Playing for Time:
The Effects of the Victorian Colonial Wars on the British Expeditionary Force of 1914

A Monograph

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Abstract

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The British Expeditionary Force's operational approach in 1914 resulted from the effects of the Victorian-era colonial wars. Doctrinally and organizationally the BEF reflected the British Army's previous decades spent conducting colonial operations. Its doctrine lacked standardization and detail because army leaders did not want to stifle initiative. British Army leaders built an infantry-centric force focused on offensive operations in line with their experiences in colonial conflicts. British general officers made numerous operational mistakes in the colonial wars, highlighted by failures during the Second Boer War. Reforms produced better prepared tactical formations and leaders, but strategic considerations meant that the BEF would remain too small to effectively fight a sustained war on the continent. Once World War I began, the BEF could only delay the massive German armies arrayed against it. The BEF played a role in the allied counteroffensives of the fall of 1914. Although tactically successful, the BEF's inability to achieve operational objectives contributed to the emergence of the Western Front's stalemate. At the end of 1914, British leaders sacrificed the BEF to gain time to build larger armies which could fight a battle of attrition.

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Acronyms

BEF	British Expeditionary Force
CRA	Commander, Royal Artillery
FM	Field Manual
FSR	Field Service Regulations
HQ	Headquarters
IG	Inspector General

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Introduction

In the over one hundred years since its brief existence, the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) of 1914 has achieved legendary status. In British histories produced after the war, the BEF turned the tide at the Marne and saved France from the massive German armies marching toward Paris. As the twentieth-century ground towards its second catastrophic war, a disillusioned generation produced a narrative of "lions led by donkeys" and portrayed BEF leaders as unthinking amateurs marching soldiers to slaughter.[1] By understanding the true story of the BEF, we can better determine its relevance to today's operational environment.

To understand the BEF's operations in 1914, it is necessary to examine the context in which it was formed, fought, and destroyed. The British Army began August 1914 as the most combat-experienced army in Europe due to its decades of colonial wars fought to expand and maintain the British Empire.[2] Yet it lacked the size to fight a continental war, and the BEF's operational commanders had never led more than a brigade in battle.[3]

The British Army's colonial wars of the late-nineteenth century, as well as Britain's strategic decisions, produced a combat-experienced BEF that was nevertheless ill-equipped and unprepared operationally for a large-scale European war. What success the BEF did have was a result of its tactical leaders making timely decisions at the battalion level and below despite mismanaged or absent operational leadership. Strategically, the BEF successfully proved Britain's commitment to its French allies and played a key role in the Allied victory at the Battle of the Marne. The BEF's history has implications for the US Army today, as it confronts an operational environment returning to great power competition.

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[1] P. A. Thompson, *Lions Led by Donkeys: Showing How Victory in the Great War was Achieved by Those Who Made the Fewest Mistakes* (London: Laurie, 1927).

[2] Ian Beckett, Timothy Bowman, and Mark Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 50.

[3] Max Hastings, *Catastrophe 1914: Europe Goes to War* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 2013), 201.

Sending the BEF to Europe in August 1914 was in line with traditional British strategy. Responsibility for defense of the British Isles typically fell to the Royal Navy. The British Army, however, often served in an offensive and expeditionary role.[4] Since the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588, the policy of Great Britain rested on three strategic pillars. First, maintain domination of the seas through a superior navy. Second, maintain overseas possessions for resources and economic gain. Third, ensure that no European continental power grew strong enough to dominate the continent and threaten Britain.[5] In spite of the Royal Navy historically receiving more resources, the British deployed armies to the continent several times throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[6] Thus, the decision to deploy the BEF to France was in line with British actions in the American Revolution, and recalled the Duke of Wellington's operations in Spain and at Waterloo.

Unfortunately, the British Army was institutionally unprepared to carry on that tradition. Throughout the Victorian era, it had fought dozens of small conflicts against indigenous peoples, but no battles against a European army since the Crimean War in 1856.[7] The traits of the BEF in 1914 can be traced back to two colonial wars in particular, the Mahdist War of 1881-1899, and the Second Boer War of 1899-1902. These wars led to a British Army constructed on the basis of the regiment and battalion, with little standardization in terms of doctrine, training, leader development, or culture.[8] When it came time to construct the BEF, army leaders amalgamated these disparate regiments into brigades, divisions, and corps. However, with little commonality

[4] Hew Strachan, "Operational Art and Britain, 1909-2009," in *The Evolution of Operational Art*, ed. John Andreas Olsen and Martin Van Creveld (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 100.

