments of the War Office.’<sup>62</sup> Influenced by Balfour and Brodrick, who was also uncomfortable with the scheme, Lansdowne replaced the word ‘direction’ with ‘supervision.’<sup>63</sup> He did not replace the rest of the sentence, as he explained to Buller, who had assisted him in drafting the original scheme, ‘I could not accept your wording in many places, and I have amended my draft and Wolseley now thoroughly approves of it...You will see that I have substituted your word (direction) for supervision. And we have “charged” the heads of dept. with certain duties instead of making them “responsible”. Wolseley attaches great importance to this change. I do not myself see so much difference between the two expressions, but “charged” is the word to which the Army is used, so perhaps it expresses correctly the necessarily limited responsibility which the head of a dept. will possess.’<sup>64</sup> Balfour, not wanting to be drawn into the controversy, later told Brodrick that whether the Commander-in-Chief was charged with supervision or direction he was ‘too ignorant of the real working of the Department...even to cherish the illusion that my opinion is very valuable. I cannot help entertaining the conviction that our administrative machinery is cumbrous and costly and that in all probability it would break down under a serious strain.’<sup>65</sup>

Lansdowne’s reorganisation was confirmed by Order-in-Council on 21 November 1895, and the Commander-in-Chief became ‘the principal adviser of the Secretary of State on all military questions’, and ‘charged with the general supervision of the Military Departments of the War Office.’<sup>66</sup> To secure further the power of general supervision it was also announced<sup>67</sup> that ‘all important questions

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<sup>61</sup> Balfour to Lansdowne (private), 19 October 1895, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/1.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Minute’, 31 October 1895, in PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21425, p.528.

<sup>64</sup> Lansdowne to Buller (private), 17 October 1895, NA. WO 132/5.

<sup>65</sup> Balfour to Brodrick (private), 2 November 1895, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/16/17/2.

<sup>66</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Minute’, 8 May 1899, in PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21425, p.530.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

would be referred to the Commander-in-Chief before submission to the Secretary of State.’<sup>68</sup> As Lansdowne later explained, he ‘never contemplated that the Commander-in-Chief should be kept in the dark’<sup>69</sup> and he never intended having confidential communications with the separate heads of department behind the Commander-in-Chief’s back.<sup>70</sup> What he envisaged was that he would get ‘the actual mind of a man who was an expert in a manner in which I should not get it if I was only to see him in the presence of the Commander-in-Chief.’<sup>71</sup> He believed ‘it is the case that when you have a number of these high officers sitting round a table they will not give you the same absolutely frank, unreserved opinion that they will when you get them quietly in your room.’<sup>72</sup> It was Lansdowne’s view that the new ‘regulations reserved to the Commander-in-Chief a far larger measure of control and authority than was contemplated by the Hartington Commission, by the late government, or by the advocates of decentralization in the press.’<sup>73</sup> He remained of the same opinion when giving evidence to the Royal Commission.<sup>74</sup>

In his reorganisation of the War Office in 1895 Lansdowne not only proceeded with the main principles of the Hartington Report but adopted the commissioners’ recommendation for the formation of a Naval and Military Council.<sup>75</sup> Because the proposal was only indirectly connected to the reorganisation of the War Office<sup>76</sup> and was largely a body formed by the Cabinet for their members Lansdowne’s negotiations were conducted under less scrutiny than his reorganisation scheme. It was also less open to attack from the press. It was Lansdowne’s view that an inter-service committee should be formed at Cabinet level with Devonshire as its Chairman. Although two inter-departmental committees already existed they did so at a subordinate level to the Cabinet and met infrequently. The Colonial Defence Committee was revived by the Salisbury government in 1885 tasked with offering

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<sup>68</sup> Peel, 11 February 1896, ‘Order-in-Council of 21<sup>st</sup> November 1895’, NA. WO 32/6357; Lansdowne, Minute, 8 May 1899, in PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21425, p.530.

<sup>69</sup> Lansdowne, 27 March 1903, *ibid.*, 21433, p.531.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 21430, p.531.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 21431, p.531.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 21434, p.531.

<sup>73</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Minute’, 8 May 1899, in *ibid.*, 21425, p.530.

<sup>74</sup> Lansdowne, 27 March 1903, *ibid.*, 21427, p.530.

<sup>75</sup> PP, 1890, XIX, C.5979, ‘The Royal Commission on the Civil and Professional administration of the Naval and Military departments, and the relation of those departments to each other and to the Treasury’, 20, p.viii.

<sup>76</sup> Brodrick, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘War Office Reorganisation’, 31 August 1895, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.36, c.1379.

suggestions on broad imperial defence principles.<sup>77</sup> The Joint Naval and Military Committee was established on the recommendation of the Hartington Commission. The organisation 'met infrequently to consider the service estimates in relation to each other and to make recommendations to the Cabinet where the final decision would be taken and to consider and authoritatively decide upon unsettled questions between the two departments, or any matters of Joint Naval and Military policy.'<sup>78</sup>

In giving prominence to the Council of National Defence<sup>79</sup> or Defence Committee of the Cabinet as part of his reform scheme of 1895, Lansdowne demonstrated the government's appreciation of the need for Empire-wide planning. In giving encouragement to this objective he attained the support of many of the service parliamentarians, and even Arnold-Forster.<sup>80</sup> Dilke and Wilkinson remained critical; the former wishing for more information on the composition and functions of the Council before passing judgement.<sup>81</sup> Interestingly Wilkinson was opposed to the formation of the Defence Committee of the Cabinet but applied to be its Secretary because 'I was convinced by the fact of its formation that there was no one in the Cabinet who had thoroughly thought out the relations between policy, war, naval & military preparation & I hoped to be even with such small opportunities of personal contact with one or two ministers as might be afforded by the secretaryship of a committee & with no other engine than the chance of drafting an occasional agenda paper of which the heads could be settled for me, to be able unobtrusively to get the essential questions before the persons whose consideration of them was of vital importance to the nation.'<sup>82</sup>

There was, however, a wide divergence of opinion between the principal architects of this committee in the formulation of its composition and functions. This divergence of opinion, combined with a lack of enthusiasm for making them a

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<sup>77</sup> Johnson, *Defence*, p.20.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p.29; Goschen, 'Commons Debate', 'Navy Estimates 1895-96', 2 September 1895, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.36, cc.1483-84.

<sup>79</sup> Brodrick, 'Commons Debate', 'War Office Reorganisation', 31 August 1895, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.36, c.1379.

<sup>80</sup> Havelock-Allan and Woodall, 'Commons Debate', 'War Office Reorganisation', 31 August 1895, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.36, cc.1393-1397 and cc.1397-1401; Arnold-Forster, 'Commons Debate', 'Navy Estimates 1895-96', 2 September 1895, *ibid.*, Vol.36, cc.1472-74.

<sup>81</sup> Dilke, 'Commons Debate', 'War Office Reorganisation', 31 August 1895, *ibid.*, Vol.36, cc.1382-85.

<sup>82</sup> Wilkinson to Devonshire (private), 26 December 1899, CH. Devonshire MSS, 8<sup>th</sup> Duke group, 340.2810.

reality, condemned the Defence Committee of the Cabinet from the start. Those asked by Salisbury to offer their suggestions included Balfour, Devonshire, Goschen and Lansdowne. Balfour and Salisbury believed respectively that strategical plans of any magnitude in which the interests of both Services were involved should pass through it,<sup>83</sup> and that it should consider more fundamental questions of defence policy than budgets.<sup>84</sup> Devonshire wished to begin operations ‘very gradually,’<sup>85</sup> and Goschen, who was the most reluctant of the Cabinet to commit, noted:

Unbeknown to Salisbury, Balfour, yourself [Devonshire], myself, or indeed any of the Cabinet except George Hamilton, there is a perfected, formal, active organization in full working order for the very purposes of the proposed Council of which you are as you call it, the somewhat definite head. There exists a Joint Naval and Military Committee who meet as occasion arises and discuss all the large questions where Army and Navy co-operation is necessary. There is the basis, the nucleus of the Council. We can be an upper Chamber to this Committee and deal with the conclusions at which they have arrived, or, we might simply add the Secretary of State for War, and myself to the Committee and you preside instead of the present arrangement...I daresay that Richards<sup>86</sup> and Buller would propose the Committee remain as it is where they are masters.<sup>87</sup>

As Devonshire noted, ‘I think I detect a little suspicion on Goschen’s part that the committee may interfere with his responsibility.’<sup>88</sup> Lansdowne was more willing than Goschen to establish the committee on a firm footing and it can be speculated that his respect for his colleague at the Admiralty eclipsed any desire to take advantage of the latter’s evident dislike of the scheme. He was against allowing the Commander-in-Chief and First Naval Lord to have seats on the Committee but was favourable to their attendance as assessors. As far as the existing Joint Naval and Military Committee was concerned, he told Devonshire, ‘it would certainly be better to treat your Council [the Defence Committee of the Cabinet] as a kind of Upper Chamber to the Joint Naval and Military Committee. I had intended that the reports

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<sup>83</sup> Balfour, ‘Minute’, ‘Committee of Defence’, 26 August 1895, CAB 37/40/64.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid; Salisbury to Devonshire (private) 17 October 1895. CH. Devonshire MSS, 8<sup>th</sup> Duke group, 340.2657.

<sup>85</sup> Devonshire, ‘Minute’, ‘Committee of Defence’, 3 November 1895, CAB 37/40/64.

<sup>86</sup> Sir Frederick Richards was Admiral of the Fleet from 1893-1899.

<sup>87</sup> Goschen to Devonshire (private), 28 August 1895, CH. Devonshire MSS, 8<sup>th</sup> Duke group, 340.2644.

<sup>88</sup> Devonshire to Salisbury (private), 15 October 1895, HH. Salisbury MSS, 3M/E, Devonshire, f.495.

of the Joint Committee be sent to the Cabinet Council...I should think it would be possible to draw a line between the functions of the Council and the Committee.’<sup>89</sup>

Although the committee was established it was later remarked that ‘it seems almost as difficult to get a meeting of the Defence Committee as to define its duties.’<sup>90</sup> The fact that between 1895 and 1900 the committee did not meet the expectations of the Hartington Report,<sup>91</sup> or become anything more than an informal committee of the Cabinet was largely because those responsible for its operation ignored it. Balfour was occupied with leading the House of Commons and Salisbury after 1897 suffered from poor health. Hicks Beach doubted it could undertake the work which was suggested for it.<sup>92</sup> Its duties and responsibilities remained vague and it lacked real power. Professional members were in attendance for only part of the proceedings and took no formal part in the discussions. To Wolseley, ‘their meetings are always interesting, sometimes to a soldier amusing and always illustrate how absolutely unfit civilians are to manage a war or indeed to lay down rules or orders for the conduct of any military operations.’<sup>93</sup> It had no agenda,<sup>94</sup> met infrequently and ‘rarely at a time of year when it was possible for ministers to concentrate their attention upon questions requiring careful study.’<sup>95</sup> Lansdowne believed ‘our discussions were not always sufficiently “focussed” and became consequently somewhat desultory.’<sup>96</sup> That no minutes were kept convinced Arnold-Forster it was ‘a fiction’.<sup>97</sup> It was the opinion of Maurice Hankey, a prominent civil servant, ‘I can throw no light on the subjects dealt with by the Defence Committee of the Cabinet. I never remember seeing a single document or hearing anything about that august but ineffective body!’<sup>98</sup> The ineffectiveness of the committee at this time to achieve a larger role in assessing Britain’s place in the world and how the nation

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<sup>89</sup> Lansdowne to Devonshire (private) 5 September 1895. CH. Devonshire MSS, 8<sup>th</sup> Duke group, 340.2646.

<sup>90</sup> Devonshire to Salisbury (private), 5 December 1895, HH. Salisbury MSS, 3M/E, Devonshire, f.517.

<sup>91</sup> Devonshire, ‘Minute’, ‘Committee of Defence’, 2 November 1900, CAB 37/53/71.

<sup>92</sup> Hicks Beach, ‘Minute’, ‘Committee of Defence’, 23 November 1900 CAB 37/53/71.

<sup>93</sup> Wolseley to Lady Wolseley (private), 30 November 1899, HCL. WP. 28/78.

<sup>94</sup> Devonshire, ‘Minute’, ‘Committee of Defence’, 2 November 1900 CAB 37/53/71.

<sup>95</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Minute’, *ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> Arnold-Forster, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Army (Supplementary) Estimate, 1900-01’, 27 July 1900, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.86, c.1564.

<sup>98</sup> Lord Hankey letter, 22 January 1952, in Johnson, *Defence*, p.34.

might adapt accordingly is revealing of the lack of interest at Cabinet level of popular pressure for reform of defence matters.

Unsurprisingly, the formation of the Defence Committee of the Cabinet and the regulations embodied by the Order-in-Council were criticised in and out of Parliament. Wolseley was appalled by the modifications to his office.<sup>99</sup> With ‘neither the supreme control exercised by the Secretary of State, nor the administrative functions now conferred on those below him’, he argued that he had ‘become a fifth wheel to a coach;’<sup>100</sup> ‘Between the ministerial head on the one hand and the departmental heads on the other, he has been crushed out, and the Secretary of State has become the actual Commander-in-Chief of the Army.’<sup>101</sup> Lansdowne disagreed with his claim. ‘I cannot accept as even approaching to accuracy, nor would it, I think, be regarded as accurate by those who have taken part in the business of the War Office during the last five years.’<sup>102</sup> It was Wolseley’s and some of the other senior officers’ opinion that the distribution of responsibility laid down in Lansdowne’s scheme was a contradiction in terms.<sup>103</sup> ‘How,’ he asked, ‘can a Commander-in-Chief exercise supervision over a department if another official is responsible for what is done by that department; and how can an official be held responsible for a department if he is supervised, i.e., controlled, by someone else to whom he has to submit all important questions before laying them before the Secretary of State?’ In endeavouring to combine general control in one place with individual responsibility in another the scheme failed in both objects.<sup>104</sup> Wolseley was quick to make the other senior officers aware of his views on the question of precedence and authority.<sup>105</sup> He ordered Wood to communicate with him first on any matters he wished to put to Lansdowne.<sup>106</sup> The result was that Lansdowne ‘minuted’

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<sup>99</sup> H. Kochanski, ‘Field Marshal Viscount Wolseley’, *Journal of Strategic Studies* 20, 2 (1997), p.121.

<sup>100</sup> Wolseley to Salisbury, ‘Memorandum relative to the working of the Order-in-Council of 21<sup>st</sup> November 1895’, 12 November 1900. PP, 1904, XLII, Cd.1792, RC, Appendix 42, no.12, p.283.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Minute on Field Marshal Lord Wolseley’s Memorandum to Lord Salisbury’, 17 November 1900, *Ibid.*, Appendix 42, no.(I), p.284.

<sup>103</sup> PP, 1901, XL, Cd.581, WOO, 7001, p.285. Wolseley to Salisbury, ‘Memorandum relative to the working of the Order-in-Council of 21<sup>st</sup> November 1895’, 12 November 1900. PP, 1904, XLII, Cd.1792, RC, Appendix 42, no.12, p.28.

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

<sup>105</sup> Wheeler, *War Office*, p.257.

<sup>106</sup> Wood, *From Midshipman to Field Marshal*, (London, 1907), p.571; PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21429, p.531; PP, 1904, XL, Cd.1790, RC, 9332-9336, p.394.

papers to Wood, but received them back through Wolseley.<sup>107</sup> Lansdowne disliked this practice but accepted that ‘it comes well within the Commander-in-Chief’s powers of supervision.’<sup>108</sup> Wolseley continued it because it reinforced his own position at the War Office and because he believed that Lansdowne was unable to understand the complexities of military affairs.<sup>109</sup>

Although Lansdowne was a close friend and admirer of Wolseley’s military rival Lord Roberts, whom he had worked with in India, he made every attempt to maintain good relations with his Commander-in-Chief. They worked in adjoining offices at the War Office and were in constant communication. That ‘Wolseley objected to the whole system’<sup>110</sup> did not weaken Lansdowne’s willingness to work harmoniously with him or maintain cordial relations. He often invited him socially to dine at Lansdowne House in London or to stay at Bowood, his estate in Wiltshire. Wolseley regularly accepted such invitations only to judge harshly of his host, hostess and their family after the event. Among letters to his wife, Lady Louisa, he refers to Lansdowne at different times between 1895 and 1900 as being ‘an ass’,<sup>111</sup> ‘my little French Jew’,<sup>112</sup> ‘the smallest minded man and least capable of all the War Ministers I have known’,<sup>113</sup> ‘a whipper-snapper of a War Office clerk’,<sup>114</sup> ‘a man who in any of his dealings with me would ruthlessly turn on me’,<sup>115</sup> and a ‘poor little creature not worth fighting over.’<sup>116</sup> That Louisa and Lansdowne’s wife Maud were close friends and established and managed the Officers Families Fund only increases speculation that Wolseley’s frequent illnesses while at the War Office corrupted his mind. That Lansdowne did not react to Wolseley’s criticisms may also have increased the latter’s frustration.

Wolseley was not the only one to be disappointed by Lansdowne’s reorganisation. Buller complained to Brodrick that ‘all his work was taken from him by the Commander-in-Chief and he had no power left except to say ditto to him on

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<sup>107</sup> Wood, *From Midshipman to Field Marshal*, (London, 1907). p.571.

<sup>108</sup> PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21429, p.531.

<sup>109</sup> Kochanski, *Sir Garnet Wolseley*, p.217.

<sup>110</sup> PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21442, p.531.

<sup>111</sup> Wolseley to Lady Wolseley (private), 4 October 1899, HCL. Wolseley MSS, WP. 28/64.

<sup>112</sup> Wolseley to Lady Wolseley (private), 19 January 1900, *ibid.*, WP. 29/7.

<sup>113</sup> Wolseley to Lady Wolseley (private), 21 December 1899, *ibid.*, WP. 28/83.

<sup>114</sup> Wolseley to Lady Wolseley (private), 2 October 1900, *ibid.*, WP. 29/65.

<sup>115</sup> Wolseley to Lady Wolseley (private), 18 December 1900, *ibid.*, WP. 28/82.

<sup>116</sup> Wolseley to Lady Wolseley (private), 2 December 1900, *ibid.*, WP. 29/81.

Councils and Boards. He desired to go back to the old Adjutant-General's meetings in which certain officers met informally and agreed on a joint opinion - usually the Adjutant-General's.<sup>117</sup> Buller also complained to Welby that the reorganisation was done without military say.<sup>118</sup> In light of Lansdowne's discussions with him over the framing of the Order-in-Council this appears to be an unjust statement. Knox as mentioned in chapter one also came to resent that business was transacted directly between the high military officers and the Secretary of State, a cause of friction that Lansdowne was aware of and later acknowledged.<sup>119</sup> According to the strict procedure, 'if an official proposal is put forward by one of the heads of Departments, the paper ought to go through the Permanent Under-Secretary, in order that it may be registered and not lost sight of, and there is an inconvenience when the head of a military Department takes a short cut and does business with the Secretary of State direct.'<sup>120</sup> Although Dilke hoped the practice of the new system might be better than its theory, he doubted that the new man chosen to be the head of the Army would be, in practice, the real head of the Army and the real adviser of the Secretary of State.<sup>121</sup> He believed the government had chosen to 'fritter' individual responsibility away 'among a great number of different boards.'<sup>122</sup> To Wilkinson the change 'appeared to me to be disastrous',<sup>123</sup> and to some of the service parliamentarians it was 'impossible to work' the system.<sup>124</sup> The new organisation with its Army Board, War Office Council and Defence Committee of the Cabinet, the 'three storied arrangement of Council' seemed to *The Saturday Review* 'to promise nothing but confusion, and to testify to nothing but timorous fear of unpractical men who try to dissipate responsibility instead of concentrating it.'<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Brodrick, 'Minute on Wolseley's Memorandum relative to the working of the Order-in-Council of 21<sup>st</sup> November 1895 to Salisbury.' CAB 37/53/75.

<sup>118</sup> Welby, 'Notes of conversation with Buller', 6 October 1895, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/5.

<sup>119</sup> PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21466, p.533.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 21466, p.533.

<sup>121</sup> S. Gwynn and G. Tuckwell, *The Life of the Right Honourable Sir Charles W. Dilke* (2 Vols., London, 1918), Vol.2, p.424.

<sup>122</sup> Dilke, 'Commons Debate', 'War Office Reorganisation', 31 August 1895, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.36, c.1383.

<sup>123</sup> Wilkinson, *Thirty Five Years, 1874-1909* (London, 1933), p.196.

<sup>124</sup> Northbrook, Chelmsford and Spenser, 'Lords Debate', 'War Office Administration - Duties of Commander-in-Chief', 5 March 1901, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.90, cc.511-21; cc.518-19; cc.525-28.

<sup>125</sup> 'A Multitude of Councils', *The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, 80(2080), 7 September 1895, pp.305-6.



It was the view of George Buckle, the editor of *The Times*, that ‘there might be a serious miscarriage,’<sup>126</sup> if each high official of the Army Board was directly responsible to the Secretary of State. Interestingly *The Times* initially misinterpreted the arrangements referred to by Brodrick in his speech to the House of Commons on War Office Reorganisation on 31 August 1895, stating that ‘the “focussing of military opinion” by means of a board which tends to prevent the Secretary of State from directly learning the opinions of the departmental chiefs, and gives him instead merely a collective opinion filtered through the Commander-in-Chief, bears an alarming resemblance in all essentials to the system actually in vogue.’<sup>127</sup> Among many letters to Buckle on the subject one reader suggested that ‘the violation of sound principles is aggravated, that complication is increased, that, more than ever, the working of the machine will turn upon the personal characteristics of its attendants, and that perhaps the most marked feature is the usurpation of new power by the civil side of the War Office in a manner certain to prove injurious to the Army.’<sup>128</sup>

To these critics, and in particular to Wolseley, the reorganisation of 1895 created an unworkable system. That Lansdowne disagreed, and that he ‘never yielded to the temptation of saying that it was no fault of mine, and that I was acting on the advice of others’<sup>129</sup> was testimony to his belief that it was ‘in principle a perfectly sound system.’<sup>130</sup> On only one occasion was he forced to impute blame to Wolseley for the mismanagement of the system established in 1895 and this he did on 4 March 1901, four months after leaving the War Office during the ‘War Office Administration’ debate in the House of Lords. The origins of the incident took root the previous November when Wolseley was invited by Queen Victoria, who was supportive of him, to give an account of how Army administration might be improved. It is interesting to note that five years earlier she accepted his appointment

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<sup>126</sup> Buckle to Balfour (private), 2 September 1895, Bod. Sandars MSS, MS. Eng. Hist. c.727, f.43.

<sup>127</sup> *The Times*, 2 September 1895, *ibid.*, c.727, f.45.

<sup>128</sup> Vetus to the Editor, ‘The Reorganized War Office’, *The Times*, 29 November 1895, p.8.

<sup>129</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘The War Office - Lord Wolseley’s Memorandum to Lord Salisbury’, 15 March 1901, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.91, c.22.

<sup>130</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘War Office Administration - Duties of Commander-in-Chief’, 4 March 1901, *ibid.*, Vol.90, c.357.

remarking that she ‘did not think it a good one.’<sup>131</sup> She also trusted that his period of office ‘may not last so long.’<sup>132</sup>

In his account, which was produced as a memorandum to Lord Salisbury, Wolseley observed the War Office system established in 1895 was contrary to that of the armies of all other Great Powers. He blamed the system for injuring the spirit of discipline and crushing out the Commander-in-Chief.<sup>133</sup> Both Lansdowne and Brodrick refuted Wolseley’s accusations, stating that in their opinion the Commander-in-Chief could not be expected to undertake more duties than he already had.<sup>134</sup> In light of the interest the correspondence created, the Duke of Bedford, who was one of the service parliamentarians and a supporter of Wolseley’s, initiated a debate. Bedford was motivated by his belief that he was ‘not hopeful of any real reform of the Army unless the Government would take the country fully and frankly into their confidence on the subject of Army administration.’<sup>135</sup> During the debate Wolseley argued that since the system of 1895 was introduced, ‘it would not be difficult to show that the needs of the Army and its general efficiency have been more than once subordinated to the wish to produce a low Budget,’ and that military efficiency ‘must depend upon the statesman...invariably a civilian.’ It was his view that the ‘system established in 1888 was all that could be desired under our constitutional conditions’ and that the 1895 system ‘will never give us a satisfactory Army.’ In assuring the nation that its military interests were being safeguarded he suggested the Commander-in-Chief should prepare a certificate ‘year by year, that the Army was in proper order.’<sup>136</sup>

In defending himself against Wolseley’s condemnation of his 1895 reorganisation, Lansdowne dismissed any proposal involving a return to the system

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<sup>131</sup> Queen Victoria to Lansdowne (private), 19 August 1895, in H. Kochanski, *Sir Garnet Wolseley*, (London, 1999), p.214.

<sup>132</sup> Queen Victoria to Lansdowne (private), 22 August 1895, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/18/4.

<sup>133</sup> Wolseley to Salisbury, ‘Memorandum relative to the working of the Order-in-Council of 21st November 1895’, 12 November 1900. PP, 1904, XLII, Cd.1792, RC, Appendix 42, no.12, p.283.

<sup>134</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Minute on Field Marshal Lord Wolseley’s Memorandum’, 17 November 1900, PP, 1904, XLII, Cd.1792, RC, Appendix 42, no.(II.), p.284; Brodrick, ‘Minute on Field Marshal Lord Wolseley’s Memorandum’, 20 November 1900, *ibid.*, p.287.

<sup>135</sup> Bedford, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘War Office Administration - Duties of Commander-in-Chief’, 4 March 1901, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.90, cc.322-23.

<sup>136</sup> Wolseley, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘War Office Administration - Duties of Commander-in-Chief’, 4 March 1901, *ibid.*, Vol.90, c.329, c.336, c.343, c.342.

of 1888.<sup>137</sup> He questioned Wolseley's willingness to give the scheme a fair trial and, in what was considered a bitter and personal attack, drew attention to confidential communications that had passed between them and reflected negatively on Wolseley.<sup>138</sup>

Eleven days later, backed by the Liberal peers Camperdown, Rosebery and Northbrook, Wolseley motioned for presentation of all the papers relating to the accusation brought by Lansdowne that he had neglected his duties. The government refused to produce the papers on the grounds that it would involve publishing recent War Office documents and Salisbury rejected the motion as being too general. *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* thought the idea of soldiers appealing to the nation was 'manifestly impracticable.'<sup>139</sup> After the debate, Wolseley never publicly referred to what he privately believed was the most unpleasant incident in his life.<sup>140</sup> To James Bryce the recriminations of Lansdowne and Wolseley were novel and would have caused even more unfavourable comment had not public opinion been demoralised by the war, by Liberal divisions and by the recklessness of the government in so many other matters. 'Things which once shocked people shock but little now.'<sup>141</sup>

Lansdowne was well aware of the atmosphere in which his reorganisation was carried out:

I have no doubt that there are imperfections in our scheme, but we cannot, I fear, please: The Queen, who wishes to keep the Army under the Crown, and who would like to clip Wolseley's wings, providing the reversion of an extra pair for the Duke of Connaught. Devonshire, who harkens after his own headless Army and Chief of Staff. Goschen, who thinks there is nothing like the leather of the Admiralty. Wolseley and Buller, who want the military discipline to prevail and the Commander-in-Chief to be the real master. Balfour, who wants a logical and self-

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<sup>137</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lords Debate', 'War Office Administration - Duties of Commander-in-Chief', 4 March 1901, *ibid.*, Vol.90, c.347.

<sup>138</sup> Maurice and Arthur, *The Life of Lord Wolseley*, p.326; Northbrook, 'Lords Debate', 'War Office Administration - Duties of Commander-in-Chief', 5 March 1901, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.90, c.512.

<sup>139</sup> 'The Position of the Commander-in-Chief and Army Reform.' *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 169, 1026, (April 1901), pp.573-584.

<sup>140</sup> Maurice and Arthur, *The Life of Lord Wolseley*, p.326.

<sup>141</sup> Bryce to Lawrence Lowell (private), 26 April 1901, Bod. Bryce MSS, USA Papers, 22, f.95.

consistent scheme which he can defend in argument against Dilke's fire on one side and that of *The Times* on the other.<sup>142</sup>

The War Office system was neither unworkable nor, as Balfour predicted, did it 'break down under serious strain.'<sup>143</sup> It was simply not given a fair trial and failed to heal the mutual suspicions between soldiers and civilians. 'Something might have been salvaged from the mass of conflicting ideas and priorities had the War Office reordered its administration to recognise the priorities of efficient defence planning but it did not.'<sup>144</sup> In the next chapter the priorities that the War Office did adopt under the new system will be assessed in relation to Lansdowne's reform of the Army. Using him as a prism to explore late Victorian politics, civil-military relations, the reform discourse and the late Victorian Army, this chapter will examine Lansdowne's decision-making and ability to manage this reform.

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<sup>142</sup> Lansdowne to Salisbury (private), 21 October 1895, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/6.

<sup>143</sup> Balfour to Brodrick (private), 2 November 1895, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/16/17/2.

<sup>144</sup> Gooch, *The Plans of War*, p.20.

## **Chapter Four - The Reform of the Army**

Having ‘attacked’ the War Office during 1895 Lansdowne turned his attention to improving the state of the Army during the Parliamentary session of 1896. Although he acknowledged that since 1870 Britain had been ‘engaged in a number of military operations in different parts of the world’, and had succeeded in getting through ‘not only without disgrace but with considerable credit to the forces concerned’,<sup>1</sup> he also recognised that the Army was ‘out of joint’,<sup>2</sup> ‘wanting in elasticity’,<sup>3</sup> and capable of simplification.<sup>4</sup> As a pragmatist he recognized ‘the difficult task’ of Army reform,<sup>5</sup> and as a supporter of the modern practical school of military thinking he shared much in common with the senior officers, ‘who cared little for names and phrases if a fighting line worth the money spent could be produced.’<sup>6</sup> With a reputation for frugal administration Lansdowne was considered capable of ‘repairing the main defects of the existing machine.’<sup>7</sup> Although determined to improve the military system, he had no wish to introduce the ‘total’ reform urged by his critics. Lansdowne’s objective was not set on revolutionary reform but on providing gradual changes for the sound defence of Britain at home and abroad. Undertaking subtle changes in this way he could justly claim, during his term of office, that ‘not a year has passed in which they [the Government] had not done something to make the Army stronger and more efficient.’<sup>8</sup> Moreover, he could also take some satisfaction in the fact that before the outbreak of ‘the War’ in 1899 he emerged successfully from defending a military system that many traditional soldiers, service parliamentarians, defence intellectuals, a large section of the press, some of the opposition and the Royal family were ‘all clamouring to abandon.’<sup>9</sup> By manipulating

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<sup>1</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lord Lansdowne on the Army’, *The Times*, 10 December 1897, p.10.

<sup>2</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘Army (Increase of Strength)’, 4 February 1897, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.45, c.1247.

<sup>3</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lord Lansdowne on the Army’, *The Times*, 10 December 1897, p.10.

<sup>4</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Minute on Field Marshal Lord Wolseley’s Memorandum’, 17 November 1900, PP, 1904, XLII, Cd.1792, RC, Appendix 42, no.(II.), p.284.

<sup>5</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘Territorial and Reserve Forces Bill’, 26 June 1907, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.176, c.1332.

<sup>6</sup> Dilke, ‘Army Reform’, in *The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, 85(2212), 19 March 1898, p.396.

<sup>7</sup> Editorial, ‘Army Estimates’, *ibid.*, 85(2210), 5 March 1898, p.318.

<sup>8</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lord Lansdowne on Imperial Defence’, *The Times*, 18 November 1898, p.10.

<sup>9</sup> Lansdowne to Salisbury (private), 2 February 1898, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 89906/19/6.

and restricting the scope of the discourse Lansdowne deflected his critics' from their principal demands.

With the exception of the work of Edward Spiers, Lansdowne's attempt to reform the Army has received less attention in the extant literature than his reorganisation of the War Office system.<sup>10</sup> However, from the archival record and a large number of studies of the late Victorian Army it is possible to identify the process of Army reform that Lansdowne embarked on during his tenure at the War Office. Much of the recent work on the subject owes a debt to the scholarship of Brian Bond who in the 1960s elevated military history beyond the limits of regimental studies, campaign histories and biographies.<sup>11</sup> Addressing the politics of command, modern military historians have made the study of the topic all-encompassing rather than a purely analytical study of the Victorians at war.<sup>12</sup> By using Lansdowne as a prism this chapter aims to explore the late Victorian Army and the reform discourse in their social and political contexts. It also aims to demonstrate the constraints and opportunities given to individuals operating in this environment. By identifying some of the perceptual differences that made these subjects so complicated this chapter will demonstrate how Lansdowne managed the Army and its reform.

The existing military system was subject to different schools of opinion influenced by those who saw a war in Europe as one model for the Army and those concerned for its responsibilities in India and the Colonies as another. Such forces resulted in an artillery approaching continental standards of technical expertise and

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<sup>10</sup> E.M. Spiers, *The Army and Society* (Edinburgh, 1980); *The Late Victorian Army* (Manchester, 1992); *Haldane: An Army Reformer* (Edinburgh, 1980); 'The Reform of the Front-line Forces of the Regular Army in the United Kingdom, 1895-1914', (D.Phil. thesis, Edinburgh, 1974).

<sup>11</sup> C.E. Callwell, *Small Wars: their Principles and Practice* (London, 1906); J.W. Fortescue, *A History of the British Army* (20 Vols., London, 1899-1930); B.J. Bond, *War and Society in Europe, 1870-1970* (Leicester, 1983); B.J. Bond, *Victorian Military Campaigns* (London, 1967); B.J. Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College, 1854-1914* (London, 1972); 'The Effect of the Cardwell Reforms in Army Organisation 1874-1904', *RUSI Journal*, 105 (1960), pp.515-524.

<sup>12</sup> D. French, *Military Identities: The Regimental System, the British Army and the British People c.1870-2000* (Oxford, 2005); *The British Way in Warfare, 1688-2000* (London, 1990); D. French and B. Holden-Reid, (eds.), *The British General Staff: Reform and Innovation, 1890-1930* (London, 2002); I.F.W. Beckett, *The Victorians at War* (London, 2003); I.F.W. Beckett, *Rifleman Form: A Study of the Rifle Volunteer Movement 1858-1908* (Barnsley, 2007); *Citizens, Soldiers and the British Empire, 1837-1902* (London, 2012); H. Strachan (ed.), *Big Wars and Small Wars: The British Army and Lessons of War in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, (Abingdon, 2006); *The Politics of the British Army* (Oxford, 1997); A.R. Skelley, *The Victorian Army at Home: The Recruitment and Terms of Condition of the British Regular, 1859-1899*. (London, 1977); H. Cunningham, *The Volunteer Force* (London, 1975).

education, an infantry trained towards the needs of colonial warfare, and a cavalry modelled upon studies of the American Civil War where the cavalryman was ‘the soldier of the charge.’<sup>13</sup> As to supply and transport arrangements these were fashioned from campaigns in Africa.<sup>14</sup>

Parallel to these cross currents and their effect on the late Victorian Army was the assumption that ‘secure behind the sturdy hulls of the Royal Navy, and with most of its wars on land against poorly armed and often badly led inhabitants, Britain proceeded with the slow caution of a rentier when responding to military development.’<sup>15</sup> In the absence of a General Staff expeditionary forces were often hurriedly improvised and reliant on the organisational ability of their commanding officers. Officers such as Wolseley, Roberts and Kitchener had to be resourceful. ‘Small colonial wars’ were so diversified, the enemy’s mode of fighting often so unorthodox, and the theatres of operation so hostile and diverse from one another that following textbook rules of conventional warfare was unreliable.<sup>16</sup> Generalship, staff work and tactics were heavily influenced by experiences of these wars. However, such unconventional warfare did not prepare the Army for wars dominated by modern armaments.

In addition, it was striking that many of the generals and commanding officers refused to accept that changes in technology were changing the nature of warfare. Many officers in practical matters were more inclined to rely on their own past experiences than adopt new theories and doctrines. This led to some of the reformers, including Buller, to remark that he had not been told what the duties of the British Army were and what the country expected it to do.<sup>17</sup> Many of the generals and even some of the senior officers had become blinkered by their own success, and so long as the Army was successful most politicians saw no need to reform the

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<sup>13</sup> G.F.R. Henderson, *The Science of War* (London, 1910), pp.61-2, in H.H.R. Bailes, ‘The Influence of Continental Examples and Colonial Warfare upon the Reform of the Late Victorian Army’ (D.Phil. thesis, University of London, 1980), p.177.

<sup>14</sup> Bailes, ‘The Influence of Continental Examples and Colonial Warfare upon the Reform of the Late Victorian Army’ (1980), in J. Gooch, ‘A Particularly Anglo-Saxon Institution: The British General Staff in the era of the two World Wars’, in D. French and B. Holden-Reid (eds.), *The British General Staff: Reform and Innovation, 1890-1939* (London, 2002), p.200.

<sup>15</sup> M.A. Ramsay, *Command and Cohesion: The Citizen Soldier. Minor tactics in the British Army 1870-1918* (London, 2002), p.45.

<sup>16</sup> C.E. Callwell, *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice* (London, 1906), p.23.

<sup>17</sup> PP, 1892, XIX, c.6582, ‘Report of the committee appointed by the Secretary of State for War to consider the terms and conditions of service in the army’, 32, p.5.

machine. Those that did tended to have some previous military experience or knowledge, such as the service parliamentarians or defence intellectuals. To such individuals no reform was possible until it was known what the Army was meant for.

To Duncan Pirie, a service parliamentarian, the principal question for the Army was, 'was it as good as it might be? Was it as good as this great Nation had a right to demand? He did not think that any answer could be given to that question except in the negative.'<sup>18</sup> Lansdowne was 'constantly pressed to tell the people...what our Army is intended to do...to justify the great sacrifices which we ask the taxpayers...to submit,'<sup>19</sup> He believed in the objects of military organisation and administration as laid down by Cardwell and the role of the Army as defined by Stanhope in his 1888 memorandum.<sup>20</sup> Entering the War Office as a relative newcomer to the British Army system he had no pre-conceived vision of how he wished to reform the Army. His views on the requirements and principles of the British Army were moulded by his experiences as a member of the Wiltshire Yeomanry, as Under-Secretary of State for War under Cardwell, as Governor-General in Canada, and as Viceroy in India. It was his opinion that the military system in Britain was singularly complicated and unlike that of any other country. 'It has, in the first place, been the outcome, not of any deliberate plan of construction, but of gradual and spontaneous growth; our Regular Army, our Militia, our Volunteers have grown up side by side, at first with scarcely any connexion, upon no definite plan. We have never had a clean slate to start with, and perhaps that is fortunate, for it implies that we have never gone through the disagreeable process to which other nations have had to submit of seeing the slate wiped clean for us by hands other than our own.'<sup>21</sup> The second peculiarity he noted was that Britain was the only European nation which relied upon voluntary enlistment.'<sup>22</sup> With a system of voluntary enlistment he held that Britain required a sufficient garrison for home defence, the ability to mobilise a force of two Army Corps for offensive purposes outside Britain, facility to despatch at short notice small bodies of men to meet minor emergencies, without recourse to a general mobilisation of the Army and to supply

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<sup>18</sup> Pirie, 'Commons Debate', 'Military Forces (Maintenance)', 8 February 1897, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.45, c.1612.

<sup>19</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lords Debate', 'Home Defence', 10 July 1905, *ibid.*, Vol.149, c.37.

<sup>20</sup> Lansdowne, 'Outlines of Army Proposals', 15 December 1897, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/16/2. See Appendix VI, p.279.

<sup>21</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lord Lansdowne on the Army', *The Times*, 7 June 1898, p.13.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*



punctually the Indian and colonial garrisons with their annual drafts as substitutes for those men who returned to Britain each year.<sup>23</sup> To Lansdowne the bedrock of the military system was that ‘for a great part of the Army the term of service should be of moderate length so as to yield an efficient reserve.’ Secondly, he argued, that ‘infantry battalions which were abroad should be supported by an adequate number of properly organised battalions at home capable of supplying the necessary drafts’ and, thirdly, that ‘there should be a connection between the country and the Army.’<sup>24</sup>

This view was partly shared by Wolseley who was also a devoted follower of Cardwell and his system<sup>25</sup> and had strongly influenced Stanhope’s ideas.<sup>26</sup> While both Lansdowne and Wolseley assumed action on the European mainland was a remote contingency Wolseley took the threat of a French invasion more seriously than Lansdowne.<sup>27</sup> However, Lansdowne accepted the duty incumbent on the Army to safeguard British commerce and society in the event of war. Acting on representations from the Admiralty regarding the importance of strategic harbours in 1899 he completed a scheme first started in 1887 by Stanhope to strengthen coastal defences at Berehaven, Lough Swilly, Falmouth and Scilly. He also secured contracts for the erection of three powerful forts on the cliffs of Dover to protect the new harbour.<sup>28</sup>

Neither Lansdowne nor Wolseley were followers of the Blue Water School but Wolseley accepted the need to add to the fleet to defend the Empire and improve the defences of the country. It was Lansdowne’s opinion that the Navy is ‘our first line of defence,’<sup>29</sup> but that both naval and military defences must be considered together; ‘partners the two services are, partners they must remain.’<sup>30</sup> Lansdowne’s view differed from that of many in the Cabinet, in particular Hicks Beach who on one notable occasion attacked him at a public dinner for suggesting that his military

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<sup>23</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lord Lansdowne on the Army’, *The Times*, 10 December 1897, p.10.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Wolseley, ‘Lord Wolseley in Glasgow’, *ibid.*, 24 November 1899, p.4; Wolseley, ‘Wolseley on the War’, *ibid.*, 7 November 1899, p.6.

<sup>26</sup> Kockanski, *Sir Garnet Wolseley*, p.188.

<sup>27</sup> Wolseley, ‘Minute on the Establishment’, 8 June 1888, NA. WO 33/48. paragraph 5(c), Lansdowne, ‘Minute’, ‘Committee of Defence’, 2 December 1895, CAB 37/40/64, paragraph 6, p.14; H.H.R. Bailes, ‘The Influence of Continental Examples and Colonial Warfare upon the Reform of the Late Victorian Army’ (D.Phil. thesis, University of London, 1980), p.26.

<sup>28</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘Military Works Loan Act’, 3 August 1899, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.75, cc.1250-1251.

<sup>29</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lord Lansdowne on Imperial Defence’, *The Times*, 18 November 1898, p.10.

<sup>30</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Colston’s Day in Bristol’, *ibid.*, 14 November 1896, p.8.

estimates had not kept pace with naval estimates.<sup>31</sup> Although Wolseley wanted to improve the state of the Army, he believed that the foundation for reform had been laid and that further wholesale reform was unnecessary.<sup>32</sup> Lansdowne partly shared this view. They both wanted to make the Army a profession and administer it on ‘sound and simple business principles.’<sup>33</sup>

They recognised the ‘inestimable value’ of regimental feeling known as *esprit de corps* and were determined ‘to foster it in all ranks of the Army.’<sup>34</sup> Wolseley’s knowledge of and loyalty to the British soldier was shaped by his innate patriotism and career in Imperial service. He believed that the soldier ‘is a peculiar animal that alone can be brought to the highest efficiency by inducing him to believe that he belongs to a regiment which is infinitely superior to the others around him.’<sup>35</sup> There is little archival evidence of Lansdowne’s views of the British soldier. However, it can be speculated from a remark made during a debate on the issue of military clothing in which he likened soldiers’ uniforms to those of domestic staff that he regarded a soldier as he might a member of his own domestic staff.<sup>36</sup> If his view of the soldier was shadowy, his view of the British officer was less so. Shaped by different military experiences than Wolseley he believed that ‘a trained British officer is the most valuable military asset that we possess.’<sup>37</sup> He also believed that one of Britain’s most admirable characteristics was its ability to produce ‘men to lead, and to inspire with their courage troops belonging to races less civilised than our own.’<sup>38</sup> Unlike Wolseley Lansdowne harboured no racialist sentiment and had a ‘sincere hope that we should frequently see native troops taking the field by the side of our own.’<sup>39</sup> Wolseley did not share this view. He believed that the need to send so many drafts to India annually was a ‘serious inconvenience to our military organisation,’ and that since ‘our Army is really a great reserve for the Army in

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> J.H. Lehmann, *All Sir Garnet: A Life of Field Marshal Lord Wolseley* (London, 1964), p.380.

<sup>33</sup> Wolseley, ‘The Standing Army of Great Britain’, in *The Armies of Today. A description of the armies of the leading nations at the present time* (London, 1893), p.95.

<sup>34</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lord Lansdowne on the Army,’ *The Times*, 14 July 1898, p.10. Wolseley, *The Soldier’s Pocket Book* (London, 1886), pp.3-4.

<sup>35</sup> Wolseley, *The Soldier’s Pocket Book* (London, 1886), pp.3-4.

<sup>36</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘Military Reorganisation - recruiting in Scotland, etc’, 25 May 1900, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.83, c.1259.

<sup>37</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘Territorial and Reserve Forces Bill’, 26 June 1907, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.176, c.720.

<sup>38</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lord Lansdowne on the Army,’ *The Times*, 14 July 1898, p.10.

<sup>39</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘Indian Troops in the Soudan’, 16 July 1896, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.42, c.1593.

India, India should therefore pay for everything connected with the Army.’<sup>40</sup> His statement about sepoys, that ‘we should not like to fight France or Germany or any other Army with Indian troops,’ caused outrage both in Britain and abroad.<sup>41</sup> Hicks Beach believed Wolseley’s opposition was based on the view that drawing on India for troops was a reflection on the rest of the Army.<sup>42</sup> While their views may have differed in detail both men recognised that the increase in the size of the Army had not kept pace with the increase in the Empire. Lansdowne freely admitted that ‘we are finding great and increasing difficulty in providing both for the normal wants of the Empire and for the special calls which come upon us with growing frequency.’<sup>43</sup>

In their views of the principles and requirements of the Army and how it might be reformed Lansdowne and Wolseley had much in common. They were both opposed to radical change. They did, however, differ over matters of finance. Lansdowne was also far more aware of the costs of reform than Wolseley. He did not believe that the Army could be constituted in any other lines than those of finance: ‘Financial and military considerations are inextricably intermixed. We cannot emancipate ourselves from the financial limits which the state of the National Exchequer imposes upon us.’<sup>44</sup> Wolseley, by contrast, believed ‘the main lines upon which our Army should be constituted must be framed on other considerations than those of finance.’<sup>45</sup> Even though Lansdowne administered with financial caution he was willing to defend the Army estimates in cases where he presumed financial parsimony would undermine the efficiency of the Army. Between 1895 and 1899 the annual estimates increased by 14.2%, and Parliament voted £9,458,000 for military loans for the defence of Britain and the Empire.<sup>46</sup>

As the Empire had grown so traditional financial prudence was threatened and public expenditure was rising inexorably, representing a ‘financial crisis of the

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<sup>40</sup> Wolseley, ‘Lord Wolseley on Indian Military Expenditure’, *The Times*, 30 July 1897, p.8.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Hicks Beach to Salisbury (private), 24 August 1899, HH. Salisbury MSS, 3M/E Hicks Beach 1896-1900, f.164.

<sup>43</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lord Lansdowne on the Army’, *The Times*, 10 December 1897, p.10.

<sup>44</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Minute’, ‘Proposals contained in Wolseley’s Minute of 22 April 1896’, 10 July 1896, CAB 37/42/32, paragraph 2, p.2.

<sup>45</sup> Wolseley, ‘Minute’, 22 February 1896, NA. WO 33/56.

<sup>46</sup> The Military Works (Money) Act, 1897 raised £5,458,000 and the Military Works Bill of 1899 raised £4,000,000. See Appendix VII, p.280.

state.<sup>47</sup> While the Army estimates increased so Dilke challenged the War Office to ‘give us a full return for our money,<sup>48</sup> and Wilkinson argued that ‘soldiers’ common sense was lost in Treasury clerk wisdom.<sup>49</sup> To one of the service parliamentarians the Cabinet had ‘starved the Army and money that was voted was improperly and absurdly spent resulting in an inefficient Army.’<sup>50</sup> In defending the War Office against such complaints Lansdowne explained that he and his military advisers were opposed to asking for more money than past experience had shown could be spent within a reasonable period of time and that they were against asking large sums without providing a guarantee that the services those funds would settle were part of a carefully considered scheme.<sup>51</sup> He also admitted obtaining funds was ‘not always a very easy task,<sup>52</sup> and ‘a great part of our Army expenditure is altogether beyond the control of the Secretary of State.’<sup>53</sup> To secure expenditure particularly for barracks and defences at home and abroad Lansdowne chose to borrow large sums of money as military loans. This was a common practice and such loans were voted by Parliament in 1860, 1872, 1888 and 1890. Where Lansdowne differed from his predecessors was in his belief that the question of the Army estimates was so closely connected with that of military loans that both should be dealt with together.<sup>54</sup> For Lansdowne such loans had an advantage over the estimates in that ‘you can make your contracts beforehand, and carry out your programme steadily, deliberately, and methodically, and without the apprehension that supplies may be forthcoming one year and not the next.’<sup>55</sup>

Lansdowne’s objective to administer the Army upon both military and financial considerations was clearly evident in his initial measures introduced in the 1896 session. Allowing the ‘machine to run on in the old grooves,’ while getting the

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<sup>47</sup> SurrIDGE, ‘Lansdowne at the War Office’, in Gooch (ed.), *The Boer War*, p.22.

<sup>48</sup> Dilke, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Military Works (Money)’, 21 June 1899, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.73, c.204.

<sup>49</sup> H.S. Wilkinson, ‘The Cost and the Efficiency of our Army’, *The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, 84(2198), 11 December 1897, p.657.

<sup>50</sup> F.C. Rasch, ‘Our Inefficient Army’, *ibid.*, 84(2195), 20 November 1897, p.547.

<sup>51</sup> Wyndham, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Military Works (Money)’, 21 June 1899, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.73, c.164.

<sup>52</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘Military Manoeuvres Bill’, 2 August 1897, *ibid.*, Vol.52, c.76.

<sup>53</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lord Lansdowne on the Army’, *The Times*, 10 December 1897, p.10.

<sup>54</sup> Lansdowne to Hicks Beach (private), 30 December 1896, GRO. St Aldwyn MSS, D2455, PCC/84.

<sup>55</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘Military Works Bill- Second Reading’, 3 August 1899, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.75, cc.1248-49.

War Office and the Headquarters into working order,<sup>56</sup> he brought forward four bills.<sup>57</sup> These ‘innocents’, as he described them, which were essential to the Army’s efficiency, were ‘ruthlessly massacred’ by the opposition and the service parliamentarians.<sup>58</sup> That their passage was described as ‘muddled out of existence,’<sup>59</sup> and the Parliamentary session as ‘disastrous,’<sup>60</sup> was largely due to the government’s other commitments at the time, notably Ireland. Lansdowne and Devonshire were both fully preoccupied with the Irish Land Bill and neglected any questions of military defence. Devonshire’s Defence Committee of the Cabinet only managed a few desultory discussions in regard to the general question of naval and military policy in the Mediterranean. Lansdowne admitted to Ardagh at the end of September, that as ‘we all became busier & busier with Land Bills & such like rubbish, this really big question slid into the background.’<sup>61</sup> While these failures were indicative of both a lack of appetite in Parliament to improve the Army and the Cabinet’s lack of interest for reform of defence matters, the War Office itself was a department of ‘exceptional activity.’<sup>62</sup> As Lansdowne later stated, ‘during our first two years the greater part of our time was taken up fighting for the existence of a short service system. Lord Wolseley and I spent a good deal of our time in preparing the case for the defence which I am glad to say we were able to maintain successfully.’<sup>63</sup>

Lansdowne and Wolseley both believed to varying degrees, that only by increasing the size of the Army in terms of men would they meet the external demands on it and provide for the security of the Empire. Wolseley wished to go further than Lansdowne in increasing the size of the Army. He suggested upgrading the two Army Corps system provided by the Stanhope Memorandum for home

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<sup>56</sup> H.S. Wilkinson, ‘The Army Estimates’, *The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, 81(2109), 20 November 1897, p.547.

<sup>57</sup> The four bills were for authorising a Military Works Loan, Military Manoeuvres, Volunteers to equip rifle ranges out of public funds and a bill for the reserve to be more readily utilised in small wars.

<sup>58</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Colston’s day in Bristol’, *The Times*, 14 November 1896, p.8.

<sup>59</sup> De Vesce, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘Increase to the Army’, *ibid.*, 5 February 1897, p.6.

<sup>60</sup> Brodrick, ‘Mr Brodrick on Army Measures’, *ibid.*, 17 September 1896, p.10.

<sup>61</sup> Lansdowne to Ardagh (private), 24 September 1896, NA. Ardagh MSS, PRO 30/40/10.

<sup>62</sup> Brodrick, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Land Forces’, 12 February 1897, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.46, c.324.

<sup>63</sup> PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21505, p.535; BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/22/19, 21505.

defence to three Army Corps and four cavalry brigades for home defence.<sup>64</sup> The military system introduced by Cardwell and accepted by ‘successive governments,’<sup>65</sup> was based on the principle that each of the double-battalion regiments of the Army would always have one battalion abroad and another at home to support it. Under the original proposal initiated by Cardwell each home based battalion had to provide an annual quota of drafts for its linked battalion overseas, train recruits and employ men in daily fatigue duties or as officers, clerks, servants, cooks, regimental tradesmen and bandsmen.

Largely due to the requirements of the growing Empire that condition of equilibrium had not been maintained since 1872, and at no time had any government attempted to remedy the discrepancy.<sup>66</sup> By constantly stealing from the home establishment or to use Wolseley’s expression ‘by sending trained men overseas or into the reserve, the home based battalions’ became ‘like a lemon when all the juice is squeezed out of it, they will be of little fighting use - they will be only weak depôts.’<sup>67</sup> Lansdowne held that this system on which the Army was organised was ‘a very admirable basis’ and probably the only one on which it was possible to organise an Army which took its recruits young and which had to provide for the defence of India and to provide an Army reserve.<sup>68</sup> While he respected and valued the system he was also willing to adapt it and present a more flexible defence of it than either Haliburton or Wolseley themselves envisaged. But even though he was willing to modify the system he had no wish to undermine its basic structure or principle. If overseas battalions were not relieved by home battalions the only alternative was feeding a battalion abroad from depôts based in Britain and this he was against. Though he accepted they were cheaper man for man than a battalion, depôts were less economic: ‘A battalion of infantry costs you about £50,000 a year, and a depôt strong enough to support a battalion on foreign service would cost you about half that sum; but which is the best bargain for the country - the depôt which costs, say,

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<sup>64</sup> Wolseley, ‘Minute’, ‘Reply to Lord Lansdowne’s Minute 10 July 1896’, 30 October 1896, in PP, 1904, XL, Cd.1789, RC, Appendix D, p.233, paragraph 10.

<sup>65</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘Army (Increase of Strength)’, 4 February 1897, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.45, c.1247.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, c.1248.

<sup>67</sup> PP, 1892, XIX, c.6582, ‘Report of the committee appointed by the Secretary of State for War to consider the terms and conditions of service in the army’, 32, p.5., 4374, p.154.

<sup>68</sup> Lansdowne, ‘The Guildhall Banquet’, *The Times*, 11 November 1895, p.6.

£25,000 and adds nothing to your fighting strength at home, nothing to your power of relieving the Army abroad, or the battalion which costs £50,000 and does both?’<sup>69</sup>

This sentiment was shared by Wolseley who since 1888 had advised Lansdowne’s predecessors of the case for increasing the military needs of the Empire.<sup>70</sup> He essentially equated Army reform with Army increase.<sup>71</sup> In 1896 Wolseley brought this idea to Lansdowne’s attention informing him that eleven infantry battalions (or fifteen if two were sent to the Cape) were required to balance the system which was split between seventy-five abroad and sixty-five at home. Including additions to the artillery Wolseley’s proposal amounted to £2,000,000. Lansdowne asked him to investigate whether savings could be made in other branches of the Army.<sup>72</sup> Having found sufficient savings from the cavalry and horse artillery he responded to Lansdowne with a proposal that would maintain a minimum number of the additional line battalions required. He suggested raising two new battalions for the Guards and using them for overseas service. This he emphasised would reduce the overall total required for the Army to do its duty from thirteen to eleven.<sup>73</sup> The idea of using the Guards was the reverse of a position that he had taken five years earlier when he had denounced the idea as ‘a very Irish proposal and ridiculous and unworthy attempt to throw dust in the eyes of the British public.’<sup>74</sup> Although Wolseley’s ‘minute’ initially received a mixed reception from the Army Board, it was agreed later by all the senior officers that using the Guards was the most economic and efficient way to strengthen the home establishment. Under the proposal, the Guards would be increased by raising a new battalion for the Coldstream Guards and one for the Scots Guards and out of the nine battalions of Guards which the increase created, three battalions would be stationed in the Mediterranean and be relieved at short intervals. Gibraltar was proposed as the site for the battalions.

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<sup>69</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lord Lansdowne on the Army’, *ibid.*, 10 December 1897, p.10.

<sup>70</sup> Wolseley, ‘Minute on the Establishment’, 8 June 1888, NA. WO 33/48. paragraph 23 and 50.

<sup>71</sup> Spiers, *The Army and Society*, p.229.

<sup>72</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Minute’, ‘Increase to the Establishment’, 10 July 1896, NA. WO 32/6357, paragraph 2.

<sup>73</sup> Wolseley, ‘Minute’, ‘Reply to Lord Lansdowne’s Memorandum 10 July 1896’, 30 October 1896, in PP, 1904, XL, Cd.1789, RC, Appendix D, p.233.

<sup>74</sup> Wolseley to Duke of Cambridge (private), 25 June 1891, in Hamer, *The British Army*, p.88.

The idea met with Lansdowne's approval. It was his view that sending the Guards battalions abroad was less expensive than raising new line battalions. Moreover, by bringing the Guards into the system established for the line and converting them into a modified kind of infantry of the line, they would be better utilised and the Guardsmen would see overseas duty.<sup>75</sup> Among the opposition, Campbell-Bannerman thought the Guards might gain from overseas experience but he strongly objected to constituting Gibraltar a Guards' station, as it 'would be very injurious probably in its effects to the discipline and efficiency.'<sup>76</sup> Of the defence intellectuals Dilke complained in a similar manner noting, 'they would get no proper exercise in field work and in the garrison station they would become garrison troops.' It would 'spoil the only battalions which at the present time were fit for war.'<sup>77</sup> Wilkinson was also critical and in an article on the subject he alleged that Wolseley would have preferred raising eleven new battalions than be part of a scheme to interfere with the Guards. While there is no record of the source he used to make his claim it can be speculated that Wolseley's enthusiasm for the scheme would discount its veracity. Moreover, during the 'Brigade of Guards' debate Brodrick was instructed by Wolseley to state, 'nothing has reached me which makes me think that it [the scheme] will be otherwise than popular with the men.'<sup>78</sup>

Most of the service parliamentarians accepted the proposal although a concern was voiced that they were about to alter the conditions of a 'Guardsmen's amusement.'<sup>79</sup> Although the scheme's critics made a determined effort the scheme had the sympathy of the Queen, who accepted the proposal but sought a delay for further enquiry,<sup>80</sup> and the Duke of Cambridge and some senior ex-Guardsmen including Lord Wantage. With such influential support Lansdowne and Brodrick succeeded in passing the measure through Parliament. By utilizing the Guards Lansdowne enabled three line battalions abroad to return to Britain allowing three others abroad to then have a home battalion to support them. To establish parity it

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<sup>75</sup> War Office 'Minute', 'Infantry Organization', December 1896, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/16/18.

<sup>76</sup> Campbell-Bannerman, 'Commons Debate', 'Brigade of Guards', 12 February 1897, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.46, c.309.

<sup>77</sup> Dilke, 'Commons Debate', 'Military Forces Maintenance, 8 February 1897, *ibid.*, Vol.45, c.1570.

<sup>78</sup> Brodrick, 'Commons Debate', 'Brigade of Guards', 12 February 1897, *ibid.*, Vol.46, c.305; H.S. Wilkinson, 'Half measures with the army', *The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, 83(2155), 5 March 1898, p.167.

<sup>79</sup> Carrington to Bigge (private), 29 December 1896, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/16/18.

<sup>80</sup> Bigge to Lansdowne (private), 6 January 1897, *ibid.*



was also announced that the Cameron Highlanders, which had only one battalion, would be given a second battalion thereby raising the infantry total to one hundred and forty-two, forming seventy-one linked battalions.

In defending Cardwell's system and re-establishing parity between the battalions Lansdowne respected the views of his military advisers. There is no indication that he underrated or attempted to undermine their proposals. When Wolseley suggested extending the four battalion system which already existed in the Rifle Corps and Rifle Brigade Lansdowne recognised the potential advantages of having a larger grouping which, in the event of an emergency, could remain in Britain and continue to draft recruits while the other three fought abroad.<sup>81</sup> Essentially, the scheme provided for the transfer of a small force abroad without the help of the Army reserve. Lansdowne instructed Knox, Stopford and Wood to examine the matter. On 2 December, the Army Board met and urged caution recalling the disruption caused by the establishment of linked battalions during Cardwell's time.<sup>82</sup>

In attempting to find the necessary drafts for overseas battalions and reducing the strength between those at home and those abroad Wolseley also suggested that extra men should be added to the infantry battalions in multiples of one hundred and fifty. Battalions abroad were generally kept at strength of 1,000 men and at home of seven hundred and twenty men. After Lansdowne and the senior officers discussed the matter it was decided that eighty should be added to the battalions raising the establishment to eight hundred men each. At the same time as Lansdowne brought forward this proposal he also introduced a scheme to enlist one hundred men from each of the newly strengthened battalions for a term of three years. This period of enlistment was four years shorter than the existing short service which comprised seven years with the colours and five with the reserve. This 'experiment', as Lansdowne described it, was adopted with caution as a fear prevailed that if the men chose to leave the Army at the end of the three years and go into the reserve this would diminish the drafts necessary for the Army in India.<sup>83</sup> While he accepted this was a possibility he also believed that men would willingly make a 'trial of the Army

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<sup>81</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lord Lansdowne on the Army', *The Times*, 10 December 1897, p.10.

<sup>82</sup> 'Meeting of the Army Board' 24 December 1897, NA. WO 32/6357.

<sup>83</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lord Lansdowne on the Army', *The Times*, 10 December 1897, p.10.

for a short time, with the option of extending their service if they found their profession agreeable.’<sup>84</sup> The press held that the measure was ‘admirable’ and the reforming civilians believed a good proportion would re-enlist at the end of three years. Haliburton and some of the strict Cardwellians were less optimistic.<sup>85</sup>

Modifying the Army reserve had been the subject of a controversial debate prior to Lansdowne’s arrival at the War Office and had incited divisions among its officials. Being strongly opposed to any form of long service and regarding a moderate period of service with the colours as more than adequate Lansdowne valued the reserve as a significant asset to the British Army. He believed that the public were misinformed about it and that it was not a bogus organisation existing only on paper. It was his wish to provide a greater role for the reserve Army which had been founded by Cardwell during Lansdowne’s earlier period at the War Office in 1872. Lansdowne was determined to make it an essential part of the home Army. In this pursuit he was supported by Buller and Wood who shared the view that men who were five years or less out of the colours had ‘not forgotten their work or lost their smartness.’ Maintaining the reserve was economically prudent. Per man they cost the country £9 a year against £55 for a soldier serving with the colours and for £700,000 a year the country obtained 80,000 seasoned men fit to take their places in the line. He believed that even if 12,000 of them were medically unfit, that still left 53,000 to complete battalions to war strength and 15,000 to replace casualties. He estimated that to maintain a force of long service soldiers in the army equal in size to the force which with the reserves could be then mobilised would cost the taxpayer £5 million more than that already voted for in the army estimates.<sup>86</sup> Use of the reserve was, however, subject to law which prevented its use for minor military operations which could not be treated as ‘of imminent national danger or of great emergency.’<sup>87</sup> On such occasions experienced men were raised into expeditionary forces by stealing them from different battalions. This practice was against the concept of

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Editorial, ‘Army Estimates’, *The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, 85(2210), 5 March 1898, p.318.

<sup>86</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lord Lansdowne on the Army’, *The Times*, 10 December 1897, p.10.

<sup>87</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘Reserve Forces Bill [HL]’, 8 May 1896, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.40, c.845.

regimental *esprit de corps* and was controversial. There was also no guarantee that sufficient men would be found.<sup>88</sup>

Lansdowne and his colleagues recognised that with Parliamentary approval they could address some of these controversial issues and make greater use of the reserve. By amending the Reserve Forces Act of 1882 Lansdowne believed he could increase the liability of the reserve so as to make a sufficient number of men available in circumstances that stopped short of the emergency conditions without which the force could not engage. By making the men liable for compulsory service during their first year in the reserve he also believed the War Office would obtain sufficient recruits.<sup>89</sup> His first attempt in 1896 was objected to by Parliament and the press. Arnold-Forster took strong objection and *The Broad Arrow* noted, 'it was a makeshift of the worst kind' and required modification.<sup>90</sup> In the spring of 1898 Lansdowne sent a modified bill to Parliament and Dilke thought the measure one of 'the worst points in the present policy of Lord Lansdowne.'<sup>91</sup> Although the bill did not satisfy Dilke it met little resistance within either Houses of Parliament and received the Royal Assent in July 1898. Under the terms of the bill reserve men were in their first year of service liable to be recalled for active service. It was limited to 5,000 Reservists at a salary of 1s per day for their first year.

In order to have a reserve and continue to attract men to the line Lansdowne was determined to improve the conditions of service and the image of the Army. The success of his military policy depended entirely on his ability to find recruits. In order to achieve a constant flow of recruits into the Army he had to address the popularity of the Army and persuade employers to employ Reservists and men in the Auxiliary Army.<sup>92</sup> In contrast to the huge demand and fascination of war literature and military exploits a career in the Army was still shunned by the large majority of the populace. Soldiers were often subject to discrimination. In 1891 the Airey Committee found that soldiers were prevented from taking omnibuses because they

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<sup>88</sup> Duke of Cambridge to Cardwell (private), 11 January 1870, NA. Cardwell MSS, PRO 30/48/13, f.16.

<sup>89</sup> 'The Reserve Forces Act, 1882', *The Times*, 9 May 1896. p.10.

<sup>90</sup> 'The Reserve Forces Bill', *The Broad Arrow. The Naval and Military Gazette*, 56(1459), 13 June 1896, p.677.

<sup>91</sup> Dilke, 'Commons Debate', 'Military Forces (Maintenance)', 8 February 1897, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.45, c.1569.

<sup>92</sup> J.D. Legard, 'Army re-organization with special reference to infantry of the line and the Militia', *RUSI Journal* 42, 241 (1898), p.242.

were dressed in uniform. Moreover, the sight of old soldiers begging in the streets only served to lessen the appeal of an Army life. Widespread rumours that the ranks of the Army were filled from ‘our gaols’, and that ‘the conditions under which our soldiers lived were scarcely consistent with common decency,’ were rumours Lansdowne assured the public ‘we are trying to kill.’<sup>93</sup> He strongly believed that if voluntary service was to survive a soldier’s life should be ‘as attractive as it can be made, consistently with sound economy.’<sup>94</sup> Lansdowne’s first measure for improving conditions in the Army was the modernization of Army accommodation. Guided by Florence Nightingale and her representations to the War Office, Lansdowne was determined to rid the Army of insanitary and old Army huts.<sup>95</sup> He believed that nothing was so detrimental in respect to the health of the troops, their efficiency, comfort and the popularity of the service.<sup>96</sup> He was also against constantly patching up old buildings as his predecessors had done.

Besides improving the accommodation for a soldier Lansdowne also raised his level of pay. Among the incentives offered to soldiers to enter the Army pay was one of the most contentious, and no other issue divided the civilian and military officials more. Among Lansdowne’s proposals in December 1897 to reform the Army none raised Wolseley’s anger more than his comments on pay and the conditions of service. Lansdowne claimed soldiers were treated generously but Wolseley believed that they were being tricked.<sup>97</sup> In 1892 Wolseley told the Wantage Committee that ‘unless we can give a very high rate of pay we should always be obliged to take in “the waifs and strays”. I think that there are very few tramps in England who at some time or other have not been in the Army.’<sup>98</sup> Haliburton doubted whether an increase in pay would have any effect on recruitment unless it was an extremely large one.<sup>99</sup> Campbell-Bannerman and Stanhope were of the same view. In fact Campbell-Bannerman believed the inducement to enlist was not pay but ‘the military life.’<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lord Lansdowne on the Army’, *The Times*, 14 July 1898, p.10.

<sup>94</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘Military Works Loan Act’, 3 August 1899, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.75, c.1254.

<sup>95</sup> E.T. Cook, *The Life of Florence Nightingale* (London, 1914), p.405.

<sup>96</sup> ‘Military Works Loan Act’, *The Times*, 4 August 1899, p.4.

<sup>97</sup> Maurice and Arthur, *The Life of Lord Wolseley*, p.308.

<sup>98</sup> PP, 1892, XIX, c.6582, ‘Report of the committee appointed by the Secretary of State for War to consider the terms and conditions of service in the army’, 32, p.5., 4480, p.159.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.33-62.

<sup>100</sup> Campbell-Bannerman, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Army Organization’, 13 May 1901, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.93, c.1501.

Lansdowne also shared this view advocating that the ‘popularity of the Army was not merely a question of pay.’<sup>101</sup> It was also his view that to retain soldiers ‘if we had to rely merely upon increased pay, I confess that I should look forward to the future with considerable misgivings...’<sup>102</sup>

In his review of Army pay Lansdowne proposed awarding different levels of remuneration. While he recognised that the ‘benefit in kind’ of 15s a week for accommodation, food and clothes in addition to the soldier’s pay was adequate for an immature youth, the Army should offer better terms to adults fit for active service.<sup>103</sup> As such, marginal increments, including the abolition of grocery stoppage and deferred pay, were announced by Lansdowne in December 1897. It was his view that the Army should end grocery stoppage for tea, sugar, milk, vegetables and other articles which were not luxuries but common necessities. As established under the regulations then in force a deduction was made to soldiers’ pay of 3d a day for these items and it was compulsory. In effect the Army promised 1s and paid 9d, Lansdowne proposed to pay soldiers a clear 1s as soon as they were fully qualified.

Lansdowne also questioned the value of deferred pay. This was the proportion of pay set aside and deferred until a soldier entered the reserve. The Army had first resorted to deferred pay in 1876 when Colonel Frederick Stanley (later 16<sup>th</sup> Earl of Derby), the then Secretary of State for War, and his advisers, ‘got frightened at the prospect of the first batch of short service men being dismissed to civil life with nothing. In those days no extensions were allowed. A ‘howl’ was brewing. Stanley was told that the marine system was very popular. It was in servile imitation of that much vaunted marine system that the much abused deferred pay system was instituted!’<sup>104</sup> It was believed by many civilians and military men, including Roberts, to be a temptation for men to leave the Army and should be abolished.<sup>105</sup> Under the terms of deferred pay men were credited with 2d a day for up to twelve years’ service, or they could take a lump sum of £21 on leaving after seven years; it had to be repaid or renounced if a man re-enlisted. Although Lansdowne did not believe that the War Office should go so far as to abolish deferred pay, he thought it should

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<sup>101</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lord Lansdowne on the Army’, *The Times*, 14 July 1898, p.10.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lord Lansdowne on the Army’, *ibid.*, 10 December 1897, p.10.

<sup>104</sup> Welby to Lansdowne (private), 22 December 1898, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/22/10.

<sup>105</sup> Roberts to Lansdowne (private), 16 December 1897, *ibid.*, Add MS. 88906/22/9.

be reduced. He proposed a reduction of three quarters of the amount then paid to a soldier on leaving the colours. Hicks Beach wished to reduce it by even more and Lansdowne had to convince him, 'if we reduce deferred pay...the soldier at home would gain by his free ration...but not much more than he would lose by the loss of three quarters of his deferred pay.'<sup>106</sup> Wolseley told Lansdowne that his proposal would not do, 'it will be howled at in every mess, and even the small minded officer who wants to keep the soldier, if he can do so, from leaving the colours at seven or eight years' service, will scoff at the arrangement...to my mind it is cruel to the soldier to interfere with his deferred pay. You might add to it, but certainly not decrease it...there is a strong agitation against the War Office in the air...it has not friends, and as far as I am able to gather of these proposals about deferred pay and the ration stoppage, they will intensify the feeling.'<sup>107</sup>

In late December 1897, Lansdowne was unable to prevent the Cabinet voting a large reduction in deferred pay. Welby, his Private Secretary, told him, 'I do not think that £5 is a fair sum to start a man in civil life, and though we may have erred too much in the other direction, we surely don't want to make it difficult for a man to pass to civil life and the reserve.'<sup>108</sup> On 2 April 1898, the War Office announced basic pay would be 1s 3d before stoppages. Deferred pay was replaced by a messing allowance and a gratuity of £1 for each year's service up to a maximum of £12.<sup>109</sup> Men transferred to the Army reserve after three years and men entitled to a pension received a gratuity of £2.<sup>110</sup> Salisbury informed the Queen 'the Army will be larger and better paid and the Cardwell system will be rendered rather more elastic. But the Cardwell system remains still there.'<sup>111</sup> Wolseley made the analogy 'you want to add half an inch to the height of a man's collar and you recoup yourself by cutting the same amount from the tail of his coat.'<sup>112</sup>

Starting an ex-soldier in civil life with adequate funds was part of Lansdowne's policy to encourage society to look at military service as a path rather

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<sup>106</sup> Lansdowne to Hicks Beach (private), 11 December 1897, *ibid.*, Add MS. 88906/19/2.

<sup>107</sup> Wolseley to Lansdowne (private), 23 December 1897, *ibid.*, Add MS. 88906/19/28.

<sup>108</sup> Welby to Lansdowne (private), 22 December 1898, *ibid.*, Add MS. 88906/22/10.

<sup>109</sup> Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army*, p.138.

<sup>110</sup> Editorial 'Army Estimates', *The Times*, 21 February 1898, p.12.

<sup>111</sup> Salisbury to Queen Victoria (private), in Kochanski, *Sir Garnet Wolseley*, p.221.

<sup>112</sup> Wolseley to Lansdowne (private), 23 December 1897, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/28.

than an obstacle to civil employment. Ex-soldiers when seeking employment were at a disadvantage owing to their age and lack of transferable skills.<sup>113</sup> It was Lansdowne's belief that the government should set an example to the private employer. In June 1896 he directed a letter to all government departments requesting them to state whether they would be prepared to reserve posts for discharged soldiers and Army reserve men.<sup>114</sup> His scheme had the support of the service parliamentarians, although Cecil Norton wished it would go further: 'I observed with satisfaction that the Secretary of State for War stated that there were some two thousand posts open to the soldier after he has served in the Army. Well, in my opinion, there ought to be at least five times that number.'<sup>115</sup> The scheme also received support from the heads of the civil departments for the '2,000 posts annually',<sup>116</sup> but interestingly it was later revealed that the War Office itself employed very few of the ex soldiers.<sup>117</sup> Although Lansdowne received little support for this scheme from his War Office colleagues, the energy with which he pressed for its adoption was indicative of his genuine belief in the importance of the measure and of his patrician 'liberal' nature.<sup>118</sup>

Lansdowne also maintained that developing better conditions in the Army could be achieved by improving the relations between officers and soldiers. He believed that it was the responsibility of every officer to 'raise the tone of the private soldier in the British Army.'<sup>119</sup> His views were also shared by Wolseley. Explaining their position to Salisbury, Lansdowne remarked, that they were both determined to get rid of incompetent high military officers and 'we are now very particular not only as to the colonels, but as to the seconds in command of regiments.'<sup>120</sup> Officers that

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<sup>113</sup> Skelley, *The Victorian Army at Home*, p.211.

<sup>114</sup> War Office to Various Government Departments, 27 June 1896, 'Civil Employment of Discharged Soldiers and Army Reserve men'. NA. WO 33/70.

<sup>115</sup> The Service Members Committee to Lansdowne, 20 January 1898, *The Times*, 22 January 1898, p.6; Norton, 'Commons Debate', 'Army Estimates, 1898-99', 28 July 1898, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.63, c.355.

<sup>116</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lord Lansdowne on the Army', *The Times*, 10 December 1897, p.10; Lansdowne, 'Lord Lansdowne on the Army', *ibid.*, 14 July 1898, p.10.

<sup>117</sup> 'War Office Reform', *The Broad Arrow. The Naval and Military Gazette*, 56(1440), 1 February 1896, p.123.

<sup>118</sup> 'How to get the men', *Ibid.*, 61(1571), 6 August 1898, p.145.

<sup>119</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lords Debate', 'British troops in India (Health)', 17 May 1897, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.49, c.606.

<sup>120</sup> Lansdowne to Salisbury (private), 29 October 1896, BL. (5) (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/16/9.

exhibited an ever increasing interest in the welfare of their men were regarded by the military authorities as more deserving of advancement than those who did not.<sup>121</sup>

For these improvements in the Army to succeed Lansdowne was dependent not just on obtaining recruits but retaining them too. Resolving the large annual efflux from the Army was of greater concern to him than the influx to the Army: 'A sudden influx of recruits at one moment is followed by a sudden efflux at another, and thereby we depart from the sound maxim laid down by Lord Wantage's Committee, that we should endeavour to maintain a constant and regular flow of recruits into the Army.'<sup>122</sup> He was no stranger to the difficulties of recruiting. While at the War Office between 1872 and 1874 recruiting was in a most unsatisfactory condition and the 'case of recruits is not what it formerly was but is far below what is desirable.'<sup>123</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century the nation expected a great deal more from its soldiers than in the 1870s and having voted to raise the establishment, Parliament and the taxpayers expected to see results. One of the ways of satisfying these demands was for the War Office to lower its physical standards and find recruits from beyond agricultural labourers in the urban slums. Among those recruited in 1897, twenty percent were in their twentieth year, thirty percent were over twenty years of age and fifty percent enlisted at eighteen. The standard height for recruits was five feet and three and a half inches but thirty percent were admitted below that under the assumption that they would reach it within a reasonable time.

It was the view of the public that the War Office was swamping the Army with immature boys of poor physique.<sup>124</sup> Although Lansdowne, who was himself short in height, attempted to humour the public that 'I confess to being myself in favour of the more moderate size, if for no other reason, because we smaller men present a smaller surface to the enemy when in action,'<sup>125</sup> he was unable to humour his War Office colleagues, the service parliamentarians, the defence intellectuals or the press. While the average annual intake of infantry recruits in the years before 'the War'

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<sup>121</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lord Lansdowne on the Army', *The Times*, 14 July 1898, p.10.

<sup>122</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lords Debate', 'Army (Increase in Strength)', 4 February 1897, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.45, c.1257.

<sup>123</sup> 'Lord Sandhurst's Motion in the House of Lords', *The Morning Post*, 1 June 1874, p.6, BL. (5) (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/13/9.

<sup>124</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lord Lansdowne on the Army', *The Times*, 14 July 1898, p.10

<sup>125</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lord Lansdowne on the Army', *ibid.*, 10 December 1897, p.10.



was 33,815,<sup>126</sup> and the additions to the line amounted to nine battalions, five of which were raised by March 1899,<sup>127</sup> this concealed the reality that there was in Britain both a manpower crisis and an Army unfit for war. In May 1897 the sixty-five service MPs drafted a memorandum on the state of the Army for Salisbury. ‘Couched in moderate and patriotic language’ and without wishing to recast the existing system it noted that that system had reached its ‘full development’ and was unsatisfactory.<sup>128</sup> It was the opinion of the military press that, ‘the whole subject bristles with difficulties in a country where enlistment is voluntary and in which general prosperity is diametrically opposed to recruiting.’<sup>129</sup> As the situation worsened Lansdowne was informed by Brodrick that ‘we are in a bad way about the line battalions...Recruits are coming in fast though not so fast for the Guards as is necessary to make the number. But the number of specials [immature youths below the physical standard required to reach efficiency] is very large and the extra strain of South Africa coupled with the number of young soldiers in the Med[iterranean] leaves us with no battalion to send anywhere.’<sup>130</sup> Lansdowne accepted Brodrick’s arguments. He was aware of the recruiting difficulty and that the quality of recruits was unsatisfactory.<sup>131</sup> But he also believed that ‘although many specials were enlisted most reached the standard within a few months.’<sup>132</sup> Wolseley was even more concerned than Brodrick and Lansdowne, informing Buller, ‘over one third are below even the low physical standard laid down for recruits. In fact at this moment over one half of the home Army are unfit to carry a pack or do a week’s - I might say a day’s - hard work in the field.’<sup>133</sup> He and the other members of the Army Board could see nothing for it but a significant increase in pay. To Dilke there were too many boys in them [the battalions], and they were there for too short a time.<sup>134</sup> To Arnold-Forster the War Office was suppressing the truth about the number of

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<sup>126</sup> ‘Table “A”, Recruiting figures Prior the South African War,’ PP, 1904, XL, Cd.1789, RC, Appendix no.13, p.137.

<sup>127</sup> Wyndham, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Army Estimates’, 2 March 1899, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.67, c.1070.

<sup>128</sup> ‘Army Reform’, *The Broad Arrow. The Naval and Military Gazette*, 58(1511), 12 June 1897, p.685.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> Brodrick to Lansdowne (private), 12 September 1897, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/4.

<sup>131</sup> Lansdowne ‘Memorandum to the Cabinet’, 15 December 1897, CAB 37/45/43.

<sup>132</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Minute’, ‘The Increase to the Army and Recruitment’, 13 December 1898, (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/16/2.

<sup>133</sup> Wolseley to Butler (private), 8 February 1899, NAI. Wolseley MSS. Dublin 15,997.

<sup>134</sup> Dilke, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Military Forces Maintenance’, 8 February 1897, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.45, c.1571.

soldiers in the colours: 'They tell us they have got them, but I say they have not; they do not exist, and the battalions the War Office pretends to have got are not battalions in any just and fair sense of the word.'<sup>135</sup> It was his view that the additions Lansdowne proposed making could not have been recommended by Wolseley because 'he knows they are not enough.'<sup>136</sup> Although both Lansdowne and Wolseley were motivated to increase the size of the Army Wolseley's demands for infantry and artillery increases were far greater than Lansdowne's; the latter's willingness and ability to sanction increases being influenced by financial considerations.

In January 1897 suffering from a throat infection which was complicated by an attack of jaundice, Wolseley's health declined and he was forced to take a leave of absence from the War Office. When he was able to resume work in September his memory was impaired and many of his colleagues noticed that he often failed to remember having met people or having written memos and minutes.<sup>137</sup> On a rare visit to the War Office during his period of recovery he noted 'there was an air of universal languor everywhere.'<sup>138</sup> Alarmed by the situation that was developing within a month of returning to work, he publicly announced his concern for the state of the Army remarking. 'Our Army machinery is overstrained and is out of gear. I speak in the presence of many whose technical knowledge will enable them to contradict me if I am wrong, when I say that, if a machine which is calculated to manufacture a certain amount of stuff annually has some twenty per cent extra work forced upon it, the machine will sooner or later, certainly break down. Yet that is what we are risking with our Army. Our Army machinery is no longer able to meet effectively the demands now made upon it.'<sup>139</sup>

The following week Brodrick wrote to Lansdowne with an idea, 'to put a certain number of facts before the public as a grave problem for the government and the country to discuss. This will rouse people and get the mind of the Cabinet into a channel which will prepare them for any proposal you may make.'<sup>140</sup> These 'facts'

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<sup>135</sup> Arnold-Forster, 'Commons Debate', 'Army Estimates 1898-99', 28 July 1898, *ibid.*, Vol.63, c.339.

<sup>136</sup> 'The Indictment against the War Office, "Army Letters, 1897-98" by H.O. Arnold-Forster', *The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, 85(2211), 12 March 1898, p.362.

<sup>137</sup> W.W. Gosse, *Aspects and Impressions* (New York, 1922), p.289; N. Lyttelton, *Eighty Years: Soldering, Politics, Games* (London, 1927), p.170.

<sup>138</sup> Wolseley to Lansdowne (private), 7 August 1897, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/28.

<sup>139</sup> Wolseley, 'Lord Wolseley in Glasgow', *The Times*, 24 September 1897, p.4.

<sup>140</sup> Brodrick to Lansdowne (private), 4 October 1897, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/4.

Brodrick publicly raised at Guildford on 13 October. Echoing the concerns of Wolseley's speech he stated that the calls upon the Army had become incessant with 50,000 men engaged on the North West Frontier of India, two battalions on service in Crete, two additional battalions and a force of artillery stationed in South Africa and British troops engaged in Egypt. It was his conclusion that the Cardwell balance was unhinged.<sup>141</sup> As public attention caught on to the crisis the Queen also noted that the Army was in a bad state.<sup>142</sup> Seizing the opportunity to reinvigorate the reform discourse Arnold-Forster initiated an attack on the War Office timed to coincide with the annual discussion among the Army Board and Cabinet of the Army estimates. In seven letters, he set out to show that the principles of Army organisation were contrary to common sense. 'The system has broken down at every point, the linked battalions do not perform their mutual offices, the depôts do not fill up their gaps, the required recruits are not forthcoming, those who are obtained are not of the right stamp or quality.'<sup>143</sup> His case against the War Office was that 'the Army system has broken down.'<sup>144</sup> Initially Lansdowne hesitated to refute the indictment. It can be speculated this was prompted by Roberts who informed him 'that although Mr Arnold-Forster's facts and figures in his letters to *The Times* may not be strictly accurate in all their details, his statements are substantially correct. It will be difficult to reply to his indictment.'<sup>145</sup>

After Arnold-Forster published his third letter, Lansdowne wrote to Haliburton, who by then had retired from the War Office, saying, 'Arnold-Forster's "facts" are so damaging that it will scarcely do to leave them unchallenged.'<sup>146</sup> He suggested that Haliburton take up the 'cudgels for us' and write to *The Times*, though not as too uncompromising a partisan of the *status quo*.<sup>147</sup> Not since the Crimean War were the public showing such anxiety about the state of the Army and the fact that it was not what it ought to be. As events developed Lansdowne used the situation and the public's anxiety as a negotiating tool with the Cabinet to obtain

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<sup>141</sup> Brodrick, 'Mr Brodrick on the Army', *The Times*, 14 October 1897, p.4.

<sup>142</sup> Queen Victoria's Journal, RA VIC/QVJ/1897: 2 December.

<sup>143</sup> Atlay, *Lord Haliburton*, p.145.

<sup>144</sup> 'The Indictment against the War Office, "Army Letters, 1897-98" by H.O. Arnold-Forster', *The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, 85(2211), 12 March 1898, p.362.

<sup>145</sup> Roberts to Lansdowne (private), 25 November 1897, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/21.

<sup>146</sup> Lansdowne to Haliburton (private), 13 November 1897, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/18.

<sup>147</sup> Lansdowne to Haliburton (private), 19 November 1897, *ibid*.

new measures for the Army. These he set out for the Cabinet in his 'Outlines of Army Proposals.'<sup>148</sup> These proposals which were framed in consultation with the senior officers were supportive of Wolseley's view that a numerical increase was 'urgently, I may say imperatively necessary.'<sup>149</sup> It was Wolseley's view at this time that twelve additional battalions were required as neither home defence nor the requirements of colonial defence had been covered adequately in his earlier minute of 30 October 1896.<sup>150</sup>

While Lansdowne negotiated with the Cabinet for his Army proposals he spoke at the annual meeting of the Primrose League in Edinburgh and set out the position of the government's military policy. The Queen was 'quite pleased' at the way in which Lansdowne 'laid the case before the country.'<sup>151</sup> *The Times* noted 'Our correspondent "Reform" agrees with us in regarding Lord Lansdowne's speech...as the most hopeful symptom that has yet appeared of a disposition in high quarters to look military facts in the face and shows that the Secretary of State for War is not yet dominated by the habit of mechanically repeating machine made opinions which is so painfully conspicuous in the letters of Sir Arthur Haliburton.'<sup>152</sup>

While the proposals were acceptable to the press, they met resistance in Cabinet and the general tone was unsatisfactory to Lansdowne. Chamberlain, who disliked the system of linked battalions, was against Lansdowne's attempt to add ten new infantry battalions to the Army. He was in favour, '(1) Of any increase in the artillery believing the Army should be especially strong in that arm. (2) Any expedients to improve the terms of the services and to secure a better class of recruits. (3) Of doing all necessary to make the Militia and Volunteers a really effective force. In my judgement Lansdowne's scheme does not do any of these things.'<sup>153</sup> He made no attempt to conceal 'his utter disbelief in the policy which he described as an attempt to prop up a rickety and useless system.' Lord James of

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<sup>148</sup> Lansdowne, 'Outlines of Army Proposals', 2 December 1897, CAB 37/45/42.

<sup>149</sup> Wolseley, 'Minute', 3 November 1897, in PP, 1904, XL, Cd.1789, RC, Appendix D para 12, p.243.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Bigge to Lansdowne (private), 1 January 1898, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/18/5.

<sup>152</sup> 'Our Correspondent Reform', *The Times*, 22 December 1897, p.9.

<sup>153</sup> Chamberlain, 'Notes on Cabinet Meeting 1<sup>st</sup> February 1898', BUL. Chamberlain MSS, Add MS. JC51/39.

Hereford, Long, Akers Douglas, Ritchie and others expressed similar views.<sup>154</sup> Hamilton who did not believe it was possible to set up any better system than that which existed believed Lansdowne's proposals would 'not altogether meet the difficulties.'<sup>155</sup> Hicks Beach was unwilling to defend the proposals and Salisbury was 'frankly incredulous' and unwilling to speak up during the debates.<sup>156</sup> Lansdowne believed the Cabinet could demolish their critics who 'were clamouring for the abandonment of the present system' but it was his concern that 'if others find out that we are half hearted and they will find it out, the task is hopeless.'<sup>157</sup> Rather than raise unnecessary difficulties he offered to resign. Salisbury refused the offer stating, 'I do not think you need anticipate any adverse vote on any essential portion. Some modification of figures may become necessary, but on them Governments have always to discuss and, if possible, to compromise.'<sup>158</sup> In the compromise that followed the Treasury decided to sanction six of Lansdowne's ten battalions and £115,000 less than he had requested for the abolition of the grocery stoppage: a sum which Wolseley received with 'very great satisfaction.'<sup>159</sup> Although Wolseley was satisfied by this concession he remained steadfastly of the opinion up until the outbreak of war in South Africa that the Regular Army was not strong enough to fulfil the objects of Stanhope's Memorandum and recruiting would remain a difficulty unless sufficient wages were paid to the soldiers.<sup>160</sup> Lansdowne was also satisfied with the Cabinet's offer. Recalling the incident a few years later he remarked 'how very thoroughly in what a favourable spirit Wolseley's proposals were dealt with by himself and the Cabinet.'<sup>161</sup>

By demonstrating his willingness to listen to his critics and adapt Lansdowne conciliated many of his critics' complaints. Dilke believed 'if honestly worked out and not spoiled by the War Office 'Jacobins' the three year enlistment may perhaps

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<sup>154</sup> Lansdowne to Salisbury (private), 2 February 1898, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 89906/19/6.

<sup>155</sup> Hamilton, 'Lord G. Hamilton on India', *The Times*, 27 January 1898, p.4.

<sup>156</sup> Lansdowne to Salisbury (private), 2 February 1898, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 89906/19/6.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>158</sup> Salisbury to Lansdowne (private), 2 February 1898, NA. (5) Lansdowne MSS, FO 800/115.

<sup>159</sup> PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21318, p.523.

<sup>160</sup> Wolseley to Permanent Under-Secretary, 7 January 1899, 'With regard to mobilization', in PP, 1904, XL, Cd.1789, RC, Appendix D, 9, p.257.

<sup>161</sup> PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21315, p.523; CAB 37/45/42.

lead to the right modifications of the system,'<sup>162</sup> and even Arnold-Forster recognised that he 'got a series of promises' from Lansdowne.<sup>163</sup> It was his belief, however, that he was not quite sure they would all be accomplished, but that there would be an attempt to carry them out which was vouched for by the fact they were made by Lansdowne. He remained critical that no promise to reform the War Office was made and that the linked battalion system would continue.<sup>164</sup> In a letter to Lansdowne the service parliamentarians expressed 'with satisfaction,' his proposals while imploring him to give greater attention to regimental *esprit de corps* and the 'reorganisation of all the land forces of the Empire with a view to their effective preparation for war.'<sup>165</sup>

The demands put forward by the service parliamentarians had been 'constantly' before Lansdowne since he had started work at the War Office. Although much of his first two years were spent defending the short service system as established by Cardwell at no point during that period did he neglect the other Army services.<sup>166</sup> Under Cardwell's original scheme neither the artillery nor the cavalry were affected by short service and localisation, though seven years in the colours and five in the reserve were gradually extended to those forces. Territorial localisation was difficult to introduce because both forces enlisted men for general service and both sought smaller numbers of men who could perform specialist duties. But these forces had to supply drafts for units overseas.

'Of all the puzzling problems the War Office' had to cope with, Lansdowne did not know any 'more difficult or more puzzling' than cavalry organisation.<sup>167</sup> In 1896 he approved an Army Board scheme to reorganise the cavalry dividing the twenty-eight regiments of that force into nine brigades of three regiments each: one regiment out of each brigade being in India, one at home on a higher establishment and another at home on a lower establishment. In each brigade the regiment at home on the lower establishment prepared the draft for the sister regiment in India and the

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<sup>162</sup> C.W. Dilke, 'Army Reform' (London, 1898) in *The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, 85(2212), 19 March 1898, p.396.

<sup>163</sup> Arnold-Forster, 'Mr Arnold-Forster on the Army', *The Times*, 4 February 1898, p.4.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>165</sup> The Service Members Committee to Lansdowne, 20 January 1898, *ibid.*, 22 January 1898, p.6.

<sup>166</sup> 'Lord Lansdowne and the Service Members', Lansdowne to Brookfield, 21 January 1898, *ibid.*, 28 January 1898, p.4.

<sup>167</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lords Debate', 'Military Reorganisation - recruiting in Scotland, etc.', 25 May 1900, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.83, c.1264.

regiment on the higher establishment was ready to take the field at once.<sup>168</sup> The odd regiment was used ‘with advantage in the colonies, another battalion of infantry being brought home in its place.’<sup>169</sup> The proposal was believed by Campbell-Bannerman to be ‘a step in the right direction.’<sup>170</sup> The following year cavalry depôts were abolished and ‘brigading’ was introduced to supply drafts more efficiently for the overseas regiments. In 1898 the new organisation broke down and the depôts were re-established. To one of the service parliamentarians the home regiments were deficient in men and horses and the strain of sending men from one regiment to another was very great.<sup>171</sup> In 1899 a new scheme was proposed so as to protect the eight regiments on the higher home establishment which contrary to the reorganisation of 1896 had been called on to provide drafts for Indian service. As in 1896 it was the government’s policy that the balance of drafts would be taken from the eight regiments on the lower establishment.<sup>172</sup> Each one of these regiments was also increased by sixty men and twenty horses. On the outbreak of war in 1899 the regiments of the cavalry were sixteen at home and twelve abroad.<sup>173</sup>

Lansdowne also set himself the task of improving the Royal Regiment of Artillery. At this time nearly half the horse and field artillery batteries served in India while the other half remained at home and the garrison artillery batteries were divided into roughly equal numbers between home, India and the Colonies. The force was highly inefficient and according to Dilke, ‘we had not a field artillery which was equal to the needs of the Empire.’<sup>174</sup> Lansdowne’s motivation to reorganise the force was partly driven by a concern that in the event of an invasion ‘the Army would need to place a large number of Auxiliary troops in the field whose efficiency would not be as great as that of the Regular Army and it was incumbent that these troops should be supported by an ample force of artillery.’ His reorganisation was also partly driven by political reasons. The artillery had been reorganised by the Liberals and in his view ‘there are reasons for doubting whether

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<sup>168</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Minute’, ‘The Strength of the Army’, 4 December 1896, in PP, 1904, XL, Cd.1789, RC, Appendix D, p.237, paragraphs 21 and 22, p.240.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid. p.240.

<sup>170</sup> Campbell-Bannerman, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Land Forces’, 12 February 1897, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.46, c.348.

<sup>171</sup> Warner, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Army Estimates 1899-1900’, 17 March 1899, *ibid.*, Vol.68, c.1166.

<sup>172</sup> Wyndham, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Army Estimates’, 2 March 1899, *ibid.*, Vol.67, c.1068.

<sup>173</sup> Wyndham, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Army (Supplementary) Estimates, 1899-1900’, 20 October 1899, *ibid.*, Vol.77, c.410.

<sup>174</sup> Dilke, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Land Forces’, 12 February 1897, *ibid.*, Vol.46, c.336.

the new organization is in all respects a success.’<sup>175</sup> In 1897, Lansdowne added a new battery of field artillery to the establishment bringing the total to forty-five which was the full complement for the three Army Corps authorized for home defence. He also rearmed the horse artillery with a new ‘12 pounder gun’ and the field artillery gun, commonly called the ‘12 pounder’, was converted into the ‘15 pounder.’<sup>176</sup> The War Office reverted to the *depôt* system, abandoned in 1893 for the purpose of drilling artillery recruits before they were posted to the batteries.<sup>177</sup>

In 1898 Wolseley proposed a further reorganisation of the Royal Regiment into mounted and dismounted branches. It was his opinion that the force had so largely increased that it had become too unwieldy an organisation to be managed from headquarters and that the system of promotion throughout one large body of men gave rise to constant shifting of officers between stations that were often widely apart and this was costly and inconvenient. His scheme involved the creation of six regiments of field artillery, five of which contained horse batteries and the creation of six field artillery *depôts*, two at Woolwich and one at Aldershot, at Colchester, at Shorncliffe and in Ireland. His reorganisation also provided for the relief of the batteries by brigade divisions and the finishing of drafts to the batteries abroad partly from the batteries of the same regiment at home and partly from the *depôts* after training with the batteries. The garrison artillery he proposed dividing into seven regiments each of which would contain one or more batteries of mountain artillery. The existing *depôts* would be abolished and the recruits received and trained by the companies.<sup>178</sup> Edwin Markham, the Inspector-General of Ordnance, doubted the advisability of making the change. Lansdowne also believed that if the artillery was divided into regiments a smaller number than six (horse and field) would be convenient.<sup>179</sup> The following year the Royal Regiment was separated into two corps of men and two distinct cadres of officer. The office of Deputy Adjutant-General Royal Artillery was abolished and officers going into either corps from 1 June 1899 could no longer be transferred to other corps without their own consent.<sup>180</sup> In

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<sup>175</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lord Lansdowne on the Army’, *The Times*, 10 December 1897, p.10.

<sup>176</sup> ‘The Army Estimates’, *ibid.*, 10 March 1896, p.10, ‘Cavalry Reorganisation’, Proceedings of the War Office Council, 21 November 1896, NA. WO 163/4B.

<sup>177</sup> Brodrick, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘The Army Estimates’, 25 February 1898, *Hansard 4th Series*, Vol.45, c.44.

<sup>178</sup> ‘Artillery Organization’, Proceedings of the War Office Council, 14/15 March 1898, NA. WO 163/4B.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>180</sup> Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army*, p.65.



implementing Wolseley's proposals Lansdowne authorised fifteen new batteries of field artillery, five of which were raised by March 1899 and the others in hand and due for completion by the end of 1900. Progress was also made to build up the re-established depôts of field and horse artillery.<sup>181</sup> To one section of the press 'a stroke of pen cannot effect reorganization as drastic as this.'<sup>182</sup> To another section Lansdowne's reorganisation 'was a confession that the proportion of artillery had been unduly reduced by some of his predecessors.'<sup>183</sup>

While determined to maintain in a high state of preparedness the strength and organisation of these arms of the Regular Army Lansdowne was also keen to increase the efficiency of the Auxiliary Army. It was one of the demands of the reformers in and out of Parliament to draw more closely together the different forces of the Army. By framing his reorganisation of the Volunteers and Militia to meet this aspiration, Lansdowne not only appeased his critics but was able to influence the direction of the reform discourse. His reorganisation of the Auxiliary Army largely excluded changes to the Yeomanry until the events of 'Black Week' made it necessary to re-examine the British Army's strategy for the prosecution of 'the War' and the Yeomanry was restructured accordingly. The discussion of Auxiliary reorganisation in this chapter will therefore be devoted to the Militia and Volunteers forces.

It was Lansdowne's opinion that in the case of a great national emergency Britain would need to look outside the Regular Army for reinforcements. The auxiliary Army was far more visible to society than the Regular Army and it was his opinion that in a nation free of compulsory service, society should 'give every encouragement and facility to those who were prepared to undertake military service.'<sup>184</sup> As a bridge between the Army and society, in purely political terms, they also made conscription less urgent, a fact that Lansdowne was aware of. Speaking at a dinner given by the Lord Mayor of London at the Mansion House in July 1898 he recalled a conversation with an advocate of compulsory service, in which the latter

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<sup>181</sup> 'The Army Estimates', *The Times*, 22 February 1899, p.10.

<sup>182</sup> 'The Separation of the Royal Artillery', *The Broad Arrow. The Naval and Military Gazette*, 62(1613), p.377.

<sup>183</sup> Editorial, 'Army Estimates', *The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, 85(2210), 5 March 1898, p.318.

<sup>184</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lord Lansdowne and the Volunteers', *The Times*, 17 February 1896, p.11.

said his ‘chief complaint against the Volunteers was that their existence stood in the way of the introduction of compulsory service.’<sup>185</sup>

Likened to that ‘proverbial old maid who is always ready but never wanted,’ the Volunteers had a ‘checkered career.’<sup>186</sup> In 1873, Lansdowne informed Cardwell ‘there can be no doubt that the Volunteer movement is in many parts of the country losing vigour and in some instances probably on its way to extinction.’<sup>187</sup> Although it was his view twenty-three years later that the force had improved,<sup>188</sup> *The Times* was less convinced reporting that they were below their establishment number and there was a very serious lack of officers ‘which taken in conjunction with the comparative inefficiency of some of those now serving, must materially affect the military value of these Auxiliaries.’<sup>189</sup> In the years before ‘the War’ Lansdowne attempted to address these issues with the support of Wolseley and the civilians at the War Office. It is notable that in 1896 Lansdowne held the view that the Volunteers ‘could not have a better friend’ than Wolseley,<sup>190</sup> and yet after leaving the War Office one of his principal criticisms of Wolseley was that, ‘if he had paid more attention to the duties assigned to him by Order-in-Council...he might...have enabled us to turn to better account that large number of Auxiliary forces that we have in this country, and which...have been not a little neglected during the last five years.’<sup>191</sup> At this time the Volunteers comprised around sixty-seven percent of the total Auxiliary Army and with over half their battalions defending the ‘great base around London.’<sup>192</sup> Although the Volunteers prided themselves on their self-sufficiency, that they received an average annual allocation of £624,500 from the Army estimates disguised the fact they were controlled by government. In his first estimates Lansdowne paid them a full year’s capitation allowance to clear their

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<sup>185</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lord Lansdowne on the Army,’ *ibid.*, 14 July 1898, p.10.

<sup>186</sup> Dartmouth, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘Volunteer Rifle Ranges’, 17 July 1899, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.74, c.978.

<sup>187</sup> Lansdowne to Cardwell, ‘Minute’, ‘Reports of Generals of Districts on Auxiliary Forces’, 18 March 1873, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/13/9.

<sup>188</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lord Lansdowne and the Volunteers’, *The Times*, 17 February 1896, p.11.

<sup>189</sup> ‘Editorial’, ‘The Army Estimates’, *ibid.*, 10 March 1896, p.10.

<sup>190</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lord Lansdowne and the Volunteers’, *ibid.*, 17 February 1896, p.11.

<sup>191</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘War Office Administration - Duties of Commander-in-Chief’, 4 March 1901, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.90, c.352.

<sup>192</sup> Wyndham, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Number of Land Forces’, 12 February 1900, *ibid.*, Vol.78, c.1264.

existing debts, and £10 to each officer for a new outfit. They also received £10 to attend a course of instruction.<sup>193</sup>

The dearth of officers in the Regular and Auxiliary Army was a ‘serious drawback’,<sup>194</sup> and ‘one of the most formidable difficulties which military reformers had to consider.’<sup>195</sup> In regard to the Auxiliary army Lansdowne and Brodrick introduced a ‘great change’ which fixed the Volunteer officers’ period of command at four years with power of renewal.<sup>196</sup> Recognising that ‘practice with the rifle is absolutely essential to the efficiency of the Volunteers,’<sup>197</sup> he also did ‘everything within reasonable limits to afford’<sup>198</sup> them opportunities for improving musketry. In 1896 they were issued with the new Lee-Metford rifle which had an improved range and accuracy. It, however, added ‘to our difficulties’ by focusing public attention on whether rifle ranges in their locality ‘are or are not safe.’<sup>199</sup> Of the 1,200 ranges in Britain in 1897 no fewer than 1,130 were ranges used solely by the Volunteers. It was Lansdowne’s personal contention that there should be an inquiry into the condition of those ranges. Responding to public concerns and acting on his inquiry Lansdowne passed through Parliament an amended Military Lands Act and Military Works Act to provide funds for the Volunteers to purchase or share ranges with the Regular Army and Militia. Lansdowne also granted the Volunteers legislative means to recover fines under the Summary Jurisdiction Act.<sup>200</sup>

His ability to manage the reform discourse through increasing the efficiency of the Volunteers was mirrored in his modification of the Militia, a force which he believed stood between the ‘Regular forces and Volunteers.’<sup>201</sup> In 1874, he found the Militia Army, which was not then under the command of the Commander-in-Chief, was threatened with low recruitment numbers. Its popularity suffered because of

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<sup>193</sup> ‘The Army Estimates - Lord Lansdowne’s Memorandum’, *The Times*, 17 February 1896, p.11. I.F.W. Beckett, *Rifleman Form*, p.137.

<sup>194</sup> Brodrick, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Land Forces’, 12 February 1897, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.46, c.330.

<sup>195</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘Imperial Defence’, 10 July 1906, *ibid.*, Vol.90, c.697.

<sup>196</sup> Brodrick, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Land Forces’, 12 February 1897, *ibid.*, Vol.46, c.330.

<sup>197</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘Lee Metford Rifle (Volunteer Rifle Ranges)’, 18 February 1897, *ibid.*, Vol.46, c.670.

<sup>198</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘Volunteer Rifle Ranges’, 17 July 1899, *ibid.*, Vol.74, c.980.

<sup>199</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘Lee Metford Rifle (Volunteer Rifle Ranges)’, 18 February 1897, *ibid.*, Vol.46, c.669.

<sup>200</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘Volunteers Bill’, 24 May 1897, *ibid.*, Vol.49, c.1115.