[5] Ibid., 103.

[6] Brendan Simms, *Three Victories and a Defeat: The Rise and Fall of the First British Empire* (New York: Basic, 2007), 667-684

[7] Byron Farwell, *Queen Victoria's Little Wars* (London: W.W. Norton, 1972), 311.

[8] Spencer Jones, *From Boer War to World War: Tactical Reform of the British Army, 1902-1914* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2017), 50-51.

outside of language and equipment, operational leaders struggled to employ their formations against the more doctrinally-coherent German Army.[9]

Furthermore, the Mahdist War and the Boer Wars had not stressed British operational doctrine or decision-making. In the Victorian age, British Army leaders made numerous operational errors which the Dervishes and Boers lacked the capability or capacity to exploit.[10] The German Army of 1914, however, proved capable of taking advantage of the BEF's lack of operational art.

Throughout the campaign of 1914, the BEF leadership of Sir John French, Douglas Haig, and Horace Smith-Dorrien displayed their shortcomings as operational leaders. Few British generals prefaced division or corps operations with shaping operations, and none used fires operationally. At the field army and corps levels, the staff work required to coordinate subordinate unit actions was ineffective. And when conditions on the battlefield presented opportunities to British leaders, they generally hesitated to seize the initiative from the German Army.[11]

As a result of these factors, the BEF's operational approach in 1914 was limited to achieving strategic effects that did not require large-scale operational victories. The BEF served as proof of Great Britain's alliance with France, and ensured that France would not face the German offensive alone. In the end, the BEF adopted a defensive operational approach that allowed it to survive long enough for Britain to build and train the "New Armies" that would fight in 1915 and beyond.[12]

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[9] Peter Hart, *Fire and Movement: The British Expeditionary Force and the Campaign of 1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 18.

[10] Farwell, *Queen Victoria's Little Wars*, 337.

[11] Hastings, *Catastrophe 1914*, 333-334.

[12] J. P. Harris, *Douglas Haig and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 100.

The United States Army's capstone document, *FM 3-0 Operations*, reflects a service attempting to shift from organizing, training, and equipping for stability operations to a focus on large-scale combat operations. The BEF's experience making a similar transition in 1914 has implications for the US Army today, despite the differences in time and operational environment.

Literature Review

To understand the British Army before the formation of the BEF, there are multiple works on the late-Victorian era army. Any examination of this period starts with Byron Farwell, whose *Queen Victoria's Little Wars* covers the numerous colonial actions during the monarch's reign. Farwell effectively cuts through the romanticism attached to colonial actions by illuminating failures of generalship and the needless slaughter which so often resulted. [13] Farwell also wrote *The Great Anglo-Boer War*, which links the great political and military decisions on both the British and Boer sides with contemporary newspapers and letters. The book covers all phases of the Second Anglo-Boer War and provides an even-handed account of Boer and British leadership.[14]

The Killing Ground by Tim Travers analyzes how the British Army changed from 1900 to 1918. His book details what he calls the "personalized army" of the late Victorian era when officer assignments were based on social connections, resulting in disastrous long-term effects. Travers also discusses the anti-intellectualism in the British Army of the day, and how it limited the development of operational doctrine, as well as hindered learning from contemporary wars.[15]

Continuing in the vein of the "personalized army" is Ian Beckett, Timothy Bowman, and Mark Connelly's *The British Army and the First World War*. Writing in 2017, the three British professors examine the strategic and political contexts in which the BEF formed. Although this

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[13] Farwell, *Queen Victoria's Little Wars*.

[14] Byron Farwell, *The Great Anglo-Boer War* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976).