<sup>201</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘South African War - Contemplated Military Measures’, 12 February 1900, *ibid.*, Vol.78, c.1189.

poor accommodation and clothing described as ‘bad in quality and ridiculous in appearance.’<sup>202</sup> Similarly, in 1895, Lansdowne found the Militia below its establishment and short of officers. While he could claim no ‘practical acquaintance’ with the Militia,<sup>203</sup> he believed it had suffered most from the fact the Army had never been constructed on a scientific basis and had ‘grown with the growth of the nation.’<sup>204</sup> It had been plundered at one end by the Regulars and encroached on at the other by the Volunteers.<sup>205</sup> This had occurred principally due to one of Cardwell’s schemes which moved the Militia from its old constitutional purpose as a county force, into a role where its primary function was as a source of supply for the Regular Army. The Report of the Localisation Committee of 1872 made it clear that the Cardwell scheme contemplated the systematic use of the Militia as the reserve for the Regular Army.<sup>206</sup> In his attempt to redress the popularity and purpose of the Militia Lansdowne encouraged an existing trend which saw the force as a stepping stone to a Regular commission. Many young candidates preferred to join the line through the Militia rather than Sandhurst. By establishing interchangeability of officers between the two arms he believed the War Office would render the Militia more attractive. To achieve this the War Office offered a large number of commissions. In 1898, three hundred officers of the line were provided from the Militia. The War Office also made an arrangement whereby officers of the line could end their service with the Militia.<sup>207</sup>

In attempting to strengthen the Army and resolve the recruiting difficulty Brodrick suggested making selected Militia battalions available for service abroad to meet emergencies. This idea had first been proposed by Lord Raglan with the full approval of the service parliamentarians during the administration of the Liberal government.<sup>208</sup> Lansdowne approved of the idea as did Wolseley, although the latter

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<sup>202</sup> Lansdowne to Cardwell, ‘Minute’, ‘Reports of Generals of Districts on Auxiliary Forces’, 18 March 1873, comment from Colonel Mason, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/13/9.

<sup>203</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘Territorial and Reserve Forces Bill’, 26 June 1907, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.176, c.1338.

<sup>204</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘The Militia’, 19 March 1906, *ibid.*, Vol.154, c.48

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>206</sup> Portsmouth, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘Territorial and Reserve Forces Bill’, 25 June 1907, *ibid.*, Vol.177, c.1022.

<sup>207</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lord Lansdowne and the Militia’, *The Standard*, 9 June 1899, p.5.

<sup>208</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘Reserve Forces Bill’, 14 June 1898, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.59, cc.169-70.

noted that such regiments to be of any use for such service would have to be much more fully trained.<sup>209</sup>

It was believed that by establishing closer links to the Regular Army in a time of peace would smooth their expansion of the Regulars in a time of war. In June 1898 Lansdowne introduced a measure whereby certain Militia battalions or individual militiamen could serve as 'a special section' for service abroad. Under the provisions if seventy-five percent of a battalion were willing to accept the liability then the whole battalion would become available and receive additional training and an extra bounty of £1. If the whole battalion did not accept liability then an individual Militiaman could accept to serve abroad with a Regular battalion of his territorial regiment for a year for an extra bounty of £1.<sup>210</sup> It was anticipated that by accepting the terms the Militia would voluntarily convert itself into an offensive and defensive organisation. By this proposal it was envisaged the status of the force would be raised and it would command respect from the public and be an attractive proposition to recruits.<sup>211</sup>

Among the service parliamentarians the strongest critic of Lansdowne's attempts to improve the Militia force was Lord Wemyss who, as a traditional Militia Colonel, believed 'it is the basis of our military system.'<sup>212</sup> It was his view that the government should not wait until an emergency arose before making use of the power which they possessed in the Militia but that they should raise it compulsorily by ballot.<sup>213</sup> Lansdowne believed 'it may be that we shall someday be driven to Compulsory Service, but I do not think I am wrong in saying that the instincts of our countrymen are too strongly opposed to it.'<sup>214</sup> Lansdowne's sentiments were shared by his Cabinet colleagues. Salisbury believed passing the Militia ballot would 'carry excitement at least, possibly consternation, into every house and every cottage where there is a family in this country.'<sup>215</sup> And as regards conscription 'I do not think for the present, so far as our eyes can reach, that that kind of legislation or that species

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<sup>209</sup> 'Militia Reserves to meet Emergencies', Proceedings of the War Office Council, 14 January 1898, NA. WO 163/4B.

<sup>210</sup> 'The Reserve Forces Bill', *The Standard*, 15 June 1898, p.2.

<sup>211</sup> 'Militia Special Service Section', *The Broad Arrow. The Naval and Military Gazette*, 61(1587), 26 November 1898, p.581.

<sup>212</sup> Wemyss, 'Lords Debate', 'The Militia', 18 February 1898, *Hansard 4th Series*, Vol.53, c.1004.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, c.1028.

<sup>214</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lord Lansdowne on the Army', *The Times*, 10 December 1897, p.10.

<sup>215</sup> Salisbury, 'Lords Debate', 'Militia Ballot', 20 February 1900, *Hansard 4th Series*, Vol.79, c.548.

of defence is open to us.'<sup>216</sup> While Lansdowne had no desire to pass the Militia ballot measure through Parliament he accepted the machinery was largely obsolete and troublesome, and offered to have it examined and revised.<sup>217</sup> By conciliating Wemyss in this way the service parliamentarian was satisfied he was getting something by degrees. As the bill was withdrawn in 1897, Wemyss noted: 'We are getting an admission.'<sup>218</sup> Although Wemyss made further attempts to pass the Militia Ballot Bill through Parliament, public antipathy to compulsion remained firm and Lansdowne's position was unchallenged.

One of the most obvious areas in which Lansdowne was able to demonstrate to the public the benefits of bringing the Auxiliaries into greater alignment with the Regular Army was through training and manoeuvres.<sup>219</sup> His first attempt to introduce a Manoeuvres bill in 1896 was abandoned owing to Parliamentary delays during the Committee stage. The following year he introduced a new bill which was passed by Parliament; balancing as fairly as possible between 'military considerations' and 'the interests of the public.'<sup>220</sup> Around this time he also obtained funds to purchase sixty square miles on Salisbury Plain for use as a manoeuvring ground<sup>221</sup> and camp where a large part of the Army would find a permanent domicile.<sup>222</sup> As a landowner he took a close interest in the purchase of the site and maintained that the land purchases should cause minimal disturbance to farming and farmers.

Among those estates purchased by the government was Hicks Beach's estate at Netheravon. Given notice of the compulsory purchase of the land for military purposes he wrote to Lansdowne 'I will put my feelings and wishes, as a landowner entirely aside in considering the matter. If it be best for the War Office to take the area now suggested by the soldiers, by all means do it.'<sup>223</sup> The Netheravon affair was a political embarrassment to Hicks Beach.<sup>224</sup> It was alleged that the site was grossly overvalued. Arnold White, a gad-fly journalist, complained 'Sir Michael had failed

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<sup>216</sup> Ibid., c.550; Balfour, 'Mr Balfour in Manchester', *The Times*, 11 January 1897, p.10.

<sup>217</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lords Debate', 'Militia Ballot Law Amendment Bill', 1 July 1898, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.60, c.769.

<sup>218</sup> Wemyss, 'Lords Debate', 'Militia Ballot Law Amendment Bill', 1 July 1898, *ibid.*, Vol.60, c.771.

<sup>219</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lord Lansdowne on Imperial Defence', *The Times*, 18 November 1898, p.10.

<sup>220</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lords Debate', 'Military Manoeuvres Bill', 2 August 1897, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.52, c.77.

<sup>221</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lords Debate', 'Military Works (Money) Bill', 5 April 1897, *ibid.*, Vol.48, c.493.

<sup>222</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lord Lansdowne on the Army', *The Times*, 7 June 1898, p.13.

<sup>223</sup> Hicks Beach to Lansdowne (private), 5 April 1897, GRO. St Aldwyn MSS, 2455, PCC/26.

<sup>224</sup> G.R. Searle, *Corruption in British Politics, 1895-1930* (New York, 1987), p.83.

in his responsibilities and this failure had cost the taxpayer a large sum of money, while he himself had benefited to the tune of £55,700.<sup>225</sup> As the government continued its acquisitions on Salisbury Plain, Lansdowne remarked ‘people will be disappointed if there are no manoeuvres in 1898 and I should like to have them on a grand scale. I have often wished that we could have combined Naval and Military manoeuvres - the landing of the Army corps in Bantry Bay or something of that sort.’<sup>226</sup> In September 1898 manoeuvres were held in front of a crowd of 80,000 spectators. To Lansdowne ‘the troops have come in for a good deal of praise and even *The Times* civil. But amongst the leaders of the others there has been flying about much envy, hatred, malice.’<sup>227</sup> Two months later he remarked ‘I have seen it said that these manoeuvres which cost the country something like £150,000 were a great waste of public money. I incline to the view...that the manoeuvres would have been cheap at any price. It is at any rate, the first time in the history of this country that 50,000 men have taken the field in peace time.’<sup>228</sup> Wolseley praised the performance of all ranks, but noted ‘the need of considerable additions to our supply and transport establishments’ and ‘the general unsuitability of civil transport for military purposes.’<sup>229</sup>

Although Lansdowne understood the importance of preparing the Army for war and addressing the demands of the service parliamentarians on this subject, he did not do enough to reform the tactics of the Army. This became evident during ‘the War’ when one of the many criticisms made against him personally was the failure of the War Office to prepare the Army for war. While this criticism will be discussed further in the thesis, the archival record substantiates that he did understand the importance of being prepared. Moreover, it should be noted that he did not act in a vacuum. In the years before ‘the War’ Wilkinson claimed that the treatment of Army questions by the Government and by Parliament ‘is that neither the Cabinet nor the majority of members of Parliament believe that there will ever be another war in which this country can be concerned.’<sup>230</sup> Such claims of political complacency,

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<sup>225</sup> A. White, *Efficiency and Empire* (London, 1901), p.9.

<sup>226</sup> Lansdowne to Wood (private), 30 August 1897, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/29.

<sup>227</sup> Lansdowne to Salisbury (private), 7 September 1898, *ibid*, Add MS. 88906/19/6.

<sup>228</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lord Lansdowne on Imperial Defence’, *The Times*, 18 November 1898, p.10.

<sup>229</sup> PP, 1898, LIII, C.9139, ‘Report on the manoeuvres held in the Neighbourhood of Salisbury in August and September, 1898, with appendices’, p.xviii.

<sup>230</sup> H.S. Wilkinson, ‘Half-measures with the Army’, *The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, 83(2155), 13 February 1897, p.167.

however, overlook the extent of military complacency. That Lansdowne did not do more to improve the tactics which rapidly changing defence strategies required was because on matters of military expertise he was willing to defer to the advice of his generals. While methods of training were publicly questioned both in and out of Parliament, the generals themselves and Wolseley in particular were uncertain how to adapt. As Howard Vincent, one of the service parliamentarians noted, ‘to take musketry alone; nothing is more certain than that firing by volleys is absolutely ineffectual.’<sup>231</sup> Similar sentiments were also made public by military thinkers at lectures at the Royal United Services Institution in 1899 and 1900. Wolseley was not temperamentally suited or willing to adjust his role as Commander-in-Chief to that of a Chief of Staff,<sup>232</sup> and, although he appreciated better than Lansdowne that ‘we train for war not drill’, he did not transform that into practice. To quote one of the service parliamentarians on the lessons of the war, ‘tactics and formations will have to be revised - the close order is done.’<sup>233</sup> Unwilling to accept his own responsibility for the situation that developed, Wolseley claimed that the problem lay with the generals. They were ‘the old fashioned lot who were promoted by seniority before I came into office and are mostly poor creatures as regards knowledge of war.’<sup>234</sup> To *The Times* correspondent Leo Amery the performance of the Volunteers and Yeomanry in South Africa ‘do[es] not prove that the art of war is a thing which requires no training, but they do prove that general intelligence is so useful an element in the composition of a soldier that even a very short training will enable an intelligent man to equal inferior men who have been trained on unintelligent and routine lines.’<sup>235</sup>

While wishing to improve the training for the Army, Lansdowne also wanted to educate it and with Wolseley’s assistance military education was reorganised and a stimulus given to the Staff College. Lansdowne acknowledged the great value of education to soldiers of all ranks and particularly in ‘the case of a private soldier...as

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<sup>231</sup> Vincent, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Army (supplementary) Estimates 1900-01’, 27 July 1900, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.86, cc.1573-74.

<sup>232</sup> A.V. Tucker, ‘Army and Society in England 1870-1900: A reassessment of the Cardwell reforms’, *Journal of British studies*, 2(2) (1963), pp.110-141; H. Kochanski, ‘Planning for War in the Final Years of Pax Britannica, 1889- 1903’, in D. French and B. Holden-Reid (eds.), *The British General Staff: Reform and Innovation, 1890-1939* (London, 2002), p.15; Hamer, *The British Army*, p.204.

<sup>233</sup> Vincent, ‘Lessons of the War: Personal Observations and Impressions of the Forces and Military Establishments now in South Africa’, *RUSI Journal*, 44(268) (1900), p.635.

<sup>234</sup> RA VIC/MAIN/P/4/127: Wolseley to Bigge, 14 December 1899.

<sup>235</sup> Amery, *The Problem of the Army*, p.186.



a means of fitting him for civil employment at the conclusion of his Army career.<sup>236</sup> He also believed that ‘education in the Army must be supervised and directed from the Headquarters, but such direction might...be exercised by any member of the Headquarters staff whose standing and knowledge of the Service gave him the requisite amount of authority.’<sup>237</sup> It was Wolseley who first mentioned to Lansdowne that the whole question of Army Schools required re-consideration.<sup>238</sup> After further discussion on this subject Lansdowne was convinced that the War Office could dispense with Army Schools and position those they wanted to retain under the control of the general officers commanding. In 1898 he proposed a committee to report on the subject.<sup>239</sup> Before the end of that year the existing arrangement of an Officers’ Education subdivision and a Soldiers’ Education subdivision were reorganised such that the former became part of the Military Secretary’s division and the latter became the Army School Subdivision of the Adjutant-General’s department.<sup>240</sup>

As well as improving the standard of the Education Department, Lansdowne also reorganised the Army Medical Department. Inspired by Florence Nightingale, with whom he had been acquainted since 1865, Lansdowne approved the amalgamation of various nursing societies to support the Army Medical Department in time of war. While assisting the nurses Lansdowne also altered the conditions of service for doctors. His interest in and desire to improve the service was an issue he and his wife were closely involved with throughout their careers. While in India he implemented some of Florence Nightingale’s sanitary recommendations and continued the Dufferin’s nursing scheme. During ‘the War’ and the First World War Lansdowne House was headquarters of ‘The Widows and Orphans of Soldiers and Sailors Fund’ and during the First World War Lansdowne was also President of the British Red Cross and converted the stables at Bowood into an Army hospital. He once remarked ‘if we had to choose between the credit belonging to the artillerist who has, let us say, invented a new form of dum-dum bullet and the credit belonging

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<sup>236</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘Army (Director General of Military Education)’, 11 July 1898, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.61, c.451.

<sup>237</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Minute’, 16 March 1898, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/16/28/2.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>239</sup> General Coleridge Grove and Colonel Alexander M. Delavoye (an army officer and writer) were appointed to manage the committee.

<sup>240</sup> Roper, *The Records of the War Office*, p.223.

to the surgeon who has contrived the means of extracting it painlessly and saving the shattered limbs, we should not hesitate in deciding whose part we should prefer.’<sup>241</sup>

The Army Medical Department was predominantly a male preserve divided into two distinct organisations.<sup>242</sup> So short of doctors was the department that civilian medics were employed to ‘fill up the gaps’ at many military stations.<sup>243</sup> ‘Giving serious consideration to the causes,’ Lansdowne received ‘various deputations’<sup>244</sup> and consulted with his advisers. The grievances complained of were both sentimental and practical. Complaints of the former kind were that the status and duties of doctors were not recognised, and those of the practical kind were of the inordinate amount of Foreign Service and the constant changes to the service. Although Lansdowne was aware of the complaints made against this department in 1896 it was not until 1898 that legislation was enacted in Parliament to bring them to effect. Informed by his advisers that the concession of rank would settle the matter he took ‘the profession at its word.’<sup>245</sup> He believed that it would be impossible to render service in the Army really popular with the profession unless the Army Medical Staff and the Medical Staff Corps were formed into a single corps and the officers within that corps given military titles corresponding to their rank and precedence in the Army. He obtained the Queen’s consent to style the new corps the Royal Army Medical Corps in the belief that the medical profession would welcome the compliment.<sup>246</sup> Under the warrant instituting the new corps as a single corps officers were given combatant titles of the same rank structure as the rest of the Army and delegated full executive and administrative responsibility.

As rapid changes in social conditions developed during this period so profound changes occurred in military technology. These changes included improvements to the machine gun, the use of breech-loading rifles and the introduction of smaller calibre ammunition.<sup>247</sup> Lansdowne was not only responsible for providing the Army

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<sup>241</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Banquet to the Medical Profession’, *The Times*, 5 May 1898, p.10.

<sup>242</sup> These were the Army Medical Staff and the Medical Staff Corps.

<sup>243</sup> Farquarhson, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Brigade of Guards’, 12 February 1897, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.46, c.318.

<sup>244</sup> Brodrick, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Army Estimates 1896-97’, 16 March 1896, *ibid.*, Vol.38, c.1070.

<sup>245</sup> ‘The Royal Army Medical Corps’, *The Broad Arrow. The Naval and Military Gazette*, 61(1566), 2 July 1898, p.1.

<sup>246</sup> Lansdowne to Queen Victoria (private), 24 April 1898, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/18/5.

<sup>247</sup> Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army*, p.238.

with the best guns available but also with providing armaments for coaling stations and fortresses both in the Colonies and nationally. Whereas previous Secretaries of State used military loans to fund arms and armament requirements Lansdowne discontinued this practice. He believed that ‘there is so much uncertainty as to the life-time of a gun and changes are so frequent in the type of our artillery - the weapon which represents at one moment acme of perfection becomes so suddenly and so rapidly obsolete.’<sup>248</sup> These factories for the production of guns (The Royal Gun Factory), carriages (The Royal Carriage Department) and ammunition (The Royal Laboratory) were all in the Woolwich Arsenal. The War Office also produced explosives at Waltham Abbey and small arms at Enfield and Sparkbrook, Birmingham.<sup>249</sup> Even with this output the War Office depended on the additional capacity of the private sector or the ‘trade.’ This use of the trade included the major munitions contractors including Armstrong, Vickers and Whitworth who produced artillery; the Birmingham Small Arms Co. and the London Small Arms Co. which manufactured service rifles; and Webley, who made the service revolvers.

The Ordnance Factories at Woolwich were in a ‘muddle’ when Lansdowne started at the War Office in 1895.<sup>250</sup> Blamed for ‘delay, extravagance, and unreliability’ they were unable to compete with the trade and custom fell away.<sup>251</sup> Friction and confusion between departments were rife. Changing the status quo was slow and until 1898 the only notable reform made was when the Director of Artillery was retitled as Inspector-General of Factories in 1896. Lansdowne was not unaware of the difficulties but owing to financial considerations it was not until 1898 that he took steps to reorganise the factories and the Ordnance Department which conceived, designed and manufactured warlike stores.<sup>252</sup> In March 1898 Powell Williams, the Finance Secretary, announced the appointment of Frederick Donaldson, a civilian with a background in mechanical engineering, as Deputy Director-General of the Ordnance Factories and the abolition of the separate design branches managed by

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<sup>248</sup> ‘Military Works (Money) Bill’, *The Times*, 6 April 1897, p.8.

<sup>249</sup> See Appendix I, p.266.

<sup>250</sup> ‘The Muddle at Woolwich’, *The Broad Arrow. The Naval and Military Gazette*, 55(1414), 3 August 1895, p.129.

<sup>251</sup> Brodrick, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Army Estimates’, 25 March 1898, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.55, c.982.

<sup>252</sup> PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21396, p.527.

military superintendents.<sup>253</sup> The appointment was opposed by the press who felt the exclusion of a military officer 'is not only a reflection but a direct injustice to the service.'<sup>254</sup> To the service parliamentarian James Bevan Edwards the 'transference of the Ordnance Factories from the military to the civil side of the War Office is the gradual divorce of these factories from the Army.'<sup>255</sup> The death of William Anderson, the Director-General, the following December naturally opened a large field of discussion as to his successor and provided Lansdowne with an opportunity to mollify his critics. With Brodrick's advice he decided to give the appointment to a man of military background to 'meet any dissatisfaction there has been with the present regime.'<sup>256</sup> He also proposed to reduce the responsibility for the factories held by the Financial Secretary to that of finance alone. At the time the Director-General and his deputy were immediately responsible to the Financial Secretary and through him to the Secretary of State. It was Lansdowne's view that by reducing his responsibility he would lighten the extreme work load of the Financial Secretary. It can also be speculated that he was partly driven to adopt this proposal because Powell Williams was not highly thought of. Balfour passed him over for promotion in 1898 telling Lansdowne that 'he would never have got even his present place except as the immediate personal friend and follower of Joe [Chamberlain].'<sup>257</sup>

As part of his reorganisation of the Ordnance Department and the Factories Lansdowne proposed replacing the title of Director-General for Chief Superintendent of the Ordnance Factories and retitling the Inspector-General of Ordnance as the Director-General of Ordnance.<sup>258</sup> Opposed to retaining Edwin Markham, the then Inspector-General, who was 'weak'<sup>259</sup> and had not been a success,<sup>260</sup> Lansdowne appointed Brackenbury to replace him. Brackenbury who was, in his view, 'head and shoulders above all competitors' had made sure that he was appointed to the new

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<sup>253</sup> Powell Williams, 'Commons Debate', 'Army Estimates', 25 March 1898, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.55, c.950.

<sup>254</sup> 'The Services and the Ordnance Factories', *The Broad Arrow. The Naval and Military Gazette*, 55(1553), 2 April 1898, p.367.

<sup>255</sup> Edwards, 'Commons Debate', 'Army Estimates', 25 March 1898, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.55, c.957.

<sup>256</sup> Brodrick to Lansdowne (private), 12 December 1898, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/16/24.

<sup>257</sup> Balfour to Lansdowne (private), 10 October 1898, BL. Balfour MSS, Add MS. 49720, f.64.

<sup>258</sup> Lansdowne, 'Minute', 30 January 1899, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/16/2.

<sup>259</sup> Lansdowne to Bigge (private), 12 October 1898, *ibid.*, Add MS. 88906/18/6.

<sup>260</sup> Lansdowne to Cross (private), 29 September 1898, BL. Cross MSS, Add MS. 51280, f.15.

post.<sup>261</sup> He also made it a pre-requisite of taking the appointment of Inspector-General that the Ordnance Factories be placed fully under his control. He told Lansdowne, ‘Believe me there is no rest or peace for you outside putting the DGOF under the IGO.’<sup>262</sup> Powell Williams, who feared that it would discriminate against the trade was strongly opposed to giving control in manufacture to the same officer responsible for its inspection. ‘Experience has shown that, under that arrangement, very defective munitions of war were often passed into the service.’<sup>263</sup> He also thought that the factories should continue to be administered and their workmen controlled by civilians and not military officers.<sup>264</sup> Among Lansdowne’s Cabinet colleagues, Hicks Beach and Chamberlain shared his views. The Chancellor opposed it for its implied sleight on civil control of military expenditure and Chamberlain for weakening the responsibility of his colleague. In his defence of Powell Williams he remarked that Lansdowne’s scheme was ‘most mischievous’ and that Lansdowne was ‘Brackenburyridden.’<sup>265</sup> Brodrick, who as a former Financial Secretary understood the system, was also against Lansdowne’s proposal.<sup>266</sup> He believed that ‘this change, if made, will content a very small number of military members of Parliament, who have worked up “The Times” – but it will be directly in face of experience, and of the decision of the Cabinet in 1888, when the previous difficulties were fresh in mind.’<sup>267</sup> Devonshire, who had recommended the transfer of the Ordnance Factories to military control during the Hartington Commission, could not see why, with ‘good will and a desire to avoid difficulties, it should not succeed.’<sup>268</sup> Goschen also agreed to the change. Salisbury shared this view but suggested the Defence Committee of the Cabinet should investigate the matter and decide.

Lansdowne defended the transfer of duties stating he was following the advice of four separate commissions<sup>269</sup> that had reviewed the question and that financial

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<sup>261</sup> Lansdowne to Wolseley (private), 29 November 1898, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/28.

<sup>262</sup> Brackenbury to Lansdowne (private), 13 January 1899, *ibid.*, Add MS, 88906/16/24.

<sup>263</sup> Powell Williams to Lansdowne (private), 31 January 1899, *ibid.*, Add MS. 88906/16/23.

<sup>264</sup> Powell Williams, ‘Minute’, 26 December 1898, *ibid.*

<sup>265</sup> Chamberlain to Balfour (private), 2 February 1899, BL. Balfour MSS, Add MS. 49773, f.158.

<sup>266</sup> Brodrick to Balfour (private), 18 January 1899, *ibid.*, Add MS. 49720, f.56.

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>268</sup> Devonshire to Lansdowne (private), 30 January 1899, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 89906/16/24.

<sup>269</sup> The four commissions were the Stephen Royal Commission on Warlike Stores (1887), the Ridley Royal Commission on Civil Establishments (1887), the Morley Commission on the Organization and

control would still remain with the Financial Secretary but the Director General Ordnance Factories would draw up proposals and calculations.<sup>270</sup> He disagreed that military control would lead to discrimination against the trade as Powell Williams feared. The committee which then consisted of Devonshire, Lansdowne, Goschen and Hicks Beach reported in favour of Lansdowne's proposal.<sup>271</sup> Brackenbury was officially appointed Director General Ordnance in January 1899 and the following month Colonel Edmond Bainbridge became Chief Superintendent Ordnance Factories. The decision to place the Ordnance Factories under military control necessitated an amendment to the 1895 Order-in-Council. Under the Order-in-Council of 7 March 1899 the Director General, 'Is charged with supplying the Army with warlike stores, equipment and clothing; with the direction of the Ordnance Committee and the manufacturing departments of the Army; with dealing with questions of armament, patterns, inventions, and designs; and with the inspection of all stores, whether supplied by manufacturing departments or by contractors.'<sup>272</sup> With Lansdowne's reorganisation the department was given wider responsibilities intended 'to bring the services (Army and Navy) into closer touch with the factories whose business it is to supply them with their equipment and to do that without in any way abandoning the idea that the factories must be managed on business principles and kept under strict financial control.'<sup>273</sup>

In reforming the Ordnance Factories along business-like principles Lansdowne removed some of the red tapeism that made the department inefficient. Applying a similar approach to improving the efficiency and lessening the bureaucracy of the War Office Lansdowne initiated a scheme of decentralisation. The War Office he entered in 1895 was governed by many minute regulations. In executing the general business of Army administration the department carried on a vast correspondence with District Commands where high military officers were unable to make decisions over minor matters without documents passing up and down the War Office

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Administration of Army Manufacturing Departments (1887) and the Hartington Commission on Civil and Professional Administration of the Naval and Military Departments (1890).

<sup>270</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lords Debate', 'Ordnance Factories Administration', 17 February 1899, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.66, c.1257.

<sup>271</sup> Lansdowne to Devonshire (private), 16 December 1898, BL. Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/13.

<sup>272</sup> Fitzroy, Order-in-Council, 7 March 1899, NA. WO 32/6356.

<sup>273</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lords Debate', 'Ordnance Factories Administration', 17 February 1899, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.66, c.1257.

hierarchy. Frustration and inefficiency were commonplace. To Grove, the Military Secretary, 'the Army was not the Army we ought to have.'<sup>274</sup>

To investigate whether any War Office business could be better transacted in the districts without reference to the War Office and whether it was desirable to delegate to the local military authorities further expenditure incurred in the districts, Lansdowne established a Departmental Committee. The Departmental Committee was established in December 1897 with Brodrick as President, Powell Williams, Major-General William Butler, Brackenbury, Major-General Burnett, and Sir George Lawson to report on decentralisation of War Office business. The Committee on Decentralisation of War Office Business reported in March 1898, having held eleven sittings and examined twenty witnesses including Roberts, Connaught, Colonel Grierson and General Sanford. Finding that the main work of the War Office was conducted on a highly centralised system, they suggested that a large amount of the business transacted between the departments of the War Office, between the War Office and the districts, and in the districts themselves, by written minutes or despatches, should be conducted orally by personal communication. It was their view that greater financial responsibility should be given to the general officers and that this 'should be accompanied by more complete association and union between the military and civil departments of the War Office.' They concluded that 'unless the Treasury will consent to dispense with the control over small matters of expenditure which they now exercise any large measure of decentralisation of financial responsibility is impossible.'<sup>275</sup> While the advice of the commissioners 'in the main'<sup>276</sup> met Lansdowne's approval, he believed more could probably have been done 'to simplify our regulations' 'if we had had leisure to take up such subjects.'<sup>277</sup> The report did not satisfy Dilke who believed 'the little changes recommended are merely pottering suggestions, which only touch the fringe of an enormous subject which really cannot be dealt with at all until we have the revolutionary changes

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<sup>274</sup> PP, 1901, XL, Cd.581, WOO, 6930, p.281.

<sup>275</sup> 'Report of Committee on Decentralization of War Office business', 16 March 1898, NA. WO 32/6178.

<sup>276</sup> Brodrick, quoting Lansdowne, 'Commons Debate', 'Army Estimates', 25 February 1898, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.54, c.55.

<sup>277</sup> Lansdowne, 'Minute on Field Marshal Lord Wolseley's Memorandum', 17 November 1900, PP, 1904, XLII, Cd.1792, RC, Appendix 42, no.(II.), p.284.

which some of us advocate.<sup>278</sup> To Arnold-Forster, who had pressed for a reorganisation of the War Office, the report did not go far enough. He believed it was ‘a condemnation of the men who make it and the processes they have been working.’<sup>279</sup> The report raised few objections from the service parliamentarians or the Liberal opposition. Henry Blundell ‘trusted that the reforms suggested in the Report, which would be a great improvement, would not be overdone.’<sup>280</sup> The military press remarked it had ‘entirely missed its purpose,’ and the recommendations ‘are for the most part so crude as to be unworkable.’<sup>281</sup>

While removing the internal obstacles to effective Army administration at the War Office Lansdowne also addressed the physical separation of the different departments which made transparency problematic. In 1896 he persuaded Parliament to agree to a new building on a site east of Whitehall to bring the department under one roof. An architect was appointed in 1898 and the foundation was started the following year. In order to carry the weight of the building, a huge tank with concrete walls and base up to six feet thick and thirty feet below road level was constructed. The first brick was laid in September 1901, ten months after Lansdowne left the War Office. The building was completed in 1906 at a cost of £1.2 million and used some 26,000 tons of Portland stone, 3,000 tons of York stone and 25 million bricks.<sup>282</sup>

Most of Lansdowne’s Army reforms were designed to be implemented over three or more years and it was his view that until given a fair trial further changes were unjustified.<sup>283</sup> However, where changes did not bring an immediate improvement in the military system as with the cavalry reorganisation Lansdowne introduced further modifications. While Lansdowne’s measures were still in their infancy in October 1899, with the outbreak of war in South Africa they were put to the test and had a profound impact on how he subsequently managed ‘the War’. Although the descent into ‘the War’ which will be explored in the next chapter

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<sup>278</sup> Dilke, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Army Estimates 1898-99’, 28 July 1898, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.63, c.324.

<sup>279</sup> Arnold-Forster, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Army Estimates 1898-99’, 28 July 1898, *ibid.*, c.344.

<sup>280</sup> Blundell, *ibid.*, c.329.

<sup>281</sup> ‘The “New Administration” of the War Department’, *The Broad Arrow. The Naval and Military Gazette*, 62(1596), 21 January 1899, p.66.

<sup>282</sup> ‘The Old War Office Building’ (London, N.D.), <http://www.mod.uk/defence.com>.

<sup>283</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Minute’, 25 January 1899, in PP, 1904, XL, Cd.1789, RC, Appendix D, 10, p.261.



overshadowed much of Lansdowne's subtle attempts to loosen the existing military system while retaining its principle, it was largely because such subtle changes were in place that Britain was able to mobilise and send to South Africa the largest force to ever leave Britain's shores.

## **Chapter Five - The War Office and South Africa 1895-1899**

It was suggested by commentators at the time and subsequent historians that Lansdowne's approach to Army policy and administration while at the War Office was to blame for the errors of 'the War'<sup>1</sup> As a trial of the Cardwell system and the purpose for which the Army existed as established by Stanhope and Wolseley and adapted by Lansdowne 'the War' had no precedent. The origins of 'the War' were deep rooted and the strength of sentiment on both sides preceded Lansdowne's term of office. Moreover Lansdowne's decisions were not made in a vacuum but were taken after consultation with his Cabinet colleagues and military advisers.<sup>2</sup> The path to war was littered with decisions taken by individuals with conscious objectives based on their individual beliefs and the information they had available to them.<sup>3</sup>

This chapter will explain how Lansdowne managed the situation he inherited and dealt with it as it evolved. It will be demonstrated that in terms of civil-military relations the prewar crisis clearly highlights the friction within the War Office, both the inability of the soldiers to fully grasp the political aspect of the situation and the inability of the civilians to give the soldiers autonomy to make military decisions. Through an examination of these dynamics this chapter aims to show how politicians and soldiers formulated military policy before the war. It will be shown that Lansdowne was not found wanting in the prewar period. Lansdowne's approach to 'the War' was pragmatic. It was influenced by financial considerations, the power of public opinion and his belief that Britain would 'not command the respect of the world unless we can make ourselves felt as well as heard' and 'while we love peace...we love it only so long as it can be maintained consistently with our self-

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<sup>1</sup> H.S. Wilkinson, *Lessons of the War, Being comments from week to week to the relief of Ladysmith* (London, 1900); *Thirty Five Years, 1874-1909* (London, 1933); I.R. Smith, *The Origins of the South African War, 1899-1902* (London, 1996); T. Pakenham, *The Boer War* (London, 1979); G.R. Searle, *A New England? Peace and War, 1886-1918* (Oxford, 2004); J. Gooch, 'Introduction', D. Steele, 'Salisbury and the Soldiers', and H. Kochanski 'Wolseley and the South African War', all in J. Gooch (ed.), *The Boer War: Direction, Experience and Image* (London, 2000); H. Kochanski, 'Planning for War in the Final Years of Pax Britannica, 1899-1903', in D. French and B. Holden-Reid (eds.), *The British General Staff: Reform and Innovation, 1890-1939* (London, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21153-7, p.508.

<sup>3</sup> I.F.W. Beckett, 'Buller and the Politics of Command' in Gooch (ed.), *The Boer War*, p.58; C. Clarke, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe went to war in 1914* (London, 2012), p.xxix.

respect as a nation and with the honourable traditions of a great empire.<sup>4</sup> In line with many of his Cabinet colleagues including, Chamberlain and Salisbury who both disliked the use of coercion as a tool of diplomacy,<sup>5</sup> Lansdowne believed that the Boer threat was exaggerated and that until it became unavoidable the government should not precipitate a war. Up until 1898 Wolseley was also determined to avoid war with the Boers.<sup>6</sup> But whereas Wolseley believed the best way to ensure peace was to increase the military presence in South Africa, Lansdowne did not. Wolseley's motivation was principally influenced by his belief that, 'demands for more troops in South Africa were also demands for extra troops for the home Army.'<sup>7</sup>

By 1895 the demands of the gold mining industry, the disenfranchisement of the 60,000 Uitlanders, many of whom were British, and the possibility of Germany allying with the Boer republics were of concern to the British government. The failure of the Jameson Raid in December 1895 to empower the Uitlanders and overthrow Kruger's State polarised the two white races in South Africa and worsened relations between Britain and the Transvaal. Lansdowne believed that it 'certainly had the effect of creating deep-seated mistrust of us in the mind of the South African Republic.'<sup>8</sup> Suspecting that the British government was involved President Kruger began to make preparations for a war with Britain. It was the view of the War Office Intelligence Department that the Boers would attack the British as they coveted the Port of Durban and had sufficient armaments to do so.<sup>9</sup>

While the Jingo supporters focused attention on Anglo-Transvaal differences in terms of the political rights of the Uitlanders, many of these Uitlanders and their financial supporters were not model agents of the state. Some, like Alfred Beit and Julius Wernher, were not even British and others were self-made adventurers. Nor was the British government's claim to be uninterested above suspicion. Critics noted harshly that Hercules Robinson (Lord Rosemead), the British High Commissioner in Cape Colony since 1880, was a friend of Cecil Rhodes and had been a director of his

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<sup>4</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lord Lansdowne on Imperial Defence', *The Times*, 18 November 1898, p.10.

<sup>5</sup> Gooch, 'Introduction,' in Gooch (ed.) *The Boer War*, p.xiii; Marsh, *Joseph Chamberlain*, p.470.

<sup>6</sup> Maurice and Arthur, *The Life of Lord Wolseley*, p.314.

<sup>7</sup> H. Kochanski, 'Field Marshal Viscount Wolseley: A Reformer at the War Office, 1871-1900', (D.Phil. dissertation, King's College, London, 1996), p.38.

<sup>8</sup> PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21354, p.525.

<sup>9</sup> Altham, 'Memorandum', 11 June 1896, NA. WO 32/7844/079/8501.

De Beers Company. Such ties led some people at the time to assume that British policy in South Africa was, if only indirectly, driven by a 'kind of buccaneering capitalist, working for his own private agenda.'<sup>10</sup> Public opinion would not support a war started by Britain on these grounds and consequently any desire on the part of the Cabinet for a pre-emptive strike in South Africa needed careful consideration. Strongly in favour of a policy of wait and see, Lansdowne believed the Boers had got 'wind in their heads' and that 'we can afford to wait longer than Kruger can.'<sup>11</sup>

While the government was willing to wait, the War Office began to redirect its policy in South Africa from one of Imperial defence in a strict sense to, as Lansdowne told the Royal Commission, maintaining 'the safety of the Colonies.'<sup>12</sup> This change of direction intensified the existing divisions between the civilians and the soldiers in that department and their views on questions of reinforcements and military strategy. Influenced by Chamberlain's call for action Wolseley directed Lansdowne's attention to the strategic importance of South Africa and the need for additional reinforcements. Harboured a belief that Jameson's recent surrender and the policy forced on Britain as a result had strengthened the Boers' belief that his superiority was greater than that of the British Wolseley recommended strengthening the Cape garrison, 'not only to resist attacks from without, but to put down at once any internal troubles fomented amongst the Boers by our enemy.'<sup>13</sup> He recommended strengthening the garrison by one regiment of cavalry, one battery of horse artillery and two battalions of infantry.<sup>14</sup> Lansdowne questioned the need to do more than make it 'safe as a coaling station and naval base.'<sup>15</sup>

While reflecting on Lansdowne's reply Wolseley drafted a further minute on reinforcing the Natal garrison and adopting a strategy that in the event of war Britain should march through Natal as the line of advance to Pretoria.<sup>16</sup> Many of the senior officers including Buller, Wood and Ardagh disagreed with this strategy. They were

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<sup>10</sup> Searle, *A New England?*, p.273.

<sup>11</sup> Lansdowne to Salisbury (private), 9 April 1897, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/16/10.

<sup>12</sup> PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21159, p.508; 21170, p.509; 21226, p.514.

<sup>13</sup> Wolseley, 'Minute', 'Army organisation 1897-1898', 22 February 1896, NA. WO 33/56. Paragraph 5.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, Paragraph 8.

<sup>15</sup> Lansdowne, 'Minute', 'Reply to Wolseley's Minute 22 February 1896', 10 July 1896, CAB 37/42/32.

<sup>16</sup> Wolseley, 'Minute', 'War between England and the Transvaal', 15 July 1896, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/16/10.

all in favour of adopting a route through the Orange Free State, whether it remained neutral or not, as the most effective means of reaching Pretoria. Ardagh was convinced that on the outbreak of war the Free Staters would give military assistance to the Transvaal. He advised against taking the Natal route.<sup>17</sup> Lansdowne, who often bypassed Wolseley and approached Ardagh directly for information on intelligence matters, dismissed Wolseley's proposal.<sup>18</sup> He did not believe that Wolseley would press the matter further. Informing the Cabinet of his decision he explained 'he could not propose any scheme for adding to Britain's military expenditure until the need for that expenditure had been demonstrated and in his opinion it did not seem such a demonstration was forthcoming.'<sup>19</sup> Salisbury argued that, if the question were purely military, the weight of opinion was in favour of strengthening the garrison of Natal. However, with the present tension between Britain and South Africa, any troop movement would be taken as hostile to the Boers and 'If the Jingo party in the Transvaal contrived some act of aggression it would generally be said that our agitating policy had driven them into it. Assuming that the Boers mean war, which seems to be improbable I think the moral advantage we should lose by divided councils at home would be greater than the military advantage we should lose by deferring measures of precaution till the hostile intention of the Boers becomes evident.'<sup>20</sup> Chamberlain accepted Lansdowne's and Salisbury's opinions as conclusive. In 1896 the Cape naval base which then held in round figures approximately 1,900 was increased to 3,400 and the garrison for the rest of South Africa which was then 1,800 was raised to 3,000, amounting to a total number of 6,400 troops in South Africa.<sup>21</sup> When Wolseley did press the matter further in November suggesting an additional 5,000 men should be sent to the Cape, Lansdowne had to point out that the Army was already overstretched in matching home battalions with overseas garrisons and they would have to ask Parliament for more men than the British Army's present establishment gave them.

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<sup>17</sup> Ardagh, 'Memorandum', 'Transvaal Boers from a military point of view', October 1896, NA. Ardagh MSS, PRO 30/40/16; 'Memorandum', 15 April 1897, in PP, 1904, XL, Cd.1789, RC, Appendix B, pp.167-168.

<sup>18</sup> PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21077, p.502.

<sup>19</sup> Lansdowne, 'Minute', 'Proposals contained in Wolseley's Minute of 22 April 1896', 10 July 1896, CAB 37/42/32.

<sup>20</sup> Salisbury, 'Memorandum', 23 July 1896, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/16/10.

<sup>21</sup> Chamberlain, 'Memorandum', 23 July 1896, *ibid.*; Lansdowne, 'Minute', 'The Strength of the Army', 4 December 1896, in PP, 1904, XL, Cd.1789, RC, Appendix D, paragraph 8, p.239.

During 1897 tensions in South Africa escalated. Fearing a further attempt to subvert the Transvaal, the *Volksraad* legislated against publications that endangered the peace of the Republic. In December 1896 this law was applied to *The Critic*, an English language Johannesburg newspaper. At the same time an Aliens Expulsion Act and an Aliens Immigration Act were introduced. Chamberlain argued these measures breached the spirit of the London Convention and should be instantly challenged.<sup>22</sup> In April, the Colonial Office informed the War Office that they intended sending ‘certain despatches to Kruger’ and that a Boer military response could not be ignored. On 8 April, a meeting between Lansdowne, Chamberlain, Balfour, Goschen and Hicks Beach was held at the Admiralty to discuss the South African situation. Salisbury was absent owing to illness which during the subsequent months became an increasingly frequent occurrence. During the meeting Chamberlain intimated that his hands had been weakened by the small size of the Cape garrison and the lack of confidence of loyal colonists in response to British inactivity. Pressing for reinforcements which included a brigade of cavalry, a regiment of infantry and field batteries, altogether about 3,500 men, he concluded if ‘they see we are in earnest...they will give way as they have always done.’<sup>23</sup> Lansdowne accepted the garrison could not defend the colony but he believed it was better to leave matters alone and send an ultimatum followed by an overwhelming force when the moment for putting their foot down had arrived.<sup>24</sup> His opinion was overruled by his colleagues. Hicks Beach thought a force should be sent for political reasons alone and Balfour and Goschen agreed.<sup>25</sup> Balfour later wrote that ‘my own view is that a Boer attack is exceedingly improbable and that it will only take place if the Boers come to the conclusion that we are fixed in the determination to attack them and that what must come had better come soon.’<sup>26</sup> Faced with an estimated cost for reinforcing the garrison of £585,000 and wishing to avoid any appearance of

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<sup>22</sup> E. Drus, ‘Select documents from the Chamberlain papers concerning Anglo-Transvaal relations, 1896-1899’, *Bulletin of the Institute for Historical Research* 27 (1954), p.162.

<sup>23</sup> Chamberlain to Salisbury (private), 8 April 1897, in J.L. Garvin, *The Life of Joseph Chamberlain*, (6 Vols., London 1932-69), Vol.3, pp.140-141.

<sup>24</sup> Lansdowne to Salisbury (private), 9 April 1897, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/16/10.

<sup>25</sup> Chamberlain to Salisbury (private), 8 April 1897, HH. Salisbury MSS, 3M/E J. Chamberlain 1897, f.86.

<sup>26</sup> Balfour quote in Dugdale, *Arthur James Balfour*, Vol.1, pp.247-8.

aggression they scaled the proposal down. Hicks Beach insisted on limiting transport costs to £200,000.<sup>27</sup>

While the Cabinet were divided over South African matters, so were the soldiers. Whereas Wolseley agreed with Chamberlain, Buller and Wood were with Lansdowne. After further discussion, on 12 April, Lansdowne proposed sending 'three battalions of field artillery and another battalion of infantry...the field artillery without loss of time.'<sup>28</sup> 'Rather than send troops to the Northern Frontier of the Cape, it was agreed to strengthen the garrison of Natal and occupy in force Laing's Nek.'<sup>29</sup> Lansdowne's proposal met with his colleagues' approval. It was not only economical, meeting the £200,000 allowance set by Hicks Beach, but logistically it avoided crossing the Orange Free State. There is no record of what Buller and Wolseley thought. However, the following day Ardagh, mentioning letters recently received from South Africa, informed Lansdowne that even if the Orange Free State remained neutral 5,000 Free-Staters would join the Transvaal and that would warrant a declaration of war.<sup>30</sup> His views were shared by Wood. Salisbury was astounded by Ardagh's recommendations: 'I suppose he reflects the dominant view of the Horse Guards. He counsels our forcing the Orange Free State into the position of enemies unless they will take our side, and further recommends us to go to war with Portugal unless she will stop Boer importation of arms through Lorenzo Marques. I cannot conceive a more unwise policy.'<sup>31</sup>

Among the civilians at the War Office Haliburton was anxious that, since the Colonial Office had never directly asked the War Office to send reinforcements, Lansdowne might be held responsible for the decision. He advised that, before any force was put under orders, Lansdowne should make known that, 'the effect that those orders will have on S[outh] A[frica] should be fully considered - whether they will tend to prevent war or whether they will render war inevitable. The

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<sup>27</sup> V. Hicks Beach, *The Life of Sir Michael Hicks Beach (Earl St Aldwyn)* (2 Vols., London, 1932), Vol.2, p.51.

<sup>28</sup> Lansdowne to Chamberlain (private), 13 April 1897, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/8; Lansdowne to Salisbury (private), 13 April 1897, *ibid.*, Add MS. 88906/19/6.

<sup>29</sup> Lansdowne to Salisbury (private), 13 April 1897, *ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Ardagh 'Memorandum', 15 April 1897, *ibid.*, Add MS. 88906/22/18.

<sup>31</sup> Salisbury to Lansdowne (private), 21 April 1897, in *MP*. (Full details in list of abbreviations and bibliography.), Vol.1, p.561.

responsibility for deciding that issue must rest with the Colonial Office.<sup>32</sup> Salisbury supported the proposal. He valued the Laing's Nek plan 'both for its intrinsic merits and for its effect upon English opinion. It is essentially and on the face of it a defensive measure. It is the natural reply to the excessive armaments of the Boers and implies no aggressive tendencies whatsoever.'<sup>33</sup> At the same time that Lansdowne's suggestions were under discussion the government set in motion a series of diplomatic moves to avert the growing crisis. Alfred Milner was sent to South Africa to replace Hercules Robinson (Lord Rosemead) who was suffering from dropsy and a British naval force was put under sail for Delagoa Bay. In light of the government's response, the Transvaal revoked the Immigration Act on 6 May and amended the Expulsion Act on 14 July to allow an appeal to the courts.<sup>34</sup> With the crisis averted Lansdowne's political position was strengthened. In June the reinforcements arrived in South Africa and the force in Natal was strengthened by 2,460 to 4,347 and in the Cape by 279 men to 3,807 bringing the total then in South Africa to 8,154. Although the effect was positive and did not trigger a hostile reaction from the Transvaal, Milner believed to be really secure the Cape garrison should be nearer 10,000, and that it could be 'quietly accomplished.'<sup>35</sup>

Milner's opinion was shared by Wolseley and Ardagh. While Milner pressed for additional reinforcements, Lansdowne believed the demands from South Africa involved a serious departure from the hitherto accepted policy of concentrating British troops at home and leaving the Colonies to look after their own defences.<sup>36</sup> His concern was that the War Office was 'making a very heavy demand upon the limited class from which our recruits are drawn and it is useless to pretend that the quality of them is satisfactory.'<sup>37</sup> He hoped the situation was temporary. It was his opinion 'that the responsibility of the Imperial Government should be limited to the defensive requirements of the naval stations and that Imperial troops should not be called upon for the defence of colonial land frontiers.'<sup>38</sup> Privately he mentioned to

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<sup>32</sup> Haliburton to Lansdowne, (private), 18 April 1897, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/19.

<sup>33</sup> Salisbury to Lansdowne (private), 21 April 1897, in *MP*, Vol.1, p.561.

<sup>34</sup> E. Drus, 'Select documents from the Chamberlain papers concerning Anglo-Transvaal relations, 1896-1899', p.168.

<sup>35</sup> Milner to Selborne (private), 2 August 1897, in *MP*, Vol.1, pp.114-115.

<sup>36</sup> Lansdowne to Selborne (private), 29 August 1897, Bod. MS Selborne 15, f.108.

<sup>37</sup> Lansdowne 'Memorandum to the Cabinet', 15 December 1897, CAB 37/45/43.

<sup>38</sup> Lansdowne 'Memorandum to the Cabinet', 6 October 1897, *ibid.*, 37/45/73.



Hicks Beach that the South Africans were not doing as much as they should for their own security. He doubted they ever would while the British maintained a large garrison there.<sup>39</sup>

By the autumn of 1898 Wolseley was convinced war was inevitable and the War Office should make adequate preparations. He was alarmed and frustrated by Lansdowne's cautious policy and believed we were not organized for the 'storm.' In a letter to Lansdowne he remarked 'I fully endorse the serious view taken by the government of the Cape upon our position in South Africa. We may go on for years as at present, but sooner or later we shall have a violent explosion there...are you prepared for it? Any student at the Staff College would say "No" to such a question. There is no good reason that I know of why we should not be thoroughly prepared for it.'<sup>40</sup> Finding his work 'most uncongenial', he noted 'As a soldier, I know what the Army wants. Lord L. does not and besides political exigencies influence him more than any Army wants even if he could appreciate what they are.'<sup>41</sup> It is interesting to note that in his evidence to the Royal Commission Lansdowne stated that in the years between the raid and 'the War' he never received from his military advisers any joint remonstrance for not strengthening the garrisons in South Africa.<sup>42</sup> Evidently Wolseley was prepared to criticize Lansdowne in private but not in public.

Infact Lansdowne knew exactly what the army wanted. In collaboration with the Colonial Office in mid 1898 he informed Hicks Beach that the troops sent out in 1897 were without transport and 'are now "immobile" therefore almost useless, either for offense or defence.'<sup>43</sup> Estimating transport would cost £60,000,<sup>44</sup> he noted that the matter should be put in hand as soon as possible and the horses replaced or 'we might get into a serious mess there.'<sup>45</sup> Among the senior officers Wood had been making enquiries on the transport question since 1897 and had advised Lansdowne that the British required £36,000 for horses and for mounted infantry. He believed that one company should be mounted in each battalion and that they would require

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<sup>39</sup> Lansdowne to Hicks Beach (private), 28 October 1897, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/2.

<sup>40</sup> Wolseley to Lansdowne, undated, in Maurice and Arthur, *The Life of Lord Wolseley*, p.316.

<sup>41</sup> Wolseley to Lady Wolseley (private), 6 October 1898, HCL. Wolseley MSS, WP. 37/96.

<sup>42</sup> PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21387, p.526.

<sup>43</sup> Lansdowne to Hicks Beach (private), 28 May 1898, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/2.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Lansdowne to Hicks Beach (private), 1 June 1898, ibid.

six mules for every seven men in the field.<sup>46</sup> Lansdowne's inability to act more swiftly on Wood's advice added to the mounting tension in the War Office. By the summer of 1898 the escalating tension in relations between the civilians and the senior officers was well developed.

As the various boundaries between individuals widened further in London so in South Africa relations were strained. During the autumn General William Goodenough, the general officer commanding in South Africa, fell ill. Lansdowne, not wishing to leave the Cape vacant, lost no time in making a new appointment. He submitted Sir William Butler's name to the Queen: 'I don't suppose you could have a general fitter for the post or more likely to be equal to an emergency.'<sup>47</sup> Butler was part of Wolseley's 'Ring', having served with him at the Red River, Ashanti and Tel-el-Kebir. He had also been ADC to Queen Victoria. Lansdowne's eagerness to find a replacement can be explained by a War Office intelligence report. This document highlighted that the defence problem was still serious, and that the War Office should make a comprehensive plan for the despatch of reinforcements and supplies from England and for the action the general officer commanding should undertake in the event of war.<sup>48</sup> The report also warned that in the event of war Britain would initially be outnumbered and that at least four to six weeks would elapse before reinforcements would reach South Africa from England or India.<sup>49</sup>

The gravity of the defence problem escalated a few months later when violence between the Uitlanders and the Boers broke out in early 1899. On Christmas Eve 1898 some of the disgruntled Britons in the Transvaal called on British subjects to petition the Queen over the death of an Uitlander called Thomas Edgar. Butler refused to accept the petition, telling Chamberlain that it was 'all a prepared business' stirred up by the South African League, a pro-imperialist pressure group of British professional men and a descendant group of the 1895 Johannesburg Reform Club. After the Transvaal authorities arrested some of the leaders of the Edgar demonstration a second Uitlander protest took place on 14 January 1899. Late in February, James Percy Fitzpatrick, an employee of Beit and Wernher and an

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<sup>46</sup> Wood, *From Midshipman to Field Marshal*, p.556.

<sup>47</sup> Lansdowne to Chamberlain (private), 28 October 1898, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/8.