[15] Tim Travers, *The Killing Ground: The British Army, the Western Front, & the Emergence of Modern Warfare* (London: Pen and Sword, 2003).

book covers BEF operations in 1914 in detail, it makes few explicit links between the BEF and the colonial armies that preceded it.[16]

Spencer Jones, another British professor, focuses on tactics and technology in 2012's *From Boer War to World War: Tactical Reform of the British Army, 1902-1914*. Jones highlights how the experience of the Boer Wars affected the British Army's tactical doctrine and weapons development, but largely ignores the operational level of war.[17]

Moving from the tactical to the operational level, Hew Strachan's chapter in *The Evolution of Operational Art* focuses on the connections between Great Britain's strategic situation and the decision to send the BEF to France. Strachan blames the lack of BEF operational art on several factors, most notably that no operational doctrine existed.[18]

For a perspective from the interwar period, British Army Colonel John K. Dunlop's *Development of the British Army, 1899-1914* is written from the viewpoint of an author who experienced World War I's battles firsthand. Colonel Dunlop had a more positive view of the pre-World War I British Army reforms than some modern authors, but agreed the Second Boer War bore primary responsibility for the BEF's improved tactical performance in 1914.[19]

Improved tactical performance allowed the BEF to survive on a such a violent battlefield, as Peter Hart recounts in *Fire and Movement: The British Expeditionary Force and the Campaign of 1914*. Hart highlights the small size of the contribution the British made during the decisive battles of 1914 in comparison to the French and German armies. His book effectively deconstructs the myth that the BEF saved the French at the Marne.[20]

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[16] Beckett, Bowman, and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*.

[17] Jones, *From Boer War to World War*.

[18] Strachan, "Operational Art and Britain, 1909-2009."

[19] John K. Dunlop, *The Development of the British Army, 1899-1914* (London: Methuen, 1938).

[20] Hart, *Fire and Movement*, 2015.

The best sources for examining official orders passed between respective commands in the BEF are generally the commanders' diaries, dispatches, and memoirs. For example, Haig and Smith-Dorrien kept detailed diaries which are useful in portraying their respective views of the campaign as it unfolded.[21] French also sent regular mandatory dispatches to Secretary of War Horatio Herbert Kitchener.[22] These are valuable for context but must be seen as colored by leaders writing for political audiences and for posterity. For this reason, understanding operational decisions in this era can only be achieved by balancing the accounts of several sources against each other.

To understand the type of army these men led, the field manuals of the time are a valuable resource. In particular, the *Field Service Regulations of 1909* serves as the basis of much of the BEF's training in the five-year period immediately preceding the war.[23] Much of the army's strengths and weaknesses can be traced to doctrine such as this.

British Strategic Situation

Great Britain took full advantage of the long European peace which resulted from the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815. Freed from having to maintain or support land forces on the European Continent, Britain focused its efforts on expanding its overseas empire.[24] It relied on balance of power politics and its naval might, rather than a large standing army, to ensure that no European power grew strong enough to challenge the British Empire globally.[25]

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[21] Douglas Haig, *Douglas Haig: War Diaries and Letters, 1914-1918*, ed. Gary Sheffield and John Bourne (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2005).

[22] John French, "Sir John French's First Despatch (Mons and Le Cateau)," The Long, Long Trail, accessed 18 January 2019, http://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/battles/british-field-commanders-despatches/sir-john-frenchs-first-despatch-mons-and-le-cateau/.

[23] United Kingdom War Office, *Field Service Regulations of 1909* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1909).

[24] Andrew Porter, *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 3, *The Nineteenth Century* (London: Oxford University Press, 2001), 401.

[25] Margaret Macmillan, *The War That Ended Peace: The Road to 1914* (New York: Random House, 2013), 40.

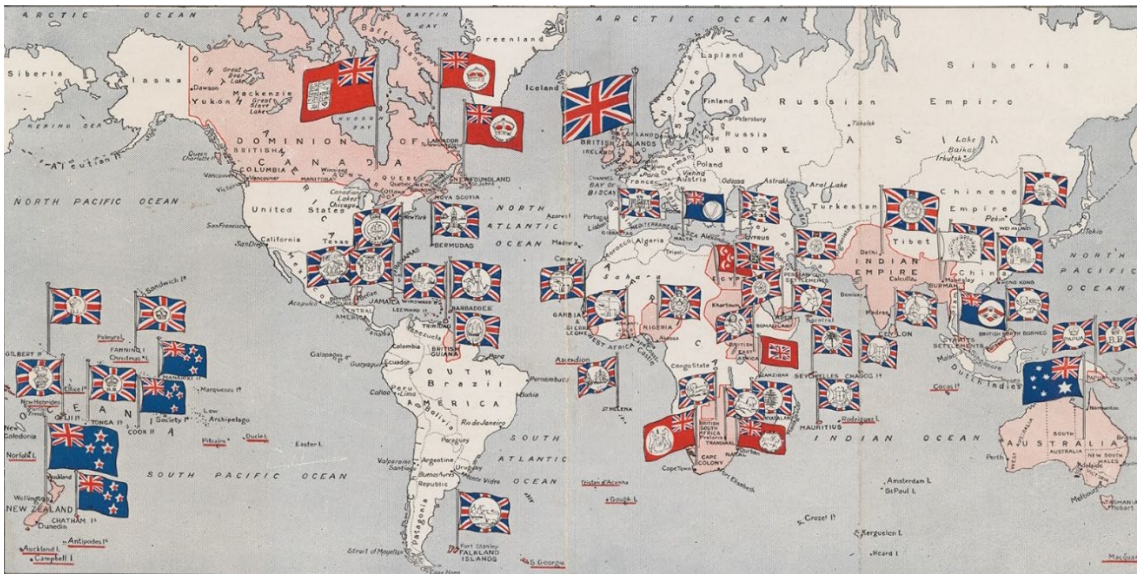

Figure 1. The Flags of a Free Empire, Showing the Emblems of the British Empire Throughout the World. Arthur Mees, *The Children's Encyclopaedia* (London: The Educational Book Co., 1910), vol 2.

The Royal Navy's supremacy served as a point of pride for the British nation. To ensure its continued dominance, the British used the "two-power standard," which Parliament codified in the Naval Defense Act of 1889.[26] The Act directed the Royal Navy to maintain a fleet at least equal in size to the next two largest navies in the world combined. The ensuing naval arms race with Germany resulted in ever-larger budgets flowing towards the Royal Navy, while the British Army's budget decreased from the end of the Boer Wars until 1912.

In contrast to the Royal Navy, which saw little combat between 1815 and 1914, the British government called upon the army to fight nearly constantly from 1840 until the end of the Second Boer War in 1902.[27] Although it faced Russia on the Crimean Peninsula in 1854-1855, nearly all of the army's campaigns focused on fighting indigenous forces in Africa, the Middle East, or Asia. These native forces varied in size and technology, but none could approach the organization or capability of a European-style army, such as possessed by France, Prussia, or later

[26] Macmillan, *The War That Ended Peace*, 114-115.

[27] Farwell, *Queen Victoria's Little Wars*, 1.

Germany. From a British perspective, these were all limited wars. The public celebrated victories such as the Battle of Rorke's Drift against the Zulus in 1879, and despaired of defeats like the Mahdi's siege of Khartoum in 1885.[28]

Despite this near-continuous conflict, the British home islands faced no danger, and no nation ever threatened its overall security. As a result, the British Army never faced the pressures to reform that often come from large-scale combat against a peer or near-peer enemy army. By contrast, the French Army's embarrassing defeat in the Franco-Prussian War forced the reorganization of that force.[29] Similarly, the German Army, although victorious throughout this period, continually reformed its tactics, organization, and equipment to maintain its dominance in Central Europe.[30] Because of the lack of political motivation by the British public and government, the British Army's reforms were limited in scope and scale.[31] Additionally, and critically for the BEF in 1914, the colonial struggles against Dervishes and Zulus rarely required the British to operate in larger than battalion or brigade size.[32] This meant British generals had few opportunities to use operational art on a large scale themselves, or to witness more senior leaders doing so.

British Army Doctrine and Culture

These limited operations resulted in a force unique among the other military establishments of Europe. British Army officers saw policing the Empire as their primary duty, and the multitude of tasks inherent in that mission required ensuring commanders were not "tied

[28] Farwell, *Queen Victoria's Little Wars*, 67.

[29] Geoffrey Wawro, *The Franco-Prussian War: The German Conquest of France in 1870-1871* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[30] Robert M. Citino, *The German Way of War: From the Thirty Years' War to the Third Reich* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005).