<sup>48</sup> Altham, 'Report', 'Frontier defence in South Africa in War against the Dutch Republic,' 21 September 1898, NA. WO 32/7844/079/8501.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*; PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21097, p.502.

acquaintance of Milner circulated privately a second petition for Imperial intervention which was signed by 21,684 Uitlanders, detailing their grievances of high taxes, inadequate schools and corrupt administration. Milner accepted the petition and forwarded it to Chamberlain. During March 1899 Kruger's government began the Great Deal negotiations with the mining industry, essentially to resolve the Uitlander issue and to secure the support of the mining industry. To some on the spot the deal was seen as an attempt to undermine the close relations which existed between the British government and the mining industry, which had been strengthened by the government's offer to support the Uitlanders' cause for increased reforms. The failure of these negotiations, which the government was not involved in, proved to be a defining moment in the Transvaal conflict and recognition that the complaints of the mining industry were inseparably linked with Uitlander enfranchisement.

Although the government was not involved in the negotiations its support for one of the mining industry's principal grievances against Kruger's government, the dynamite monopoly, added to the uneasy tension in South Africa. When an attempt in June by some of the Cape politicians to bring Milner and Kruger together at Bloemfontein to settle matters failed badly, war became more of a possibility and Milner believed that it was time to turn the screw. But Butler, who was prejudiced in favour of the Boers, disagreed. Butler's opposition upset Milner, who wanted him replaced with someone else. In late June he wrote in his diary: 'Things have become critical now. Butler or I will have to go.'<sup>50</sup> That Butler sympathised with the Boers was not a good enough reason for his dismissal. Only professional misconduct would bring that about. Although Butler had left England with no instructions from the War Office as to what was expected of him, under the departmental system then in place he was expected to submit a plan for offensive and defensive operations in South Africa. Convinced that some politicians and soldiers were trying to bring about a war at an early date, he delayed sending this military strategy until June 1899.<sup>51</sup> The delay made those in London anxious. Chamberlain, who had been made aware by Selborne, the Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, of the personal differences

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<sup>50</sup> Milner to Chamberlain (private), 29 May 1899, NA. WO 32/7850/079/8663; A. Milner 'Diary', 24 June 1899, in *MP*, Vol.1, p.510.

<sup>51</sup> I.F.W. Beckett, 'Butler and the Politics of Command' in Gooch (ed.) *The Boer War*, p.58.

between Milner and Butler,<sup>52</sup> took the opportunity to suggest to Lansdowne that Buller might take his place. Lansdowne refused, remarking, 'his suppression just now would be difficult to explain. He has I have no doubt been indiscreet, but his removal would imply that he misconducted himself gravely. I have seen no evidence as yet which really establishes this. He is, I daresay prejudiced in favour of the Boers, but he evidently thinks Milner is too much imbued with the ideas of the other side and does not accurately estimate the value of the forces which are at work in South Africa. It would in my opinion be better to leave him alone unless he does something outrageous.'<sup>53</sup>

Lansdowne's decision was taken with a consideration of how public opinion was positioned for a war in South Africa and would react to the removal of a Lieutenant-General advocating a peaceful resolution to the conflict. In his evidence to the Royal Commission he stated that, 'I do not think I misrepresent it when I say that throughout that correspondence [Butler's with the War Office] there runs a note of genuine and deep alarm lest anything should be done that might make the embers which were smouldering in South Africa break into a blaze.'<sup>54</sup> 'We had also to consider that at the same time public opinion in this country was not prepared for a great war or for the large expenditure in preparing for a great war.'<sup>55</sup> Butler, however, did not need to do anything outrageous. On 4 July having learnt from a colleague at the War Office<sup>56</sup> that he was unpopular both in that Office and in some British newspapers and aware that his presence had become an embarrassment to Milner,<sup>57</sup> he offered to resign.<sup>58</sup>

Three days after the collapse of the Bloemfontein Conference Wolseley sent Lansdowne a minute on the British Army's position in South Africa and strategy in the event of war. He advised mobilising 'at once on Salisbury Plain under the general who it is intended should command in South Africa in the event of war one of our three Army Corps...as it might probably wake up the Transvaal to the fact

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<sup>52</sup> Milner to Selborne (private), 24 May 1899, in *MP*, Vol.1, p.400.

<sup>53</sup> Lansdowne to Chamberlain (private), 14 June 1899, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/9.

<sup>54</sup> *PP*, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21179, p.509.

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

<sup>56</sup> There is no recorded evidence of who the colleague was.

<sup>57</sup> Lansdowne to Bigge (private), 5 August 1897, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/22/17.

<sup>58</sup> Lansdowne to Chamberlain (private), 25 July 1899, BUL. Chamberlain MSS, JC51/57.

that England was at last serious and by doing so prevent war altogether.’ Suggesting possible lines of advance he concluded operations should begin as soon as possible so as to be ‘over by next November.’<sup>59</sup> Lansdowne’s view of the situation differed. He continued to oppose sending large reinforcements to South Africa and in replying to Wolseley’s June memorandum on that subject stated that ‘there is now I think a general agreement that if there is to be a serious demonstration it should take a different shape. The proposal need not be further pursued.’<sup>60</sup> Lansdowne’s caution disappointed Wolseley who told his wife that, ‘little Lansdowne...is an obstinate little fellow, very conceited, and his obstinacy is born of ignorance - I spend my day struggling with my little gentleman...Such a small minded man it would be difficult to imagine. I am sure some little Jew must have “overtaken” his mother before he was conceived.’<sup>61</sup>

George Wyndham, Lansdowne’s Under-Secretary, was also upset at the decision. Part of his disappointment was that Lansdowne’s inaction seemed at odds with the ideals of conservative imperialism he admired in men such as Joseph Chamberlain, Cecil Rhodes and Dr Jameson. As a founder member of the South African Association in England he often spoke so strongly for the interests of colonials that he was known as the ‘Member for South Africa.’<sup>62</sup> Frustrated by the diplomatic situation he complained that he was ‘stuck in the morass of the War Office’<sup>63</sup> and disappointed not to have persuaded Lansdowne to send out large numbers of reinforcements. Lansdowne’s caution at this time was also mirrored by the Cabinet who as one observer noted ‘will keep out of war if possible.’<sup>64</sup>

The ‘different shape’ that Lansdowne was pursuing in order to maintain the safety of the Colonies required making preparations in stages and was subject to his view that public opinion had to be supportive of a war in South Africa. As he later told the Royal Commission, ‘I doubt extremely whether if we had gone, as I conceived prematurely, to Parliament in the month of June 1899, and asked for a

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<sup>59</sup> Wolseley to Lansdowne, 8 June 1899, CAB 37/50/38.

<sup>60</sup> Wolseley ‘Minute’, 12 July 1899, NA. WO 32/7847.

<sup>61</sup> Wolseley to Lady Wolseley (private), 24 June 1899, HCL. Wolseley MSS, WP. 28/30.

<sup>62</sup> Egremont, *The Cousins*, p.189; The South African Association was a body manipulated by Milner through Wyndham who was busily priming the London press. A.N. Porter ‘Sir A Milner and the Press, 1897-1899’, *The Historical Journal*, 16(2), June 1987, pp.323-339; Searle, *A New England?*, p.274.

<sup>63</sup> Wyndham to Milner (private), Bod. Milner MSS, Mil 14 (SA 30).

<sup>64</sup> Hamilton ‘Diary’, 20 June 1899, BL. E. Hamilton MSS, Add MS. 48675, pp.9-10.

large war expenditure, we should have got it,'<sup>65</sup> and even if the British Army had got it he believed that it would have enabled Britain's enemies to claim Britain provoked 'the War' herself. It was his contention that by forcing the pace they would have brought on hostilities sooner. He was aware that the Boers were armed and in a position to commence hostilities but by sending to South Africa large numbers of reinforcements early in 1899, or even before that, he believed the preconceived mistrust of Britain would have been increased and they would have precipitated war.<sup>66</sup>

Although Lansdowne was moving slower than his senior officers would have wished he continued to approve activities designed to secure the safety of the colonies. In July the War Office sent two officers to the Cape to purchase 1,340 animals,<sup>67</sup> to complete two months' reserve supplies of rations for the Cape and Natal garrisons,<sup>68</sup> as well as sending out ten 'special service' officers to South Africa.<sup>69</sup> In August in consultation with Wolseley Lansdowne summoned Buller from his command at Aldershot to inform him, in Buller's own words, 'in a most ungracious manner, that if there was a war in South Africa I was selected as the Commander.'<sup>70</sup> It was Buller's view that Lansdowne did not want any serious preparations for war put in hand and that his appointment was merely a 'party move in a political game.'<sup>71</sup> He told Lansdowne that he had never held an independent command and that he had always considered himself as a better second in command than commander in anything complex. He concluded that in the event of war in South Africa it would be for Wolseley to be in charge with him as Adjutant-General.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21352, p.525.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., Cd.1791, RC, 21353-56, p.525.

<sup>67</sup> 'Précis supplied by the War Office of the principal events connected with South Africa from the date of the Bloemfontein Conference (31 May 1899) to the occupation of Pretoria (5<sup>th</sup> June 1900).' PP, 1904, XLII, Cd.1792, RC, Appendix no.1, p.5.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 20 June 1899, p.5; Lansdowne to Wolseley (private), 16 June 1899, NA. WO 32/7846; Wolseley to Lansdowne (private), 17 June 1899, NA. WO 32/7846.

<sup>69</sup> 'Précis supplied by the War Office of the principal events connected with South Africa from the date of the Bloemfontein Conference (31 May 1899) to the occupation of Pretoria (5<sup>th</sup> June 1900).' PP, 1904, XLII, Cd.1792, RC, Appendix no.1, p.5.

<sup>70</sup> Buller to T. Buller (private), NA. WO 132/6 and 24; BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/22/19.

<sup>71</sup> C.H.Melville, *Life of General the Right Hon. Sir Redvers Buller* (2 Vols., London, 1922), Vol 2. p.4.

<sup>72</sup> G. Powell, *Buller, A Scapegoat? A Life of General Sir Redvers Buller 1839-1908* (London, 1994), p.119.

Wolseley, whose relations with Buller were not always amicable, later questioned the appointment twice, telling his brother George that Buller then aged sixty had ‘grown fat and bloated and was not the man he had been ten years earlier.’ Wolseley would have liked to have taken command for himself but it was obviously made clear to him that aged sixty-six he was not acceptable.<sup>73</sup> After further discussion Buller accepted the offer. Among the other senior officers who had wished to be have been appointed to command in South Africa were Wood, who Buller believed would have been a better choice than himself, and Roberts, who had offered his services in March 1896 and April 1897.<sup>74</sup> Kitchener had not expressed any view but Queen Victoria pressed for his appointment to command.<sup>75</sup> On 3 July Buller was again summoned to the War Office and Lansdowne told him he proposed sending 10,000 men to South Africa.<sup>76</sup> Buller still believed that there was no definite object.<sup>77</sup> Summarising the views he discussed with Lansdowne at their meeting in a memorandum for Wolseley, he mentioned the need to reinforce the Cape and Natal garrison and arrive at decisions as to relations between England and the Orange Free State and the line of advance the British should take. It was his wish to send an ‘overwhelming force’ once hostilities became inevitable.<sup>78</sup> Wolseley was broadly in accord except as to his line of advance. He questioned taking the route through the Orange Free State: ‘there are many serious military objections to it,’ although he acknowledged that he had confined his own study to the Natal route. His plan also differed from Buller’s in respect of the number of reinforcements and the timing of their despatch. He favoured an earlier despatch than Buller.<sup>79</sup>

A further difference of opinion between the two senior officers was recorded on 18 July at a meeting with Lansdowne at the War Office when, according to Wolseley, Buller announced that, in the event of an ultimatum to Kruger and the need to augment the garrisons, ‘he had complete confidence in Butler’s ability and forethought, and that as long as clever men like Butler and Symons, on the spot, did

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<sup>73</sup> Melville, *Sir Redvers Buller*, Vol.2. p.4; I.F.W.Beckett, ‘Buller and the Politics of Command’ in Gooch (ed.), *The Boer War*, p.45.

<sup>74</sup> Roberts to Lansdowne (private), 27 March 1896, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/21; Roberts to Lansdowne (private), 25 April 1897, *ibid.*, Add MS. 88906/16/10.

<sup>75</sup> Beckett, ‘Buller and the Politics of Command’ in Gooch (ed.), *The Boer War*, p.46.

<sup>76</sup> Buller to T. Buller (private), 3 November 1899, NA. WO 132/6 and 24.

<sup>77</sup> PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 14963, p.170; BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/22/19.

<sup>78</sup> Buller, ‘Memorandum’, 6 June 1899, CAB 37/50/43.

<sup>79</sup> Wolseley, ‘Comment’, 7 July 1899, attached to Buller’s ‘Memorandum’, 6 July 1899, CAB 37/50/43.

not say there was danger, he saw no necessity for sending out any troops in advance of the Army Corps to strengthen our position against any possible attack by the Boers on the frontiers.’<sup>80</sup> Buller’s biographer has suggested that this was a most unlikely comment for Buller to have made and, if he did say something on these lines, it was more likely to have been an expression of his reluctance to send out any part of his own Army Corps ahead of the rest. It is probable that Wolseley’s failing memory was to blame for the way the story was reported.<sup>81</sup> During the Royal Commission Lansdowne admitted not recollecting the conversation, but did not ‘question the substantial accuracy.’<sup>82</sup>

With the Cabinet and Lansdowne moving slower than they would have liked, the senior officers formed themselves into a mobilisation committee and began making preparations for a war in South Africa.<sup>83</sup> While diplomatic and military necessities shaped the pace of preparations in London, the Transvaal government offered new concessions over the franchise question. Lansdowne believed that ‘Transvaal affairs have passed out of the acute stage and I anticipate a long period of haggling...which this office has to keep up without the support which it would receive if it were clear that we were in for a big fight.’<sup>84</sup> While the Cabinet recognised that public opinion would not support a resort to war over the franchise question alone the government informed Kruger that his offer would only be accepted if its provisions were agreed on by both governments and supported by a Joint Inquiry. As the Cabinet waited for a reply Lansdowne informed them that Symons, the general officer commanding in Natal, had requested additional soldiers to secure Natal from raids and that he was in favour of sending 2,000 men immediately. He maintained the reinforcements would strengthen Britain’s own position, reassure the Colonists and strengthen British diplomacy during the new phase that had started.<sup>85</sup> The Cabinet was divided with some pressing for a larger number to be sent out. Against incurring any more expenditure for the despatch of soldiers than was necessary, Lansdowne was supported by Hicks Beach and after a

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<sup>80</sup> Wolseley, ‘Note’, 17 July 1899, in PP, 1904, XL, Cd.1789, RC, Appendix D, p.264.

<sup>81</sup> Powell, *Buller*, p.121.

<sup>82</sup> Wolseley, ‘Note’, 17 July 1899 in PP, 1904, XL, Cd.1789, RC, Appendix D, p.264; PP, 1904, XL, Cd.1790, RC, 9085, p.383; PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21169-21170, p.509.

<sup>83</sup> Buller to T. Buller (private), 3 November 1899, NA. WO 132/6.

<sup>84</sup> Lansdowne to Minto (private), 26 July 1899, NLS. Minto MSS, MS. 12568, f.200.

<sup>85</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Minute’, 2 August 1899, in PP, 1904, XL, Cd.1789, RC, Appendix D, p.264.



long discussion the Cabinet voted to send 2,000 men to Natal.<sup>86</sup> The increase pleased Wolseley. He believed 'it will make our position North of the Tugela River and at Ladysmith particularly much more secure than it is at present.'<sup>87</sup>

In mid-August while the government maintained their pressure on the Transvaal and brought public opinion along with them, Lansdowne produced a memorandum as to 'the time which would elapse between the occurrence of an event rendering hostilities with the Transvaal inevitable and the concentration in the North of Natal of the force which we should probably send out.' He estimated it would take three or four months if nearly £1 million worth of mules, carts and clothing was ordered immediately. As to the landing facilities at Durban and the railway transport from that place to the point of concentration, he noted the line 'is a single line with steep gradients and its carrying capacity is very limited but the landing capacity at the port is still more limited. It is calculated that the disembarkation of an Army Corps and cavalry division could not be done in less than a month. A margin of two weeks should be provided to allow troops to take over local transport on arrival and for the recovery of horses after the sea voyage.' He concluded that the force already in Natal and the additional 2,000 troops which the War Office was adding to it, if attacked by Boers, would have to fall back but there was no danger of it being overwhelmed. 'The long delay anticipated in this memorandum would therefore not involve any risk of a military reverse, although its political effects might be serious and inconvenient.'<sup>88</sup>

While the senior officers advised him to incur the additional expenditure to save time, he did not recommend that course to the Cabinet. As he later told the Royal Commission, 'I pointed it out to the Cabinet I wished to lay the problem before the Cabinet. That must not be taken as a recommendation of mine that the thing should be done immediately.' It was his view that 'I placed the Cabinet in full possession of the problem which lay before us. I gave them this "timetable" so that they might know what risk was incurred by the postponement of the expenditure, but I take my full share of the responsibility of the Cabinet for not having incurred that

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<sup>86</sup> Salisbury to Queen Victoria (private), 1 August 1899, CAB 41/25/17.

<sup>87</sup> Wolseley to Lansdowne (private), 2 August 1899, in PP, 1904, XL, Cd.1789, RC, Appendix D, p.264.

<sup>88</sup> Lansdowne, 'Memorandum', 12 August 1899, CAB 37/50/49.

expenditure at the time.’<sup>89</sup> He accepted it was only political considerations which delayed those preparations being made.

Although the information contained in Lansdowne’s memorandum was widely known by the senior officers, including Buller who in his 6 July ‘memorandum’ had also stated ‘it is evident that in any case a considerable period will necessarily elapse after a state of war has been declared or established by one side or the other before the English force can be ready to commence an advance on Pretoria,’<sup>90</sup> it was a surprise to the Cabinet. The implication of Britain’s military unpreparedness also angered them. Salisbury told Chamberlain he had never doubted the ‘futility’ of the War Office but he thought it ‘uncivil’ to criticise it just then. Recognising the ‘scandal which will certainly be created by the conditions of our military preparedness’, he held they should not spend any more money until it was certain that ‘we are going to war.’<sup>91</sup> Chamberlain was alarmed by the timescale envisaged by Lansdowne. He observed the War Office, ‘are hopeless and it will be a mercy if they do not land us in a catastrophe.’<sup>92</sup> Goschen thought the four month delay was preposterous.<sup>93</sup> He and Balfour urged Hicks Beach to sanction the money required, but no one else in the Cabinet did. Beach thought Britain ‘may have to prepare for the worst,’<sup>94</sup> but he was still strongly opposed to further expenditure and no positive decision was taken. After the Cabinet meeting the Cabinet broke up for their holiday. Lansdowne went to Ireland while others went to Scotland for the grouse shooting or the golf in the belief that war was improbable.

Not long after his arrival in Ireland, Lansdowne received a minute from Wolseley, mentioning Milner’s anxiety about the weakness of the military forces in South Africa. Against a Dutch rising in the Cape and for protection of the diamond mines he suggested strengthening the Cape garrison and for the defence of Natal he recommended sending out 10,000 men.<sup>95</sup> He believed that ‘we should not require either to call out the Army reserve or to bring any troops from India to give effect to

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<sup>89</sup> PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21154, p.508.

<sup>90</sup> Buller, ‘Memorandum’, 6 July 1899, CAB 37/50/43.

<sup>91</sup> Salisbury to Chamberlain (private), 16 August 1899, in Roberts, *Salisbury*, p.728.

<sup>92</sup> Chamberlain to Selborne (private), 14 August 1899, Bod. Selborne MSS 9/63.

<sup>93</sup> Goschen undated, in Pakenham, *The Boer War*, p.82.

<sup>94</sup> Smith, *The Origins of the South African War*, p.345.

<sup>95</sup> Wolseley to Lansdowne, 17 August 1899, CAB 37/50/52.

the scheme.’<sup>96</sup> He believed that an Army from India would be ‘afflicted with venereal, drink and fevers’, moreover he reminded Lansdowne that the force that ‘lost us Majuba was an old one from India.’<sup>97</sup> As mentioned in Chapter four, Wolseley strongly disliked the Indian Army. Lansdowne did not share Wolseley’s view on not using soldiers from India. ‘I quite understand your wish that the Army Corps and cavalry division which we shall send out in certain eventualities should be exclusively British. We are all agreed as to this. But I see no reason why we should not use the 10,000 troops which India is holding in readiness for the purpose of strengthening Natal. To send out one division of the Army Corps without Reservists would, I cannot help thinking, be awkward. India is ready and could get there first.’ Moreover ‘if your anticipation is realized, and the Orange Free State takes no measures to prevent its frontier from being violated by the Transvaal Boers, we should, I hope certainly regard ourselves as free to go through the Orange Free State - the route which I know you prefer. In this event we should be better off if we had not committed a part of our force to effect a valuable diversion.’ By adopting this approach he believed Britain would be in a position to launch its Army Corps against the Transvaal by whatever route was selected.<sup>98</sup> While Lansdowne never publicly showed any irritation with Wolseley during their years at the War Office together, he was upset by Wolseley’s letter and sorry that Wolseley had not put his views in writing before the Cabinet separated. He thought Wolseley had underrated the ability of the British force already in Natal to take care of itself and its communication.<sup>99</sup>

When the Transvaal government rejected the Joint Inquiry and offered various proposals initiated by Jan Smuts, the South African statesman and military leader, expressly conditional upon three guarantees,<sup>100</sup> Lansdowne believed the government could not possibly entertain the conditions. He believed that Smuts’ original proposals merited ‘benevolent examination’ but the conditions as to suzerainty and future non-intervention were ‘obviously’ inadmissible, and ‘if literally persisted in

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Wolseley to Lansdowne (private), 24 August 1899, CAB 37/50/56.

<sup>98</sup> Lansdowne to Wolseley (private), 20 August 1899, CAB 37/50/53.

<sup>99</sup> Lansdowne to Chamberlain (private), 21 August 1899, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/9.

<sup>100</sup> The three guarantees were that Britain: accept arbitration of outstanding disputes after the franchise was settled, desist from intervening in the internal affairs of the Transvaal and refrain from insisting on suzerainty.

will render a peaceful solution to my mind, impossible.’<sup>101</sup> He believed the offer was framed so as to save the face of the Transvaal Government which had climbed down a long way since Bloemfontein and would have been more human had it not tried to cover its retreat. But unlike Chamberlain, who argued that, if Britain did not arrive at a settlement within a week or ten days, an instalment of 10,000 men should be sent from India,<sup>102</sup> Lansdowne did not find sufficient evidence of bad faith to justify such an action.<sup>103</sup> He recognised that public opinion ‘would I suspect be lukewarm were we to pronounce a collision.’ He did not, however, altogether dismiss the need to send reinforcements if the negotiations broke down. He believed ‘we must insist on knowing how the new concessions will really work out.’ Part of his concern was that Milner, who was feeling the effects of the prolonged tension, might force war on the British.<sup>104</sup> He continued to believe that they should avoid ‘hurrying the pace and forcing on hostilities’ as Wolseley would have wished.<sup>105</sup> It can be speculated that Lansdowne’s position at this time as to what course the Cabinet should adopt in the light of their past claims was clearer than any of his other colleagues.<sup>106</sup>

Among most of the Cabinet war remained a distant possibility. Balfour was convinced that war would be avoided.<sup>107</sup> While Lansdowne’s appraisal of the situation appeared reasonable, his August memorandum still rankled with some of his colleagues. As the political tension increased towards the end of August Hicks Beach noted, ‘the War Office people are really going to pay us out if they can, for taking the Sudan Office off their hands.’<sup>108</sup> Goschen hoped that Chamberlain would take a lead in challenging the slow-moving assumptions of the War Office,<sup>109</sup> but he did not.

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<sup>101</sup> Lansdowne to Wolseley (private), 27 August 1899, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/22/11.

<sup>102</sup> Chamberlain to Lansdowne (private), 24 August 1899, BUL. Chamberlain MSS, JC 5/51/70.

<sup>103</sup> Lansdowne to Salisbury (private), 26 August 1899, BL.(5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/7.

<sup>104</sup> Lansdowne to Goschen (private), 27 August 1899, *ibid.*, Add MS. 88906/19/16.

<sup>105</sup> Lansdowne to Wolseley (private), 27 August 1899, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/22/11.

<sup>106</sup> A.N. Porter, *The Origins of the South African War* (Manchester, 1980), p.237.

<sup>107</sup> Balfour to Lady Elcho (private), September 1899, in R.K. Massie, *Dreadnought: Britain, Germany and the Coming of the Great War* (New York, 1991), p.321.

<sup>108</sup> Hicks Beach to Salisbury (private), 24 August 1899, HH. Salisbury MSS, 3M/E Hicks Beach 1896-1900, f.166.

<sup>109</sup> Marsh, *Chamberlain*, p.470.

London's official reply to the Smuts' proposals was formulated by Salisbury and Chamberlain on 28 August. The government was willing to accept the franchise concession and arbitration while still demanding a Joint Inquiry and, if the reply from the Transvaal was unsatisfactory, it would draw up a new settlement - in other words, an ultimatum.<sup>110</sup> As far as the reinforcements were concerned, Salisbury informed Lansdowne that he was in favour of sending Indian troops to Natal, believing that they will be 'a little cheaper and quite as good and they are less hampered by Parliamentary regulation.' He was sorry that both Milner and Wolseley were pressing for a larger garrison for the Cape which he believed was a mistake. It was his view that what Milner 'has done cannot be effaced. We have to act upon a moral field prepared for us by him and his Jingo supporters. And therefore I see before us the necessity for considerable military effort - and all for people whom we despise, and for territory which will bring no profit and no power to England.'<sup>111</sup> Lansdowne would have probably agreed with the first part of Salisbury's comment. He also believed that Milner had caught South African fever and was overstating the urgency.<sup>112</sup>

In early September the Transvaal government withdrew the Smuts proposal and fell back on their earlier franchise offer which was the seven-year retrospective franchise and four extra seats for the Rand. They were not interested in Kruger meeting Milner and they continued to reject Britain's suzerainty of the Transvaal.<sup>113</sup> The consequence of their action was that the military option resumed paramount importance. It was, as Lansdowne later told the Royal Commission, at this stage that he understood war was imminent.<sup>114</sup> He believed that 'things would come to a head before we are many days or hours older and I shall be glad when our suspense is terminated.'<sup>115</sup> Though the senior officers did their best to hinder the politicians over mobilising Indian troops,<sup>116</sup> Lansdowne refused to make any concessions on their

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<sup>110</sup> Roberts, *Salisbury*, p.730.

<sup>111</sup> Salisbury to Lansdowne (private), 30 August 1899, NA. (5) Lansdowne MSS, FO 800/145.

<sup>112</sup> Gell to Milner (private), 21 September 1899, in E.Stokes, 'Milnerism', *The Historical Journal* 5 (1962), p.57.

<sup>113</sup> Roberts, *Salisbury*, p.733.

<sup>114</sup> PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21192, p.510.

<sup>115</sup> Lansdowne to Wood (private), 3 September 1899, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/29.

<sup>116</sup> Wolseley to Lansdowne (private), 2 September 1899, CAB 37/50/61.

behalf.<sup>117</sup> In making their preparations they failed to impress George Hamilton, the Secretary of State for India, who told his brother-in-law, ‘your military men are very tiresome. They insist on setting up a military machine which will not work for four months and during that interval they assume that the enemy is going to sit still. I am very reluctant to move troops out of India, but I see no alternative.’<sup>118</sup> Wolseley’s anger was obvious as he told his wife, Lansdowne ‘looked more like a Jew today than ever. I can now assert from four years constant work with him that his mind is smaller than his body.’<sup>119</sup> By early September the view that the War Office was being inept and slow continued to get abroad. Whereas the soldiers had previously found the politicians dilatory, they now complained they were moving too fast. On 5 September Buller was encouraged by Salisbury’s private secretary, Schomberg ‘Pom’ McDonnell, whose views on Lansdowne matched his own, to go behind Lansdowne’s back and give Salisbury a memorandum ‘to startle the Cabinet.’<sup>120</sup> He believed that there must come a point when the military and diplomatic or political forces were brought into line. Before the diplomats presented an ultimatum the military should be ready to enforce it.<sup>121</sup> Referring to himself and his military colleagues at the War Office he complained that they had no idea how matters were proceeding, had not been consulted and did not know how fast diplomacy was moving.

Wolseley echoed Buller’s concerns telling Lansdowne that the ‘first intimation I have had that our negotiations with the Transvaal...have reached an acute stage has come to me from Sir Redvers Buller...we have lost time...we have committed one of the gravest blunders in war, namely, we have given to our enemy the initiative...The government are acting without the complete knowledge of what the military can do while the military authorities on their side are equally without full knowledge of what the government expects them to do.’<sup>122</sup> Senior officers’ claimed that they were not taken into confidence by Lansdowne. While Wolseley and Buller were not in complete accord with the ‘secrets of the Cabinet’,<sup>123</sup> it is inaccurate to

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<sup>117</sup> Lansdowne to Hamilton (private), 1 September 1899, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/20.

<sup>118</sup> Hamilton to Lansdowne (private), 6 September 1899, *ibid.*, Add MS. 88906/19/20.

<sup>119</sup> Wolseley to Lady Wolseley (private), 6 September 1899, in Pakenham, *The Boer War*, p.75.

<sup>120</sup> Powell, *Buller*, pp.122-125.

<sup>121</sup> Buller to Salisbury, ‘Memorandum’, 5 September 1899, CAB 37/50/62.

<sup>122</sup> Wolseley to Lansdowne, ‘Memorandum’, 5 September 1899, CAB 37/50/69.

<sup>123</sup> PP, 1904, XL, Cd.1790, RC, 8788, p.369.

suggest that Lansdowne did not listen to or discuss matters with his military advisers. From the date of his appointment in June, Buller was 'freely consulted' by Lansdowne at the War Office. Moreover, while working there, he was given wide latitude.<sup>124</sup>

Political necessity forced the politicians at this stage to deal with the situation in terms of what public opinion in the country was willing to stand. At Chamberlain's request the Cabinet agreed to meet on 8 September. Prior to this meeting he drafted two Memoranda. The first written on 5 September stated that he believed 'the time has fully come to bring matters to a head. In contrast to Buller's and Wolseley's view that the British Army would have difficulty in holding their own if Kruger took to the offensive he noted their [Transvaal] forces are exaggerated. 'If 12,000 English troops, with some thousands of Volunteers, cannot successfully resist an offensive movement in the Colonies by the Boers, it seems to me the British Army must be in a very bad way.' In light of War Office reports he suggested Indian forces should 'start for Natal as early as they can be moved.'<sup>125</sup> On 6 September, in his second memorandum entitled 'The South African Situation,' he set out a history of events up to that date, stating that the matter was larger than the franchise question and that its resolution would affect 'the estimate formed of our power and influence in our Colonies and throughout the world.' He reckoned that while an expedition of 3,000 men was sufficient in 1884 to secure the fulfilment of the obligations of the Conventions, 'it is now considered that 50,000 men are required to enforce our claims at the present time. The result is that unless a complete change of policy is secured we shall have to maintain permanently in South Africa a very large garrison, at a great expense to the British taxpayer, and involving the utter disorganization of our military system.'<sup>126</sup> He reiterated these comments at the Cabinet meeting at the Foreign Office on 8 September. Despite Hicks Beach's protests (the cost of sending the first 10,000 troops was at least £350,000 and for the second part of Buller's invasion force over £5 million), they agreed with Chamberlain's plan that 10,000 men should leave for Natal as soon as possible. They also sent a note to Kruger re-emphasising their earlier demands and that they would

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<sup>124</sup> Wolseley to Lansdowne, 'Memorandum', 5 September 1899, CAB 37/50/69; PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21247-53, p.515.

<sup>125</sup> Chamberlain, 'Memorandum', 6 September 1899, CAB 37/50/63.

<sup>126</sup> Chamberlain, 'The Situation in South Africa, 6 September 1899, CAB 37/50/70.

accept the Smuts proposals taken by themselves without conditions and subject to a joint inquiry.<sup>127</sup> United on delaying events until reinforcements arrived in South Africa they resolved to test the Orange Free State by also demanding that Martinus Steyn, its President, maintain neutrality in the event of war.<sup>128</sup> Salisbury warned, 'we must remember this is the first occasion we have gone to war with people of Teutonic race.'<sup>129</sup> He advised his colleagues that they should get away from the franchise issue, which he imagined would be, 'troublesome in debate - and to make the break on a proposal to revise or denounce the [1884] Convention on the ground that it has not been carried out as we were promised: and because it has been worked out to benefit not the people of the Transvaal with whom we were contracted, but a very limited minority of them who are hostile to the rest.'<sup>130</sup>

After the Cabinet broke up on 8 September, Lansdowne informed the Queen that he earnestly 'trusts that the government of the South African Republic will do nothing to precipitate hostilities. Should they do so after the arrival of these reinforcements there need...be no apprehension for the safety of the Colony.'<sup>131</sup> To command the additional 10,000 troops and those already in Natal, Lansdowne, in consultation with Wolseley and Buller, appointed George White, the Quartermaster-General. Of the Cabinet only Chamberlain doubted that White, who was sixty-four, was the best choice for the task. On 8 September Lansdowne also had a stormy interview with Buller at the War Office.<sup>132</sup> He cautioned him for 'going behind his back' by writing to Salisbury and pressing for the despatch of troops.<sup>133</sup> In his evidence to the Royal Commission Lansdowne stated 'he [Buller] was perfectly aware of what was passing, if he was not aware it was his own fault, as he had ample opportunities of making himself aware.'<sup>134</sup>

Buller was still unhappy with the Cabinet's decision and wanted many more troops sent to Natal. He told Lansdowne that it would be wise to make immediate provision for a further force in Natal. 'I cannot help feeling that if we let things drift

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<sup>127</sup> Smith, *The Origins of the South African War*, p.369.

<sup>128</sup> Surridge, *Managing the South African War*, p.68.

<sup>129</sup> Roberts, *Salisbury*, p.735.

<sup>130</sup> Salisbury, 'Note', 9 September 1899. in Roberts, *Salisbury*, p.735.

<sup>131</sup> Lansdowne to Queen Victoria (private), 8 September 1899, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/18/6.

<sup>132</sup> Powell, *Buller*, p.125.

<sup>133</sup> Pakenham, *The Boer War*, p.96.

<sup>134</sup> PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21202, p.512.



until we are in a very uncomfortable military position and if the Boers are bold...they have now the chance of easily inflicting a serious reverse upon us in Natal.<sup>135</sup> Taking account of what the Cabinet had already decided, Lansdowne did not see that the War Office could be expected to do more.<sup>136</sup> Furthermore, Wolseley had said he would stake his reputation that, after the reinforcements had arrived, everything south of the Biggarsberg would be safe. In view of this, Lansdowne believed that, even if they sent no further forces, the worst outcome would be that the British had to remain on the defensive longer than might be desired.<sup>137</sup> As the reinforcements left for Natal, Hamilton reported to Curzon that:

The ease and rapidity with which the Indian Contingent has been told off and despatched contrast very favourably with the procrastination and want of decision of the War Office. Wolseley is quite played out; he has lost his memory, and his governing motive in arrangements for the Transvaal seems to be jealousy of the Indian establishment. Wood is half cracked and wholly deaf; White is to command in Natal, and Buller is hardly on speaking terms with the higher military authorities. The Department is a real danger to the nation, and until it is reorganized on the Admiralty system, civil and military being blended together, and working loyally together, we shall have no effective War Department. What disgusts me is the jealousy of the Indian Army, so constantly shewn ... Buller is, or rather was competent, but he lives too well, and from what I have seen of the War Office generally, I look with considerable apprehension upon the earlier stages of any active campaign in South Africa ... Both Chamberlain and Milner believe that, without war, no satisfactory settlement can be arrived at. I am not certain that they are right; time is on our side, railroads are being rapidly pushed on that will entirely circumvent the Transvaal, and the influx of the British element must year by year increase.<sup>138</sup>

Hamilton's view of the situation was no different at the end of September when he informed Curzon:

I am very much amused at George Wyndham writing to you so enthusiastically concerning the ability of the War Office to place 35,000 men at once in the field. He perhaps did not tell you that the first preliminary to obtaining these 35,000 men is to call out the reserves, and that when the reserves are called out they have to be clothed and accoutred, and then to be put through a short course of musketry, in order that they may know how to handle rifles which they have never before had in their hands...the more I see of that Office the more despondent I

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<sup>135</sup> Buller to Lansdowne (private), 9 September 1899, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/5.

<sup>136</sup> Lansdowne to Buller (private), 9 September 1899, *ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> Lansdowne to Chamberlain (private), 9 September 1899, *ibid.*, Add MS. 88906/19/9.

<sup>138</sup> Hamilton to Curzon (private), 14 September 1899, BL. Hamilton MSS, Mss. EUR F123/81.

am. It is not that there is a lack of ability on the military side, but they, none of them, seem to pull together, or know their own or other's minds. A confident opinion is given one day as to the impossibility of proceeding by a particular route: a week afterwards that route is the one route by which an expedition should go.<sup>139</sup>

It might be considered that Hamilton was being politely silent in not criticising his brother-in-law but he had been strongly critical of him during the Riel affair while serving as Governor-General in Canada.<sup>140</sup>

After Kruger rejected the government's further offer Lansdowne sought Cabinet authority to make immediate arrangements to collect in South Africa the land transport and food supplies for an Army Corps. Given that it would take thirteen weeks to arrange he considered this 'really urgent.'<sup>141</sup> While his proposal was discussed and agreed upon, a further note was sent to Kruger and his government. Even though Wolseley was given £640,000 to spend on transport for the Army Corps he was disappointed the decision had not been taken earlier. Sharing his view with Ardagh he stated, 'I am sick of urging a set of foolish men - whom by the bye I can only approach through Lansdowne, for he takes care that I have no access to them - to buy the mules, wagons, and harness we shall want for war but to no purpose. We have lost two months through the absolute folly of our Cabinet and the incapacity of its members to take in the requirements and the difficulties of war. Now we shall not be in a position to move forward seriously before Christmas Day!! This is strictly between you and me. Lansdowne's little mind - his jealousy - want of decision is trying to a soldier who knows his own work as I do. It is no wonder we never achieve much in war and have to struggle through obstacles created by the folly and war ignorance of civilian ministers and war office clerks.'<sup>142</sup> He told his wife 'if the government could (I mean politically) and would have done in July what they will now have to do with much moral effect, I believe the Boers would have given in and we should have saved millions.'<sup>143</sup> Ardagh was also alarmed by events. 'I cannot, from what I know defend their [Cabinet] attitude as being the course most

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid..

<sup>140</sup> Louis David Riel was a Canadian politician and leader of two resistance movements against the Canadian government. Lansdowne to G. Hamilton (private), 3 November 1885, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/19.

<sup>141</sup> Lansdowne to Salisbury (private), 21 September 1899, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/6.

<sup>142</sup> Wolseley to Ardagh (private), 23 September 1899, NA. Ardagh MSS, PRO 30/40/3, f.61.

<sup>143</sup> Wolseley to Lady Wolseley (private), 19 September 1899, HCL. Wolseley MSS, WP. 28/53.

likely to end in peace with honour.<sup>144</sup> The politicians had a different view. St John Brodrick believed that ‘the military preparations are at least a month behind hand. The soldiers he says habitually underestimate the real time wanted for everything, & on this occasion everybody was anxious to accept their estimate so to postpone the commencement of irrevocable expenditure and action.’<sup>145</sup>

While the politicians waited for Kruger’s reply the War Office had further discussions as to the line of advance to take in South Africa. As in 1896 the Intelligence Department remained convinced the Orange Free State would most likely support the Transvaal and preparations should be based on ‘the definite hypothesis of a hostile Free State.’<sup>146</sup> Altham’s views were also shared by Forestier-Walker, who on arrival in South Africa noted ‘it was virtually certain the Orange Free State would join the Transvaal as would Afrikaners living along the Cape border with the Orange Free State.’<sup>147</sup> Whereas Milner favoured the occupation of Laing’s Nek, Wolseley, Buller, General Forestier-Walker, White and Wood were all against such an action.<sup>148</sup>

After agreeing on a line of advance Lansdowne informed the Cabinet of his military advisers’ recommendations as to ‘(1) the importance of an early decision with regard to the line of advance to be adopted in the event of war with the South African Republics and (2) the superiority of the line leading through Cape Colony and the Orange Free State over any other line.’ He stated that ‘if we continue to make all our preparations for attacking by way of Natal, we shall find it virtually impossible to alter our plans should the Orange Free State at the last moment declare itself hostile.’ He judged, from Steyn’s recent statements, that there was little hope of a friendly understanding with the Orange Free State and if there was war Britain should have to reckon with both Republics. He added ‘it does not seem as if in the present temper of the Orange Free State much would be gained by an attempt to arrive at a friendly understanding with it.’ But he trusted that somehow or other it

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<sup>144</sup> Ardagh to Lady Malmesbury (private), 24 September 1899, NA. Ardagh MSS, PRO 30/40/3, f.66.

<sup>145</sup> Gell to Milner (private), 21 September 1899, in Stokes, ‘Milnerism’, p.57.

<sup>146</sup> Altham, ‘Memorandum’, 3 June, NA. WO 32/7844; ‘Memorandum by the Intelligence Department on the political and military relations existing between the Transvaal and Free State’, 8 August 1899, NA. WO 32/6369/266/Cape/42.

<sup>147</sup> Forestier-Walker to Ardagh (private), 11 September 1899, NA. WO 32/7855.

<sup>148</sup> Lansdowne to Chamberlain (private), 4 October 1899, BUL, Chamberlain MSS, JC 5/51/86.

would be open to Buller to make his way to Pretoria across the Orange River.<sup>149</sup> Buller believed that if Bloemfontein declared for the Transvaal, the Army should take Bloemfontein on the way to Pretoria, and if the Orange Free State stayed neutral, it should be forced to give sureties they would preserve that neutrality.<sup>150</sup> Wolseley endorsed Buller's opinion that the best way to Pretoria would be from the Orange River by the railway through Bloemfontein.<sup>151</sup>

On 29 September the Cabinet met again and agreed on wording the ultimatum. By this stage they were agreed the matters had got to the point where it was 'dangerous.'<sup>152</sup> Hicks Beach reported to Lady Londonderry that 'none of us (except possibly Chamberlain though I am by no means sure about him) likes the business. But we all feel that it has to be done.' Like many of his colleagues and the soldiers he was uncertain over how long war would last, but he expected a short war, noting, 'war preparations go on, and any amount of money is being spent.'<sup>153</sup> Salisbury's diplomacy at this stage was guided by his need to retain a free hand in South Africa and his hope that the Boers would take the offensive first. While his Cabinet colleagues were questioning his ability to lead the country and the efficacy of his 'traditional foreign policy', he refused to be drawn into rows with Russia or Germany over China, and succeeded in completing a secret treaty with Portugal effectively preventing that country from supplying the Transvaal via Delagoa Bay. In the delicate international situation which was developing he achieved a remarkable feat of diplomacy, effectively maintaining the status quo.<sup>154</sup>

As the Cabinet deliberated over the text of the ultimatum, Chamberlain, Hicks Beach and Goschen raised concerns of how such a document would be regarded by public opinion while Devonshire, Balfour and Lansdowne had little to say except approve. They also agreed to continue with preparations for mobilising the Army Corps, to call up the reserves and to summon Parliament for 17 October. Lansdowne, who was still hesitant, believed, 'it may not be desirable to call out the reserves a day

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<sup>149</sup> Lansdowne, 'Minute', 25 September 1899, CAB 37/51/74.

<sup>150</sup> Buller, 'Memorandum', 24 September 1899, CAB 37/51/74.

<sup>151</sup> Wolseley, 'Memorandum', 25 September 1899, CAB 37/51/74.

<sup>152</sup> Chamberlain, 'Commons Debate', 'King's Speech (Motion for an address)', 4 February 1904, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.129, c.463.

<sup>153</sup> Hicks Beach to Lady Londonderry (private), 30 September 1899, in M.M. Yakutieli. 'Treasury Control and the South African War 1899 - c.1905' (D.Phil. thesis, Oxford, 1989), p.54.

<sup>154</sup> Roberts, *Salisbury*, p.733.

sooner than is really necessary.’ But they should be called out in time to enable the War Office, ‘to equip them, perhaps to give them a little course of musketry, to embark them, and to deliver them at their destination by a date not later than that at which their land transport and supplies will be ready for them in South Africa.’<sup>155</sup> He told Salisbury that, if the latest date for the Queen to sign the proclamation for calling up the reserve was 7 October, all the reserves would have joined by 21 October.<sup>156</sup>

While these preparations were made, the Orange Free State declared an alliance with the Transvaal and expelled its British subjects. Likewise the Transvaal mobilised its forces and adjourned the *Volksraad*. As the spotlight fell on the War Office in early October there were signs that the principal individuals were pulling in the same direction. On 3 October, referring to the surprise expressed by some of the Cabinet at the size of the force assembling for employment in South Africa, Lansdowne presented his colleagues with a memorandum in which he explained the War Office had definitely decided to adopt the Cape Colony and Orange Free State route and that Wolseley and Buller were of the opinion there should be no reduction in the strength of the Army Corps being sent from Britain and that no part of the force on its way to South Africa should be reckoned as part of it. Buller in his ‘memorandum’ of 5 September recommended that the ‘whole of the Army Corps should be mobilized but stated that if it was decided to adhere to the Natal route, the troops already in Natal might be taken as equivalent to one infantry division and one cavalry brigade and the Army Corps reduced accordingly.’ He mentioned a force of 50,000 soldiers.

Lansdowne believed that the soldiers were right and that Britain would make a ‘grievous mistake if, from motives of economy, we were to reduce the number of troops for which we are asked to provide.’ ‘We are going to fight an enemy more formidable than any whom we have encountered for many years past...the adhesion of the Orange Free State has added very largely to the Boer Force.’<sup>157</sup> Lansdowne’s principal concern at this stage was having sufficient animal transport and supplies for the Army Corps. In South Africa the rainy season was about to begin which meant

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<sup>155</sup> Lansdowne to Salisbury (private), 29 September 1899, HH. Salisbury MSS, 3M/E Lansdowne correspondence 1897-1899, f.444.

<sup>156</sup> Lansdowne to Salisbury (private), 30 September 1899, *ibid.*, f.442.

<sup>157</sup> Lansdowne ‘Memorandum’, 3 October 1899, CAB 37/50/76.

that there would be sufficient grass for the transport animals to feed on.<sup>158</sup> However, insufficient numbers of mules on the spot required having to import them from Spain, Italy, and America. Though the timing for this had been factored into his ‘memorandum’ of 12 August he now doubted that the whole force would be concentrated and equipped before the third week in December.<sup>159</sup>

On the eve of war Kruger announced to the newspapers in South Africa that, ‘War is certain. The Republics are determined, if they must belong to Great Britain, that a price will have to be paid which will stagger humanity. They have, however, full faith, the sun of liberty will arise in South Africa.’<sup>160</sup> Filled with patriotism and apprehension, the South African press fanned the flames of strife further. John Merriman noted, ‘On our side there is panic and alarm everywhere. Johannesburg has been literally denuded of its inhabitants...the well-to-do, far from offering to take up arms in what is professedly *their* cause are crowding the hotels, pouring forth their woes over cigars and champagne and waiting till the ‘market drops’ to enable them to buy shares for nothing, that will be rendered valuable by British blood and bayonets. The Boers have mobilized with incredible celerity and efficiency and are with great difficulty restrained from the offensive.’<sup>161</sup> Making light of the chaotic situation in South Africa, Chamberlain remarked that Milner and the inhabitants in Cape Colony were scared by the rumours of enormous Boer preparations, exaggerating the probability of their taking the offensive and of a British reverse if they did.<sup>162</sup>

While Chamberlain played down the extent of the conflict, White had fewer illusions. Then on his way to Durban, he remarked, ‘the Cabinet have incurred the heaviest responsibility in not having sent quietly into this country more troops. If the military preparations had from the first kept pace with the political negotiations the Boers would never have assumed the...attitude they now have committed themselves

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<sup>158</sup> PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21180, p.510.

<sup>159</sup> Lansdowne to Balfour of Burleigh (private), 4 October 1899, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/20/11.

<sup>160</sup> President Kruger to the New York Herald, 11 October 1899 in L. Creswicke, *South Africa and the Transvaal War*, (8 Vols., London, 1903), Vol.2, p.3.

<sup>161</sup> Merriman to Smith (private), 10 October 1899, in P. Lewsen, *Selections from the Correspondence of John X Merriman 1899-1905* (1966), Vol.3, pp.92-95.

<sup>162</sup> Chamberlain to Lansdowne (private), 5 October 1899, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS, 88906/19/9.

to...All this may be traced to the want of military advice in the Cabinet.’<sup>163</sup> On 9 October the Transvaal government handed the British an ultimatum which demanded by 5pm on 11 October immediate assurances to the Transvaal. It demanded that British troops on the borders of the Republic should be instantly withdrawn and that all British reinforcements that arrived in the last year should be withdrawn from South Africa and that those troops which were then on the sea should not be landed in any port of South Africa.’<sup>164</sup> Milner forwarded the ultimatum to London, where it was received with ‘derision, delight, dismay - and indifference.’<sup>165</sup> Salisbury was pleased with the document, warning Chamberlain that the government must not be seen as ‘doing work for the Capitalists.’<sup>166</sup> While Salisbury replied that ‘the conditions demanded...are such that Her Majesty’s Government deem it impossible to discuss,’<sup>167</sup> Lansdowne congratulated Chamberlain, ‘accept my felicitations! I don’t think Kruger could have played your cards better than he has.’<sup>168</sup> Wolseley rejoiced ‘beyond measure to think war must now come. Come it would most certainly sometime or other and now is best for us...Buller will, I am sure, end the war with complete success for England.’<sup>169</sup>

On the eve of war public opinion had largely rallied behind the government for its policy in South Africa but it was not in complete accord. It was Selborne’s view that only four fifths of the public were with the government due to ‘our hesitancy (militarily almost criminal) in making early preparations.’<sup>170</sup> Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice, Lansdowne’s brother and Liberal MP for Cricklade, thought that Chamberlain’s policy had been wrong. In a plea for patience he argued the British should at least try to understand the Boers.<sup>171</sup> In contrast Walter Long, a Unionist politician and Wiltshire neighbour of Lansdowne’s, believed the universal cry was that ‘we must fight - we must win, and we are ready to pay the bill.’<sup>172</sup> It was now incumbent on the government to make sure that those that were in support of their

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<sup>163</sup> White to Lady White (private), 6 October 1899, BL. White MSS, Mss. EUR F108/98b.

<sup>164</sup> Boer Ultimatum in A.C. Doyle, *The Great Boer War* (London, 1901), p.66.

<sup>165</sup> Pakenham, *The Boer War*, p.109.

<sup>166</sup> Roberts, *Salisbury*, p.739.

<sup>167</sup> Salisbury, ‘Reply to Transvaal Ultimatum’, 10 October 1899, in Roberts, *Salisbury*, p.739.

<sup>168</sup> Lansdowne to Chamberlain (private), 10 October 1899, BUL. Chamberlain MSS, JC51/89.

<sup>169</sup> Wolseley to Lady Wolseley (private), 11 October 1899, HCL. Wolseley MSS, WP. 28/65.

<sup>170</sup> Selborne to Milner (private), 7 October 1899, in D.G. Boyce (ed.), *The Crisis of British Power, The Imperial and Naval Papers of the Second Earl of Selborne, 1895-1910* (London, 1990), pp.94-95.

<sup>171</sup> Fitzmaurice to Bryce (private), 2 October 1899, Bod. Bryce MSS, Bryce 118, f.64.

<sup>172</sup> Long to Lansdowne (private), 5 October 1899, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/20/3.

policy did not turn against them.<sup>173</sup> Public expectation was high. Having recently seen British victories at Ashanti and Fashoda the public had no reason to suspect that a war against the Boers would be different. The opposition Liberal party leaders were also broadly supportive of the measures. Rosebery, addressing the House of Lords, said ‘in the face of this attack, the nation will, I doubt not, close its ranks and relegate party controversy to a more convenient season.’<sup>174</sup> In the House of Commons Campbell-Bannerman said that his party would vote supplies and powers necessary to secure a rapid and effective prosecution of a war rendered absolutely necessary by the terms of the Boer ultimatum and the subsequent invasion of the British colonies.<sup>175</sup>

In international politics Salisbury had limited Britain’s exposure to an attack from one or other of the European powers and, though the situation in China was unsettled, the risk of large scale British military involvement was minimal. While both civil and military opinion appeared to be united this was temporary. In the next chapter it will be demonstrated how the lack of cooperation between civilians and senior officers at the War Office was reflected by the generals in South Africa and how Lansdowne managed the blunders of ‘the War’ and responded to the lessons of the war. It will be shown that neither the War Office system of 1895 nor the Army system broke down under the pressure of war but that the system of ‘short service and reserves’ stood the nation in ‘good stead.’<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Surridge, *Managing the South African War*, p.73.

<sup>174</sup> Rosebery to Editor, *The Times*, 12 October 1899, p.10.

<sup>175</sup> Campbell-Bannerman, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘First Days Debate’, 17 October 1899, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.77, c.71.

<sup>176</sup> PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21334, p.524.



## **Chapter Six - The War in South Africa**

In debate, at the time of the South African War, the Duke of Bedford claimed the administrative machinery of the War Office under the test of war turned out ‘a disaster and humiliation.’<sup>1</sup> Infact had the War Office system Lansdowne established in 1895 not existed it would have been ‘impossible to place and maintain in the field that Army that went to South Africa.’<sup>2</sup> The policy of Britain was not fixed upon lines to make the country a great military power. Having never expected to face an enemy of this type and scale the fact that the War Office kept up a force of over 180,000 men 6,000 miles from Britain was an achievement. Although the lessons of ‘the War’ revealed limitations in Lansdowne’s prewar Army system he did not believe reform during war would be effective. As such he introduced temporary and permanent emergency measures designed to strengthen Britain’s denuded defences and increase the size of the Army while maintaining the principles of the Cardwell system. Lansdowne’s loosening of the grip held by the civilians over the senior officers, his ability to appease his critics in the reform movement and the opposition, and his belief that as Secretary of State for War he alone must be responsible to Parliament for the Army were reasons why the War Office and Army system did not break down under the pressure of war.

In the extant literature different contours of ‘the War’ have been examined from the broad history of ‘the War’ to detailed aspects of it.<sup>3</sup> With the exception of Keith Surridge’s examination of Lansdowne no proper account has been made of Lansdowne at the War Office and the measures he took to manage ‘the War’.<sup>4</sup> By the

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<sup>1</sup> Bedford, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘War Office Administration - Duties of Commander-in-Chief’, 4 March 1901, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.90, c.323.

<sup>2</sup> Lansdowne to the Editor, ‘The Government and the Hartington Commission’, 24 September 1900, *The Times*, 25 September 1900.

<sup>3</sup> L.S. Amery, *The Times History of the War in South Africa, 1899-1902* (7 Vols., London, 1900-1909); A.C. Doyle, *The Great Boer War* (London, 1901); D. Lowry, *The South African War Reappraised* (Manchester 2000); A. Sternberg, *My Experiences of the Boer War* (London, 1901); R.D. Thomas, *Two Generals: Buller and Botha in the Boer War* (London, 2012); J.C. de Villiers, *Healers, Helpers and Hospitals: A History of Military Medicine in the Anglo-Boer War* (2 Vols., Pretoria, 2008).

<sup>4</sup> K.T. Surridge, *Managing the South African War, 1899-1902: Politicians v. Generals* (Woodbridge, 1998); ‘British civil-military Relations and the South African War (1899-1902)’, (D.Phil, thesis, London, 1994); ‘Lansdowne at the War Office’, in J. Gooch (ed.), *The Boer War: Direction, Experience and Image* (London, 2002), and D. Judd and K.T. Surridge, *The Boer War: A History* (London, 2002).

unique opportunity provided by the events of ‘the War’ and their effect this chapter will demonstrate how Lansdowne diverted his critics away from the controversy raging about the Regular Army, and focused their attention on how to turn the Auxiliary Army to ‘best account’,<sup>5</sup> made further increases and improvements to the British Army and established stability in South Africa. This chapter will suggest that by the time Lansdowne left in November 1900 the War Office had ‘forgotten its traditions’<sup>6</sup> and earned a character: ‘its machinery heavy and cumbrous, as some of it is, has worked steadily and at a speed of which it was supposed to be incapable.’<sup>7</sup>

Having secured the support for a war in South Africa the government had to ensure that public approval and enthusiasm remained strong. To achieve this, the government had to deliver a quick victory. Lansdowne and his advisers had no doubt this was possible. It was their belief that the Army was more efficient than at any previous moment. Wyndham believed, ‘the Army is more efficient than at any time since Waterloo.’ His sentiment was also shared by Lansdowne and Wolseley.<sup>8</sup> The latter stating that ‘no Army has ever left our shores composed of finer soldiers.’<sup>9</sup> Such complacency was widespread and encouraged the view held by one of the generals that, ‘we were all rather afraid the war might be over before we arrived in November.’<sup>10</sup> On 7 October, a Royal Proclamation called up the reserves. During the following two weeks while the reserves mobilised Lansdowne’s adaptation of the Cardwell system was put through its first test in time of war. Doubting ‘whether they will be as strong as we expected,’<sup>11</sup> he was proved wrong when the War Office received a ninety-eight percent return rate.<sup>12</sup> The success was attributed to the War Office’s respect for ‘regimental feeling.’<sup>13</sup> To one of the service parliamentarians the

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<sup>5</sup> Wyndham, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Number of Land Forces’, 12 February 1900, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.78, c.1260.

<sup>6</sup> ‘The War and the War Office’, *The Broad Arrow. The Naval and Military Gazette*, 64(1654), 10 March 1900, p.293.

<sup>7</sup> ‘The Word to the War Office’, *ibid.*, 64(1667), 9 June 1900, p.693.

<sup>8</sup> Wyndham to P. Wyndham (private), 11 October 1899, in Mackail and Wyndham (eds.), *Life and Letters of George Wyndham*, Vol.2, p.70.

<sup>9</sup> Wolseley, ‘Memorandum’, 30 January 1900, in PP, 1904, XL, Cd.1789, RC, Appendix D, p.275.

<sup>10</sup> J. Adye, *Soldiers and Others I have known* (London, 1925), p.166.

<sup>11</sup> Lansdowne to Haliburton (private), 18 October 1899, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/18.

<sup>12</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lord Lansdowne in Sheffield - The Cutler’s Feast’, *The Belfast News-Letter*, 3 November 1899.

<sup>13</sup> Wyndham, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Army (Supplementary) Estimates’, 20 October 1899, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.77, c.406; An estimated 90% were mobilised with the corps to which they belonged. Lansdowne, ‘Lord Lansdowne in Sheffield - The Cutler’s Feast’, *The Belfast News-Letter*, 3 November 1899.

belief he himself had always had that ‘the proposals of Mr Cardwell...would eventually bear good fruit...has been fully justified.’<sup>14</sup> Such praise of Cardwell’s legacy was echoed by Haliburton who later noted, the British would not have been in South Africa had it not been for the reserve.<sup>15</sup> The need to send infantry battalions to South Africa meant that the ability to train men and instruct officers in their simplest duties became temporarily impaired. Unwilling to shatter the machine, functioning to provide for home defence and training men for overseas duties, the War Office decided to embody thirty-three of the one hundred and twenty-four Militia infantry battalions.<sup>16</sup> In the same way that the successful call up of the reserves silenced many critics of the Cardwell system and the War Office, so too did the partial embodiment of the Militia.

Embodying the Militia, calling up the reserves and preparing the Army for embarkation to South Africa added enormously to the military expenditure of the country. Some senior officers, including Wolseley, held it as axiomatic that ‘when war is upon us, then money is to be had easily and for the asking.’<sup>17</sup> The Treasury and Hicks Beach thought otherwise. Having consulted his War Office colleagues and discussed Wolseley’s minute of 30 September in which he had recommended measures for strengthening the Militia, cavalry and horse and field artillery as an ‘indispensable minimum,’<sup>18</sup> Lansdowne informed the Cabinet that the cost of forces to the end of 31 March 1900 was estimated at £11 million. Faced with this amount, and the possibility of having to impose new taxes to meet the cost of the war, Hicks Beach’s first reaction was to threaten to resign. Although neither scenarios materialised and new taxation was delayed until the budget the following year, that the Cabinet contemplated a penny on income tax and 6d on beer to meet the demands for war expenditure was an indication of their optimism that ‘the War’ would not last long. When Parliament met on 17 October, for the first time since the outbreak of the war, the House of Commons voted to pay £10 million for expenditure.

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<sup>14</sup> Vincent, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Army (Supplementary) Estimates’, 20 October 1899, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.77, c.432.

<sup>15</sup> Haliburton, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘Army Organization’, 25 June 1901, *ibid.*, Vol.95, c.1373.

<sup>16</sup> Wyndham, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Army (Supplementary) Estimates’, 20 October 1899, *ibid.*, Vol.77, c.418.

<sup>17</sup> Wolseley, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘War Office Administration - Duties of Commander-in-Chief’, 4 March 1901, *ibid.*, Vol.90, c.331.

<sup>18</sup> Lansdowne ‘Minute’, 12 October 1899, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/16/3.

With the expenditure for the embarkation secured, the whole force of one Army Corps, except one regiment of cavalry, roughly 41,000 soldiers began to embark.<sup>19</sup> Among their number preparing to embark with their regiments for active service were Lansdowne's two sons. Owing to effective working relations between the War Office and the Admiralty the mobilisation was generally regarded as a success.<sup>20</sup> While most troop transports averaged fourteen knots Goschen secured the use of the *Majestic* (White Star Line) and *Campania* (Cunard Line) as transports for 2,000 and 3,000 men respectively. He believed the extra £44,000 was justified, 'to show to the world of sending out 5,000 men in two 20 knot ships is worth something.'<sup>21</sup> According to Frederick Robb, the Deputy-Assistant Adjutant-General, 'I have never known such a quiet time at the War Office as immediately after the issue of the mobilization orders. Of course, mobilization on such a large scale as that was an absolute experiment, and we quite anticipated that there would be a very large number of questions asked...but I can say from experience and a lot of us noticed it, that we were perfectly surprised at the calmness and quietness with which every detail worked out.'<sup>22</sup> The quietness was short-lived as within a few weeks of the outbreak of war demands for more men escalated. By the end of October, after the battle of Nicholson's Nek, Wolseley recommended that three more battalions and a mountain battery set sail for South Africa to make good the loss of 2,300 men killed, wounded or captured.<sup>23</sup> Bad weather at sea caused problems, horses died and the *Persia* was temporarily disabled with one hundred and fifty dragoons and horses. Goschen remarked that 'with 100 ships some are sure to have...troubles, however good they are.'<sup>24</sup> Queen Victoria was distressed about the horses and questioned whether it would not be better to get them at the Cape.<sup>25</sup> Lansdowne replied that suitable horses could not be obtained in sufficient number there.<sup>26</sup>

During November there was no let up in the embarkation of the Army. Lansdowne observed that he was 'spending money at an appalling rate but I believe

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<sup>19</sup> Wolseley, 'Memorandum', 30 January 1900, in PP, 1904, XL, Cd.1789, RC, Appendix D, p.275

<sup>20</sup> PP, 1904, XL, Cd.1790, RC, 9467, p.401.

<sup>21</sup> Goschen to Lansdowne (private), 10 November 1899, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/16.

<sup>22</sup> PP, 1904, XL, Cd.1790, RC, 4399, p.186.

<sup>23</sup> Wolseley to Lansdowne 31 October 1899, in PP, 1904, XL, Cd.1789, RC, Appendix D, p.274.

<sup>24</sup> Goschen to Lansdowne (private), 10 November 1899, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/16.

<sup>25</sup> Queen Victoria to Lansdowne (private), 7 November 1899, *ibid.*, Add MS. 88906/18/4.

<sup>26</sup> Lansdowne to Queen Victoria (private), 7 November 1899, *ibid.*

nothing to be more costly in the end than an unnecessary prolongation of war.<sup>27</sup> In calculating the many implications of being at war he believed that ‘it is desirable that the troops should reach South Africa as soon as possible in view of the state of public feeling in the two colonies.’<sup>28</sup> Wolseley realised that ‘the War’ would be a much longer affair than was anticipated and the cost would be extremely great.<sup>29</sup>

One of the principal costs of ‘the War’ was for the large numbers of men required to fight it. To officials at the War Office and the Admiralty the constant demands for more men made by Buller during the first few months of ‘the War’ came as a surprise. There was some doubt that he even knew why he needed them. It was Knox’s opinion that ‘our doings here are perfectly wonderful everything going so smoothly and Division after Division is mobilized by the turn of a handle... What, however, I do not understand is our generals wanting such numbers of men. Two Army Corps! We have nearly three there already with all the colonials... “Let em all come” is their word and I do not believe they know why.’<sup>30</sup> Similar concerns were voiced by the Admiralty where Goschen, on informing Lansdowne that the Navy was in a position to re-employ some of their fastest transports and save hiring new ones, remarked that he was disturbed by Buller’s demand for more men of war.<sup>31</sup> Salisbury proposed editing his communications. Lansdowne disagreed, remarking that the telegrams should be shown to the Cabinet as they justified the military preparations the War Office was making, ‘which they would do only partly if the government suppressed many of Buller’s remarks on the situation.’<sup>32</sup>

Between October 1899 and February 1900 Wolseley estimated 114,000 Regular troops were on their way to South Africa and 28,800 Auxiliaries and colonials. The total of all ranks made it the largest Army that had ever left Britain for any war.<sup>33</sup> There was some discrepancy between the exact figures reported to the public and the War Office. During the Commons debate on the Queen’s speech on 1

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<sup>27</sup> Lansdowne to Hicks Beach (private), 7 November 1899, *ibid.*, MS. 88906/19/3.

<sup>28</sup> Lansdowne to Queen Victoria (private), 11 October 1899, *ibid.*, Add MS. 88906/18/6.

<sup>29</sup> Wolseley to Lady Wolseley (private), 3 November 1899, HCL. Wolseley MSS, WP. 28/73.

<sup>30</sup> Knox to Campbell-Bannerman (private), 2 December 1899, BL. Campbell-Bannerman MSS, Add MS. 41221, f.265.

<sup>31</sup> Goschen to Lansdowne (private), 14 November 1899, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/16.

<sup>32</sup> Lansdowne to Salisbury (private), 7 November 1899, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/7.

<sup>33</sup> Wolseley, ‘Memorandum’, 30 January 1900, in PP, 1904, XL, Cd.1789, RC, Appendix D, p.275.

February 1900, Wyndham declared there were some 180,000 troops in South Africa.<sup>34</sup> Roberts was somewhat concerned when he arrived in South Africa and found the actual total was 79,000 infantry and cavalry which with the Royal Artillery, Royal Engineers, Army Service Corps and Royal Army Medical Corps, totalled 86,503 Regular soldiers in addition to 11,195 colonial troops.<sup>35</sup> Lansdowne noted that Roberts' finding was disappointing. 'The way in which a huge force 'cuts to waste' when it is scattered as your troops are, is melancholy.'<sup>36</sup>

The mobilisation succeeded not only because of the efficient cooperation between the War Office and the Admiralty but also because of the willingness of the Treasury to provide expenditure for the war. After Hicks Beach's initial reluctance to sanction money for 'the War' and his belief that Lansdowne should limit himself to £9 million,<sup>37</sup> he raised no significant further objections to demands from the War Office and Admiralty. He later informed Salisbury:

Every matter of importance from the sending of reinforcements in June last, the preparations for and mobilization of the Army corps down to the latest additions to our forces in South Africa has been decided by the Cabinet or the Cabinet Committee. All the expenditure prepared by the War Office in order to carry out their decisions has been accepted as a rule. Lord Lansdowne has had a completely free hand with regard to all the details of the military expenditure as has Mr Goschen with regard to the transplants and there has in no case been any greater delay than was required for a preliminary discussion of a few of the largest items between Lord Lansdowne and myself or between the permanent heads of the two departments.<sup>38</sup>

Against the success of the mobilisation Lansdowne's critics had few reasons for complaint. Campbell-Bannerman, who had some initial reservations of the War Office system Lansdowne adopted and in particular the Army Board,<sup>39</sup> noted that 'it has completely fulfilled the purpose for which it was created,' and, although Dilke took exception to the cost of mobilisation and questioned the need of a home Army to defend Britain, he did not have the 'slightest doubt' of the reserves coming up in

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<sup>34</sup> Wyndham, 'Commons Debate', 'Address in answer to Her Majesty's most gracious Speech', 1 February 1900, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.78, c.340.

<sup>35</sup> Roberts to Lansdowne (private), 5 February 1900, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/22.

<sup>36</sup> Lansdowne to Roberts (private), 9 February 1900, *ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Hicks Beach to Salisbury, (private), 12 October 1899, HH. Salisbury MSS, 3M/E Hicks Beach correspondence 1896-1900, f.173.

<sup>38</sup> Hicks Beach to Salisbury, (private), 1 February 1900, *ibid.*, f.197.

<sup>39</sup> Campbell-Bannerman to Knox (private), 2 January 1897, in Hamer, *The British Army*, p.70

answer to the call and that embodying the Militia was the ‘proper step.’<sup>40</sup> The service parliamentarians had no objections to the steps taken to embark the men for South Africa and Frederick Rasch noted that the ‘War Office have disappointed the fondest hopes of their bitterest enemies...’<sup>41</sup>

While the War Office facilitated a smooth mobilisation, the generals in South Africa fared less well meeting with determined resistance from the Boers. It can be argued that in certain cases their situation was undermined by political interference. In Natal civilian and military opinions clashed as Walter Hely-Hutchinson, the Governor of Natal, and White disagreed over the movement of soldiers. The incident upset the soldiers on the spot.<sup>42</sup> In resolving the dispute Lansdowne informed White ‘we expect you to act strictly in accordance with military requirements of the situation. Governor is within his right in directing your attention to political consequences of your arrangements, but responsibility for the decision rests entirely with you. You may find steps necessary which may run counter to public opinion here and in the colony but we shall unhesitatingly support you in adhering to arrangements which seem to you militarily sound.’<sup>43</sup> His response was a clear indication that in bringing ‘the War’ to a successful conclusion neither he nor the government would interfere with or attempt to control the generals and that the government was willing to relinquish some of their need to control them.

The Army’s performance in the early stages was unimpressive and by the time Buller arrived on 30 October White was trapped in Ladysmith, Cecil Rhodes and Colonel Kekewich were surrounded at Kimberley and Robert Baden-Powell was cut off at Mafeking. Buller regarded the situation as one of extreme gravity.<sup>44</sup> Lansdowne who had known White since India noted that in England there was a great desire ‘to get the knife into him [White].’<sup>45</sup> He was glad Buller did not press for his dismissal and was confident he would hold out. Brackenbury saw White’s capture as the fortune of war. Some reverses in a campaign were inevitable and, with

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<sup>40</sup> Dilke, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Army (Supplementary) Estimates’, 20 October 1899, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.77, c.427.

<sup>41</sup> Rasch, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Army (Supplementary) Estimates’, 20 October 1899, *ibid.*, Vol.77, c.430.

<sup>42</sup> Hely-Hutchinson to Chamberlain (private), 10-11 November 1899, NA. WO 179/206 ff.606-608; White to Lansdowne (private), 17 October 1899, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/21/7.

<sup>43</sup> Lansdowne to White 27 October 1899, *ibid.*, Add MS. 88906/22/20.

<sup>44</sup> Buller to Lansdowne, 3 November 1899, in PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, Appendix J, p.619.

<sup>45</sup> Lansdowne to Buller, 11 November 1899, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/5.

inferior forces, the British could not always be successful.<sup>46</sup> Buller believed, ‘to forecast the future is difficult, we are still hanging on by our eyelids.’<sup>47</sup> Having previously agreed with the War Office to take the Orange Free State line of advance to Pretoria he now decided to split his Army Corps into three. He ordered Methuen to relieve Kimberley, Gatacre to secure the Northern Cape while he himself would proceed to Ladysmith. Informing Lansdowne of his decision he remarked that the ‘advance in Natal with infantry who are just off the ships and are short of cavalry and artillery, on the Boers in positions carefully prepared, will be a risk, but it is a greater risk to leave Ladysmith alone.’<sup>48</sup> Lansdowne was ‘not astonished’ that Buller altered his plans, but he was concerned at Buller’s choice of generals to execute the plan. Although Methuen was an old friend and Wiltshire neighbour and ‘able and painstaking’, Lansdowne did not believe that ‘he is strong enough for an almost independent command...Forestier-Walker [Methuen’s second-in-command] is I am told safe and steady but I don’t think the Walker-Methuen combination sufficiently good.’<sup>49</sup> Salisbury advised Lansdowne, ‘my earnest advice is to leave the matter entirely to Buller...the responsibility must be his own.’<sup>50</sup>

The subsequent failure of Buller’s plan and the defeats of Gatacre, Methuen and Buller himself all within five days of each other in mid-December dealt a collective shock to both the British authorities and public. The Black Week, so called by Herbert Asquith, also shattered Britain’s complacency as to a quick victory. Only the previous week, on 8 December, the Cabinet had met and considered what to do ‘assuming that we are successful in the war.’ One idea was that a small, landlocked, mainly Dutch colony could be formed within the Empire.<sup>51</sup> St John Brodrick, the then Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, had bet Milner a case of champagne that, ‘serious fighting (defined as an engagement or siege in which 3,000 men were employed on either side) *will be over by Xmas Day!!!!*’ Brodrick had been the person

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<sup>46</sup> Brackenbury to Lady White (private), 31 October 1899, BL. White MSS, Mss. EUR F108/114.

<sup>47</sup> Buller to Lansdowne (private), 29 November 1899, in PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC Appendix J, p.621.

<sup>48</sup> Buller to Lansdowne (private), 14 November 1899, *ibid.*; Methuen, with Forestier-Walker, as his second-in-command, took 20,000 troops along the route of the western railway towards Kimberley and Gatacre, advanced to secure the Northern Cape and prevent the Boers advancing from the strategic railway junction at Stormberg.

<sup>49</sup> Lansdowne to Queen Victoria (private), 3 November 1895, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/18/.

<sup>50</sup> Salisbury to Lansdowne (private), 8 November 1899, NA. (5) Lansdowne MSS, FO 800/115.

<sup>51</sup> Roberts, *Salisbury*, p.749.



at the Foreign Office most closely in touch with the War Office.<sup>52</sup> When Buller informed Lansdowne on 15 December ‘a serious question is raised by my failure today. I do not now consider that I am strong enough to relieve Ladysmith...I consider that I ought to let Ladysmith go,’<sup>53</sup> Lansdowne was unable to ignore ‘its gravity or the effects which the succession of misfortunes may have.’<sup>54</sup> Replying to Buller’s telegram he stated ‘the abandonment of White’s force and its consequent surrender is regarded by the government as a national disaster of the greatest magnitude.’<sup>55</sup>

If public opinion had generally been supportive of the government’s decision to go to war, by the end of December ‘a strong reaction of disgust with the want of (military) foresight on the part of the Ministry has set in and much criticism imposed on Lansdowne and Wolseley and Hicks Beach - quite undeserved I should think of the two latter.’<sup>56</sup> Lansdowne and Balfour, who had joined him at the War Office the previous month, became bywords for weakness and Salisbury was described as a man of the past.<sup>57</sup> Although the public were shocked by the defeats most of the opposition maintained their broadly non-partisan attitude to the situation in South Africa. Campbell-Bannerman told an audience at Aberdeen on 19 December: ‘We have in the field the largest Army that ever left these shores...we have a united people in the country and in every part of the Empire and with these forces on our side - moral and material - success is certain’.<sup>58</sup> Asquith warned that it would be ‘grotesque’ to get these reverses out of proportion. He compared the present ‘humiliations and mortifications’ with periods of real national crisis during the Napoleonic War or Indian Mutiny.<sup>59</sup>

The defence intellectuals held Lansdowne responsible for the military defeats in South Africa. Perceived flaws in his personality led Wilkinson to accuse him of

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<sup>52</sup> T. O’Brien. *Milner. Viscount Milner of St James’s and Cape Town, 1854-1925* (London, 1979), p.170.

<sup>53</sup> Buller to Lansdowne, 15 December 1899, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/22/20.

<sup>54</sup> Lansdowne to Buller, 15 December 1899, *ibid.*, Add MS. 88906/19/5.

<sup>55</sup> Lansdowne to Buller, 16 December 1899, *ibid.*, Add MS. 88906/22/20.

<sup>56</sup> Bryce to Merriman (private), 29 December 1899, in P. Lewsen (ed.), *Selections from the Correspondence of John X Merriman 1899-1905* (4 Vols., Cape Town, 1966), Vol.3, p.127.

<sup>57</sup> J.L. Garvin, *The Life of Joseph Chamberlain* (6 Vols., London, 1932-1969), Vol.3, p.519.

<sup>58</sup> Campbell-Bannerman, ‘Campbell-Bannerman at Aberdeen’, *The Times*, 20 December 1899, p.10.

<sup>59</sup> Asquith, ‘Asquith at Tyneside’, *ibid.*, 18 December 1899, p.3.

‘an unbusiness-like way of playing with national affairs,’<sup>60</sup> and that ‘the present distressing situation appears to me to be attributable to the want of harmony between policy and military preparations which is essential to success in war but which Lord Lansdowne thinks unattainable.’<sup>61</sup> Wilkinson’s remark referred to a speech made by Lansdowne on 2 November, in which he stated that ‘If our naval and military preparations and our diplomatic negotiations are always to keep exactly abreast our diplomacy will on the one hand have to be hesitating and dilatory, while on the other hand the military and naval authorities will have to commit overt acts of warlike preparations, acts of the most provocative and threatening description, not because an international difficulty has arisen, but because such a difficulty may arise. I doubt extremely whether public opinion will allow us to conduct our negotiations in this manner. It would be diplomacy with a vengeance.’<sup>62</sup> Lansdowne did not think it was unattainable but that it was not practical politics. As he later noted and as described in the previous chapter, ‘While negotiations were still in progress we determined to restrict ourselves to those purely protective measures which seemed to us sufficient for the purpose and which, in our belief, were not calculated to provoke a rupture of the negotiations which were proceeding.’<sup>63</sup>

The personal attacks made against Lansdowne’s character by the defence intellectuals were as nothing when compared to those made by some sections of the press. Unlike in previous wars, ‘the War’ attracted a mass readership, made possible in part by technical advances in telegraphy and news gathering which had transformed the methods and scope of the British newspaper industry. The majority of the Conservative press firmly supported the war, whereas, the Liberal press, like the Liberal Party, was divided. *The Westminster Gazette*, *Daily Chronicle* and *Daily News* followed Rosebery and the Liberal Imperialists in support of the war, whereas *The Morning Leader*, *The Star* and *The Manchester Guardian* endorsed pro-Boer views. Editors had expected a prompt and decisive victory and despatched war correspondents in unprecedented numbers, including Dr Arthur Conan Doyle, Leo

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<sup>60</sup> H.S. Wilkinson, ‘How weak policy leads to bad strategy’, published in *Lessons of the War, Being comments from week to week to the relief of Ladysmith* (Philadelphia, 1900, p.31).

<sup>61</sup> Wilkinson to Devonshire, (private), 18 December 1899, BL.Wilkinson MSS, MFR 454, 96850, Reel 2, f.26.

<sup>62</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lord Lansdowne in Sheffield - The Cutler’s Feast’, *The Belfast News-Letter*, 3 November 1899.

<sup>63</sup> Lansdowne, ‘House of Lords Debate’, ‘Address in Answer to Her Majesty’s Most Gracious Speech’, 30 January 1900, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.78, c.41.

Amery and Winston Churchill. Much of the press reporting from the front was unreliable and inaccurate,<sup>64</sup> and Lansdowne was quick to make arrangements for a strict censorship of the telegrams sent home from South Africa.<sup>65</sup> Wolseley was strongly of the opinion that giving any information, stating the place at which preparations were being made or giving any details, all of which were valuable to an enemy, should be forbidden. Lansdowne, reminded of his experience with seditious press reports in India, agreed. He believed that an appeal to the leader representatives of the press would be a more favourable approach than legislation.<sup>66</sup>

During the summer of 1899 Lansdowne had instructed Wolseley to draft a bill for parliamentary legislation to control the press during time of war. The Cabinet rejected the draft ruling that the government could not expect to introduce such a measure in peace time. On 6 October Lansdowne invoked the 1875 International Telegraph Convention of Berne to impose censorship and not long after Lord Stanley (17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Derby) was sent to South Africa to become Chief Military censor.<sup>67</sup> *The Times* complained bitterly about censorship asserting it was ‘inconsistent, arbitrary and vexatious.’<sup>68</sup> Its editor, Moberley Bell, complained to Lansdowne about the manner in which the censors did their work. Lansdowne accepted ‘some of them are no doubt wanting in tact and intelligence...It seems to me all wrong that the censor should add anything of his own to the correspondent’s message, in one case the censor is said to have insisted upon the insertion of some words complimentary to a certain general.’<sup>69</sup> Such was the power of the press on the spot in South Africa that reporters had their favourite generals whom they portrayed as heroes fighting a ‘gentleman’s war.’<sup>70</sup> Such adulation made it difficult for Lansdowne and the government to criticise them in public. By February 1900, the power of the press in directing public opinion on ‘the War’ was such that the government decided to end

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<sup>64</sup> K. O. Morgan, ‘The Boer War and the Media’, *Twentieth Century British History* 13(1) (2002), pp.1-16, p.4.

<sup>65</sup> Lansdowne to The Prince of Wales (private), 15 October 1899, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/18/9.

<sup>66</sup> Proceedings of the War Office Council, 23 March 1899, NA. WO 163/4B.

<sup>67</sup> S. Badsey, ‘War Correspondents in the Boer War, in Gooch (ed.), *The Boer War*, p.188.

<sup>68</sup> War Office to Roberts, 3 February 1900, NA. WO 105/30/63-82.

<sup>69</sup> Lansdowne to Roberts (private), 2 February 1900, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/22.

<sup>70</sup> K. O. Morgan, ‘The Boer War and the Media’, *Twentieth Century British History* 13(1) (2002), pp.1-16, p.15.

the censorship of letters.<sup>71</sup> Roberts, who was then in command in South Africa and was popular with newspaper reporters, was strongly in favour of relaxing the censor noting, 'write what you like, because it is by your writings that I shall see what mistakes have been made.'<sup>72</sup>

Lansdowne's unpopularity with the press made him an easy target of press sensationalism for the military blunders in South Africa. As Haliburton noted 'if the *Times* and the *Post* at all reflect the mind of the nation, it is to be feared that we are in for a fit of national frenzy and not a very suitable frame of mind to conduct a great war.'<sup>73</sup> Among those to question Lansdowne's ability to conduct 'the War' *The Spectator* suggested that 'a great nobleman is not the person to whom the country can look for a really thorough and merciless exposure of the causes of our present inefficiency. We require a man brought up, not like a man of vast estates usually is, to consider serenity and absence of detailed work the principal conditions to conduct a department with success.'<sup>74</sup> 'We fear that he has unconsciously no doubt regarded his duties rather as those of a figure-head chairman of a great charitable or ornamental corporation than as those of the Minister on whom the efficiency of the Army depends, and on whose exertions was staked the safety of the nation...he will show none of the tiger-will, none of the tireless vigilance and resource which are wanted now.'<sup>75</sup>

While the country was looking for a scapegoat it was also gripped with astonishment, frustration and humiliation. Self-confident music hall songs jarred with the harsh reality. The atmosphere of gloom in England was even deeper than at the Cape. Many theatres closed due to lack of audiences and social life fell to a minimum. London was plunged into depression.<sup>76</sup> Beatrice Webb commented, 'the dismissal of Massingham from the editorship, and of others from the staff of the *Daily Chronicle*, reflects the strong patriotic sentiment of its readers. Any criticism of the war at present is hopelessly unpopular. The cleavage of opinion about the war

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<sup>71</sup> Wyndham, 'Commons Debate', 'Army (Supplementary) Estimate, 1900-1901 Debate', 27 July 1900, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol 86, c.1544.

<sup>72</sup> Roberts quoted by Vincent, Commons Speech, 'Army (Supplementary) Estimate, 1900-1901 Debate', 27 July 1900, *Ibid.*, Vol 86, c.1576.

<sup>73</sup> Haliburton to Lansdowne (private), 11 January 1900, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/18.

<sup>74</sup> 'War Office Reform and the War', Topics of the Day, *The Spectator* 84, 6 January 1900, p.4.

<sup>75</sup> 'Lord Lansdowne and the Government', *ibid.*, 20 January 1900, p.4.

<sup>76</sup> Viscountess Milner, *My Picture Gallery, 1886-1901* (London, 1951), p.157.

separates persons hitherto united and unites those who by temperament and training have hitherto been divorced. No one knows who is friend and who is enemy...and who can fail to be depressed at the hatred of England on the continent.<sup>77</sup> A journalist told Rosebery, 'I trust I may never experience another black week like that...perhaps it was worst of all in newspaper offices for the news came so late. The paper on Friday had almost been "put to bed" (with articles speculating &c on what Buller would do) when the news of his defeat came in after 1 o'clock.'<sup>78</sup>

The news of the defeats in Black Week were less sensational to Queen Victoria who remarked, 'please understand that there is no one depressed in this house. We are not interested in the possibilities of defeat, they do not exist.'<sup>79</sup> She urged on Balfour 'very strongly the necessity of resisting the unpatriotic and unjust criticism of our government and of the conduct of the war. If the government are firm and courageous the country will support them.'<sup>80</sup> Salisbury shared her sentiment 'I have always thought the Cabinet rather underrated the Boers but "all will come right".'<sup>81</sup>

While it was difficult for the Cabinet and the civilians at the War Office to criticise the generals in public, in private Hamilton noted, 'Making all allowance for the inevitable shortcomings of organization, transport and supply, it is not the defects associated with these branches of military supply, that have been the primary cause of our reverses. It is the lack of brains and foresight shown by our generals. This we cannot say in public, or even in private, as it would discourage those under their command, and would look like an attempt on the part of the politicals at home at saving themselves at the expense of those in the firing line.'<sup>82</sup> It is notable that in the immediate aftermath of Black Week Lansdowne made no public defence of the War Office or his own conduct and it was Balfour that first attempted to deny War Office responsibility. But in three speeches at Manchester in early January 1900 he failed to win public support, and showed a distinct lack of understanding of popular awareness. *The Times* reported that he had 'utterly failed to understand the present

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<sup>77</sup> Webb, 'Diary' December 1899, in N & J Mackenzie (ed.), *The Diaries of Beatrice Webb* (London, 2000).

<sup>78</sup> Cook to Rosebery (private), 31 December 1899, NLS. Rosebery MSS. MS 10112, f.260.

<sup>79</sup> Balfour to Salisbury (private), 19 December 1899, BL. Balfour MSS, Add MS. 49691, f.82.

<sup>80</sup> Queen Victoria to Balfour (private), 4 February 1900, Bod. Sandars MSS, MS. Eng. Hist. c.713, f.99.

<sup>81</sup> Roberts. *Salisbury*, p.750; D. Steele, 'Salisbury and the Soldiers', in Gooch (ed.), *The Boer War*, p.8.

<sup>82</sup> Hamilton to Curzon (private), 21 December 1899, BL. Hamilton MSS, Mss. EUR F123/81, f.125.

temper of the British people, or to realize that, while there is no desire to hamper the Cabinet or the War Office at the moment of dire distress, the time is not far distant when the nation will demand to know why departments of state to which it trusted have permitted to be caught unprepared.’<sup>83</sup>

Wolseley warned that ‘we are now face to face with a serious national crisis and unless we meet it boldly and quickly grapple with it successfully it may...lead to dangerous complications with Foreign powers.’<sup>84</sup> He blamed Lansdowne for not listening to him,<sup>85</sup> and for thinking that he could do all his business without his assistance.<sup>86</sup> He resented that he had been allowed no part in ‘the War’ and ‘that an older man than I has been allowed to command.’<sup>87</sup> Interpreting the blunders as proof of his ineffectual stand against the subordination of his office to civilian control, he took a ‘certain gloomy satisfaction in the guilt and remorse which he imagined that Lansdowne must be feeling.’<sup>88</sup>

Although the question of intervention was discussed by some of the Great Powers, in Britain it was considered to be very remote. Germany took advantage of the situation to enact a naval bill in the Reichstag enabling her to double the size of her Navy. The Russian Emperor at a meeting with Sir Charles Scott, the British Ambassador at St Petersburg, expressed his deepest sympathy with the nation. He desired the Queen to be assured that he was filled with the most ‘friendly feelings to us in this long hour of trial and that nothing was further from his thoughts than to take any advantage of our difficulties or to countenance any step likely to increase them.’<sup>89</sup> Nonetheless crowds in Dublin cheered the news of British defeats and it ‘was not possible to ignore the danger that might arise from any sudden or unforeseen event which might set fire to public opinion in France, where the wound of Fashoda still rankles.’<sup>90</sup> The darkest hour of ‘the War’ was not in fact Black Week and its impact militarily was fairly insignificant. Neither Kimberley nor Ladysmith surrendered when the British forces were defeated at Colenso and Magersfontein and

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<sup>83</sup> ‘Mr Balfour on the Army and the War Office’, *The Times*, 15 January 1900, p.14.

<sup>84</sup> Wolseley, ‘Memorandum’, 14 December 1899, NA. WO 32/7887.

<sup>85</sup> Wolseley to Lady Wolseley (private), 31 October 1899, HCL. Wolseley MSS, WP. 28/71.

<sup>86</sup> Wolseley to Lady Wolseley (private), 21 December 1899, *ibid.*, WP. 28/83.

<sup>87</sup> Wolseley to Lady Wolseley (private), 28 September 1900, *ibid.*, WP. 28/63.

<sup>88</sup> Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency*, p.43.

<sup>89</sup> Scott to Salisbury (private), 17 December 1899, CAB 37/51/98.

<sup>90</sup> Plunkett to Salisbury (private), 23 December 1899, CAB 37/51/101.

Stormberg did not incite an uprising in the Cape. The sieges of Kimberley and Ladysmith just continued. Moreover by invading Natal rather than the Cape and directing their energy and strength in operations against the besieged garrisons the Boers wasted valuable resources for use elsewhere.<sup>91</sup>

The set-backs of Black Week convinced Lansdowne that Buller should be replaced. His view was strengthened by the fact he could replace him with Roberts, who had indicated his willingness to go to South Africa and that ‘my want of knowledge of the country would be made up by the many good men well acquainted with it whom I should have to assist me.’<sup>92</sup> It was Roberts’ opinion that Buller’s mismanagement made it clear that British strategy and tactics were both at fault, ‘and that unless change is made at once our Army will be frittered away and we shall have to make ignominious peace.’<sup>93</sup> Roberts did not think Buller would have any reason to consider himself ‘superseded’ if he himself went out in supreme command. He ‘would still hold an extremely responsible position as second in command, while he would be available to direct operations in any part of the country where most needed, and thus leave the officer in supreme command to exercise effectual general supervision.’<sup>94</sup> Lansdowne was persuaded. He was convinced that Roberts, assisted by Kitchener, should take command of the Army in South Africa. On the evening of 15 December, having received the news of Colenso, he summoned Balfour from a dinner party to the War Office to discuss the situation and spoke openly in favour of a Roberts-Kitchener combination. Balfour concurred that Buller should be replaced. Secrecy was essential as Kitchener was not popular with Wolseley and his ‘Ring’ within the War Office.<sup>95</sup> Although Salisbury was initially doubtful of Lansdowne’s idea, the proposal to send Kitchener reconciled him. On the evening of 16 December the Defence Committee of the Cabinet confirmed the decision that Buller must resign his command to Roberts.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> J. Grigg, *The Young Lloyd George* (London, 1973), p.263.

<sup>92</sup> Roberts to Lansdowne (private), 22 October 1899, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/22.

<sup>93</sup> Roberts to Lansdowne (private), 16 December 1899, *ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> Roberts to Lansdowne (private), 11 December 1899, *ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> Rodd to Curzon, (private), 12 December 1899, BL. Curzon MSS, Mss. EUR F111/405.

<sup>96</sup> Balfour to Salisbury (private), 18 December 1899, HH. Salisbury MSS, 3M/E Balfour correspondence 1896-1899, f.42.

The following day Lansdowne met Roberts alone at Mackellar's Hotel in Dover Street, where he was staying, to discuss his appointment. Describing the incident to Roberts' daughter years later he noted, 'By that time it was known that your brother [Freddy Roberts] had been wounded. I asked your father, who was much distressed, whether he still felt physically fit for such a tremendous enterprise. He made no secret of his feelings as to Freddy, but was hopeful and ready to go on.'<sup>97</sup> Later that day Lansdowne learnt from Herbert Scott, Roberts' ADC in Ireland, that Freddy had died. As Lansdowne explained, 'I had to go and find your father and break the news to him. The blow was almost more than he could bear, and for a moment I thought he would break down, but he pulled himself together. I shall never forget the courage which he showed, or the way in which he refused to allow this disaster to turn him aside from his duty. Your father, throughout these sad conversations, made it quite clear that Kitchener's assistance was essential to him.'<sup>98</sup>

Although the decision had already been taken and agreed by the politicians neither Queen Victoria nor Wolseley were aware that Buller was to be replaced.<sup>99</sup> When Wolseley learnt about the decision he was 'dumbfounded.' He told Lansdowne that Buller would rather resign than suffer the humiliation and, even if he had made mistakes, he was a better man than Roberts. Queen Victoria intimated her astonishment through Arthur Bigge, her private secretary, who was a close personal friend of Buller's. It was his view that, 'Her Majesty was deeply aggrieved at the Cabinet's behaviour on numerous grounds. For not telling her of the decision to appoint Roberts, not seeking her advice, not consulting her before cabling Buller, and failing to consult Wolseley.'<sup>100</sup> After Kitchener accepted the appointment, Lansdowne informed Salisbury, 'I assume this clinches the business and I have told Roberts that he must make arrangements to start by next Saturday's mail. He is very keen and is confident of being able to get on with Buller.'<sup>101</sup> In the event of Roberts being incapacitated Kitchener agreed to serve under Buller. As to his title it was decided that rather than put him above all the generals except Buller, which would have involved superseding four Lieutenant-Generals and two Major-Generals, 'a

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<sup>97</sup> Lansdowne to Miss A. Roberts (private), 11 May 1921, NAM. Roberts MSS, 7101-23-181.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Queen Victoria's Journal, RA VIC/QVJ/1899: 17 December.

<sup>100</sup> Pakenham, *The Boer War*, p.245.

<sup>101</sup> Lansdowne to Salisbury (private), 17 December 1899, HH. Salisbury MSS, 3M/E Lansdowne correspondence 1897-1899, f.484.



rather violent measure' in Lansdowne's opinion, so long as Roberts was to the fore, Kitchener would be his Chief of Staff and 'owe allegiance to no one else.'<sup>102</sup>

On 18 December, Balfour was summoned to Windsor to discuss the appointment with the Queen. Salisbury had told Lansdowne the day before to submit Kitchener's appointment to the Queen before it got into the newspapers as, 'she loves Buller and does not love Roberts or rather his wife.'<sup>103</sup> Although she accepted Balfour's reason for haste in the change of command and approved, she could not help feeling that Roberts then aged sixty-seven was rather old and Wolseley would have been preferable. Reporting the meeting to Salisbury, Balfour mentioned the Queen's feelings about not having an opportunity to express an opinion about Roberts' appointment, adding that he could not understand why Lansdowne had not sent a messenger to the Queen by special train the previous day. Lansdowne's oversight occurred, as it was later reported, because he contented himself with telling 'Bigge who was in London the whole story, and asking him to convey it to Her Majesty.'<sup>104</sup>

Roberts' appointment left the post of Commander-in-Chief in Ireland vacant and the Queen hoped her son would fill it.<sup>105</sup> The Duke of Connaught himself was more interested in serving in South Africa, a wish that his brother, the Prince of Wales, also strongly supported. 'It is the ruin of his military career if he has no employment during the most important war we have ever been engaged in,' he told Lansdowne.<sup>106</sup> But Roberts, who met the Queen on 22 December, did not wish the Duke to go to South Africa, because his seniority meant he could go only in a position suitable to his rank.<sup>107</sup> Attaching him to the staff would put the Duke in a false position.<sup>108</sup> As he was leaving for South Africa on 23 December, the Duke told Roberts at Waterloo Station that the Prince of Wales was very annoyed. Roberts

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<sup>102</sup> Lansdowne to Salisbury (private), 22 December 1899, *ibid.*, f.486.

<sup>103</sup> Salisbury to Lansdowne (private), 17 December 1899, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/7.

<sup>104</sup> B. Dugdale, *Arthur James Balfour* (2 Vols., London, 1936), Vol.1, p.296.

<sup>105</sup> Bigge to Lansdowne (private), 18 December 1899, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS, 88906/18/7; Balfour to Salisbury (private), 18 December 1899, HH. Salisbury MSS, 3M/E Balfour correspondence 1896- 1899, f.44.

<sup>106</sup> Prince of Wales to Lansdowne (private), BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/18/9.

<sup>107</sup> Miss A. Roberts 'Note on her Father's appointment', (undated), NAM. Roberts MSS. 7101-23-181.

<sup>108</sup> Roberts to Lansdowne (private), 22 December 1899, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/22.

feared the Prince would return to the attack during his campaign in South Africa.<sup>109</sup> Lansdowne smoothed the situation over by sympathising with the Queen that her son had not obtained the service he so desired and informing her that his selection as Commander-in-Chief in Ireland ‘would be an excellent one in the interest of the Army.’<sup>110</sup> After Balfour’s meeting with the Queen, Lansdowne telegraphed Buller to tell him of Roberts’ appointment as Commander-in-Chief South Africa, his Chief of Staff being Lord Kitchener.<sup>111</sup> Buller was as surprised to learn the news as the Queen had been. Receiving Lansdowne’s notification of the change of command he remarked, ‘that it read like one to a girl who was being put in charge of a strict governess.’<sup>112</sup>

While Lansdowne’s telegram upset Buller, so Robert’s appointment grated on Wolseley. In the months following the appointment he gradually lost interest in his work at the War Office. After producing a Memorandum on 29 December 1899 on the possibility of an invasion by France and measures to counter that,<sup>113</sup> and another on 30 January 1900 on what had been done in England and the Colonies and India to place a fighting Army in South Africa,<sup>114</sup> he took a noticeably less active role in the prosecution of the war.<sup>115</sup> It can be speculated that the reasons for his uninterest in War Office matters were his ill health and his anger that a man whom he considered to be a ‘charlatan’<sup>116</sup> and a ‘cheat’<sup>117</sup> had obtained the South Africa command he had coveted. His jealousy must have been further heightened by the public adulation Roberts received as he turned the tide in South Africa and prosecuted ‘the War’ successfully. While the Roberts’ appointment caused Wolseley notable distress, to some sections of the press it restored their faith in the government’s seriousness to

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<sup>109</sup> Roberts to Lansdowne (private), 26 December 1899, *ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> Lansdowne to Queen Victoria (private), 27 December 1899, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/18/7.

<sup>111</sup> Lansdowne to Buller, (private), 18 December 1899, *ibid.*, Add MS. 88906/22/20.

<sup>112</sup> Buller’s reaction to Lansdowne’s telegram of 18 December 1899, in Melville, *Sir Redvers Buller*, Vol.2, p.128; Buller to Lansdowne (private), 20 June 1900, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/22/18.

<sup>113</sup> Wolseley to Lansdowne, ‘Minute’, 29 December 1899, CAB 37/51.

<sup>114</sup> Wolseley, ‘Memorandum’, 30 January 1900 in PP, 1904, XL, Cd.1789, RC, Appendix D, p.275.

<sup>115</sup> In August 1900 he remarked that he had ‘lost interest in my work.’ Wolseley to Lady Wolseley (private), 1 August 1900, HCL. Wolseley MSS, WP. 29/49i. By October it was his view that ‘work grates on me.’ Wolseley to Lady Wolseley (private), 24 October 1900, *ibid.*, WP. 29/67.

<sup>116</sup> Wolseley to Lady Wolseley (private), 28 September 1900, *ibid.*, WP. 29/63.

<sup>117</sup> Wolseley to Lady Wolseley (private), 13 July 1900, *ibid.*, WP. 29/47.

bring 'the War' to a successful conclusion, 'in sending out Roberts and Kitchener the government have done the best thing for restoring public confidence.'<sup>118</sup>

If the press thought that the personnel taking command of the Army in December 'remains all that we could wish it to be,'<sup>119</sup> the deficiency in stores was certainly not. That the stores of warlike matériel were found lacking triggered a further barrage of attacks against Lansdowne. It was reported that the 'military machine has never been kept in full working order' and 'war found us wanting in most essential preparations.'<sup>120</sup> Lansdowne accepted this criticism and as he managed the crisis purposively concealed nothing from his critics. It was his view that 'we have been struck by the inadequacy of our reserves of many kinds of stores.'<sup>121</sup> He was prepared for such criticism.

On the same day that Buller informed Lansdowne of his failure to relieve Ladysmith, Brackenbury produced his report on the Ordnance Department which Lansdowne had instructed him to undertake the previous January. Brackenbury found that the only items for which reserves were adequate were lances, revolvers, rifles and carbines. Lances and carbines were rarely used by the cavalry and many officers went on service having bought their own small arms. Brackenbury believed that the deficiency had occurred principally because items were not replaced and because of the belief that in the event of a war output from the Ordnance Factories and trade would meet the demands with sufficient equipment. The perception that British industry could provide anything at short notice appealed to those eager to keep military expenditure to a minimum. The result as Brackenbury observed was that Britain was 'attempting to maintain the largest Empire the world has ever seen with armaments and reserves that would be insufficient for a third-class military power.'<sup>122</sup>

Both Lansdowne and Wolseley were surprised by the magnitude of the findings. It is of interest to note that while Lansdowne certainly was aware before 'the War' that the whole question of the Ordnance Department wanted a thorough

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<sup>118</sup> 'The Nation on Trial' *The Sheffield and Rotterham Independent*, 19 December 1899, p.5.

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

<sup>120</sup> 'Military Reforms in the House of Lords,' *The Times*, 28 May 1900, p.9.

<sup>121</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lords Debate', 'South African War - Contemplated Military Measures', 12 February 1900, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.78, c.1181.

<sup>122</sup> Brackenbury, 'Minute', 15 December 1899, in PP, 1904, XL, Cd.1789, RC, Appendix E. p.278.

overhauling and it was to that end he ‘brought in General Brackenbury with the Commander-in-Chief’s entire concurrence,’<sup>123</sup> he also believed ‘great as our deficiencies were, the Army at that moment was probably better equipped than it had ever been before.’<sup>124</sup> Responding to the Royal Commission on questions of deficiency it was his view that responsibility lay with Brackenbury’s predecessor, General Markham.<sup>125</sup> In his defence of Brackenbury he concluded that Brackenbury’s hands during the early part of 1899 were full with a War Office armament scheme that had been triggered under his predecessor but had languished.<sup>126</sup> ‘What happened when he [Brackenbury] arrived at the War Office is that we accelerated the arrangements for making good the deficiency.’<sup>127</sup> Wolseley also accepted that the department had been inefficient remarking, ‘I am fully conscious of our many shortcomings in the way of reserves of clothing and of other military stores generally and I sincerely trust that our recent experience will prevent us from ever again being found so ill prepared.’<sup>128</sup>

By the time Brackenbury’s report was completed the majority of the reserves that did exist before ‘the War’ had been despatched to South Africa and in many cases what had originally been held in reserve had been sent twice over. That ‘the War’ had lasted just two months and was settling into a protracted state forced him to order equipment from all over the Empire and to borrow resources from the Navy. In his recommendations to improve the department and its lack of reserves<sup>129</sup> Brackenbury estimated that roughly £11.5 million was the minimum amount required to make good the deficiencies. Lansdowne referred the report to the Defence Committee of the Cabinet who considered it at a meeting held on 20 January. Hicks Beach was opposed to spending so much on the ‘representation of a single officer of the War Office.’<sup>130</sup> His view was also shared by Lansdowne. Interestingly in a speech two years earlier he stated. ‘I should be sorry to be the Secretary of State for War who would propose that the pruning knife should be

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<sup>123</sup> PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21281, p.520.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 21325, p.523.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 21396-21420, pp.527-528.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 21280, p.520.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 21287, p.520.

<sup>128</sup> Wolseley, ‘Memorandum’, 30 January 1900 in PP, 1904, XL, Cd.1789, RC, Appendix D, p.275.

<sup>129</sup> PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21280, p.520.

<sup>130</sup> Defence Committee of Cabinet meeting January 1900, reported in Lansdowne, ‘Memorandum-Reserves of armament and military stores’, 21 May 1899, in *ibid.*, 21280, p.518.

rigorously applied to meet expenditure on stores.<sup>131</sup> Acting on the advice of his colleagues Lansdowne decided to appoint two departmental committees. The first, under the Presidency of Frances Mowatt, the Permanent Secretary to the Treasury, was established to examine Brackenbury's proposals. Interestingly Wolseley was not consulted at all about this Committee nor informed of its findings.<sup>132</sup> He learnt about its proceedings from Brackenbury. That neither Brackenbury nor Chamberlain served on the committee, Hicks Beach believed, was regrettable and 'will certainly detract from its authority.'<sup>133</sup> The committee were supportive of many of Brackenbury's recommendations.<sup>134</sup> The second committee with a responsibility to examine armaments was chaired by Robert Grant, the former Inspector-General of Fortifications. The costs of implementing the recommendations of the two reports were £6,482,567 and £1,586,338 respectively.

Given the findings contained in these reports Lansdowne asked the Treasury for £11,621,870 which included an additional sum of £3,552,965 for the completion of the coast defences, a scheme that had already had Cabinet approval. Hicks Beach, who was against accumulating large reserves, initially offered a little over £300,000. He stated that, 'I believe it to be wasteful. Owing to the rarity of important wars, the brief period for which guns, ammunition and stores remain "in fashion" before they are condemned as obsolete, and the cost of keeping such reserves in proper condition. But I also feel that this is not the moment at which to adopt such a great change of system.'<sup>135</sup> Urged by his Cabinet colleagues and Mowatt himself to change his mind, he later reluctantly agreed to provide £10,500,000 over three years starting in 1901. Lansdowne was disappointed by his offer but after further conversations on the matter recognised that it was 'useless to press him to increase the amount.'<sup>136</sup> It is notable that even though the deficiencies at the beginning of 'the War' were significant Kitchener later reported that he had no reason to complain of delay on the part of the War Office in complying with requisitions for ordnance, 'the

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<sup>131</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lord Lansdowne on the Army', *The Times*, 10 December 1897, p.10.

<sup>132</sup> PP, 1904, XL, Cd.1790, RC, 8816, p.370.

<sup>133</sup> Hicks Beach to Lansdowne (private), 24 January 1900, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/3.

<sup>134</sup> Lansdowne, 'Memorandum - Reserves of armament and military stores', 21 May 1899, in PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21280, p.519.

<sup>135</sup> Hicks Beach to Lansdowne (private), 12 May 1900, *ibid.*, Add MS. 88906/19/3.

<sup>136</sup> Lansdowne to Hicks Beach (private), 29 May 1900, *ibid.*

stores and the equipment all came out, and we had at times one hundred and twenty days' supply on hand.'<sup>137</sup>

Lansdowne's willingness to accept the deficiency in reserves of stores did little to soothe the temper of his critics and only fed their view that he was unsuited to his position as Secretary of State. While it was easy for them to collectively moralise about his unsuitability, his critics were less united in attempting to particularise the lessons of the war. Three weeks after Roberts arrived in South Africa those critics in and out of Parliament who wished to abolish the Cardwell system began asking whether the government intended to inquire into the deficiencies of the military system.<sup>138</sup> The Queen herself demanded an answer to the shortcomings of 'the War' remarking, 'the War Office is greatly at fault, and that an inquiry should be made; "but not now."' <sup>139</sup> Lansdowne questioned the value of such an inquiry stating, 'the result is, a long time passes while the inquiry is proceeding, and you are very fortunate indeed if you get advice on which you can act at once without further delay and without further investigation.'<sup>140</sup> Salisbury thought 'it is not for us now to express any criticism on the military operations, because we cannot hear the opinion of those who are justly entitled to be heard on the point.'<sup>141</sup> In agreement that during a time of war it was inappropriate to examine the blunders in South Africa, the government resisted any attempts to initiate an inquiry and Lansdowne for similar reasons resisted introducing any 'great organic changes' in the Army.<sup>142</sup> He was keen to avoid large scale reform with 'the War' in progress, but in consultation with the Cabinet and the senior officers, he accepted the need for a number of emergency measures.

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<sup>137</sup> PP, 1904, XL, Cd.1790, RC, 239, p.12.

<sup>138</sup> Kimberley, 'Lords Debate', 'Address in answer to Her Majesty's Most Gracious Speech', 30 January 1900, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.78, c.17; Arnold-Forster, 'Commons Debate', 'Army (Supplementary) Estimates', 27 July 1900, *ibid.*, Vol.86, c.1559. Bedford, 'Lords Debate', 'War Office Reorganisation - Recruiting in Scotland, etc.', 17 July 1900, *ibid.*, Vol.83, c.197.

<sup>139</sup> Queen Victoria to Balfour (private), 4 February 1900, Bod. Sandars MSS, MS. Eng. Hist. c.713, f.99.

<sup>140</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lords Debate', 'War Office Reorganisation - Recruiting in Scotland, etc.', 17 July 1900, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.83, c.202.

<sup>141</sup> Salisbury, 'Lords Debate', 'Address in answer to Her Majesty's Most Gracious Speech', 30 January 1900, *ibid.*, Vol.78, c.29.

<sup>142</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lords Debate', 'South African War - Contemplated Military Measures', 12 February 1900, *ibid.*, Vol.78, c.1182.

In spite of the unparalleled scale and smoothness of the mobilisation by February 1900, Wyndham believed that 'it has failed to achieve its object.'<sup>143</sup> In light of this the emergency measures or 'expedients' Lansdowne announced were framed to deal with two objects. Firstly what permanent additions it was desirable to make to the personnel and matériel of the Army, and secondly what immediate steps were necessary for the purpose of strengthening Britain during the period of denudation which the country was then experiencing and which would last for some time.<sup>144</sup> Largely in reaction to the immediate lessons of 'the War' the measures were designed so as not to 'stand in the way of any schemes for the improvement of the Army which the experience' of 'the War' might lead the government to consider later.<sup>145</sup>

One question that the government could not ignore until later was the fear of a foreign invasion caused by a reduction of resources available for home defence. This concern was particularly important to Wolseley who believed that the 'political horizon in Europe may be clear at present, but, as in 1870, it may cloud over suddenly without any warning,'<sup>146</sup> and that the will of France to attack Britain was still possible.<sup>147</sup> He estimated that an invading French Army would number at least 150,000 fighting men.<sup>148</sup> His opinion was not taken particularly seriously by the Admiralty, the Cabinet or Lansdowne and among the public it was of almost no concern, as Churchill noted 'the fear of invasion seemed to influence our daily lives as little as the fear of death.'<sup>149</sup> However, it could not be dismissed altogether and among certain members of the press it found followers.<sup>150</sup> While Wolseley urged the government to consider the possibility of an invasion, he also believed in a protracted war and that 'after its conclusion we shall have to keep a very large body

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<sup>143</sup> Wyndham, 'Commons Debate', 'Number of Land Forces', 12 February 1900, *ibid.*, Vol.78, c.1259.

<sup>144</sup> Lansdowne to Clarke, Wood and Brackenbury, 6 January 1900, NA. WO 32/6360/266/283&282&281.

<sup>145</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lords Debate', 'South African War - Contemplated Military Measures', 12 February 1900, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.78, c.1194.

<sup>146</sup> Wolseley to Lansdowne, 30 September 1899, CAB 37/51/78.

<sup>147</sup> Wolseley to Lansdowne, 'Minute', 29 December 1899, *ibid.*, 37/51/105.

<sup>148</sup> Wolseley to Lansdowne, 23 January 1900, *ibid.*, 37/52/5.

<sup>149</sup> Churchill, 'Mr Churchill at Plymouth', *The Times*, 18 May 1900.

<sup>150</sup> Searle, *National Efficiency*, p.40.

of troops there for a long while.<sup>151</sup> As such he advised Lansdowne that an increase in the size of the Army was required. Lansdowne agreed with him. He believed there was something ironical in the situation where ‘the greatest maritime Power in the world was at war with two little states ‘which do not own a boat’s crew between them and which are consequently invulnerable by our powerful Navy.’ This situation, he believed, had thrown on the Army ‘exertions of the most arduous kind,’<sup>152</sup> and made it necessary to strengthen it. Whereas Wolseley proposed achieving this with new recruits Lansdowne insisted that ‘we must in the main rely upon materials already existing.’<sup>153</sup>

Lansdowne’s idea of using resources in hand, notably the Auxiliary Army, was shared by Grove, Clarke and Wood.<sup>154</sup> Although he had introduced measures before ‘the War’ to improve the Auxiliary Army and bring it into a closer alignment with the Regular Army, the Auxiliaries were still regarded as ‘too little taken into account.’ To Lansdowne ‘the War’ ‘has been to show us what a great and valuable reserve power we possess in our Auxiliary forces.’ He believed that ‘we must...insist upon a nucleus of Regular troops for our home Army, but for the bulk of it we must depend on the Auxiliary forces.’<sup>155</sup> Giving greater prominence to this part of the Army he believed would increase their popularity<sup>156</sup> and weaken the many arguments in favour of modified compulsion. He believed that by tapping this resource he would raise 70,000 men for the Army.<sup>157</sup> Although Wolseley raised no objection to Lansdowne’s proposal, he was less enthusiastic about modifying the Auxiliary Army than he was the Regular Army. It was Lansdowne’s opinion that Wolseley underestimated the importance of the Auxiliary Army in the military system. After leaving the War Office he remarked that Wolseley had worked ‘fitfully and only when the spirit moved him,’ and that if he had paid more attention to his

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<sup>151</sup> Wolseley to Lansdowne, ‘Minute’, 29 December 1899, CAB 37/51/105. Wolseley’s Minute of the 29 December 1899 was revised on 3 January 1900 with minor modifications. Wolseley to Secretary of State, 3 January 1900, NA. WO 32/6360/266/280.

<sup>152</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘South African War - Contemplated Military Measures’, 12 February 1900, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.78, c.1173.

<sup>153</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Memorandum on Wolseley’s 29 December Memorandum’, 17 January 1900, (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/16/28/5.

<sup>154</sup> Grove to Lansdowne, 9 January 1900, NA. WO 32/6360/266/280, Clarke to Lansdowne, 9 January 1900, NA. WO 32/6360/266/283, Wood to Lansdowne, 8 January 1900, NA. WO 32/6360/266/282.

<sup>155</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘South African War - Contemplated Military Measures’, 12 February 1900, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.78, c.1175.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, c.1179.

<sup>157</sup> Editorial, ‘The Military Scheme’, *The Times*, 13 February 1900, p.10.



duties, he might have turned to ‘better account’ that force.<sup>158</sup> Although Wolseley refuted Lansdowne’s claim, during his term as Commander-in-Chief his preference for improving the Regulars over the Auxiliaries was readily apparent. He believed that an Army could not be created in a few weeks.<sup>159</sup>

Of the three forces comprising the Auxiliaries, the Yeomanry, Volunteers and Militia, Lansdowne believed that Wolseley took ‘too disparaging a view of the Militia’s value.’<sup>160</sup> The latter believed that the Militia were ‘very bad shots and they have very little opportunity of learning to shoot, their training is very imperfect.’ He also maintained that the ‘officers of the Militia were not as well instructed in military matters as our officers.’<sup>161</sup> In February 1900 there were a total of 97,500 militiamen in one hundred and twenty four battalions of which thirty-six battalions were or were about to serve in South Africa.<sup>162</sup> To Lansdowne’s critics the fact that the Militia were needed in South Africa was seen as an admission of Lansdowne’s failure to provide an Army fit for war. In attacking the system they demanded to know why was it necessary to send the Militia out of the country when there was a large contingent of Regular soldiers in Britain. Lansdowne, who had nothing to conceal from his critics, admitted in public that the 92,000 Regular soldiers were ‘in no sense a field Army.’ They comprised many young soldiers under twenty years old who were unfit to go abroad,<sup>163</sup> but as Brodrick later noted a considerable number of that 92,000 embarked the following April.<sup>164</sup> Although the number of militiamen was 30,000 men below its establishment and falling, with ‘the War’ this trend was reversed. ‘War’, as Lansdowne noted, ‘does not tend to make the Army unpopular.’<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Lansdowne ‘Lords Debate’, ‘War Office Administration - Duties of Commander-in-Chief’, 4 March 1901, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.90, c.352.

<sup>159</sup> Wolseley, ‘Note’, HCL. Wolseley MSS, WP. M1/12/27/iii.

<sup>160</sup> Lansdowne ‘Minute on Wolseley’s 29 December 1899 Minute, 17 January 1900, BL. (5)

Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/16/28/5.

<sup>161</sup> PP, 1904, XL, Cd.1790, RC, 9135, p.386.

<sup>162</sup> Wyndham, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Number of Land Forces’, 12 February 1900, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.78, c.1261.

<sup>163</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘Military Reorganisation - Recruiting in Scotland, etc.’, 25 May 1900, *ibid.*, Vol.83, c.1262.

<sup>164</sup> Brodrick, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Army Organization [Third Day’s Debate]’, 16 May 1901, *ibid.*, Vol.94, c.302.

<sup>165</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘South African War - Contemplated Military Measures’, 12 February 1900, *ibid.*, Vol.78, c.1174.

The patriotic spirit that took hold of the country brought recruiting to a level 'which it never reached before.'<sup>166</sup> Given the large number of recruits voluntarily joining the Army it was not surprising that two attempts by Wemyss during 'the War' to enforce the Militia ballot found little support. It was Lansdowne's view that 'at this moment when men are coming forward spontaneously in great numbers, when there is an amount of enthusiasm, a general and widespread desire throughout the Empire to bear a part in its defence, I do not think that this is a time for talking about compulsion in any form. What I venture to think is wanted at this present time is not compulsion but encouragement.'<sup>167</sup>

In using the 'unique opportunity' created by 'the War' the remaining Militia battalions were embodied in May 1900 for training during the spring and summer months under canvas and at minimal cost to the Exchequer.<sup>168</sup> In June Lansdowne informed the Cabinet of a scheme to reform the Militia in order to forestall the possible exodus which might otherwise occur after the war.<sup>169</sup> Under the proposed scheme, all militiamen would in future enlist with a liability for service abroad and in consideration of this receive a consolidated bounty. The Militia reserve and the 'special service section' of the Militia, which Lansdowne believed were 'cordially detested by the whole force', would be abolished. In its place a reserve composed of men who had served six years and who were entitled to receive £2 a year bounty would be established. The period of training of all recruits would be extended from three to six months, the preliminary training taking place with their own regiment for one month and for the remainder of the six months at the depot.<sup>170</sup> Lansdowne also favoured changing the policy about part worn clothing which had been 'pushed too far' and to take action on the soldiers' complaints, particularly relating to head dresses.<sup>171</sup> At the time the Militia was the laughing stock of music hall audiences.<sup>172</sup> Addressing the complaints of many service parliamentarians and some of the

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<sup>166</sup> Wyndham, 'Commons Debate', 'Number of Land Forces,' *ibid.*, c.1262.

<sup>167</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lords Debate', 'South African War - Contemplated Military Measures', *ibid.*, c.1183.

<sup>168</sup> Lansdowne, 'Minute', 'Army Proposals,' 8 February 1900, CAB 37/52/14.

<sup>169</sup> Turner to Lansdowne (private), 7 June 1900, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/16/28.

<sup>170</sup> Lansdowne, 'Memorandum', 'Proposals for the Militia', 20 June 1900, *ibid.*, Add MS. 88906/16/26.

<sup>171</sup> Turner to Lansdowne (private), 4 June 1900, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/16/28.

<sup>172</sup> Holden to Turner, 7 June 1900, *ibid.*

military including Methuen that the Militia was poorly officered,<sup>173</sup> Lansdowne proposed giving such men ‘facilities for attending courses of instruction...under financial conditions which will absolutely safeguard them against any inroad on their own private means.’<sup>174</sup> In wishing to popularise the Auxiliaries he also divided the office of Inspector-General of Auxiliary Forces and Recruiting into two, appointing Major-General Alfred Turner to the former post. A few months later a subordinate officer was appointed to Turner specifically to deal with the ‘many intricate Militia problems.’<sup>175</sup>

While Lansdowne’s measures for improving the Militia met with only slight criticism in and out of Parliament, those for reorganising the Volunteers met with stronger resistance. Up until Black Week, most of the senior officers objected to making use of the Volunteers in South Africa. Wolseley, who had the greatest regard for the force as a reserve of the Army and because it did an immense amount for popularising it, believed that when tackling a thoroughly disciplined enemy it would not be fair to call upon the Volunteer force such as it then was.<sup>176</sup> After Black Week their objections held less force and when Alfred Newton, the Lord Mayor of London, Colonel Eustace Balfour of the London Scottish Volunteers, Colonel Howard Vincent MP of the Queen’s Westminster Rifles, and Lord Lovat offered to raise regiments for overseas service it seemed to Lansdowne a ‘new departure’ but one that it was impossible ‘to refuse altogether.’<sup>177</sup> Just as the Militia force was below its establishment so too was the Volunteer force 43,000 below its own establishment.<sup>178</sup> But with the outpouring of patriotic spirit in Britain their numbers increased by 30,000 men between November 1899 and March 1900, bring their total number to 249,606 men.<sup>179</sup>

‘The War’ gave a renewed impetus regarding the military value of the Volunteers and with the precarious manpower situation in 1900 the Volunteers were

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<sup>173</sup> Methuen to Lansdowne (private), 26 March 1900, *ibid.*, Add MS. 88906/20/12.

<sup>174</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘South African War - Contemplated Military Measures’, 12 February 1900, *Hansard 4th Series*, Vol.78, c.1179.

<sup>175</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘Military Reorganisation - Recruiting in Scotland, etc.’, 25 May 1900, *ibid.*, Vol.83, c.1258.

<sup>176</sup> PP, 1904, XL, Cd.1790, RC, 9135, p.386..

<sup>177</sup> Lansdowne to Salisbury (private), 15 December 1899, Salisbury MSS, 3M/E Lansdowne correspondence 1897-1899, f.482.

<sup>178</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘South African War - Contemplated Military Measures’, 12 February 1900, *Hansard 4th Series*, Vol.78, c.1177.

<sup>179</sup> Wyndham, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Army Estimates 1900-01’, 16 March 1900, *ibid.*, Vol.80, c.1123.

the most 'highly favoured' of all the Auxiliary forces.<sup>180</sup> Receiving increased grants of several kinds they were encouraged to recruit up to their full strength of 1,000 men per battalion and to recruit second battalions. They were also given a limited number of Regular commissions to fill vacancies in twelve new Regular battalions and allowed to raise mounted companies to improve musketry. In order to give local authorities the means to cooperate with the Volunteer corps in providing them with appropriate buildings and with rifle ranges, Lansdowne presented a bill to amend the Military Lands Act 1892.<sup>181</sup> The ninety-eight batteries of Volunteer artillery men were also entirely rearmed partly with a semi-mobile 4.7 inch gun. Wolseley was not satisfied. He told Lansdowne, 'when I contemplate the possibility of having to use our Volunteer artillery with the absurd guns now in their possession I do not know whether to laugh or cry. In fact there is no avoiding the conviction that at this moment we are solely dependent upon the fleet to defend...us from invasion and that if the French landed 100,000 with 500 or even 400 guns in England we should be at their mercy.'<sup>182</sup> While Wolseley was dissatisfied that Lansdowne did not do more, the service parliamentarians had few objections to these concessions in detail. His proposal to give the Volunteers twenty-eight days' consecutive training under canvas was, however, objected to. It was held that such a period was to demand from them too much.<sup>183</sup> He subsequently reduced the period to fourteen days. Out of the two hundred and sixteen Volunteer corps in Britain one hundred and seventy-nine agreed to go to camp on the new terms.<sup>184</sup>

The most far reaching and controversial change Lansdowne attempted as part of his emergency measures was a bill to amend the Volunteer Act 1863. The Bill contained a new definition of the conditions under which the Volunteer force could be called out for actual military service. In the previous act the Volunteers could be called out in the case of 'actual or apprehended invasion.' Lansdowne and his colleagues believed that this was a 'clumsy formula' and proposed rephrasing it with the words used in the Reserve Forces Act 1882: 'in case of imminent national danger

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<sup>180</sup> Editorial, 'The Military Scheme', *The Times*, 13 February 1900, p.10.

<sup>181</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lords Debate', 'Volunteers Bill', 18 May 1900, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.83, cc.532-6.

<sup>182</sup> Wolseley to Lansdowne (private), 5 October 1900, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/28.

<sup>183</sup> Bedford, 'Lords Debate', 'Military Reorganisation - Recruiting in Scotland, etc.', 25 May 1900, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.83, c.1231.

<sup>184</sup> Lansdowne, *ibid.*, c.1255.

or great emergency.’<sup>185</sup> The proposal had been recommended six years previously under the Liberal government and was not ‘a new plot to revolutionize the character of the force.’ The logic behind the War Office’s proposal to amend the phraseology was described by Wyndham. During a time of emergency no government would be able to declare by Royal Proclamation that they feared invasion as that would precipitate their very fear. Neither could they leave things until an invasion took place as that would require turning the Volunteers into an effective field Army in forty-eight hours which could not be done.<sup>186</sup> The second object of the bill was to give power to the Secretary of State to accept the services of the Volunteers for home defence in cases which fell short of a great emergency. The third object was for the employment of Volunteers on active service ‘in any part of the world.’<sup>187</sup> Largely in reaction to a lesson learnt the previous October the principal aim was to consolidate Volunteer efforts in peace so as to avoid the pressure that the War Office experienced in war with the on rush of men, some of whom were Volunteers and others who were not, and the need to test them, select officers and equip them in great haste.<sup>188</sup>

Although the Volunteer Bill had the full approval of the Volunteer colonels and soldiers,<sup>189</sup> Arnold-Forster, who was one of the principal advocates for the Volunteers in the House of Commons, opposed it. Objecting to ‘the proposals it contained’ and ‘because its character is such that it should not be brought in as an isolated measure at this time,’<sup>190</sup> he argued the bill would transform the character of the force, a force formed to protect the country from invasion, and create a new class of Reservists.<sup>191</sup> He also maintained that ‘if any considerable number of men undertake these obligations they will, by doing so, seriously interfere with their employment.’<sup>192</sup> Cecil Norton, a service parliamentarian, doubted the scheme on the grounds that it was an ‘inopportune time’ to introduce the measure.<sup>193</sup> Campbell-

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<sup>185</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘Volunteers Bill’, 18 May 1900, *ibid.*, c.533.

<sup>186</sup> Wyndham, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Volunteer Bill [Lords]’, 18 July 1900, *ibid.*, Vol.86, c.346.

<sup>187</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘Volunteers Bill’, 18 May 1900, *ibid.*, Vol.83, c.533.

<sup>188</sup> Wyndham, ‘Commons Debate’, 18 July 1900, ‘Volunteers Bill [Lords]’, *ibid.*, Vol.86, c.351.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, c.535.

<sup>190</sup> Arnold-Forster, ‘Commons Debate’, 18 July 1900, ‘Volunteers Bill [Lords]’, *ibid.*, Vol.86, c.353.

<sup>191</sup> Editorial, ‘In the House of Commons Yesterday’, *The Times*, 19 July 1900, p.9.

<sup>192</sup> Arnold-Forster, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Volunteer Bill [Lords]’, 18 July 1900, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.86, c.356.

<sup>193</sup> Norton, *ibid.*, c.362; *The Times*, 19 July 1900, p.7.

Bannerman and Kimberley<sup>194</sup> speaking for the opposition, were also against change, the former noting ‘we must bear in mind that the sudden emergency of last winter evoked a spirit of self-sacrifice and of patriotism which may not always be preserved in the same pitch in time of peace.’<sup>195</sup> *The Times* also objected to Volunteers being used for Imperial defence which ‘involves a total change in character of the Volunteer force.’<sup>196</sup>

In light of the criticism the government abandoned the provision enabling Volunteers to agree to serve in any part of the world and the obligation to be called out at any time was confined to the United Kingdom. Wyndham justified the government’s step down on the basis that it was ‘proper to wait’ before deciding such matters until the Volunteers serving in South Africa ‘have come home and told their tale.’<sup>197</sup> The debate revealed both the reluctance among the service members and defence intellectuals to accept broad change and the increase of their power to challenge civilian supremacy.

While it was difficult for Lansdowne to persuade some of the Volunteer representatives in the country to accept change he had no such difficulty with the Yeomanry. Of the three forces in the Auxiliary Army it assumed an awkward role in the scheme of national defence.<sup>198</sup> Comprising many retired cavalry officers, landowners, and fox hunters,<sup>199</sup> it was undermanned and partially trained. In 1899, there were thirty-eight regiments comprising 11,891 officers and men.<sup>200</sup> To Lansdowne, ‘our Yeomanry dwindles just because the best men and officers and rank and file feel it is a farce...largely a theatrical reminiscence of the cavalry which fought in the Crimea and Peninsular. The best men of all ranks avoid it or leave it because they think it an expensive sham.’<sup>201</sup> Dealing with the manpower crisis that emerged in late 1899 with the resources they had and the popularity of the war, he

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<sup>194</sup> Kimberley, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘Volunteers Bill’, 18 May 1900, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.83, c.535.

<sup>195</sup> Campbell-Bannerman, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Volunteers Bill [Lords]’, 18 July 1900, *ibid.*, Vol.86, c.367.

<sup>196</sup> ‘In the House of Commons Yesterday’, *The Times*, 19 July 1900, p.9.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*; Wyndham’s actual language differed from that reported in *The Times*. Wyndham, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Volunteers Bill [Lords]’, 18 July 1900, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.86, c.382.

<sup>198</sup> Dunlop, *The Development of the British Army*, p.53.

<sup>199</sup> P. Talbot, ‘The English Yeomanry in the nineteenth century and the Great Boer War.’ *Journal for Society of Army Historical Research*, 79 (2001), pp.55-6.

<sup>200</sup> Dunlop, *The Development of the British Army*, p.53.

<sup>201</sup> Lansdowne to Wyndham (private), 17 December 1899, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/20/5.

and his advisers put forward a scheme to make better use of the force. On 16 December, Buller requested that Lansdowne send him 8,000 irregulars organised in companies of one hundred each, equipped as mounted infantry able to ‘shoot as well as possible and ride decently.’<sup>202</sup> That same day the Army Board discussed the matter and agreed to make use of the Yeomanry in accordance with Buller’s request under the proviso that they should ‘bring their own horses, receiving the government remount price for them.’<sup>203</sup>

At the time no large units of mounted infantry existed in the British Army,<sup>204</sup> so that the organisation of at least 20,000 such soldiers was a ‘matter of immediate urgency and permanent importance.’<sup>205</sup> Lansdowne and Wyndham, who had over twelve years of service in the Yeomanry, decided that they would create a new unit called the Imperial Yeomanry out of both the existing Yeomanry and by recruiting good horsemen from the general public. The Imperial Yeomanry was largely Wyndham’s creation, as he told his father: ‘It is my child. I invented it after lunch on Sunday and it is already in fine bantling. May it live and prosper.’<sup>206</sup> Wolseley took no part in the creation of the force and later claimed ‘his opinion had not been asked for upon the Imperial Yeomanry question.’<sup>207</sup> However, it is clear that Wood did inform him in the matter.<sup>208</sup> Although the proposal met with the approval of the Yeomanry representatives themselves,<sup>209</sup> when Wolseley heard about it, he opposed the scheme. He was anxious to provide Buller with ‘8,000 trained men accustomed to some sort of discipline, but to go into the highway and byways and pick up any civilians who will volunteer to go to South Africa quite regardless of whether they have...even the rudiments of discipline and to form these into companies of battalions in the proportion of three of such men to one of the very imperfectly drilled and disciplined Yeomanry men who volunteer is according to my knowledge of war, a dangerous experiment.’<sup>210</sup> While Lansdowne admitted that the Imperial

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<sup>202</sup> Buller to Lansdowne 16 December 1899, in PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, Appendix J, p.624.

<sup>203</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Proceedings of the Army Board’, 16 December 1899, NA. WO 162/612.

<sup>204</sup> Under existing arrangements the British Army trained for 1,200-1,400 mounted infantry men annually. Lansdowne to Wolseley (private), 17 December 1899, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/16/28/5.

<sup>205</sup> Lansdowne to Wyndham (private), 17 February 1899, *ibid.*, Add MS. 88906/20/5.

<sup>206</sup> Wyndham to P. Wyndham (private), 20 December 1899, in Egremont, *The Cousins*, p.205.

<sup>207</sup> Wolseley to Permanent Under-Secretary, ‘Minute’, 28 December 1899, NA. WO 32/7866.

<sup>208</sup> Wood to Wolseley, 27 December 1899, *ibid.*

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

<sup>210</sup> Wolseley to Permanent Under-Secretary, ‘Minute’, 28 December 1899, *ibid.*

Yeomanry would 'include a large number of men who have little experience as soldiers', he knew of no other source to provide for Buller's request. Moreover, he did not share Wolseley's view regarding the type of recruits the scheme would attract reminding him that the senior officers and Wolseley himself had laid down certain qualifications to ensure 'our getting really useful men who with a little training and experience in the field will be extremely valuable.'<sup>211</sup>

Among the Cabinet Balfour approved of the scheme, and wrote a letter of appeal to the Earl of Haddington which was published in *The Times*.<sup>212</sup> Walter Long, Lansdowne's Wiltshire neighbour, also supported it, remarking the feeling in all ranks in the Wiltshire Yeomanry was 'splendid and enthusiastic.'<sup>213</sup> Lansdowne established an Imperial Yeomanry Committee or 'Board' for the organisation of the force and for testing the men recruited.<sup>214</sup> The first contingent was embarked by 11 February 1900,<sup>215</sup> and they were enlisted as part of the Regular Army because under the Yeomanry Act the War Office had no power over them 'outside the limits of the United Kingdom.'<sup>216</sup> Enlistment with the Regular Army was 'a temporary operation' for the duration of the war.<sup>217</sup> Achieving a measure of success and enabling more Regular soldiers to be used at the front, Methuen thought they were 'a splendid force.'<sup>218</sup> Speaking in the House of Lords seven years later, Lord Harris, who presided over the Imperial Yeomanry Committee, recalled 'I was one of the four Yeomanry officers...summoned by [Lansdowne] in the Black Week that followed our most serious disasters in South Africa, and as we went out of the room, one of my friends said to me, Is this going to make us or break us? As it turned out, it made us. But it was not the service we had given; it was not such credit as we had gained; the tradition of that would by degrees have died down, certainly in the minds of recruits. What made us was the fact that we showed we were worth something in

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<sup>211</sup> Lansdowne 'Minute', 30 December 1899, NA. WO 32/7866/ 8&9.

<sup>212</sup> Balfour to Haddington 'The Auxiliary Forces, the Yeomanry', *The Times*, 21 December 1899, p.9.

<sup>213</sup> Long to Lansdowne (private), 27 December 1899, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/20/3.

<sup>214</sup> Lansdowne to Long (private), 2 January 1900, *ibid.*

<sup>215</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lords Debate', 'The Imperial Yeomanry - Transport', 6 February 1900, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.78, c.689.

<sup>216</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lords Debate', 'The Imperial Yeomanry, Volunteers - Temporary Army Rank Relative Rank with Militia Officers', 19 February 1900, *ibid.*, Vol.79, c.352.

<sup>217</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lords Debate', 'Supersession of Militia Officers, 29 March 1900', *ibid.*, Vol.81, c.626.

<sup>218</sup> Methuen to Lansdowne (private), 26 March 1900, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 8890/20/12.



the war.<sup>219</sup> To improve the conditions of service for the remaining Yeomanry that did not serve in South Africa Lansdowne's emergency measures provided for a month's training under canvas, an increase in their contingent allowance and a grant for travel to and from training.<sup>220</sup>

Although Lansdowne devoted most of his attention during 'the War' to increasing the size and improving the condition of the Auxiliary Army he did not neglect to reorganise the Regular Army. While his permanent measures to increase the infantry battalions did not go as far as Wolseley wished, he raised twelve new battalions which with the three that had previously been authorised, in order to supply the reliefs and drafts for colonial stations in India and South Africa, brought the total to fifteen.<sup>221</sup> The new battalions were added as third and fourth battalions of the existing line arrangements. He also increased the number of infantry men serving on a three year enlistment.<sup>222</sup> Three months later, in May 1900, these fifteen battalions had an average strength of 370 men and nine or ten officers each. Although the number of men entering the battalions was respectable, it was Lansdowne's opinion that there were still further directions in which the War Office should look to attract more men and 'perhaps men of a better social class.' It can be speculated from this remark that Lansdowne wished to introduce more educated men into the ranks. To maintain a sufficient flow of recruits and retain them in the Army was one of Lansdowne's overarching aims as Secretary of State. He believed that to achieve this required an improvement in the condition of service. It was his view that 'one of the greatest drawbacks of our present system is that which is to be found in the fact that of the men who do enter the Army so large a number waste away and disappear in the first years of their service, giving us neither the full period of their service with the colours nor the advantage of their presence afterwards in the reserve.'<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> Harris, 'Lords Debate', 'Territorial and Reserve Forces Bill', 26 June 1907, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.176, c.1328.

<sup>220</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lords Debate', 'Yeomanry- Pay, Grants, and Training', 20 March 1900, *ibid.*, Vol.80, c.1294.

<sup>221</sup> Lansdowne, 'Note', 27 January 1900, NA. WO 32/6360/266/302; Lansdowne, 'Lords Debate', 'South African War - Contemplated Military Measures', 12 February 1900, *ibid.*, Vol.78, c.1173.

<sup>222</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lords Debate', 'South African War - Contemplated Military Measures', 12 February 1900, *ibid.*, Vol.78, c.1173 and c.1181.

<sup>223</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lords Debate', 'War Office Reorganisation - Recruiting in Scotland, etc.', 25 May 1900, *ibid.*, Vol.83, c.1263 and c.1264

While introducing measures to improve the military life for an infantry man, Lansdowne's emergency measures also attempted to do the same for the other divisions within the Regular Army. Despite the importance Lansdowne attached to the artillery and his attempts to reorganise it prior to 'the War' he was fiercely attacked for not doing enough for the force in South Africa. Arnold-Forster remarked that 'the supply of artillery both horse and field, was totally inadequate, and that the guns for both these branches and also those assigned to the garrison artillery were insufficient in numbers.'<sup>224</sup> It was also Wolseley's view that an increase in the size of the force was necessary. Lansdowne agreed but he maintained that Wolseley's proposal to form seven new batteries of horse artillery and forty-one of field artillery in the space of a few months would be 'hopeless.' During the early stages of 'the War' artillery of two Army Corps were sent to South Africa and only the field artillery of one Army Corps remained in Britain. In light of this Lansdowne decided to raise horse and field artillery for two more Army Corps.<sup>225</sup> He proposed raising these men from artillery reservists, from ex-artillery men desiring to re-join the service and from a certain number of Volunteer artillery men being allowed to join the batteries upon a 'short one year's term of engagement.'<sup>226</sup>

While Lansdowne's additions to the artillery were less than Wolseley had wished for his additions to the cavalry were broadly in accord with Wolseley's demands. Responding to the view that Lansdowne's reorganisation of 1895 had weakened the force Lansdowne's emergency measures provided for fifteen regiments of cavalry. These were formed from existing regiments left in Britain and raised to war strength.<sup>227</sup> The new measures met little resistance in and out of Parliament, although a criticism was made by one of the service parliamentarians that the cavalry system was 'a sham', and the regiments were 'skeletons.'<sup>228</sup> Lansdowne disagreed. He believed that he had put the cavalry into 'a better shape than they were a few years earlier.' But he conceded 'I do not think under any

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<sup>224</sup> H.O. Arnold-Forster, *The War Office, the Army and the Empire: A Review of the Military Situation in 1900*, (London, 1900), p.29.

<sup>225</sup> This amounted to thirty-six batteries of field artillery and seven batteries of horse or forty-three altogether.

<sup>226</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lords Debate', 'South African War - Contemplated Military Measures', 12 February 1900, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.78, c.1175.

<sup>227</sup> Wyndham, 'Commons Debate', 'Number of Land Forces,' *ibid.*, c.1272.

<sup>228</sup> Heneage, 'Lords Debate', 'Military Reorganisation - Recruiting in Scotland, etc.', 25 May 1900, *ibid.*, Vol.83, c.1265.

system we shall be able to keep the whole of our cavalry complete in men and horses.’ He believed the mere question of barracks would prevent it. There would always be a certain number of horses sick or untrained and ‘the idea of keeping the whole cavalry at such a strength of men and horses that you could at any moment send it out of the country seems to me illusory.’<sup>229</sup>

Among Wolseley’s proposals for increasing the Regular Army discussed at the Defence Committee of the Cabinet on 29 December 1899 was a suggestion to raise thirty-two battalions of veteran soldiers.<sup>230</sup> Lansdowne was favourable to ‘tapping’ these discharged soldiers no longer on the reserve,<sup>231</sup> but he did not believe that there would be the ‘slightest chance of raising thirty-two battalions in the next few months.’ He also held it was a ‘misnomer to describe them as veterans,’<sup>232</sup> although this was the term they were generally referred to by. The proposal to allow these ex-soldiers to serve in line battalions was discussed and approved by the Defence Committee of the Cabinet on 20 January<sup>233</sup> and formally submitted to the Cabinet on 8 February. Although the Cabinet approved in principle to using these men they could not agree on how much to pay them. Lansdowne thought they should receive £30 payable in instalments.<sup>234</sup> Some of his colleagues supposed that this was too generous. Their objections annoyed him.<sup>235</sup> Balfour remarked that the Cabinet’s decision knocked a great hole in the emergency portion of the scheme and that it was extremely improbable that any trained soldiers would ‘give up their civil employment for the privilege not of fighting but of living in barracks for a year on 1s 3d a day.’<sup>236</sup> He suggested that a bounty of £6 should be offered to them.<sup>237</sup> But Lansdowne thought that this did not go far enough. The difficulty confronting Lansdowne and the Cabinet was that whereas a first class Army Reservist received £9 a year a veteran received about £6. While it was fair to discriminate between a

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<sup>229</sup> Lansdowne, *ibid.*, c.1264 and c.1266.

<sup>230</sup> Wolseley to Lansdowne, ‘Minute’, 29 December 1899, CAB 37/51/105, paragraph 13 and A (1).

<sup>231</sup> Lansdowne to Wolseley (private), 17 January 1900, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/16/3.

<sup>232</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘Military Reorganisation - Recruiting in Scotland, etc.’, 25 May 1900, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.83, c.1253.

<sup>233</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Memorandum -Meeting of Defence Committee’, 20 January 1900, (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/22/18.

<sup>234</sup> Lansdowne to Hicks Beach (private), 3 March 1900, GRO. St Aldwyn MSS, D2455 PCC/84.

<sup>235</sup> Lansdowne to Wolseley (private), 11 February 1900, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/16/28/5.

<sup>236</sup> Balfour, ‘Memorandum’, undated, *ibid.*, Add MS. 88906/16/28/5.

<sup>237</sup> Balfour, ‘Memorandum’, 24 February 1900, *ibid.*, Add MS. 88906/16/18.

man who had been out of the Regular Army for more than five years and was less valuable than a man who remembered more of his drill, it did not solve the question of inducement and compensation to a man more firmly established in civil life.<sup>238</sup> Lansdowne compromised. He proposed paying the veteran an amount equal to two years arrears of reserve pay (£12) and allowing them to enrol for one year of service only and at the end of that year to pay them a bounty of £10. The amount of £22 was almost exactly the difference between the ordinary pay of a soldier for one year and the 2s 6d a day which Wolseley had originally suggested veterans should be paid.<sup>239</sup> The Cabinet approved Lansdowne's scheme on 16 February.<sup>240</sup> Wishing to raise the status of the force, Lansdowne also proposed that the new battalions should be called the Royal Reserve Battalions, an idea that Queen Victoria found satisfactory. The response to the veteran scheme was 'magnificent',<sup>241</sup> and by July 24,000 men had been recruited to the Royal Reserve Battalions and Wolseley reported that they were a force whose 'presence in the country was and is an invaluable addition to its defensive strength.'<sup>242</sup>

While Lansdowne was willing to make use of veterans for home defence he was also determined to utilise colonial soldiers to help prosecute 'the War'. In a show of support for the Empire the governments of the self-governing British Colonies offered men, particularly mounted soldiers, to participate in the conflict. The initial reluctance of the War Office to accept this support later became the subject of controversy over alleged snubbing of those Colonies which offered mounted infantry. Lansdowne refuted such criticism later telling the Royal Commission that 'it is, to say the least, a gross exaggeration to represent the then War Office as having repudiated the offers of mounted troops from the Colonies.'<sup>243</sup> The value of the 16,000 colonial soldiers that fought in South Africa from Canada, Australia, Tasmania, India, the Cape and Natal was recognised by Lansdowne not only because they added to Britain's military strength but because their presence 'impressed on the civilized world "Great Britain" is not an empty phrase and that we

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<sup>238</sup> Wyndham, 'Minute', 11 January 1900, CAB 37/52/4.

<sup>239</sup> Lansdowne, 'Minute', 13 February 1900, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/16/28/5.

<sup>240</sup> Lansdowne to Queen Victoria (private), 16 February 1900, *ibid.*, Add MS. 88906/18/7.

<sup>241</sup> Wyndham, 'Commons Debate', 'Army Estimates,' 12 March 1900, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.80, c.609.

<sup>242</sup> Wolseley quoted by Lansdowne. Lansdowne, 'Lords Debate', 'Militia Ballot Bill [House of Lords]', 2 July 1900, *ibid.*, Vol.85, c.204.

<sup>243</sup> PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21138, p.506.

should not have obtained this large measure of Voluntary support unless the cause for which we are fighting were a just cause.’<sup>244</sup>

While Lansdowne’s scheme of emergency measures strengthened the Army at home and abroad the measures did not go far enough for Wolseley. Upset by the Cabinet’s decision and sick of his position at the War Office<sup>245</sup> he offered to resign informing Lansdowne ‘as the Cabinet refuse to adopt the measures by which alone I believe you could raise the troops I conceive to be essential for national safety, I feel compelled to resign my position as Commander-in-Chief.’<sup>246</sup> Lansdowne refused to accept his resignation. In the same way that the measures, as an expression of military strength, failed to satisfy Wolseley they also failed to convince many of the critics of Army reform in Parliament and the press ‘who are so numerous.’<sup>247</sup> To Dilke they were an ‘extravagant makeshift proposal,’<sup>248</sup> and to one of the service parliamentarians, ‘We have tried raising an Army by Voluntary enlistment and by making the Army popular, but we are now trying to raise an Army by invitation and imagination.’<sup>249</sup> *The Times* argued the War Office ‘has a rare opportunity’ which has ‘not yet been properly utilized.’<sup>250</sup>

At the same time that Lansdowne was occupied with passing his emergency measures through Parliament he was also devoting his energy to making sure the War Office was in full support of Roberts’ campaign in South Africa. On his arrival in South Africa Roberts began a series of tactical reforms to address the weaknesses within the Army and bring ‘the War’ to a conclusion.<sup>251</sup> Lansdowne, who did not believe in interfering with generals in the field,<sup>252</sup> made sure Roberts was given a free hand to undertake his task. He concluded that if Roberts failed to recover the situation the government’s popularity would suffer. He was willing to make ‘almost any sacrifice’ in order to bring about a swift end to the war. With minimal loss to

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<sup>244</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lord Lansdowne in Sheffield - The Cutler’s Feast,’ *The Belfast News-Letter*, 3 November 1899.

<sup>245</sup> Wolseley to Lady Wolseley (private), 18 January 1900, HCL. Wolseley MSS, WP. 28/7i.

<sup>246</sup> Wolseley to Lansdowne (private), 11 February 1900, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/16/28/5.

<sup>247</sup> Wyndham, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Army Estimates’, 12 March 1900, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.80, c.610.

<sup>248</sup> Dilke, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Army Estimates’, 12 March 1900, *ibid.*, Vol.80, c.627.

<sup>249</sup> Acland-Hood, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Number of Land Forces’, 12 February 1900, *ibid.*, Vol.78, c.1301.

<sup>250</sup> Editorial, ‘The Military Scheme’, *The Times*, 13 February 1900, p.10.

<sup>251</sup> Roberts, ‘Notes for guidance in South African Warfare’, 26 January 1900, NA. WO 108/109

<sup>252</sup> Lansdowne to White (private), 27 October 1899, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/22/20.

civilian supremacy Lansdowne's willingness to loosen control satisfied the senior officers and their wishes to prosecute 'the War' without hindrance. In bridging the gap between civilians and soldiers both in London and on the spot Lansdowne also made certain that as Roberts made his advance towards Pretoria he was protected from unwarranted interference and distractions, particularly the possibility of other generals acting as a brake on his plan of campaign. 'Please do not think about our Parliamentary difficulties or allow them to affect your plan',<sup>253</sup> he informed Roberts during the attacks on the government in early 1900. By maintaining a transparent and harmonious relationship with his colleague,<sup>254</sup> Lansdowne ensured that Roberts was given every possible chance to undertake a successful campaign.

While Roberts was preparing to start his advance to Pretoria, Buller met with defeat at Spion Kop. The battle demonstrated more than any other the incompetent leadership of some of the generals and their failure to appreciate the requirements of modern warfare. It showed that tactics to deal with long-range artillery, and magazine rifle fire were lacking, adequate communication and scouting were absent and training was deficient.<sup>255</sup> Whereas 1,500 British soldiers became casualties, including two hundred and forty-three dead, the Boers suffered three hundred and thirty-five casualties. Photographs of dead soldiers brought to the attention of the British public as never before the reality of modern war. What had once been thought of as a 'tea-time war' was now portrayed as an 'absent-minded war'<sup>256</sup> and an appalling demonstration of military blunder.<sup>257</sup> In contrast to Black Week, when the generals on the spot and Wolseley were spared public criticism, the press did not hold back after Spion Kop. Although the press were fully aware that military incompetence was the cause of the set-backs in South Africa, Lansdowne remained the principal focus of their attack on the war. One writer noted 'the plight of our Army in South Africa, the half measures, the manifest hesitations, and the tardiness of the despatch of reinforcements, equally condemn Lord Lansdowne.'<sup>258</sup> Spenser Wilkinson noted that 'In the crisis of the Nation's fate we were ungoverned and unled, and to all appearance we are content to be so, and the leader writers, trained in

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<sup>253</sup> Lansdowne to Roberts, (private), 5 January 1900, *ibid.*, Add MS. 88906/19/22.

<sup>254</sup> Lansdowne to Roberts, 28 January 1900, NA. WO 105/30.

<sup>255</sup> A.C. Doyle, *The Great Boer War* (London, 1901), pp.247-266 and pp.515-534.

<sup>256</sup> W.E. Cairnes, *An Absent Minded War; being some reflections on our reverses and the causes which have led to them* (London, 1900).

<sup>257</sup> Searle. *A New England?*, p.279.

<sup>258</sup> H.W. Wilson, 'An Englishman' 'The Causes of Reverse', *National Review* 34 (1900), pp.830-42.

the tradition of respectable formalism interpret the Nation's apathy as fortitude. For the state of the Army, for the strategical and tactical training which has resulted in so many failures, the politicians of both front benches, who in turn have neglected these vital matters, are responsible.'<sup>259</sup>

The news coverage of Spion Kop nearly brought down the government. Lansdowne believed Buller's command should be reduced, his Army divided up, and given to Roberts,<sup>260</sup> to whom he wrote, 'I confess I have no confidence in anything but the advance which you will be beginning a few days hence.'<sup>261</sup> Wishing to focus all their efforts on Roberts' imminent operation, Lansdowne protested at Buller's demand for further reinforcements. He advised Salisbury that, 'to weaken him [Roberts] in order to pour more troops into the Natal sieve would in my belief be sheer folly.'<sup>262</sup>

As the implications of Buller's defeat took shape and the new session of Parliament approached, Chamberlain was 'not quite sure that the government would survive: 'I do not look forward to the Session with much pleasure but perhaps it may relieve me of all pressure by turning the government out of office.'<sup>263</sup> It was Devonshire's view that 'without attempting to find scapegoats we ought to know who is responsible for this policy.'<sup>264</sup> When the situation in South Africa was debated in the House of Lords, Salisbury's defence of his government's oversight was cynical and devoid of sound argument. Failing to give the House a lead his speech was deficient in explanations and confidence and allowed Rosebery to denounce what was an attempt to ring-fence himself from criticism at his colleagues' expense.<sup>265</sup> Lansdowne, who spoke after Salisbury, was less sardonic in defending the government's position and intimated that the government had possibly underrated 'not the numbers of armaments of the Boers but their value as fighting

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<sup>259</sup> Wilkinson, *Lessons of the War, Being comments from week to week to the relief of Ladysmith*, p.152 and p.156.

<sup>260</sup> Surridge, 'Lansdowne at the War Office', in Gooch, (ed.), *The Boer War*, p.35.

<sup>261</sup> Lansdowne to Roberts (private), 27 January 1900, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/22.

<sup>262</sup> Lansdowne to Salisbury (private), 11 February 1900, NA. WO 32/8098.

<sup>263</sup> Chamberlain to Mrs Chamberlain (private), 16 January 1900, in J.L. Garvin, *The Life of Joseph Chamberlain* (6 Vols., London, 1932-69), Vol.3, p.539.

<sup>264</sup> Devonshire to Lansdowne (private), 23 January 1900, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/13.

<sup>265</sup> Rosebery, 'Lords Debate', 'Address in Answer to Her Majesty's Most Gracious Speech', 30 January 1900, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.78, cc.35-39.

men.’ Denying that the government had been unprepared, he stated that his military advisers had claimed that it was possible by sending out reinforcements of moderate size to secure the two colonies.<sup>266</sup> Interestingly, in giving evidence to the Royal Commission three years later he did admit that the government had been unprepared.<sup>267</sup> Unlike Salisbury’s speech Lansdowne’s went some way towards appeasing the irritable mood in the House.

Taking advantage of the government’s weakened popularity some of the opposition and reform advocates initiated a series of attacks during the early part of the Parliamentary session calling for reform. Dilke blamed the Defence Committee of the Cabinet for having failed and for ‘slackness on the part of those who attend to the work,’ and that ‘every precaution recommended by every authority...was neglected by the Cabinet.’<sup>268</sup> Arnold-Forster argued ‘the country does not care about how these difficulties have come upon us, but how they are to be dealt with,’<sup>269</sup> and Sir Edward Grey held that ‘individual ability in the Cabinet is not denied, but there must be some mind which co-ordinates, which guides and controls the individual ability and subordinates it to the policy of the whole. We have not seen the work of that mind in the action of the Cabinet. We have not felt the confidence which the country would feel in a Cabinet controlled by one guiding mind inspiring the whole.’<sup>270</sup>

Although the government survived these attacks, Lansdowne’s publication of the Spion Kop despatch the following April caused them further difficulties. Although the despatch contained evidence that the operation was muddled by the generals who were in disagreement with each other, Lansdowne believed he was justified in publishing the facts. He did not think the House of Commons would have stood complete suppression of the case.<sup>271</sup> At the end of March, he circulated to the Cabinet Buller’s despatches about the defeat at Spion Kop, with a letter from Roberts of 13 February attached. In his report of the battle, which he had written ‘not

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<sup>266</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘Address in Answer to Her Majesty’s Most Gracious Speech’, 30 January 1900, *ibid.*, Vol.78, c.41 and c.42.

<sup>267</sup> PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21417, p.528.

<sup>268</sup> Dilke, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Address in Answer to Her Majesty’s Most Gracious Speech’, 1 February 1900, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.78, c.313 and c.308.

<sup>269</sup> Arnold-Forster, *ibid.*, c.342.

<sup>270</sup> Grey, *ibid.*, cc.390-391.

<sup>271</sup> Lansdowne to Salisbury (private), 19 April 1900, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/7.



necessarily for publication', Buller criticised General Warren's action, and himself for not intervening sooner. Roberts was infuriated by Buller's suggestion that Warren was not following instructions and included in his own despatch a censure of Buller, which Lansdowne thought was as temperate as possible and gave him credit for a well-conceived plan that might have succeeded had he not given his subordinates too free a hand.<sup>272</sup> Balfour thought it noteworthy that Roberts said nothing of Buller that Buller did not say against himself.<sup>273</sup>

On 30 March, Lansdowne and the Cabinet drafted a telegram to Roberts, which some of the Cabinet wished 'more vigorously worded'.<sup>274</sup> It stated that 'your despatch of 13<sup>th</sup> February...puts us in a difficulty. Buller has under him about 50,000 men. He and his second in command have apparently quarrelled. We gather that in your opinion, neither one nor the other have shown competence in recent military operations. It does not seem easy to justify keeping them in their present positions if they are to be intrusted with difficult operations in the future, or leaving all their troops with them if they are not.'<sup>275</sup> Although the Cabinet was agreed on the wording of the telegram Lansdowne cancelled it as he believed that such action would 'stir up controversy in many quarters, some of them quite exalted.' It was his view, as he later told Roberts, that 'We had already said enough to show you that you would have had our support if you had recommended his supersession, or that of any other general.'<sup>276</sup> Lansdowne's cautious approach in dealing with this matter was mirrored by Roberts who believed: 'Personally I should be glad to see both Buller and Warren leave the country, but it is not easy to get rid of them without a storm being raised, which I would rather avoid for the credit of the Army.'<sup>277</sup>

Believing that concealing the despatches would be more damaging to the government than their publication, Lansdowne informed Roberts that some of them should be made public and that Buller should be invited to write a narrative of events.<sup>278</sup> Buller, however, was opposed to this: 'I do not at all like the idea of

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<sup>272</sup> Lansdowne to Roberts (private), 18 April 1900, *ibid.*, Add MS. 88906/19/22.

<sup>273</sup> Lansdowne to Balfour (private), 24 April 1900, BL. Balfour MSS, Add MS. 49727, f.132.

<sup>274</sup> Lansdowne to Queen Victoria (private), 9 April 1900, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/18/7.

<sup>275</sup> Cabinet to Roberts, 30 March 1900, Bod. Sandars MSS, MS. Eng. Hist. c.73, f.67.

<sup>276</sup> Lansdowne to Roberts (private), 31 March 1900, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/23.

<sup>277</sup> Roberts to Lansdowne (private), 1 April 1900, *ibid.*

<sup>278</sup> Lansdowne to Roberts (private), 28 March 1900, *ibid.* Add MS. 88906/22/20.

rewriting a despatch for publication. I much prefer to leave it in the hands of the Commander-in-Chief, and let him select for publication whatever he thinks proper.<sup>279</sup> In light of Buller's attitude Roberts advised Lansdowne to publish some of the despatches as he had previously suggested. He also accepted that his despatch of 13 February should be published. When the matter was discussed in Cabinet opinions differed. As no minutes were kept at the meeting there was no record of its final decision. Believing the Cabinet had made no decision to repress publication, Lansdowne authorised the press to publish the selected documents. Prior to the publication of the Spion Kop papers Lansdowne warned Roberts of the 'disagreeable comments' that the press would make. He remarked, 'I don't like it, but there is nothing else to be done.'<sup>280</sup> Neither Roberts nor Wolseley, who was also informed of the matter, had any objection. The publication caused a 'howl'.<sup>281</sup> *The Times* reported that 'It shows us the Secretary of State endeavouring to shift onto the Commander-in-Chief in the field responsibility that rightly belongs to the authorities at home.'<sup>282</sup> Salisbury was puzzled by Lansdowne's action. He thought the Cabinet 'were all of one mind that it ought not to be published.'<sup>283</sup> Salisbury was particularly upset by the affair as it reflected negatively on the Cabinet as a whole. 'I am not dealing with the substance of your decision which I regret: as the publication should have carried with it the suppression of Buller and Warren. But what I demur is that the views of the Cabinet were weighed with you so little in a matter of this gravity.'<sup>284</sup>

With no official record of the Cabinet's meeting, Lansdowne was quite unaware of any such decision to suppress publication. 'But our decisions are very often impalpable and perhaps I ought to have been able to construct one from materials afforded by Devonshire's yawns and casual interjections round the table,'<sup>285</sup> he informed Balfour. Queen Victoria, who received copies of telegrams sent to and from South Africa, was at a loss to understand Lansdowne's action, and informed him that Roberts 'must not be interfered with by civilians at a distance who

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<sup>279</sup> Roberts to Lansdowne (private), 31 March 1900, Bod. Sandars MSS, MS. Eng. Hist. c.73, f.67.

<sup>280</sup> Lansdowne to Roberts (private), 13 April 1900, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/23.

<sup>281</sup> Lansdowne to Roberts (private), 27 April 1900, *ibid.*

<sup>282</sup> Editorial 'The Parliamentary Paper which we give today', *The Times*, 4 May 1900, p.9.

<sup>283</sup> Salisbury to Lansdowne (private), 12 April 1900, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/7.

<sup>284</sup> Salisbury to Lansdowne (private), 20 April 1900, *ibid.*

<sup>285</sup> Lansdowne to Balfour (private), 22 April 1900, BL. Balfour MSS, Add MS. 49727, f.130.

cannot judge the exact state of the case.<sup>286</sup> In his reply, Lansdowne concurred with her, while maintaining it was ‘within the right of the Cabinet to endeavour to strengthen the hands of the general and to make him feel that the responsibility for severe measures if taken will not be his alone.’<sup>287</sup> Fearing that the affair would lead soldiers to lose the respect of their generals, she suggested that Lansdowne should resign, but Salisbury was unwilling to agree to this. He anticipated by taking such a course the rest of the Liberal Unionists would follow Lansdowne and the government would collapse.

Although to many observers it was not very easy to understand why the incident created such a sensation, Lansdowne’s son, who was serving in South Africa, noted ‘I suppose the fuss about Buller is really a political one, as he was Campbell-Bannerman & Rosebery’s man for the W.O., and it is a fine chance for them to make political capital, without apparently being unpatriotic.’<sup>288</sup> During the debates in Parliament Campbell-Bannerman said the government’s defence was utterly insufficient, but, ‘I believe this debate will have done a great deal of good if it even induces the Government to look a little round them before they take a step of this sort again.’<sup>289</sup> Rosebery declared that the government had ‘degraded’ Buller’s authority and ‘impaired his position.’<sup>290</sup> The government escaped censure by a strictly party vote, though many of its supporters abstained. Making an example of Buller’s incompetence in South Africa was not Lansdowne’s object although he believed that ‘Buller trusted too much to his subordinates and did not take measures to satisfy himself that his orders were carried out.’<sup>291</sup>

Lansdowne’s position in Cabinet was not seriously affected by the incident. However, the press and public’s estimation of him was further damaged and during subsequent months he was subjected to intense criticism and satire. To Rudyard Kipling, ‘this here home government is about as slack-backed and muddleheaded as

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<sup>286</sup> Queen Victoria to Lansdowne (private), 17 March 1900, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/18/7.

<sup>287</sup> Lansdowne to Queen Victoria (private), 9 April 1900, *ibid.*

<sup>288</sup> Petty-Fitzmaurice to Lady Cavendish (private), 20 June 1900, CH. Devonshire MSS, Chatsworth. 9<sup>th</sup> Duke’s group, Uncatalogued (Evie Devonshire papers), Pre-1908 B36.

<sup>289</sup> Campbell-Bannerman, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Army Estimates, 1900-1901’, 4 May 1900, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.82, c.823.

<sup>290</sup> Rosebery, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘South African War - Publication of the Spion Kop Despatches’, 4 May 1900, *ibid.*, c.733.

<sup>291</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘South African War - Publication of the Spion Kop Despatches’, *ibid.*, c.725.

they can make 'em - specially the limp and luckless Lansdowne.'<sup>292</sup> Hector Munro, alias "Saki", satirised Lansdowne in 'Alice in Pall Mall' as the White Knight. Spender, the Editor of the *Westminster Gazette*, who published the work, said it was quoted everywhere and set all of London laughing. He regarded it as symbolic of all the War Secretaries who did not expect war:<sup>293</sup>

'The great art of falling off a horse,' said the White Knight, 'is to have another handy to fall on to.'

'But wouldn't that be rather difficult to arrange?' asked Alice.

'Difficult, of course,' replied the Knight, 'but in my Department one has to be provided for emergencies. Now, for instance, have you ever conducted a war in South Africa?'

Alice shook her head.

'I have,' said the Knight, with a gentle complacency in his voice.

'And did you bring it to a successful conclusion?' asked Alice.

'Not exactly to a *conclusion* – not a *definite* conclusion, you know – nor entirely successful either. In fact, I believe it's going on still...'

'You see, I had read a book,' the Knight went on in a dreamy, far-away tone, 'written by some one to prove that warfare under modern conditions was impossible. You may imagine how disturbing that was to a man of my profession. Many men would have thrown up the whole thing and gone home. But I grappled with the situation. You will never guess what I did.'

Alice pondered. 'You went to war of course-'

'Yes; *but not under modern conditions.*'

'Now, for instance,' he continued kindly, seeing that Alice had not recovered her breath, 'you observe this little short-range gun that I have hanging to my saddle? Why do you suppose I sent out guns of that particular kind? Because if they happened to fall into the hands of the enemy they'd be very little use to him. That was my own invention.'<sup>294</sup>

While Lansdowne was caricatured by the press and public, the progress of 'the War' with Roberts in command was characterised by mostly successful British counter-offensives. This new phase began on 11 February 1900 when Roberts led his troops away from the Modder River towards the Orange Free State in a great flanking march that ended in the capture of Bloemfontein.<sup>295</sup> On 15 February, John French ended the siege of Kimberley assisted by Roberts who did the initial planning of the operation. The Boer line was finally broken between 21 and 27 February at the

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<sup>292</sup> Kipling to Lawrence (private), 21 June 1900, in T. Pinney (ed.), *The Letters of Rudyard Kipling*. (6 Vols., London, 1990-2004), Vol.3, 1900-10, p 22.

<sup>293</sup> J.A. Spender, *Life, Journalism and Politics* (2 Vols., London, 1927) Vol.2, p.93.

<sup>294</sup> H. Munro (Saki), *The Westminster Alice* (London, 1902), pp.11-16.

<sup>295</sup> H.E. Raugh, Jnr, *The Victorians at War, 1815-1914: An Encyclopaedia of British Military History* (Santa Barbara, 2004), p.53.

Battle of the Tugela Heights. The success of Buller's force in Natal at Pieters Hill, Railway Hill and Hart's Hill ended Boer resistance in that place and they began to melt away. On 28 February, Ladysmith was relieved. To Lansdowne the relief was 'inexpressible,'<sup>296</sup> and 'the shadow of impending calamity, which has darkened our path for so long, is at last removed.'<sup>297</sup> On the strength of the good news Lansdowne 'ran down here [Bowood] for two days' rest,' informing his former Military Secretary in Canada, Minto, that it was 'the first outing I have had since November. It has been a weary winter and the suspense was almost intolerable.'<sup>298</sup> Brackenbury, on learning that the garrison had fired only one third of their 15-pounder ammunition and not one twenty-sixth of their small-arm ammunition, told Lansdowne, 'the greatest anxiety I ever had during this war, up to the present, was lest, in the earlier stages, I had been too stingy about ammunition and they might run short in Ladysmith...it gave me sleepless nights...I might have spared myself the anxiety.'<sup>299</sup>

After Ladysmith was relieved and the generals in command in South Africa began to sense a turn in their fortunes so their petty jealousies began to materialise, straining further the relations between the different cliques. The high military officers on the spot were of different traditions, backgrounds and temperaments and many were unsuited to their tasks. Even though in the months following the relief of Ladysmith Lansdowne noted there was a lot of growling on the part of 'the man in the street' and 'I might almost add the man in the Cabinet,' over alleged failure to punish officers who had been responsible for bad mistakes, there were no calls in or out of Parliament for such action.<sup>300</sup> Roberts was less lenient and during the course of the campaign took it upon himself to remove from command five generals, six cavalry brigadiers, one infantry brigadier, five commanding officers of cavalry regiments and four commanding officers of infantry battalions for incompetency.<sup>301</sup>

With the surrender of Bloemfontein to Roberts on 13 March some of the press proclaimed 'the first half of the Campaign is over.'<sup>302</sup> On 31 May, General

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<sup>296</sup> Lansdowne to Monson (private), 4 April 1900, Bod. Monson MSS, MS. Eng. Hist. c.1209. f.52.

<sup>297</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lords Debate', 'South African War - suggested further calling up of Volunteers', 1 March 1900, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.79, c.1356.

<sup>298</sup> Lansdowne to Minto (private), 4 March 1900, NLS. Minto MSS, MS 12568, f .212.

<sup>299</sup> Brackenbury to Lansdowne (private), 12 March 1900, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/20/6.

<sup>300</sup> Lansdowne to Roberts (private), 27 July 1900, *ibid.*, Add MS. 88906/19/24.

<sup>301</sup> PP, 1904, XL, Cd.1790, RC, 10520, p.446.

<sup>302</sup> 'British occupy Bloemfontein', *The New York Times*, 15 March 1900.

Pretyman, military governor at Bloemfontein, proclaimed the annexation of the Orange Free State as the Orange River Colony. Roberts left Bloemfontein and resumed his advance towards Johannesburg on 3 May 1900 in the belief that the surest way to disconcert and to discourage an enemy was to go straight to their headquarters. Mafeking was relieved on 17 May by Colonel Mahon and two weeks later Roberts captured Johannesburg. On 5 June Roberts entered Pretoria and although there were still two set piece battles to be fought he could declare 'the War' over. On 3 September, he proclaimed the annexation of the South Africa Republic and Britain was nominally in control of both Republics apart from the Northern Transvaal. While Roberts thought 'the War' was over, Lansdowne supposed that none of the Cabinet, himself included, 'had an idea whether they were near or still far from the end.'<sup>303</sup>

Whilst 'the War' entered this new phase and the situation stabilised, Lansdowne's task as Secretary of State was no less challenging. Among the stories that reached Britain none was more shocking to the public than that of medical negligence. Disease was a major problem for the Army Medical Department and high profile deaths such as that of Prince Christian Victor of Schleswig-Holstein, Queen Victoria's nephew, of typhoid, attracted public attention. *The Times* sent William Burdett-Coutts MP to file reports on the outbreak of the disease. The publication of his report created a public sensation. It appeared to be an attack on the government, but Lansdowne understood it was really aimed at the War Office. It was commonly said that the attack was largely instigated by disappointed doctors and well-meaning but also disappointed ladies.<sup>304</sup>

Lansdowne questioned some of the contents of the report, but privately he realised there had clearly been cases of great suffering because it was impossible to cope with the phenomenal outbreaks of disease that followed Roberts in his rapid advance. Among the criticisms included in the report was that the War Office should have sent more nurses. The question of nurses took up much of Lansdowne's attention during 'the War'. It required his tact, particularly as the Army Nursing Service was closely associated with members of the Royal family. When 'the War' began, this service had a lady superintendent, nineteen superintendent sisters and

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<sup>303</sup> Lansdowne to Roberts (private), 8 June 1900, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/23.

<sup>304</sup> Lansdowne to Roberts (private), 30 June 1900, *ibid*.

sixty-eight sisters serving the main military hospitals in Britain and abroad. There was no mechanism for expansion or bringing in reserves, but the creation of the Princess Christian's (Queen Victoria's daughter) Army Nursing Reserve enabled the deployment of 1,400 trained nurses in South Africa up until May 1902. Nurses served in base, general and stationary hospitals, and on hospital trains and hospital ships. As 'the War' progressed demands for the provision of medical assistance in the field grew largely because of the British practice of tending to both their own soldiers and wounded Boers.<sup>305</sup>

While the involvement of the Royals in nursing matters raised the profile of the service it did little in the short term to strengthen the numbers for service in South Africa. The shortage of nurses was of concern to Wolseley: 'I am certain we shall have over again the same rows about our hospitals that we had in the Crimea when Miss Nightingale went there, unless we take this question of the nurses up seriously and send a large number of trained nurses there under some lady who will undertake the job.'<sup>306</sup> It was Wolseley's view that the difficulty lay with the Army Medical Department which was obstructive and prejudicial. His view was shared by others. Violet Cecil, Salisbury's daughter-in-law, then in South Africa, found 'the military authorities treat the Red Cross like dirt',<sup>307</sup> and William MacCormac, Surgeon-in-Ordinary to the Prince of Wales and a Volunteer in South Africa, reported that the British could use more nurses. Roberts found William Wilson, Surgeon-General with the force, was not very responsive,<sup>308</sup> and noted that medical officers were not keen to employ them, seeming to resent their presence 'probably because the nurses kept vigilant watch over their patients and detected any carelessness by the doctors.'<sup>309</sup> It is of interest, that even though Lansdowne was acquainted with Florence Nightingale and had strongly promoted nurses in India, he did not think they should inundate South Africa with nurses, unless they were really wanted.<sup>310</sup>

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<sup>305</sup> 'Proceedings of the Army Board', 23 October 1899, NA. WO 163/612.

<sup>306</sup> Wolseley to Lansdowne (private), 18 January 1900, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/28.

<sup>307</sup> Cecil to G. Cecil undated, in H. & M. Cecil, *Imperial Marriage. An Edwardian War and Peace* (London, 2002), p.150.

<sup>308</sup> Proceedings of the Army Board, 24 January 1900, NA. WO 163/612.

<sup>309</sup> Roberts to Lansdowne (private), 28 February 1900, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/23.

<sup>310</sup> Lansdowne to Roberts (private), 20 January 1900, *ibid.*

The difficulty experienced by the War Office in providing nurses during ‘the War’ was part of a larger problem concerning the Army Medical Department and Army doctors. Lansdowne was aware that Army doctors as a class were not as good as they should be,<sup>311</sup> and were a concern to Roberts. Roberts found them to be insufferably conceited, not good surgeons and, with scarcely any exception, a very inefficient lot. He recommended that Lansdowne should thoroughly reorganise the department.<sup>312</sup> Army hospitals were administered by the Royal Army Medical Corps. Established by Lansdowne in 1898, it had not proved itself and was inefficient. Its conditions of service and low pay failed to attract men who might lend it status, and the personnel added to the corps during ‘the War’ were untrained in their special duties. Unsurprisingly, slackness was noticeable in much of the work of snatch teams and hospital orderlies. The system of seniority and promotion further weakened the machine and nearly all the military doctors were over-burdened with red tape. ‘There was an extraordinary want of organization in some of the base hospitals and want of business-like management.’<sup>313</sup>

After the charges of medical negligence were debated in the House of Commons, Balfour announced that a small, impartial commission of inquiry would be established to report on the care and treatment of the sick and wounded during the war.<sup>314</sup> The commission, led by Lord Justice Romer made no use of Royal Army Medical Corps assistance in their inquiry. This, Lansdowne believed, was the correct approach because the War Office must not seem to be ‘personally conducting’ the commission.<sup>315</sup> That the commission included no soldier upset Wolseley. He regretted that the British soldier ‘is in no way represented...yet he is the man chiefly concerned in the matters complained of.’<sup>316</sup> Lansdowne had in fact asked Wolseley to recommend a soldier to take part but the names he submitted would not have carried much weight with the public and Lansdowne concluded it would ‘be better that the views of the Army should be ascertained from the evidence of witnesses.’<sup>317</sup>

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<sup>311</sup> Lansdowne to Roberts (private), 10 March 1900, *ibid.*

<sup>312</sup> Roberts to Lansdowne (private), 28 August 1900, *ibid.*, Add MS. 88906/19/24.

<sup>313</sup> Unnamed correspondent to Wood (private), 22 August 1900, *ibid.*, Add MS. 88906/19/29.

<sup>314</sup> Balfour, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘South African War - Hospital and Medical arrangements - Mr Burdett-Coutts’s Charges - Committee of Inquiry’, 5 July 1900, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.85, cc.618-20.

<sup>315</sup> Lansdowne to Roberts (private), 3 August 1900, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/24.

<sup>316</sup> Wolseley to Lansdowne (private), 22 July 1900, *ibid.*

<sup>317</sup> Lansdowne to Wolseley (private), 23 July 1900, *ibid.*



The findings revealed a lack of administrative and organisational ability among the principal medical officers, friction between the civil surgeons and the Royal Army Medical Corps and among the senior officers in the corps itself. Lansdowne's reputation did not suffer for the inadequacies of the medical arrangements in South Africa as it was widely accepted both in and out of Parliament that he did more for the Royal Medical Army Corps than any previous Secretary of State.<sup>318</sup>

Over the summer, as the focus of attention moved from one of military duty to civil duty the press and public began to probe deeper into the costs of the war. Hicks Beach pressed the War Office to reduce military expenditure. Lansdowne was unwilling to consider a reduction until the situation in South Africa was clearer and any reduction could be carried out with safety.<sup>319</sup> In the autumn, with the costs of 'the War' still spiralling, Hicks Beach appealed to Salisbury and Chamberlain that Britain's finances were so bleak that he was reluctant to extend her financial or military obligations.<sup>320</sup> When Hicks Beach tried to impose a deadline for reductions in the size of the force, Lansdowne replied:

In South Africa Robert's troops are all fully employed. The extent of the country which he is holding and the length of the railway which he has to protect are immense...to my mind it would be out of the question to take troops away from him at present. As to home troops I am not frightened by rumours of French preparations, but it is idle to deny that we are not strong at home and the outlook abroad is not reassuring. I am indeed pressed by the soldiers to do more than we are actually doing. If we were to disembody now I think the commander in chief would be justified in protesting...no one is keener than I am for a drawing of our horns all over the world...<sup>321</sup>

Hicks Beach replied,

I could not ask you to take troops away from Roberts which he says it is necessary to retain. But, as I said, I am told that there is a very large force left behind in the Cape Colony and possibly also in Natal...As to home troops I do not see how Wolseley could in reason protest against the disembodiment of a force which he has just pronounced to be useless. I think you attach far too much importance to the soldiers' opinions on this matter which is a question of policy...I suspect that your soldiers

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<sup>318</sup> Farquharson, 'Commons Debate', 'Army (Supplementary) Estimate, 1900-01, Debate', 27 July 1900, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.86 c.1581.

<sup>319</sup> Lansdowne to Salisbury (private), 6 June 1900, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/7.

<sup>320</sup> Hicks Beach to Salisbury (private), 1 October 1900, HH. Salisbury MSS, 3M/E Hicks Beach, f.222.

<sup>321</sup> Lansdowne to Hicks Beach (private), 7 September 1900, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/3.

want to make up...abnormal armaments as long as possible in the hopes of making more of them permanent.<sup>322</sup>

While Lansdowne was considering the military requirements in South Africa, Roberts informed him that he wished to retire from his command and return. It was Lansdowne's opinion that he should replace Wolseley as Commander-in-Chief of the British Army when the latter's term of office expired the following December. Although the proposal to appoint Roberts to Commander-in-Chief 'really quite upset' Queen Victoria for she had always hoped her son, the Duke of Connaught, might take the post, she recognised his claim.<sup>323</sup> Among some biographical notes written after the publication of Lansdowne's Peace Letter in 1917, Lansdowne summarised his memories of 'the War' in five short phrases: 'Difficulties underrated; confidence shaken; Roberts invoked; Brown's Hotel; Roberts had saved himself.'<sup>324</sup> It can be speculated that Lansdowne was indebted to Roberts and his success in South Africa. While Lansdowne's son noted it would be nice for his father to be at the War Office with Roberts,<sup>325</sup> Lansdowne himself had no such desire. By the end of August 1900 it was obvious to him that, 'we shall be met next session by demands for fundamental changes both in the Army and the War Office. With regard to the Army it is admitted that the experience of the war has revealed many defects and that changes are inevitable. As for the War Office I am far from persuaded that there is such a case for a complete alteration of system.' He recognised that there would be great changes in War Office personnel over the following months and before they 'laid rash hands on the organisation,'<sup>326</sup> he hoped they would see what the staff thought of it and not refer questions of reform to a committee. He thought any such inquiry would be interminable and 'no department has been subject of so

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<sup>322</sup> Hicks Beach to Lansdowne (private), 10 September 1900, *ibid.*

<sup>323</sup> Bigge to Lansdowne (private), 27 September 1900, *ibid.*, Add MS. 88906/18/8.

<sup>324</sup> Lansdowne, 'Biographical Note', Undated, *ibid.*, Add MS. 88906/12/5/8. Where Roberts was staying in London prior to his appointment was in Dover Street in Mayfair. The two well-known hotels in that street were Browns and McKellars. According to the extant archive Roberts was staying at McKellars Hotel on 17 December when Lansdowne informed him of his appointment to command in South Africa. Later that day Lansdowne returned to Dover Street to inform him about the death of his son Freddy. It can be speculated that they met at Browns Hotel, Lansdowne to Miss A. Roberts (private), 11 May 1921, NAM. Roberts MSS, 7101-23-181.

<sup>325</sup> Petty-Fitzmaurice to Lady Cavendish (private), 11 October 1900, CH. Devonshire MSS, Chatsworth. 9<sup>th</sup> Duke's group, Uncatalogued (Eve Devonshire papers), Pre-1908 B36.

<sup>326</sup> Lansdowne to Salisbury (private), 26 August 1900, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/7.

many enquiries as the War Office, no department is so much abused.<sup>327</sup> He questioned that, if reform came from within, then should they not have a new Secretary of State as well as a new Commander-in-Chief? Moreover he wondered whether the public would be convinced that he, on whose advice the existing organisation was introduced, was free from leanings. He believed ‘Everything depends on the influence of individuals,’<sup>328</sup> and it was his view that, as the lessons of ‘the War’ emerged, he would not be the most suitable person to reform the office.<sup>329</sup> Lansdowne’s reluctance to continue in office is also hinted at in a letter he wrote to Queen Victoria in which he remarked in his self-deprecating manner that, as Secretary of State, ‘he must often have seemed to you to fall short of Your Majesty’s expectations.’<sup>330</sup>

Advising Lansdowne to avoid entering upon personal speculations, Salisbury refused to accept his resignation and cautioned him that ‘It is quite possible we may not be far from an election. We must all face it together. It would have the worst effect, if discussions about future resignations etc., were to be encouraged and get abroad just now. It would give the impression that we were falling to pieces.’<sup>331</sup> Lansdowne, who had found the War Office the most thankless and ‘irritating’ post in government,<sup>332</sup> accepted Salisbury’s advice. That Salisbury refused his resignation and promoted him to the Foreign Office two months later was recognition of the Prime Minister’s confidence in him. The appointment was a surprise to Lansdowne who had ‘expected an uneventful existence at Bowood or perhaps relegation to some easy-going post.’<sup>333</sup> According to Salisbury, ‘Stanhope, Stanley and Gathorne-Hardy had all been criticised over War Office reform’ and Lansdowne, he believed, was only the most recent victim.<sup>334</sup> As further lessons emerged in the years following ‘the War’ a new generation of ‘victims’ were given the challenge of reforming the

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<sup>327</sup> Ibid. Interestingly they did refer questions to a committee within a few weeks of Lansdowne’s departure from the War Office under the Chairmanship of Clinton Dawkins [The Committee on the Re-organization of the War Office].

<sup>328</sup> Lansdowne to Salisbury (private), 2 February 1900, *ibid.*

<sup>329</sup> Lansdowne to Salisbury (private), 3 September 1900, HH. Salisbury MSS, 3M/E Lansdowne correspondence 1897-1899, f.587.

<sup>330</sup> Lansdowne to Queen Victoria (private), 27 October 1895, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/18/4.

<sup>331</sup> Salisbury to Lansdowne (private), 1 September 1900, NA. (5) Lansdowne MSS, FO 800/115.

<sup>332</sup> Lansdowne to MacDonnell (private), 24 December 1900, Bod. MacDonnell MSS, MS. Eng. Hist. c.351, f.33.

<sup>333</sup> Lansdowne to Roberts (private), 1 November 1900, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/24.

<sup>334</sup> Salisbury to Queen Victoria, undated, in Roberts, *Salisbury*, p.756.

War Office. In implementing their reforms, Lansdowne's three immediate successors were partly influenced by the legacy of their predecessor. This is the subject of the next chapter.

## **Chapter Seven - Lansdowne's Legacy at the War Office**

The purpose of this chapter is to explore Lansdowne's influence on War Office and Army reforms between 1900 and 1908. In the literature a considerable body of work exists on the reforms attempted during this period.<sup>1</sup> Policy-making machinery has been extensively covered, as have technological and organisational developments of the Army.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore our understanding of how the British government modernised the armed forces of Britain has been detailed in biographical studies of key policy makers.<sup>3</sup> However, in the extant literature there is a gap in asking to what extent Lansdowne's policies influenced the War Office and Army reforms of his successors, the Unionist War Secretaries St John Brodrick (1900-1903), Hugh Oakley Arnold-Forster (1903-1905), and the Liberal War Secretary Richard Burdon Haldane (1906-1912). This chapter will provide a brief overview of the different reforming policies they adopted and highlight in what ways they did or did not draw on Lansdowne's earlier initiatives. The chapter will also illustrate, from Lansdowne's own speeches and comments, his own thoughts on his successors' reforms and demonstrate how as a senior statesman he could still direct the reform discourse. In exploring Lansdowne's legacy the chapter will also demonstrate the way in which both Unionist and Liberal policy was made in and out of office. It will locate each Secretary of State for War and his advisers within the general political

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<sup>1</sup> L.J. Satre, 'St John Brodrick and Army Reform, 1901-1903', *Journal of British Studies*, 15(2) (1976), pp.117-139; A.V. Tucker, 'The Issue of Army Reform in the Unionist Government, 1903-05', *The Historical Journal*, 9(1) (1966), pp.90-100; A.J.A. Morris, 'Haldane's Army Reforms 1906-08: The Deception of the Radicals', *History*, 56(186) (1971), pp.17-34; E.M. Spiers, 'Rearming the Edwardian Artillery', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, 57(231) (1979), pp.167-176.

<sup>2</sup> J. Gooch, *The Plans of War: The General Staff and British Military Strategy c.1900-1916* (London, 1974); G.F. Ellison, 'Lord Roberts and the General Staff', *The Nineteenth Century and After*, 112 (1932), pp.722-732; I.F.W. Beckett, *Citizen Soldiers and the British Empire, 1837-1902* (London, 2012); I.F.W. Beckett, *Rifleman Form: A Study of the Rifle Volunteer Movement 1858-1908* (Barnsley, 2007); J.K. Dunlop, *The Development of the British Army, 1899-1914: From the Eve of the South African War to the Eve of the Great War* (London, 1938).

<sup>3</sup> L.S. Amery, *The Leo Amery Diaries Volume 1, 1896-1929*, J. Barnes and D. Nicholson (eds.), (London, 1980); A.W. Fitzroy, *Memoirs* (London, 1925); M.V. Brett (ed.), *Journals and Letters of Reginald, Viscount Esher*, (4 Vols., London, 1934-38); Lord Middleton, *Records and Reactions 1856-1939* (London, 1939); M.L. Arnold-Forster, *The Right Hon. Hugh Oakley Arnold-Forster: A Memoir* (London, 1910); E.M. Spiers, *Haldane: An Army Reformer* (Edinburgh, 1980); R.B. Haldane, *Richard Burdon Haldane: An Autobiography* (London, 1924); D. James, *Lord Roberts* (London, 1954); N.A. Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution* (South Carolina, 1999).

background of the period and summarise some of the principal political factors that shaped their decisions.

‘The War’ ‘transmuted the complacent arrogance and contempt of other nations begotten of long years of peace and prosperity to a truer consciousness both of our strength and of our defects and has awakened an earnest desire to make those defects good.’<sup>4</sup> It exposed the deficiencies of not only the Army but the government too. Conciliating public opinion and pledging the country to a series of Committees and Royal Commissions to deal with the conduct of the war, the reorganisation of the War Office and the state of the Army, were essential elements in the survival of the Unionist party. These inquiries acted as both constraints and opportunities for Lansdowne’s successors. As important as these committees were in providing answers and recommendations, what no government could afford to overlook was the financial considerations of acting upon them. Implementing reforms were, as Lansdowne had experienced, only possible subject to the estimates Parliament was willing to vote. During Lansdowne’s term of office the changing balance of international power imposed substantial demands on the military resources of the Empire and the Army estimates rose steadily. Under Brodrick, his immediate successor, the ongoing war in South Africa sent them escalating upwards.<sup>5</sup> After the conclusion of ‘the War’ further increases in military estimates were considered unpopular. Moreover the view that the Navy was the first line of defence, which during Lansdowne’s term of office was largely a view held by civilians, was under his successors broadly accepted by both civilians and military.<sup>6</sup> As such, naval estimates continued to form a larger share of the nation’s defence expenditure than the military estimates. Even with the pressure these new conditions imposed, Arnold-Forster was unable to reduce his estimates below £28 million.<sup>7</sup> Unlike his Unionist predecessors Haldane came into office promising a reduction in military expenditure.<sup>8</sup> Like Lansdowne, he also believed that the Army should be reformed on the basis of existing forces. Although the interest in reform was more urgent than during Lansdowne’s period, popular sentiment against revolutionary change was still

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<sup>4</sup> L.S. Amery, *The Times History of the War 1900-1909*, Vol.1, p.11.

<sup>5</sup> See Appendix VII, p.280.

<sup>6</sup> Gooch, *The Plans of War*, p.165.

<sup>7</sup> See Appendix VII, p.280.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

a powerful constraint in the period from 1900 to 1908.<sup>9</sup> Without support in and out of Parliament Brodrick and Arnold-Forster were powerless to enact their proposals. The fact that the number of service parliamentarians was less than during Lansdowne's tenure was no reason to dismiss their influence. Balfour believed that Haldane underrated the political influence of the Volunteer MPs in the House of Commons. In 1907 there were twenty-eight remaining, of whom fourteen were Liberals. During Lansdowne's term of office there had been sixty-five of all parties.

No less important than securing the confidence of the service parliamentarians and defence intellectuals was that of the Cabinet and Prime Minister. Neither Salisbury nor Balfour, who succeeded him in 1902, were willing to sacrifice their premiership to schemes of reform which they were not comfortable with. Salisbury, as Lansdowne experienced, was opposed to any measures that undermined the power of the civilians over the military. Balfour, who had a wider knowledge of defence matters than Salisbury, believed that Britain's Imperial commitments should determine her military policy. His creation and operation of the Committee of Imperial Defence, itself a legacy of Lansdowne's Defence Committee of the Cabinet, occasionally put him at odds with the views of his Secretary of State. Furthermore, as a believer in the indomitable bond of party unity, he was unwilling to support any scheme which threatened to damage that. When the unpopularity of both Brodrick's and Arnold-Forster's reforms became injurious to that unity he moved the former to the India Office and let the latter's scheme collapse. Just as Parliamentary and government interest in defence matters had increased, so too had the influence of public opinion. It was public opinion's opposition to the spiralling military costs experienced at the end of 'the War' that largely caused the collapse of Brodrick's reform agenda.

While the domestic and international political climate was becoming more complicated than before 'the War', British foreign policy had succeeded in reducing the task of military planners to a manageable extent. Having stood alone in 1901, the British Empire by 1908 was on increasingly friendly terms with her traditional rivals of France and Russia and with the new naval powers of Japan and the USA. This transformation, however, provided little comfort to the Navy and the General Staff

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<sup>9</sup> See Appendix VIII, p.281.

whose sights were set on Germany. With an awareness of the new role that foreign affairs had assumed, Brodrick adopted a fairly conservative approach to War Office and Army reform. As Lansdowne's Under-Secretary of State and architect of many of the reforms between 1895 and 1898 he continued to modify the systems he and Lansdowne had defended. Guided by the findings of the select committee on War Office Reorganisation which noted 'the real vice is not systems but persons,'<sup>10</sup> by Order-in-Council of 4 November 1901 the soldiers at all levels of command were given a greater voice in administering Army affairs. The offices of Adjutant-General, Military Secretary, and Director of Mobilization and Military Intelligence were brought under the control of the Commander-in-Chief. Unlike in 1895, when the Adjutant-General held an independent position, in 1901 he became principal adviser to the Commander-in-Chief. As in 1895 the Commander-in-Chief was given general supervision of the heads of the other military departments and they remained responsible to the Secretary of State for War for the proper maintenance of their duty. The responsibility of training, discipline, organisation, mobilization and offensive and defensive schemes under his nominal authority was recognised. The Commander-in-Chief remained the principal adviser to the Secretary of State. Unlike in 1895 where the duties of the Director-General of the Army Medical Department were not defined and he reported to various departments according to the nature of the subject, in 1901 he was elevated to a similar position with that of the other departments under the supervision of the Commander-in-Chief. The duties of the Financial Secretary were not altered and remained as they did under the 1899 Order-in-Council.<sup>11</sup>

Lansdowne thought it was 'remarkable that the first step taken by Mr Brodrick...was to restore to the Commander-in-Chief, in deference to a very widespread feeling, some of the functions of which the Order-in-Council of 1895 had deprived him.'<sup>12</sup> Like Lansdowne, Brodrick disliked the bureaucracy and red tape of the War Office which prevented rapid decision-making,<sup>13</sup> and the ability to concentrate on matters of substance. As with Lansdowne, he granted more

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<sup>10</sup> Dawkins to Curzon (private), 28 February 1901, BL. Curzon MSS, Mss. EUR F111/181, f.244.

<sup>11</sup> 'Memorandum on the present organization of the War Office', in PP, 1904, XL, Cd.1789, RC, Appendix no.44, p.292.

<sup>12</sup> Lansdowne, 'Memorandum', 'Note on the Report of the Elgin Commission 3 November 1903', BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/22/11.

<sup>13</sup> Satre, 'St John Brodrick and Army Reform', p.126.



responsibilities to the general officers commanding intending to lessen the adherence to routine work and minute regulations. The consultative element of Lansdowne's 1895 system was also extended. The War Office Council was instructed to adopt frequent meetings and to hear any subject of consideration a civilian or military member might like to bring forward with or without the approval of the Secretary of State. Membership was extended to include the Director-General of Mobilisation and Military Intelligence and the Director-General of the Army Medical departments. The Defence Committee of the Cabinet was extended to include the Commander-in-Chief and the Director of Military Intelligence. The new Army Board was given the same freedom of discussion as the War Office Council.<sup>14</sup> Reforming the War Office was of less concern to Brodrick's successor Arnold-Forster than reforming the Army. However, Balfour made it a condition of his appointment that he accept and support the Esher Committee on Reconstruction of the War Office in its task on reforming the department. Although the Esher report was a reversal of nearly all the reforms made since 1895, Lansdowne was less critical of it than Brodrick, but he held that it gave an incorrect view of the relations between the 'military and the financial officials' at the War Office.<sup>15</sup> Balfour, and to a great extent Arnold-Forster,<sup>16</sup> however, accepted most of Esher's recommendations. A new Army Council was constituted by Letters Patent on 6 February 1904 and simultaneously the office of Commander-in-Chief and the old War Office Council and new Army Board were abolished, and the Military Departments were reduced to four individuals.

Although Esher had advised that a General Staff should be established and headed by a Chief of the General Staff with a seat on the Army Council, Balfour, who was in the final days of his government, was reluctant to accept this. When Haldane entered the War Office he was fully apprised of the merits of a General Staff, having discussed the subject with Esher and some of the Unionists. As a Liberal Imperialist and member of the 'National Efficiency' movement he committed himself to introduce it. By uniting the parts of the framework of a General Staff developed by the Unionists, he established it in two divisions: the

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<sup>14</sup> Roper, *The Records of the War Office*, p.107.

<sup>15</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lords Debate', 'The War Office Reconstitution', 21 June 1904, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.136, c.676.

<sup>16</sup> Arnold-Forster, 'Commons Debate', 'Army Estimates 1904-05', 14 July 1904, *ibid.*, Vol.138, c.59.

General Staff at Army Headquarters, (the War Office) and the General Staff in commands and districts. Among his other achievements in reforming the War Office was overseeing the move of the War Office from Pall Mall to a new building in Whitehall which realised the plans Lansdowne had originated and approved in 1896 to bring all the departments under one roof.

Haldane succeeded because of his willingness to create a spirit of cooperation between the civilians and military, something his predecessors had failed to accomplish. While his reforms were largely the legacy of his Unionist predecessors his determination to bridge the gap between the civilians and the military was new. While recognising the need for improved relations between the civilians and military but lacking the interpersonal skills to enact it, Brodrick entered office remarking, 'the Army is hopelessly disorganised and used up; everyone is stale.'<sup>17</sup> His scheme of reform, as Wyndham elaborated, was that 'instead of one War Office which tries to do everything and fails, and sixteen military districts which are left with little enough to do, you should divide the United Kingdom into six great commands, each sufficiently large to embrace the raw material which could be progressively trained and turned into an Army Corps and to provide each of those districts with generals, staff, transport, and equipment.'<sup>18</sup> His scheme for six Army Corps comprised three formed of Regulars available for immediate despatch abroad as a striking force and three formed of both Regulars and Auxiliaries with a primarily home defence role. The scheme retained the principle of linked battalions at home and abroad introduced by Cardwell and adopted by Lansdowne in 1895. His Army reform was also based, like his predecessor's, on the belief that correcting the malfunctioning system would be achieved by increasing the size of the Regular Army. It was his view, as he explained to the House of Lords, that Lansdowne increased the Army in 1897 'because for years...the pressure of every soldier of experience had been brought to bear on successive governments to prove that without more battalions you were not able to provide adequate drafts.'<sup>19</sup> Although Lansdowne recognised the weaknesses in Brodrick's scheme, he was one of the few members of the Cabinet who did not

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<sup>17</sup> Brodrick to Curzon (private), 9 November 1900, BL. Curzon MSS, Ms. EUR F111/10b, f.236.

<sup>18</sup> Wyndham, 'Commons Debate', 'Army Organization', 13 May 1901, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.93, c.1512.

<sup>19</sup> Middleton, 'Lords Debate', 'The Strength of the Army', 12 March 1908, *ibid.* Vol.185, c.1661.

reject it. He cautioned Brodrick's critics against weakening the Regular Army at a time when the Army reserve itself was weak.<sup>20</sup>

When Arnold-Forster's scheme for reforming the Regular Army was revealed to the Cabinet in February 1904, it was expected that he would reduce the Army estimates, rectify the enlistment crisis, and resolve the abortive reforms of his predecessor. As a defence intellectual, he was both a more ambitious and radical reformer than his two predecessors or his successor. His scheme, which rejected any overtures from Lansdowne, had at its core the abolition of the Cardwellian system of linked battalions. In light of the fact that Britain's overseas commitments were increasing and demands on the Regular Army for home defence were diminishing, it was argued that linking battalions was potentially an obstacle to efficiency. Arnold-Forster proposed a dual Army system with a short service Army for home defence and a long service Army for colonial defence similar to a scheme that Roberts had recommended to Lansdowne in 1897.<sup>21</sup> Balfour welcomed the break with the Cardwell system because it freed the Regular Army for its Imperial role and even Lansdowne accepted the change:

It has often been my lot to defend in this House [House of Lords] the system of linked battalions. I remain of opinion that, given the circumstances of the time, we had in these linked battalions a very valuable system for supplying the wants of the Army, but it was a system which...depended upon an approximation between the number of battalions required for service at home and the number required for service abroad...But from the moment that it was recognised that the bulk of our Regular troops are required for service out of the country, and that consequently the number of Regular battalions at home must represent a very insignificant number indeed compared with the battalions abroad - from that moment the linked-battalion system was doomed, and we were bound to discover some alternative.<sup>22</sup>

Although Arnold-Forster's scheme appeared on paper to be an improvement on Brodrick's, its fate depended less on the political and military needs of the country than on financial circumstances. Moreover, the opposition and service parliamentarians were unable to accept such a radical change. Wemyss could not

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<sup>20</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lords Debate', 'Army Organization', 5 March 1903, *ibid.*, Vol.118, c.1532.

<sup>21</sup> Roberts to Lansdowne (private), 25 November 1897, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/21.

<sup>22</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lords Debate', 'Supply (Army Estimates)', 21 July 1904, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.138, c.737.

comprehend how Lansdowne and the Cabinet had allowed ‘the present Secretary of State for War to play with the Army, as if they were tin soldiers in a nursery.’<sup>23</sup>

In contrast to Arnold-Forster’s scheme, Haldane introduced an Expeditionary Force based on six self-sufficient divisions rather than Army Corps. Each division had its own medical support, transport and cavalry division all capable of rapid mobilisation. Making a break with Unionist military policy Haldane and his advisers were attracted by the idea of these smaller units because they provided a flexible force capable of pursuing small wars in Egypt or a war in Europe. Unionist military policy held that an Expeditionary Force which might be needed for a continental war was secondary to the security of the Empire and India in particular.<sup>24</sup> Since Arnold-Forster’s reform scheme had not been implemented, the Cardwellian system of linked battalions was still in place and it was Haldane’s intention to continue with that system. The principal difference between the system as established by Lansdowne and that which Haldane found was that the needs of imperial defence had widened the gap between the number of battalions abroad and those at home which fed them by eighty-five to seventy-one respectively. By retaining Cardwell’s system Haldane revived ‘the conditions essential to the sound position of infantry battalions,’<sup>25</sup> which had existed during Lansdowne’s term of office. Affirming the latter’s legacy, the Earl of Portsmouth, the Under-Secretary of State for War, stated that when Lansdowne was at the War Office ‘such conditions did generally obtain’ and the state of the home battalions ‘was generally satisfactory.’<sup>26</sup> Haldane also reverted to the size of home battalions that prevailed under Lansdowne and his predecessor of seven hundred and twenty men.<sup>27</sup> The government did not overlook the fact that, in 1898, Lansdowne had increased this number to eight hundred men per battalion, but argued that they were ‘dealing now with the question of drafts, not with the question of the Regular reserve.’<sup>28</sup> According to one of its architects, the Expeditionary Force ‘was in principle identical with the Field Force of 1895’; it was

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<sup>23</sup> Wemyss, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘Organization for War’, 28 July 1905, *ibid.*, Vol.150, c.739.

<sup>24</sup> Williams, *Defending the Empire*, p.102.

<sup>25</sup> Portsmouth, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘The Strength of the Army’, 12 March 1908, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.185, c.1675.

<sup>26</sup> Portsmouth, *ibid.*, c.1676.

<sup>27</sup> Welby to the Editor, ‘Army Reserve’, *The Times*, 29 March 1907, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/22/12.

<sup>28</sup> Portsmouth, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘The Strength of the Army’, 12 March 1908, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.185, c.1680.

only distinctive in as much as it was ‘not intended solely for home defence but...for offensive action overseas.’<sup>29</sup>

Faced with increasing demands for retrenchment Haldane proposed reductions from the Regular Army that amounted to 20,000 men. Lansdowne believed these amputations were of ‘a ruthless character’, and ‘involve a very serious diminution of the fighting strength of the British Army.’ Moreover, given the magnitude of the officer shortage after ‘the War’, it was a concern to him that Haldane wanted to reduce the Regular Army because of ‘the number of officers whom we lose in consequence of them.’ Although Haldane’s measures for reforming the Regular Army had much in common with Lansdowne’s earlier infantry scheme and were accepted by Parliament and passed into law, Lansdowne remained critical of his reductions. He doubted if the Bill as a whole was a ‘thorough and considered scheme of Army reform, or that the passing of it will at once render the country, for purposes either of offence or of defence, stronger and better equipped than it was a few years ago.’<sup>30</sup>

In the same way that Lansdowne’s successors’ willingness to adapt elements from their predecessor’s reorganisation of the Regular Army varied widely so too did their reforms of the Auxiliary Army. Brodrick, who like Lansdowne also served in an Auxiliary force, continued his idea of assimilating it with the Regular Army in a time of peace in order to smooth its expansion of the Regulars in a time of war. In 1901 the establishment of the Militia was 150,000 and its strength was 100,000. He proposed reducing the establishment to its strength and, as Lansdowne had suggested, abolishing the Militia reserve and forming a reserve for the Militia of 50,000. He also proposed adding to and training the Militia artillery for eighty-four days. Brodrick’s proposals for a real reserve for the Militia met little opposition from Parliament.<sup>31</sup> However the reforms proceeded slowly because the drain from the Militia into the Regular Army showed no sign of weakening. As such his proposal for an increase of 50,000 in the Militia reserve appeared to be utopian. Arnold-Forster inherited a Militia force in a state of crisis and, as the Norfolk Commission reported in 1904, lacking ‘the strength or the military efficiency required to enable

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<sup>29</sup> G.F. Ellison, ‘Reminiscences’, *Lancashire Lad* (November 1935), p.8, in Spiers, *Haldane*, p.80.

<sup>30</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘Territorial and Reserve Forces Bill’, 26 June 1907, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.176, c.1334, c.1336 and c.1343.

<sup>31</sup> Brodrick, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Army Organization’, 16 May 1901, *ibid.*, Vol.94, c.306.

them to fulfil the functions for which they exist.<sup>32</sup> While professing to be a champion of the Militia he proposed reducing and converting the force into short service battalions, a scheme that Wemyss believed ‘will only add some fragments to the War Office administrative wreckage that floats and eddies round the base of Lord Herbert’s statue in Pall Mall...’<sup>33</sup> Driven more by sentiment than practicality, the scheme met strong resistance and Balfour advised him not to commit the government to it.

The Militia was still in crisis in 1906 when Haldane entered office. Given its condition, it is notable that Haldane’s proposals for using some Militia men to support his Expeditionary Force on mobilisation and forming the others into a Special Reserve were opposed by the service parliamentarians. They were against any change that used the Militia as drafts. Only with the collaboration of the Unionists and Lansdowne in particular, did he succeed in pushing his proposal through Parliament. As Leader of the Unionists in the House of Lords, Lansdowne advised that ‘the government scheme has...some very good points, and I have no desire to make party capital out of its imperfections.’<sup>34</sup> He believed that the Militia should go over ‘bag & baggage’ to fill the place of the Special Reserve and that ‘too much’ had been made of the drafting question.<sup>35</sup>

As with the Militia so with the Volunteers Lansdowne’s successors owed a debt to his previous policy. After ‘the War’ it became a matter of debate whether the Volunteers should continue with the traditional role they had before ‘the War’ as an Army of home defence exclusively or whether they should assume service throughout the Empire as an Army of reserve. Brodrick decided that they should be allocated a home defence role. Their deficiencies, he believed, could be addressed by a more exacting standard of training and service. He proposed making provision for twenty-five specially selected battalions of Volunteers to be attached to the Army Corps and making the special camp regulations introduced by Lansdowne in 1898 compulsory. He also further developed Lansdowne’s scheme of utilising the

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<sup>32</sup> Arnold-Forster, *Hugh Oakley Arnold-Forster*, p.255.

<sup>33</sup> Wemyss, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘The Militia Force’, 29 July 1904, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.139, c.49.

<sup>34</sup> Lansdowne to à Court Repington (private), 16 April 1907, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/22/12.

<sup>35</sup> Williams, *Defending the Empire*, p.111.

Volunteer artillery force<sup>36</sup> by including twenty-one batteries of Volunteer artillery in his plans for his fourth, fifth and sixth Army Corps. Largely due to the new regulations the number of recruits declined, a development that caused public opinion concern. To appease public opinion Balfour abandoned the scheme and appointed the Norfolk Commission to inquire into the state of the force. Just as Brodrick's attempt to reform the Volunteers met resistance so too did Arnold-Forster's proposals to reduce the force.

Although the Volunteer force bequeathed by the Unionists to the Liberals was not entirely unreformed, Haldane believed the condition of the force was 'the most confused thing we have in the British constitution.'<sup>37</sup> In his attempt to reform the force he built on Lansdowne's earlier proposal for the employment of Volunteers in cases of emergency and penalties for non-attendance at camp. Whereas Brodrick and Arnold-Forster both broke with Lansdowne and attempted to make large reductions to the size of the Volunteers because they believed the likelihood of an invasion was remote, Haldane was less punitive. He envisaged utilising the Volunteers as a territorial force and for fulfilling the functions of a reserve fit for duty overseas.<sup>38</sup> Owing to opposition from the service parliamentarians Haldane was unable to carry through Parliament his reforms as he had wished to see them implemented. In 1908 Lucas, the Under-Secretary of State for War, reassured the Lords that the Territorial Force was statutorily enlisted for service at home and was never considered in any other light than as a home defence Army.<sup>39</sup> Although Haldane's scheme had similarities with the past, the proposal to split command from administration under administrative bodies called the County Associations was new. It was Lansdowne's view that these were 'really miniature War Offices.' As Haldane's scheme for the Territorial Army developed Lansdowne remarked that it was 'the Old Volunteer Force under a new title.'<sup>40</sup> This view was not entirely accurate. Although under his successors the Volunteers functioned for the purpose of home defence as they had

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<sup>36</sup> Lansdowne rearmed part of them with modern 4.7 and 15 pounder guns.

<sup>37</sup> Haldane, 'Commons Debate', 'Supply (Army Estimates)', 25 February 1907, *Hansard 4th Series*, Vol.169, c.1293.

<sup>38</sup> H. Cunningham, *The Volunteer Force. A Social and Political History 1859-1908* (London, 1975), p.139; Haldane, 'Commons Debate', 'Supply (Army Estimates)', 25 February 1907, *Hansard 4th Series*, Vol.169, cc.1301-02.

<sup>39</sup> Lucas, 'Lords Debate', 'Recruiting for the army', 16 November 1908, *ibid.*, Vol.196, c.830.

<sup>40</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lords Debate', 'Territorial and Reserve Forces Bill', 26 June 1907, *Hansard 4th Series*, Vol.176, c.1341.

previously done, they had also become more organised and more complete in arms and equipment than the old Volunteers.<sup>41</sup>

During ‘the War’ the Volunteers and Yeomanry proved their value. Brodrick was especially keen to build on the renewed impetus the creation of Lansdowne’s and Wyndham’s Imperial Yeomanry gave to the force. In 1901 he appointed a committee on the future of the Yeomanry. Based on its recommendations he increased the size of the force, paid them a higher salary, and demanded that they undergo a longer period of training. Unlike Brodrick, Arnold-Forster spared the Yeomanry any structural reorganisation. He believed ‘the Yeomanry are as satisfied with the War Office, as the War Office is with the Yeomanry.’<sup>42</sup> Making only a minor modification he proposed that the Yeomanry should be brought into closer contact with the higher formation branches of the Volunteers, the artillery and engineers. When Haldane entered the War Office he found the Yeomanry in a much more ‘satisfactory position’ than the other Auxiliary forces. But he worried ‘if we came to war nobody would quite know where to put them.’<sup>43</sup> Since their last major reorganisation in 1901 they had grown to comprise fifty corps and their number was over 26,000 of all ranks and their annual training extended over a period of from fourteen to eighteen days besides the preliminary training. He decided to use some of the available Yeomanry units as divisional cavalry for the infantry divisions of the Expeditionary Force and those not allocated for that force would be enrolled with the Volunteers in the Territorial force under the administration of County Associations. The service parliamentarians disliked placing the Yeomanry under the County Associations.<sup>44</sup> Harris thought that civil administration had been tried and found wanting in the previous century, and Scarborough remarked that Yeomanry officers would prefer to enlist for overseas service and remain under central military authority than accept the administration of the County Associations.<sup>45</sup> Both peers also deplored the lower rates of pay associated with Haldane’s scheme.<sup>46</sup> As a Colonel in the Wiltshire Yeomanry Lansdowne agreed with both Harris’ and

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<sup>41</sup> Spiers, *The Army and Society*, p.281.

<sup>42</sup> Arnold-Forster to Balfour (private), 5 May 1904, BL. Balfour MSS, Add MS. 49722, f.149.

<sup>43</sup> Haldane, ‘Commons Debate’, ‘Supply (Army Estimates)’, 25 February 1907, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.169, c.1293.

<sup>44</sup> Harris, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘Territorial and Reserve Forces Bill’, 26 June 1907, *ibid.*, Vol.176, c.1328.

<sup>45</sup> Spiers, *Haldane*, p.102.

<sup>46</sup> 2s 8d a day in place of 5s 6d.



Scarborough's views. He was against asking them 'to do more work for less pay.'<sup>47</sup> Many of the newspapers waited until 30 June 1908, the date by which Haldane had hoped to enrol the bulk of the Yeomanry and Volunteers for the Territorial force, to pass judgement on the recruiting returns. At that date the number of men laid down as the strength for the whole Territorial force was 300,000 and the returns showed that 183,000 or 63% of its establishment had been filled. In language that Lansdowne would not have been unused to reading *The Times* reported 'though we applaud the public spirit and enthusiasm of the 183,000 men who have joined, we cannot forget that 120,000 more are needed. Until these men have come forward it cannot be said that one of the first requirements of Mr Haldane's scheme, units ready at full war strength, has been fulfilled.'<sup>48</sup>

All attempts at Army reform by Lansdowne and his successors were dependent on effective recruiting. While Parliament might grant new Army establishments, it was still through voluntary enlistment that recruiting numbers had to be met. Lansdowne's attempt to increase recruiting numbers by shortening the term of service to three years for the Regular Army did not get a fair trial owing to 'the War' as 'all the three years men were kept and the experiment had not a chance.'<sup>49</sup> By utilising the patriotism of 'the War' Brodrick adopted a similar scheme as Lansdowne for all enlistments to the Regular Army, with the option of entering the reserve for nine years or of extending their colours service for a further five years for an extra 6d a day.<sup>50</sup> Brodrick's 1901 scheme therefore 'destroyed any chance of testing the value' of Lansdowne's arrangement.<sup>51</sup> Unlike Lansdowne or Brodrick, Arnold-Forster's scheme proposed enlisting recruits to the 'General Service' Army for nine years with the colours and their counterparts in the 'Home Service' Army for two years. Haldane reverted to the terms of enlistment for a Regular soldier maintained by Lansdowne before 1898 on the Cardwellian system, of seven years with the colours and five with the reserve.

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<sup>47</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lords Debate', 'Territorial and Reserve Forces Bill', 26 June 1907, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.176, c.1342.

<sup>48</sup> 'Our Home Defence Army', *The Times*, 6 July 1908, p.11.

<sup>49</sup> Portsmouth, 'Lords Debate', 'Territorial and Reserve Forces Bill', 25 June 1907, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.176, c.1021.

<sup>50</sup> Satre, 'St John Brodrick and Army Reform', p.129. This was believed to be expedient since it was inefficient to send soldiers abroad for a shorter period.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

In his attempt to solve the recruiting difficulty and make the Army an attractive career for officers and soldiers, Lansdowne made notable improvements to the image of the Army and the conditions of service. Brodrick did likewise. Lansdowne's scheme for the employment of ex-soldiers was adopted and extended by Arnold-Forster who established a War Office Council committee to examine the matter. By 1905 the noticeable results of these changes were evident in falling figures of misconduct, drunkenness and wastage from the colours. In continuity with his predecessors' policies for improved conditions of service Haldane ensured that soldiers returned to society better educated and qualified to find employment. Lansdowne's modifications of soldiers' pay and compensation based on age were also continued by Brodrick in a plan guaranteeing that only efficient soldiers would be rewarded.<sup>52</sup> Under Haldane service pay was replaced with proficiency pay.<sup>53</sup>

Resolving the lack of officers was a difficulty shared by both Lansdowne and his successors. Brodrick appointed Lord Stanley to enquire into officers' expenses in the belief that regimental expenditure was a deterrent to joining. In 1906 Haldane appointed a War Office Committee to consider the means of attracting officers into the Army. Finding a deficiency in captains and subalterns the committee suggested that a Supplementary list of Regular officers should be formed of men who had had a year's preparatory training. To administer the scheme, the committee proposed that the existing school and University corps should be reorganised in an Officers Training Corps supervised by a specially selected staff at the War Office.<sup>54</sup> The idea of using the public schools and universities and their cadet corps to fill the gap in the number of officers was not new. During Lansdowne's period of office a proposal that all boys over the age of fifteen should be given instruction in drill, manoeuvre and the use of arms was made at the Headmasters' Conference. Lansdowne rejected the idea at the time due to the cost and the likely opposition it would have provoked but the proposal gave rise to an intense public debate. The War Office always looked with considerable suspicion on proposals made by educational institutions for the grant of facilities or of financial aid to cadet corps, rifle clubs or any such organisations, mainly because they could not see a return in military strength for the

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<sup>52</sup> Salisbury to King Edward VII, 24 January 1902, CAB 41/27/2.

<sup>53</sup> Spiers, *Haldane*, p.148.

<sup>54</sup> H. Strachan, *History of the Cambridge University Officers Training Corps* (Tunbridge Wells, 1976), pp.121-124.

money.<sup>55</sup> Asked whether it would have been advantageous to him as Secretary of State, if on appealing to the manhood of the country, he had been appealing to a manhood who in their boyhood had been trained to arms, he replied, ‘that seems to me an obvious proposition.’<sup>56</sup> It was his opinion that ‘it is desirable that we should as far as possible make use of the education given to the youth of this country at school for the purpose of encouraging them after they have completed that education to take their place in the military forces of the Crown.’<sup>57</sup> Haldane’s Officers Training Corps drew on this idea. Radical opinion was not impressed by the prospect of a Liberal government harnessing the perceived militarism of the public schools.<sup>58</sup> Many Unionists were sceptical as to whether Haldane would secure sufficient officers from this corps.

To Spenser Wilkinson the three Unionist war Secretaries since 1899 were ‘a series of amateur vivisectors...each of whom surpassed his predecessor in ignorance of the organism which he had had in his hands and therefore in the ruthless use of the scalpel.’<sup>59</sup> Although this comment is open to question given the administrative experience of these individuals and the political and social factors which impacted on their ability to operate, when Haldane entered the War Office the moment and conditions for using the scalpel were opportune. With hindsight he could pick and choose from earlier reforms, committees and Royal Commissions, he could understand the direction taken in British foreign policy, and at the start of a new government he had time. Haldane believed that ‘no one Secretary of State, no one government can solve the problem of imperial defence. Assume that the work is begun and carried on under the most favourable conditions, it must take two or three administrations to work it out thoroughly. What can be done is to work upon the basis of the past, because there is always a great deal of good in the work that has been done by your predecessors and to use that to build on, and so carry the matter a stage further, and then hand it on, administered in a spirit which makes it easy for those who come after, even if with political views of a different complexion to carry

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<sup>55</sup> Amery, *The Problem of the Army*, p.42.

<sup>56</sup> PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21339, p.524.

<sup>57</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘Military Instruction (Schools and Cadets bill)’, 29 April 1901, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.93, c.16.

<sup>58</sup> Spiers, *Haldane*, p.137.

<sup>59</sup> Wilkinson undated ‘The government and the Army’, draft article 1905, Wilkinson MSS, OTP 13/47, in Williams, *Defending the Empire*, p.118.

on the work in which you have been engaged.<sup>60</sup> In the conclusion of this thesis it will be argued that by placing Lansdowne in his own social, political and intellectual context his significance as a political figure can be re-examined and restored to its proper position.

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<sup>60</sup> Haldane, 'Mr Haldane on Army Reform', *The Times*, 5 January 1906, p.13.

## **Conclusion**

No single appraisal of Lansdowne at the War Office between 1895 and 1900 has existed up until now. With two exceptions that deal specifically with civil-military relations, Lansdowne has received little attention from students of late Victorian politics. Many historians have suggested that his personality was flawed and largely to blame for the mistakes of 'the War'. It has been argued that he lacked sufficient firmness for his task and that he neglected the logistical and administrative considerations of using military force. This thesis has broken new ground. It compels those who have written on the various problems Lansdowne encountered to rethink their conclusions by adding a new reflection. Drawing Lansdowne out of the shadows and portraying him as a man of his age dealing with the challenges politicians of the period had to deal with, the primary aim here has been to return him to his proper position. It has achieved this by using him as a prism through which to study late Victorian politics, civil-military relations, the reform discourses, the Army and 'the War'. Moreover, by placing Lansdowne in his proper contexts and exploring how he dealt with contemporary pressures that influenced his thinking, his significance as a political figure has been demonstrated. Accordingly, this thesis has attempted to address the issue of War Office and Army reform. It has concluded that between 1895 and 1900 internal and external political rivalries, a complex inheritance, and a lack of interest made 'total' reform impracticable.

The tensions with which Lansdowne struggled in his department were the result of a culture of disharmony which had evolved over more than a century. The problem was over the extent to which civilians should participate with soldiers in deciding questions of a technical and financial nature and over the constitutional issue involving the conflict between the Crown and Parliament for supremacy over the Army. It is people that make organisations work and the organisation of the War Office made personality clashes inevitable. Lansdowne was a younger Secretary of State than average and his principal advisers, both civilian and military, were with a few exceptions older than he was. In his career he had come into contact with the leading military authorities and had developed an understanding of the discourse.

Although he believed that business at the War Office should be conducted as far as possible by civilians and senior officers sitting side by side under one roof, he also realised that whatever the senior officers thought of as the most advisable military measures, they had to reckon with the Secretary of State and he with the Cabinet and with the Chancellor of the Exchequer. It was his view that the hand of the politician should not be forced by the senior officers and that a more or less ignorant civilian Secretary of State should not profess to be an expert. On entering office in July 1895, he accepted that reforms were necessary but held firmly that the Army could not be organised on any other lines than those of finance.<sup>1</sup> Opposed to radical changes, he chose to implement, with minor modifications, the policy established by his predecessors. It was his view that the power centralised in the office of the Commander-in-Chief should be reduced and that wider use should be made of the expertise of the other senior officers. By giving them increased responsibility and direct access to the Secretary of State, he believed he would obtain an unreserved opinion. While attaching great importance to this method of conducting business, he also believed in the value of consultative bodies, establishing an Army Board, War Office Council and Defence Committee of the Cabinet. What Lansdowne could not have anticipated in attempting to reorganise the department in the autumn of 1895 was that Wolseley was not sufficiently capable to cope with the demands which changing diplomacy was asking of him. Unable to accept the modification of his office he determined to contravene Lansdowne's reorganisation and denied all attempts by the other senior officers to avail themselves of their statutory access to him. By undermining the 1895 reorganisation in this way Wolseley widened the gap between the civilians and the senior officers and opposed the spirit of collaboration.

It was Wolseley's opinion that the War Office system of 1895 was a fruitful cause of military weakness and the success of the mobilisation for 'the War' had nothing to do with the system but was due to the professionalism of the officers concerned.<sup>2</sup> Lansdowne accepted that his system had imperfections but that it was not at fault. Moreover, it was irrefutable that every important step and decision

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<sup>1</sup> Lansdowne, 'Minute', 'Proposals contained in Wolseley's Minute of 22 April 1896', 10 July 1896, CAB 37/42/32, paragraph 2, p.2.

<sup>2</sup> Wolseley, 'Lords Debate', 'War Office Administration - Duties of Commander-in-Chief', 4 March 1901, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.90, c.343.

affecting the Army in South Africa was considered by the Army Board which itself was introduced as part of the machinery of the 1895 system. He believed that the failures and mistakes during 'the War' were if anything due to the fact that the system was not carried out as faithfully as it might have been. That the system did not break down during 'the War' was, according to his colleague Devonshire, a reason not to condemn it. To Devonshire it had provided Britain 'in sufficient numbers with officers and with men...has been the means of transporting this great force over thousands of miles of sea, and over an enormous territory, and of providing that force with the necessary rations, supplies, stores and equipment'... 'a military system which has been able to do even this is not to be condemned...'.<sup>3</sup> The reorganisation of 1895 sowed the seeds of disharmony in the War Office by irreparably damaging Lansdowne's relations with Wolseley and aggravating the latter's unwillingness to make better use of the system. But there were also clashes of ideology and control. Wolseley favoured a more prominent role for the military and held that a soldier should also be the Secretary of State for War,<sup>4</sup> and Lansdowne believed that the Commander-in-Chief should not involve himself in politics.<sup>5</sup> It can also be speculated that Wolseley's illness corrupted his mind and fed his belief that all politicians were timeservers and ready to stoop to anything.<sup>6</sup>

Just as political necessity dictated relations between civilians and senior officers, so petty jealousies and rivalries impaired relations between the senior officers themselves. While united in wishing to transfer the financial and supply functions from the civilian side of the War Office to their own side they were by no means united on broader issues of Army reform. This conflict was mainly one of personalities but it also had its roots deep within the social and class structure of the Army. On the one hand were the Horse Guards or regimental officers, including the Duke of Cambridge, and on the other were the reforming officers including men such as Wolseley and Roberts. Both the Traditionalists and the Reformers had different views on regimental organisation, education, training and staff planning. Just as these two groups were divided, so the Reformers were also divided among themselves. Whereas Roberts and his clique advocated reforms and strategic

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<sup>3</sup> Devonshire, 'The Duke of Devonshire at Bradford', *The Times*, 24 September 1900, p.10.

<sup>4</sup> PP, 1904, XL, Cd.1790, RC, 9082, p.383.

<sup>5</sup> PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21570, p.538.

<sup>6</sup> Wolseley to Lady Wolseley (private), 19 May 1898, HCL. Wolseley MSS, WP. 27/7.

priorities modelled by service in India, experience in Africa and Britain was the model for Wolseley and his clique.<sup>7</sup> Such divisions weakened the senior officers and enabled the civilian authorities to exploit them and impose a system of divide and rule. Given the disharmony of civil-military relations operating within the War Office reform was unachievable.

That this lack of cooperation and disunity at the War Office thrived during Lansdowne's term of office was a result of Lansdowne's Cabinet colleagues and Salisbury. They purposively chose to strengthen civilian control at the expense of military authority. Mutual suspicion between the different groups dictated thinking in government circles and made reform impossible. Of the nineteen Cabinet members there was an inner core with diverse backgrounds and experience. Such diversity produced a variety of views on defence planning and military matters. Salisbury, the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, believed 'a War Minister must find his reward in his conscience or his salary, he must not look for fame,'<sup>8</sup> He strongly distrusted the views of military experts. Devonshire, the Lord President of the Council, who in 1888 had chaired a Royal Commission to enquire into the Army and Navy departments, favoured abolishing the post of Commander-in-Chief and appointing a Chief of Staff. Goschen, the First Lord of the Admiralty believed in the primacy of the Navy. Balfour, the First Lord of the Treasury, wanted to introduce greater rationality and method in defence policy-making.<sup>9</sup> Chamberlain believed that the War Office should secure British commerce.<sup>10</sup> Hicks Beach, the Chancellor, was anxious to resist the relentless rising demands for defence spending.<sup>11</sup> Hamilton, the Secretary of State for India, who had turned down the War Office in 1887, described it as the toughest of all the departments in government.<sup>12</sup>

Lansdowne attributed the lack of Parliamentary interest in the reform discourse to an indifference of public interest in military and defence matters. But the issue was also due to a natural antipathy of politicians to confront the status quo and risk antagonism which might lose votes. If the Cabinet had little desire to introduce

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<sup>7</sup> Beckett, 'The Stanhope Memorandum of 1888', p.245.

<sup>8</sup> Salisbury, 'Speech in 1862', in Roberts, *Salisbury*, p.785.

<sup>9</sup> Williams, *Defending the Empire*, p.22.

<sup>10</sup> Chamberlain, 'Mr Chamberlain on British Commerce', *The Times*, 14 November 1896, p.12.

<sup>11</sup> P. Jackson, *The Last of the Whigs: a Political Biography of Lord Hartington, Later Eighth Duke of Devonshire (1833-1908)* (London, 1994), p.305.

<sup>12</sup> G. Hamilton, *Parliamentary Reminiscences and Reflections*, Vol.1, p.276.



changes in military administration, so too did the Liberal party. The Liberals had an ambivalent attitude to military reform and during Lansdowne's term of office developed no alternative policy on the subject. It had been Gladstone's belief that resistance to the militant Jingoism was the natural attitude of his party and between 1895 and 1899 he still cast a shadow over his party. Even after the outbreak of war in South Africa, most Liberals were more preoccupied with how far its conduct required a review of Liberal thinking about imperial society and the role of the state than why the country was at war.

Lansdowne's inability to reform the War Office and Army stemmed not only from a widespread lack of interest in the subject but also because those that most wished to bring it about were neither powerful nor coordinated enough as a group to challenge the government. The influence of the service parliamentarians was more apparent than real and in both Houses they rarely posed a threat. Similarly the defence intellectuals, who believed that the Cardwell system had caused the collapse of the Army and that a greater role in imperial defence should be given to the Navy, found only limited support for their ideas among parliamentarians and the military. Moreover the reformers among the press had their own doctrinaire views of reform and by condemning the entire system then in place overlooked that had it been better managed it might have succeeded.

That the War Office was unreformable was also because of a general lack of pressure from domestic and foreign affairs to force change. The 'National Efficiency' movement which emerged during 'the War', when the intensity of party rivalry was absent,<sup>13</sup> met with limited success in its attempt to reject that which was considered irrelevant to the needs of the new century. Achieving rather more success was the rejection of British traditional foreign policy led by a new generation of ministers and diplomatists. The part Lansdowne played in this movement should not be under-estimated. His role prior to 'the War' in dealing with imperial defence and overseas expeditions in Egypt and the Sudan had a profound effect on foreign and colonial policy. As the well-established system of protocol and tradition was perceived to flounder, a younger generation, including Lansdowne, forced through a transformation in Whitehall. It was axiomatic that Britain's view of its place in the

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<sup>13</sup> Hamilton Diary, 26 November 1898, in M. Bentley, *Politics Without Democracy, 1815-1914* (Oxford, 1999), p.225.

world and its seemingly invincible Army and Navy bred a complacency which distanced the nation from the rest of the powers, and made military reform unattainable. It received a severe jolt from events in South Africa. Lansdowne clearly recognised this: ‘no one is keener than I am for a drawing of our horns all over the world...’<sup>14</sup> was suggestive of his concern for imperial interests.

It is the conclusion of this thesis that the War Office and Army were unreformable. This does not mean, however, that Lansdowne as Secretary of State for War was unable to initiate subtle changes in the administration of the Army. Having served as Under Secretary of State for War, he understood the existing military system established by Cardwell better than many of his predecessors had done, but even though he respected its purpose and principles he realised that it had its faults. The requirements of the Empire had grown, special calls had been made on the Army and consequently he believed it was ‘out of joint,’<sup>15</sup> ‘wanting in elasticity,’<sup>16</sup> and capable of simplification.<sup>17</sup> Lansdowne’s gradualism modified the system while preserving the basic structure of the system which had had the support of eight Secretaries of State before him, two Commanders-in-Chief and four Adjutant-Generals. Unlike Wolseley, who believed that the Army had already been reformed and that recovering the original purpose of the Army system could be established by an increase in men, Lansdowne adopted a more flexible view. By grafting many understated changes onto the existing system he did more than either the military or civilian advisers in their rigid defence of the system were willing to attempt.

The principal changes introduced by Lansdowne between 1895 and 1899 included a degree of decentralisation by enabling the general officers commanding, to have ‘experience in times of peace of duties that would inevitably fall upon them in time of war.’<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, fourteen new regiments of infantry were authorised and were either wholly or partially raised. Three-year enlistment was introduced and

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<sup>14</sup> Lansdowne to Hicks Beach (private), 7 September 1900, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/3.

<sup>15</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lords Debate’, ‘Army (*increase of strength*)’, 4 February 1897, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.45, c.1247.

<sup>16</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Lord Lansdowne on the Army’, *The Times*, 10 December 1897, p.10.

<sup>17</sup> Lansdowne, ‘Minute on Field Marshal Lord Wolseley’s Memorandum to Lord Salisbury’, 17 November 1900, in PP, 1904, XL, Cd.1789, RC, Appendix 42, no.(II.), p.284.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

third and fourth battalions were created of double battalions. The regiments of the cavalry were brought up to strength in men, horses and guns and the organisation of the Royal Artillery which had numbered nearly 40,000 men and had been administered as one regiment from Pall Mall was decentralised. Fifteen batteries of field artillery and three of howitzers were authorised and partially raised. The home battalions were increased from seven hundred and twenty to eight hundred men. These additions which were the first additions to the Army since 1871 resulted in a total increase of approximately 25,000 men.<sup>19</sup> The higher practical training of the Army and the generals' commanding it was considered and for the first time in twenty-six years Army manoeuvres on a large scale were possible due to the acquisition of land at Salisbury Plain. New rifle ranges were established and new barracks were built, the pay of the soldier was increased, and an extended and more thorough training for the Militia was decided on and put into force; employment of Militia regiments on service abroad was also instituted. A special Army reserve of 5,000 infantrymen in their first year of reserve service was created to bring up to strength regiments sent abroad. Inter-changeability of officers between the Militia and the line was established and a rigid overhaul of every branch of military equipment was made. Quick-firing guns were provided for coastal defence, the construction of coastal fortifications completed, and provision made for the defence of London by the Volunteers. The Ordnance Department and factories were reorganised along business-like principles and control was given to the military to administer both design and inspection. The Education Department, and Clothing Department were reformed and changes in the Medical Department were implemented to improve the status and duties of doctors and nurses.

During 'the War' Lansdowne's emergency measures provided for a further twelve infantry battalions and an increase in the number of infantry men serving on the three year enlistment. Thirty-six batteries of field artillery and seven batteries of horse artillery were raised and the fifteen regiments of cavalry were reformed and raised to war strength. Veteran soldiers were re-enlisted for home defence under the name of the Royal Reserve Battalion. All militiamen were embodied and thirty-six battalions saw service abroad, a reserve for the Militia was proposed and opportunities made for Militia officers to attend courses of instruction. The office of

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<sup>19</sup> See Appendix IX, p.282.

Inspector-General of Auxiliary Forces and Recruiting was divided into two departments with a new Inspector-General of the Auxiliary Forces. A subordinate officer to the Inspector-General of the Auxiliary Forces specifically to deal with the Militia was also established. The Volunteers received increased grants of several kinds, and were encouraged to recruit up to their full strength of 1,000 men per battalion and to recruit second battalions. They were given a limited number of Regular commissions to fill vacancies in the new infantry battalions and allowed to raise mounted companies. Legislation to provide for appropriate buildings and rifle ranges was enacted and the ninety-eight batteries of Volunteer artillery men were also entirely rearmed partly with a semi-mobile 4.7 inch gun. A Volunteer Bill was enacted giving the government power to accept offers from the Volunteers to undertake military duty in Britain at any time. By utilising the services of the Yeomanry, the Imperial Yeomanry was established and the remaining Yeomanry received a month's training under canvas, an increase in their contingent allowance and a grant for travel.<sup>20</sup>

A common thread holding together these subtle changes and their effect on the efficient mobilisation of the Army to South Africa and its successful occupation was Lansdowne's greatest achievement, his preservation of the Cardwell system. At the time, it was condemned by the regimental officers, the service parliamentarians, the defence intellectuals, a large section of the press, the Royal family and London Society. Although the system was consistently blamed for the poor state of the Army, 1897 was a watershed for the reform discourse. By recognising and offering to repair the faults of the system with improvements in the conditions of Army service and an increase in men Lansdowne not only silenced his critics and their wish to abolish the system, but won from them a measure of confidence in his proposals. By using the public's anxiety which had been stirred up by the reinvigorated reform discourse as a lever, Lansdowne secured from the Cabinet his Army proposals and the greatest increase in the Army in peacetime. Lansdowne's flexible defence of the Cardwell system proved itself a success during its first trial in time of war, thus further silencing its critics. It illustrated Lansdowne's political shrewdness. On both these occasions, by collaborating with the critics of the system

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<sup>20</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lords Debate', 'Yeomanry - Pay, Grants, and Training', 20 March 1900, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.80, c.1294.

and listening to public opinion, the War Office acquired significant political influence.

Towards the end of Lansdowne's term of office, the reformers, particularly in Parliament, acquired greater leverage. Issues which had previously been treated as part of an intellectual discussion began to take on a practical aspect. As the lessons of 'the War' emerged, organic reform could no longer be ignored, and in the following years reforming the War Office and Army systems became a matter of urgency. Responsibility for this was entrusted to the Unionist Secretaries of State, St. John Brodrick and Hugh Oakley Arnold-Forster, and the Liberal Secretary of State Richard Burdon Haldane. That the two Unionists failed to reform the War Office and Army and Haldane succeeded was the result of a number of different factors. By pledging the country to a series of inquiries into almost all aspects of the War Office and the Army the Unionist government appeased public concern but acting on their recommendations created both constraints and opportunities. The changing balance of international power, the widespread view of the Navy as the first line of Imperial defence, greater Parliamentary and public interest in defence matters, and spiralling costs also weakened their ability to carry out their reforms as they might have wished. Moreover, Balfour's Committee of Imperial Defence, which in many respects owed a legacy itself to Lansdowne's earlier Defence Committee of the Cabinet, undermined many of Arnold-Forster's ideas. It was not until Haldane approached the issue with the benefit of experiences born of hindsight that with the support of the Committee of Imperial Defence and Unionist party and a new spirit of civil and military collaboration was reform conceivable.

Winston Churchill argued that the Army was not an 'inanimate thing like a house, to be pulled down or enlarged or structurally altered at the caprice of the tenant or owner.'<sup>21</sup> And yet successive Secretaries of State had introduced quite different schemes of alteration. Brodrick adopted a fairly cautious approach, largely continuing to mirror the system he inherited from Lansdowne. Like his predecessor he attempted to adjust any imperfections in the system by an increase in the size of the Regular Army and improvements in the conditions of service. Arnold-Forster in contrast introduced a reform scheme which amounted to a complete reversal of those

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<sup>21</sup> Churchill, 'Letter to Editor', *London Daily Mail*, 17 December 1904, in R.S. Churchill, *Winston Spencer Churchill* (5 Vols., London, 1967-82), Vol.2, p.86.

proposed by his predecessors. Haldane reverted to the system of linked battalions modified by Lansdowne, although the functioning of his Expeditionary Force and Territorial Army had less in common with Lansdowne's functions for the Army, the latter's being based on the Stanhope Memorandum. With one of its possible functions being for intervention on the continent, it also broke with Unionist military policy which held that security of the Empire and India in particular was a their primary requirement. Apart from its functioning and where it could intervene, Haldane's Expeditionary Force was in principle identical with the Field Force of 1895, and the Volunteer force that merged into the Territorial Army in 1908 was in some respects like the old Volunteer force. The formation of the Officers Training Corps was also testimony to Lansdowne's legacy and his view that education might be used for the purpose of encouraging schoolboys to join the Army after completing their education.<sup>22</sup>

While the direct impact of Lansdowne's legacy was notable, it is equally valuable for assessing Unionist and Liberal politicians at the time. While Brodrick and Haldane remained respectively Conservative and Liberal ministers for their entire political careers, Lansdowne made the transition from Liberal to Liberal Unionist to Unionist, and Arnold-Forster that from Liberal Unionist to Unionist. The continuity of military policy adopted by Haldane of both Lansdowne's and Arnold-Forster's schemes is suggestive of much about the nature of political affiliations in this period. While Brodrick was trusted by his Cabinet colleagues and was one of the next generation of parliamentarians, he was also tainted by his association with Lansdowne. His successor Arnold-Forster, not having been in the Cabinet of 1895, was not as 'particeps criminis' with Lansdowne.<sup>23</sup> Yet he was widely disliked. As a defence intellectual he had a preconceived vision of how to reform the department. It engendered an uncompromising dogmatism and self-assertiveness that went beyond all limits, and made him unpopular across parties. Haldane, by contrast, had not been involved in the debate on the Cardwell system or the reorganisation of 1895. He had no military experience or knowledge, although he had served on a War Office

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<sup>22</sup> Lansdowne, 'Lords Debate', 'Military Instruction (Schools and Cadets) Bill [H.L.]', 29 April 1901, *Hansard 4<sup>th</sup> Series*, Vol.93, c.16.

<sup>23</sup> Akers-Douglas to Selborne (private), 21 September 1903, Bod. Sandars MSS, MS. Eng. Hist. c.736, f.48-9.

explosives committee during Lansdowne's term of office.<sup>24</sup> He had no preconceived reform proposals. As an advocate of the Blue Water School, however, he believed that the Army's commitment to home defence was inappropriate and costly. He was personally acquainted with both Balfour and Lansdowne and as a Liberal Imperialist he shared with the Unionists an antipathy to Irish Home Rule. Wishing to achieve continuity in military policy with the Unionists he relied greatly on their cooperation. As has been shown, while their conception of the Army differed, Unionist military policy continued to influence the Liberal War Office and Army reforms after 1906.

While Haldane's reforms achieved a far greater measure of success than those of his three predecessors, attitudes towards the Army were much the same in the late Victorian period as in Edwardian Britain. Although punishments were less severe, the health of the soldier steadily improved and the number of deserters and drunks declined, the Army was still unpopular. This is evident in that a far smaller proportion of recruits joined the Territorials than Haldane had anticipated. It is concluded that at a time of approaching mass warfare and national armies voluntary enlistment and part time soldiering had as limited appeal during Lansdowne's term of office as it did under his successors.

Historians have found Lansdowne wanting as Secretary of State for the blunders of 'the War'. Among others he has been accused of neglecting to prepare the Army for the war. This fails to acknowledge that Lansdowne's decisions were not made in a vacuum but were taken in consultation and with the guidance of his military advisers and the Cabinet. One of the complaints made at the time had regard for the deficiency of stores. While Lansdowne accepted the criticism, he also believed that 'great as our deficiencies were the Army at that moment was probably better equipped than it had ever been before.'<sup>25</sup> It was his view that 'the operations assumed proportions far in excess of anything we had ever professed to be prepared for.'<sup>26</sup> Lansdowne accepted that they underrated the fighting value and power of endurance of the Boers,<sup>27</sup> and that more was not done to prepare the Army for war

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<sup>24</sup> Knox to Haldane (private), 10 May 1900, NLS. Haldane MSS, MS 5905.

<sup>25</sup> PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21325, p.523.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 21417, p.528.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 21108, p.503 and 21347, p.525.

on account of political considerations.<sup>28</sup> But he held the view that the troops in and on their way to South Africa in September 1899 would be sufficient to secure the colonies, 'not perhaps against raids, but against a successful invasion. That being so we did not see much object in sending out an Army Corps until it was likely to find on arrival that everything was ready for its advance.'<sup>29</sup> He believed the problem was one of personnel rather than the fault of the system.<sup>30</sup>

Among the complaints made by the senior officers was that prior to 'the War' they had no idea how matters were proceeding, had not been consulted and did not know how fast diplomacy was moving.<sup>31</sup> Contrary to this view Lansdowne kept the Army Board consulted at every stage of the preparations, and once war was imminent 'it cannot be doubted that the generals knew perfectly well what they were going to South Africa for.'<sup>32</sup> Similarly, on the spot in South Africa, Lansdowne kept Roberts informed at every stage, giving him a free hand to bring 'the War' to a successful conclusion. It was Roberts' view that 'Lansdowne has done everything which can be expected from a Secretary of State for War to push on the campaign.'<sup>33</sup> The precise delimitation of the civil and military sphere was (and is) always contended. By conceding some civilian authority in this way Lansdowne met the wishes of the senior officers to administer 'the War' unimpeded, and yet without undermining the importance the Cabinet placed on civilian supremacy. That the soldiers were frustrated by the approach taken by Lansdowne and the Cabinet is understandable. However, their failure to recognise political necessity, public opinion and the cost of their proposals made consensus impossible. Under the system of responsible government and the nature of the constitution, the balance of civil-military relations favoured the civilians. Given the degree of mutual suspicion and unwillingness to collaborate among the political and military elites, 'total' reform was impracticable.

Lansdowne could not shake off the political and bureaucratic constraints. But he was no mere prisoner of circumstances. Even with the limitations imposed on him

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<sup>28</sup> Lansdowne, 26 March 1903, *ibid.*, 21157, p.508.

<sup>29</sup> Lansdowne to Devonshire (private), 5 December 1899, BL. (5) Lansdowne MSS, Add MS. 88906/19/13.

<sup>30</sup> PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21285-6, p.520.

<sup>31</sup> Buller to Salisbury, 'Memorandum', 5 September 1899, CAB 37/50/43.

<sup>32</sup> PP, 1904, XLI, Cd.1791, RC, 21234, p.514; 21247, p.515 and 21489, p.534.

<sup>33</sup> Roberts to Wilkinson (private), 23 January 1900, in Wilkinson, *Thirty Five Years*, p.245.



he pushed through subtle reforms that helped to prepare Haldane's, later, more wholesale restructuring of the Army. In this Lansdowne showed great political nous and practical sense. His gradualism should not belie his historical significance, nor should it be overshadowed by his role during the Constitutional Crisis in 1910-11 or in connection with the 'Peace Letter'. It was time to bring Lansdowne out of the shadows into which historians have banished him.

**Appendix I: List of buildings in which the various departments of the War Office were housed in the summer of 1899**

- 1) War Office Pall Mall, Central Branch, Military Secretary's Division, Adjutant-General's Department (except Inspector-General of Cavalry), Quartermaster-Generals Department (except Remount Subdivision), Ordnance Department, Chaplain-General, Finance Department (part of) Contracts Division
- 2) Winchester House, Finance Department (part of)
- 3) Horse Guards, Inspector-General of Cavalry and Staff Department of Inspector-General of Fortifications, Finance Department (one branch)
- 4) Woolwich, Finance Department (some clerks)
- 5) Pimlico, Finance Department (some clerks)
- 6) 66 Victoria Street, Remount Subdivision
- 7) 5 King Street, Westminster, Veterinary Division
- 8) Grosvenor Road, Royal Army Clothing Department
- 9) 18 Queen Anne's Gate Military Intelligence Division
- 10) 12 Carteret Street, Military Intelligence Division
- 11) 18 Victoria Street, Army Medical Department

Source: PP, 1904, XLII, Cd.1792, RC, Appendix no.46, p.297.

Outside of Central London departments for the design and manufacture of armaments were:

The three Ordnance Factories at Woolwich comprising: Guns (The Royal Gun Factory), Carriages (The Royal Carriage Department) and Ammunition (The Royal Laboratory).

Explosives at Waltham Abbey

Small Arms at Enfield Lock

Small Arms at Sparkbrook in Birmingham

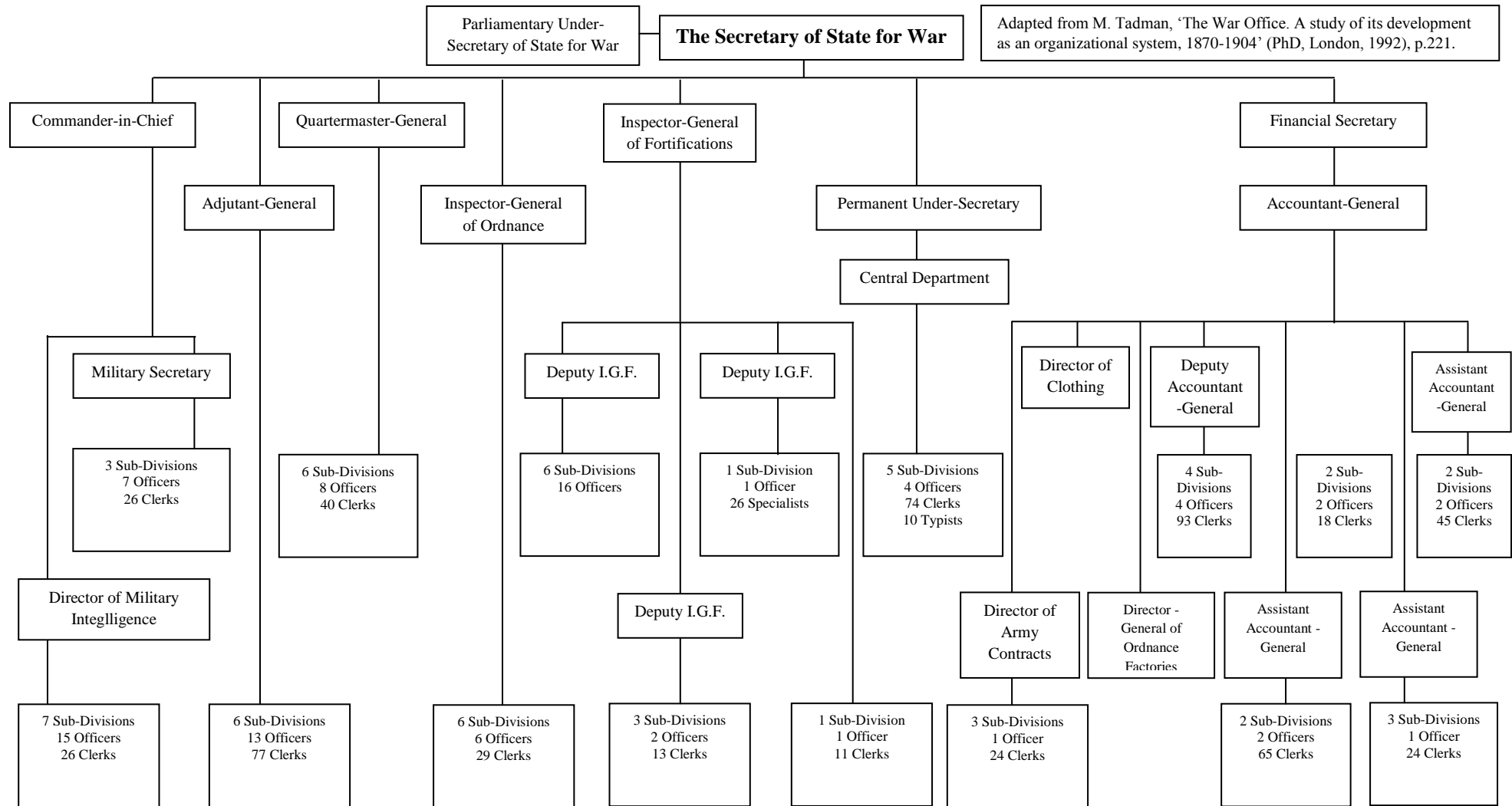
Source: A.H. Atteridge, 'The War Office', *The Windsor Magazine: An illustrated monthly for men and women*, 7 (December 1897) pp.545-52.

## Appendix II: Secretaries of State for War between June 1854 and June 1895

Name	Term of Office	School	University	Military Experience	Junior Post	Party
Henry Pelham-Clinton, 5 <sup>th</sup> Duke of Newcastle	12 June 1854 to 30 January 1855	Eton	Oxford	No	Chief Secretary for Ireland	Peelite
The Lord Panmure, 11 <sup>th</sup> Earl of Dalhousie	8 February 1855 to 21 February 1858	Charterhouse	Edinburgh	Yes (Cameron Highlanders)	Vice President of the Board of Trade	Whig
Jonathan Peel	26 February 1858 to 11 June 1859	Rugby	No	Yes (Grenadier Guards)	Surveyor-General of Ordnance	Conservative
Sidney Herbert, 1 <sup>st</sup> Baron of Lea	18 June 1859 to 22 July 1861	Harrow	Oxford	No	Secretary of State for Colonies	Liberal
Sir George Cornewall Lewis	23 July 1861 to 13 April 1863	Eton	Oxford	No	Under-Secretary Home Office	Liberal
George Robinson, 1 <sup>st</sup> Marquess of Ripon	28 April 1863 to 16 February 1866	Educated at home	No	Yes (Honorary Col. 1 <sup>st</sup> Volunteer Batt. West Yorkshire)	Under-Secretary War	Liberal
Spencer Compton, Marquess of Hartington	16 February 1866 to 26 June 1866	Educated at home	Cambridge	No	Under-Secretary War	Liberal
Jonathan Peel	6 July 1866 to 8 March 1867					Conservative
Sir John Pakington	8 March 1867 to 1 December 1868	Eton	Oxford	No	Secretary of State for War and the Colonies	Conservative
Edward Cardwell	9 December 1868 to 17 February 1874	Winchester	Oxford	No	Secretary of State for the Colonies	Liberal
Gathorne Hardy	21 February 1874 to 2 April 1878	Shrewsbury	Oxford	No	President of Poor Law Board	Conservative

Name	Term of Office	School	University	Military Experience	Junior Post	Party
Frederick Stanley, 16 <sup>th</sup> Earl of Derby	2 April 1878 to 21 April 1880	Eton	No	Yes (Grenadier Guards)	Financial Secretary to War Office	Conservative
Hugh Childers	28 April 1880 to 16 December 1882	Cheam School	Cambridge	No	Financial Secretary to Treasury	Liberal
Marquess of Hartington	16 December 1882 to 9 June 1885					Liberal
W.H. Smith	24 June 1885 to 21 January 1886	Educated at home	Oxford	No	Financial Secretary to Treasury	Conservative
Gathorne Hardy	21 January 1886 to 6 February 1886					Conservative
Henry Campbell-Bannerman	6 February 1886 to 20 July 1886	Glasgow High School	Cambridge	No	Financial Secretary to War Office	Liberal
W.H. Smith	3 August 1886 to 14 January 1887					Conservative
Edward Stanhope	14 January 1887 to 11 August 1892	Harrow	Oxford	No	Under Secretary of State India	Conservative
Henry Campbell-Bannerman	18 August 1892 to 21 June 1895					Liberal

**Appendix III: The War Office in 1896**



Adapted from M. Tadman, 'The War Office. A study of its development as an organizational system, 1870-1904' (PhD, London, 1992), p.221.

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Lord Alexander Balfour of Burleigh - Secretary for Scotland

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Henry, Lord James of Hereford - Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

Lord Askwith, *Lord James of Hereford* (London, 1930)

Those with no studies to date include:

Sir Matthew White Ridley - Secretary of State for the Home Department

George Henry, 5th Earl of Cadogan - Lord Lieutenant of Ireland

Charles Thompson Ritchie - President of the Board of Trade

### **Appendix V: Members of the 1895-1900 Cabinet**

Name	Position in Cabinet	Age on 1 <sup>st</sup> July 1895	School	University	Military Experience
Lord Salisbury	Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs	65	Eton	Christ Church, Oxford	
Arthur Balfour	First Lord of the Treasury and Leader of the House of Commons	47	Eton	Trinity College, Cambridge	
Lord Halsbury	Lord Chancellor	71	Educated at home	Merton College, Oxford	
The Duke of Devonshire	Lord President of the Council	61	Educated at home	Trinity College, Cambridge	
Lord Lansdowne	Secretary of State for War	50	Eton	Balliol College, Oxford	Royal Wiltshire Yeomanry
Lord Cross	Lord Privy Seal	72	Rugby	Trinity College, Cambridge	
Sir Matthew White Ridley	Secretary of State for the Home Department	52	Harrow	Balliol College, Oxford	
Joseph Chamberlain	Secretary of State for the Colonies	58	A Dame school in Camberwell,	University College, London	
Lord George Hamilton	Secretary of State for India	49	Harrow		Joined Rifle Brigade in 1864 then Coldstreams
George Joachim Goschen	First Lord of the Admiralty	63	Rugby	Oriel College, Oxford	
Henry Chaplin	President of the Local Government Board	54	Privately and Harrow	Christ Church, Oxford	
Sir Michael Hicks Beach	Chancellor of the Exchequer	57	Eton	Christ Church, Oxford	Captain in the Royal North Gloucestershire Regiment of Militia
Charles Thomson Ritchie	President of the Board of Trade	56	City of London School		
Lord James of Hereford	Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster	66	Cheltenham College		
Aretas Akers-Douglas	First Commissioner of Works	43	Eton	University College, Oxford	
Lord Cadogan	Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland	55	Eton	Christ Church, Oxford	

Name	Position in Cabinet	Age on 1st July 1895	School	University	Military Experience
Lord Ashbourne	Lord Chancellor of Ireland	57	Privately	Trinity College, Dublin	
Lord Balfour of Burleigh	Secretary for Scotland	56	Eton	Oriel College, Oxford	
Walter Hume Long	President of the Board of Agriculture	50	Privately and Harrow	Christ Church, Oxford	Major in the Royal Wiltshire Yeomanry

## **Appendix VI: The Stanhope Memorandum**

The Stanhope Memorandum was a reply by the Secretary of State for War Edward Stanhope to proposals made by Garnet Wolseley, then Adjutant-General about the purposes of the Army.

‘Her Majesty’s Government are not able to concur in the proposed definition of the objects to be provided for, nor can they accept the proposal to aim at forming three Army-Corps of regular troops instead of two. They have examined this subject with care, and are of opinion that a general basis for the requirements of our Army might be more correctly laid down by stating that the objects of our military organization are -

- (a) The effective support of the civil power in all parts of the United Kingdom
- (b) To find the number of men for India which has been fixed by arrangements with the Government of India.
- (c) To find garrisons for all our fortresses and coaling stations, at home and abroad, according to a scale now laid down; and to maintain these garrisons at all times at the strength fixed for peace or war footing.
- (d) After providing for these requirements, to be able to mobilize rapidly for home defence two Army-Corps of Regular troops, and one partly composed of Regulars and partly of Militia; and to organize the Auxiliary Forces, not allotted to Army-Corps or garrisons, for the defence of London and for the defensible positions in advance; and for the defence of mercantile ports.
- (e) Subject to the foregoing considerations and to their financial obligations, to aim at being able, in case of necessity, to send abroad two complete Army-Corps, with cavalry division and line of Communication. But it will be distinctly understood that the probability of the employment of an Army-Corps in the field in any European war is sufficiently improbable to make it the primary duty of the military authorities to organize our forces efficiently for the defence of this country.’

Source: E. Stanhope, ‘minute’, 8 December 1888, WO 33/48, Paper A 148A.

## **Appendix VII: Army estimates of effective and non-effective services**

During Lansdowne's term of office

1895-1896     £18,470,535

1896-1897     £18,156,520

1897-1898     £19,528,390

1898-1899     £20,096,373

1899-1900     £43,065,398

1900-1901     £91,343,544

Source: PP, 1904, L, (73), 'Army Estimates of Effective and Non-Effective services for the year 1904-05', p.3.

During Brodrick's term of office

1901-1902     £92,660,874

1902-1903     £68,803,527

1903-1904     £30,728,618

Source: PP, 1904, L, (73), 'Army Estimates of Effective and Non-Effective services for the year 1904-05', p.3.

During Arnold-Forster's term of office

1904-1905     £28,895,624

1905-1906     £28,478,863

Source: PP, 1908, LXIII, (49), 'Army Estimates of Effective and Non-Effective services for the year 1908-09', p.3.

During Haldane's term of office

1906-1907     £28,301,421

1907-1908     £27,141,642

1908-1909     £26,859,299

Source: PP, 1910, LX, (30), 'Army Estimates of Effective and Non-Effective services for the year 1910-11', p.3.



## **Appendix VIII: Speeches in Parliament on military subjects made by Lansdowne, Brodrick, Arnold-Forster and Haldane**

Lansdowne during his sixty-five months at the War Office spoke in the House of Lords on 122 defence related issues occasionally referring to three or more different issues on any given day during the session.

Brodrick during his twenty-three months spoke in the House of Commons on 1,357 defence related issues, often referring to eight or more issues on any given day during the session.

Arnold-Forster in his twenty-four months spoke in the House of Commons on 541 defence related issues, often referring to four or more issues on any given day during the session.

Haldane spoke in the House of Commons on 2,564 defence related issues during his seventy-nine months, often referring to three or more issues on any given day of the session.

*Source: Hansard - People, Lansdowne, St.J. Brodrick, H.O. Arnold-Forster, R.B. Haldane, <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/people/>*

Although these figures indicate that Brodrick made more contributions than Haldane, the former's contributions were principally related to the ongoing events in 'the War'.

**Appendix IX: Numbers of men on the Home and Colonial Establishments of the British Army exclusive of those serving in India**

1895-1896	155,403
1896-1897	156,174
1897-1898	158,774
1898-1899	180,513
1899-1900	184,853

Source: 'Army Estimates', 7 March 1896, p.6, 5 February 1897, p.11, 21 February 1898, p.12, 2 February 1899, p.10, *The Times*.

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Austen Chamberlain

Joseph Chamberlain

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Sir Augustine Birrell

Herbert Henry Asquith, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Oxford and Asquith

Margot Asquith, Countess of Oxford and Asquith

Geoffrey Dawson

Francis Wrigley Hirst

John Dodson, 2<sup>nd</sup> Baron Monk Bretton

John Wodehouse, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Kimberley

Alfred Milner, 1<sup>st</sup> Viscount Milner

Sir Edmund Monson, 1st Baronet

Arthur Augustus William Harry Ponsonby, 1st Baron Ponsonby of Shulbrede

Lord Antony MacDonnell of Swinford

Sir John Simon

Sir William George Granville Venables Vernon Harcourt  
James Bryce, 1st Viscount Bryce  
Charles Robert Wynn-Carrington, 1st Marquess of Lincolnshire  
John Satterfield Sandars  
William Palmer, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Selborne  
Roundell Palmer, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Selborne  
Miscellaneous letters - G.W.Forrest, Edmund Gosse

*Bowood Collection, Bowood House*

Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice  
Dowager Lady Lansdowne  
(5) Lansdowne Speeches in India  
(5) Lansdowne Scrap Books and Photographs

*British Library, African and Asian Department*

Henry Petty-Fitzmaurice, 5<sup>th</sup> Marquess of Lansdowne  
John Wodehouse, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Kimberley  
Sir Alfred Lyall  
Thomas George Baring, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Northbrook  
General Sir Henry Brackenbury.  
Richard Assheton Cross, 1<sup>st</sup> Viscount Cross  
George Nathaniel Curzon, 1<sup>st</sup> Marquess Curzon of Kedleston  
Henry Mortimer Durand  
Sir Mountstuart Elphinstone Grant Duff  
Lord George Hamilton  
George Robert Canning Harris, 4<sup>th</sup> Baron Harris  
Sir Courtnay Peregrine Ilbert  
Victor Alexander Bruce, 9<sup>th</sup> Earl of Elgin  
Donald James Mackay, 11<sup>th</sup> Lord Reay

Field Marshal Sir George White  
Beilby Lawley, 3<sup>rd</sup> Baron Wenlock  
Lieutenant Colonel Sir Francis Edward Younghusband

*British Library, Manuscripts Department*

Henry Petty-Fitzmaurice, 5<sup>th</sup> Marquess of Lansdowne – Bowood Papers  
Sir Edward Walter Hamilton  
Arthur James Balfour, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Balfour  
Hugh Oakeley Arnold-Foster  
Henry Campbell-Bannerman  
Richard Assheton Cross, 1<sup>st</sup> Viscount Cross  
Charles Wentworth Dilke  
Francis Leveson Bertie, 1<sup>st</sup> Viscount Bertie of Thame  
Florence Nightingale  
Sir Henry Frederick Ponsonby  
Edgar Algernon Robert Gascoyne-Cecil, 1<sup>st</sup> Viscount Cecil of Chelwood  
Sir Charles Scott  
John St Loe Strachey  
Walter Hume Long, 1<sup>st</sup> Viscount Long  
William Ewart Gladstone  
Henry Spenser Wilkinson

*British Library, National Sound Archive*

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Robert Offley Ashburton Crewe-Milnes, 1<sup>st</sup> Marquess of Crewe

Charles Hardinge, 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Hardinge of Penshurst

*Centre Historique des Archives Nationales, Paris*

*Churchill College Archive Centre, Cambridge*

Leo Stennett Amery

Sir Winston Churchill

Reginald McKenna

Sir Cecil Spring Rice

*Devon Record Office*

General Sir Redvers Buller

Fortescue family of Castle Hill

*The Devonshire Collection, Chatsworth House, Derbyshire*

Spencer Compton Cavendish, 8<sup>th</sup> Duke of Devonshire

Victor Christian William Cavendish, 9<sup>th</sup> Duke of Devonshire

*David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.*

Field Marshal Garnet Joseph Wolseley, 1<sup>st</sup> Viscount Wolseley

*Eton College Library*

*Gloucestershire Record Office*

Michael Hicks Beach, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl St Aldwyn

*Hatfield Library, Hatfield House*

Robert Arthur Talbot Gascoyne-Cecil, 3<sup>rd</sup> Marquess of Salisbury

James Edward Hubert Gascoyne-Cecil, 4<sup>th</sup> Marquess of Salisbury

*Hertfordshire Archives*

Edward Robert Lytton Bulwer-Lytton, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Lytton

William Henry Grenfell, 1<sup>st</sup> Baron of Desborough

*House of Lords Record Office*

Andrew Bonar Law

Edward Gibson, 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Ashbourne

Sir Courtnay Peregrine Ilbert

David Lloyd George, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl Lloyd-George of Dwyfor

Richard Greville Verney, 19<sup>th</sup> Baron Willoughby de Broke

Political Journal Papers

*Hove Central Library, Special Collections*

Field Marshal Garnet Joseph Wolseley, 1<sup>st</sup> Viscount Wolseley

*Kings College London. Liddell Hart Military Archives*

Major-General Sir Frederick Barton Maurice, 1<sup>st</sup> Baronet

*Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa*

Matthew Bell Irvine

May E. Griffin

Traill family

*Liverpool City Council. Liverpool Record Office*

Edward Henry Stanley, 15<sup>th</sup> Earl of Derby

*London Metropolitan Archives*

Maycock Collection

*Marylebone Cricket Club Archive*

*National Archives of Ireland, Dublin*

Field Marshal Garnet Joseph Wolseley, 1<sup>st</sup> Viscount Wolseley

*National Army Museum, Templer Study Centre, London*

Field Marshal Frederick Sleigh Roberts, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl Roberts

*National Library of Scotland*

Richard Burdon Haldane, 1<sup>st</sup> Viscount Haldane

Gilbert John Elliot-Murray-Kynynmound, 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Minto

Archibald Philip Primrose, 5<sup>th</sup> Earl of Rosebery

*Public Record Office of Northern Ireland*

Lt-Colonel Charles Kenneth Howard Bury

Charles Stewart Vane-Tempest-Stewart, 6th Marquess of Londonderry

*Public Record Office, Kew*

Cabinet Records (CAB)

CAB 9 Colonial Defence Committee and Committee of Imperial Defence and Colonial Defence Committee

CAB 11 Colonial Defence Committee and Committee of Imperial Defence and Colonial Defence Committee. Defence Schemes

CAB 37 Photographic Copies of Cabinet Letters

CAB 41 Photographic Copies of Cabinet Letters in the Royal Archives



## War Office (WO)

WO 132 General Sir Redvers Buller

WO 24 Establishment War Office

WO 32 Registered files of the War Office dealing with all aspects of the administration of the departments and the armed forces.

WO 33 Confidential printed reports and Memoranda dealing with all aspects of the administration of the departments and the armed forces

WO 105 Field Marshal Lord Roberts

WO 106 Directorate of Military Operations and Military Intelligence

WO 108 South Africa correspondence

WO 163 War Office Council, later War Office Consultative Council, Army Council, Army Board and their various committees

## Foreign Office (FO)

FO 17 China correspondence

FO 32 Greece correspondence

FO 72 Spain correspondence

FO 633 Evelyn Baring, 1st Earl of Cromer

FO 800 Private Office papers of Secretaries of State between 1900 and 1935 and of many Under-Secretaries of State from 1886

## Treasury (T)

T1 Original Board of Treasury correspondence and letters to the Treasury

T2 Brief entries of Treasury letters and papers, their subject matter, date and disposal

T3 The Skeleton Registers

## Colonial Office (CO)

CO 179 Despatches (letters of the Governors), Offices (Letters of Government Departments) and Individuals

CO 417 High Commission for South Africa correspondence

CO 537 Secret despatches and telegrams

CO 694 Registers of secret correspondence.

CO 879 Africa correspondence

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30/67 William St John Fremantle Brodrick, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Midleton

30/57 Horatio Herbert Kitchener, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl Kitchener of Khartoum

30/48 Edward Cardwell, 1<sup>st</sup> Viscount Cardwell

30/29 Granville George Leveson-Gower, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl Granville

*Rothschild Archive, London*

Alfred Charles de Rothschild

Nathan Mayer Rothschild

*Royal Archives, Windsor Castle*

Queen Victoria

*Royal Horticultural Society Archive*

*Royal United Services Institute Library*

Miscellaneous papers

*School of Oriental and Asian Studies Library, London*

Sir Henry Mortimer Durand

*Shropshire County Council*

William Clive Bridgeman, 1<sup>st</sup> Viscount Bridgeman

*Surrey History Centre, Surrey*

William Hillier Onslow, 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Onslow

*The National Gallery of Art Archive, London*

Henry Petty-Fitzmaurice, 5<sup>th</sup> Marquess of Lansdowne

Board meeting minutes

*United States Library of Congress, Washington*

Joseph Hodges Choate

Moreton Frewen

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Storey-Maskelyne family

Walter Hume Long, 1<sup>st</sup> Viscount Long

*Online Collections*

Edgar Dewdney, The Glenbow Archives, [www.glenbow.org/collections](http://www.glenbow.org/collections)

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