[31] Beckett, Bowman, and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, 415.

[32] Travers, *The Killing Ground*, 42.

down to hard and fast rules."[33] Major General J.F. Maurice, after the Esher Committee of 1904 attempted to standardize Army doctrine, stated, "I maintain that the British Army is under a condition of difficulty…that exists for no other Army in the world…we cannot attempt to stereotype our tactics."[34] [35] British Army doctrine of the era reflected this desire to maintain localized training standards and mostly consisted of descriptive tactical guidance, rather than proscriptive tactics and standards. The manuals also reinforced the belief that fixed doctrine would hamper the independent initiative of officers in battle, who alone had the ability to determine what tactics would work in a given situation. The field manual *Infantry Training, 1905* proclaimed, "constant practice in a stereotypical formation inevitably leads to want of elasticity, [limits leaders'] exercise of their wits, and cramps both initiative and intelligence…. It is therefore…forbidden to either formulate or practice a normal form of either attack or defense."[36]

For an army expecting to continue fighting wars against native and indigenous enemies, lack of formal doctrine was an acceptable risk. In 1912, an army inspector general (IG) reported the junior officers and men of three separate divisions where "of peak efficiency."[37] Troublingly, however, the same IG also warned that tactics between the three divisions "were so divergent…it would be difficult for them to combine into an army that acts with full effect."[38] Two years later the BEF deployed to France with six infantry divisions. This institutional flaw, a vestige of wars against tribesmen, would hinder operations as the IG predicted.

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[33] Jones, *From Boer War to World War,* 50.

[34] Ibid., 50.

[35] Established to recommend changes based on the lessons of the Boer Wars, the Esher Committee of 1904 proposed abolishing the position of Commander-in-Chief of the Forces and creating an army general staff, among other reforms.

[36] Jones, *From Boer War to World War,* 50.

[37] United Kingdom War Office, Inspector General of the Forces Report for 1912, 566-568.

[38] Ibid., 566-568.

Prior to the war, Douglas Haig answered critics of the British Army's lack of doctrine by arguing an "army trained to march long distances, to maneuver quickly, and to fight with the utmost determination, will be a suitable instrument in the hands of a competent commander whether the situation is to be solved by 'envelopment' or 'penetration.'"[39] It is indicative of Haig's mindset that he described military operations as a binary choice between one form of offensive maneuver or another.[40]

This is not to accuse Haig of embodying the unthinking chateaux general from "Blackadder Goes Forth."[41] Although an intelligent and dedicated officer, Haig was a product of the culture of the Victorian-era British Army. Of that army's tendencies, Brigadier General Sir James Edmonds disparagingly wrote there was "only one form of order and that is to attack. Generals who protest and point out the folly of attempting to rush fortifications are [fired and sent home]."[42] Edmonds' words, although from 1916, reflect the "Cult of the Offensive" that had become part of many European officers' mindset by the start of the war.[43] Although not as extreme as the French Army's famous "Elan," the British came out of the Victorian colonial wars also convinced the offensive was the predominant way of war.[44] At Omdurman in 1898, the 21st Lancers charged thousands of Dervish warriors in a cavalry action out of the Napoleonic era. The attack succeeded, albeit with a significant cost in casualties.[45] All this should have proven was attacking warriors (not soldiers) who lacked machine guns and artillery with cavalry charges was

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[39] Douglas Haig, quoted by John Charteris, *Field Marshal Earl Haig* (London: Cassell, 1929), 55-56.

[40] US Department of the Army, *Field Manual (FM) 3-90-1 Offense and Defense Volume 1* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2015), 1-3.

[41] *Blackadder*, Series 4, "Blackadder Goes Forth," directed by Richard Boden, aired 28 September 1989 to 02 November 1989, on BBC One.

[42] Travers, *The Killing Ground,* 15.

[43] Ibid., 38.

[44] Jones, *From Boer War to World War*, 69.

[45] Daniel Bolger, "The Ghosts of Omdurman," *Parameters* (Autumn 1991): 28-31.

still viable. The British mistakenly extrapolated successes like Omdurman to apply to offensive operations in general. As General Sir Ian Hamilton opined in 1910, "War is essentially the triumph, not of [technology], not of…men entrenched behind wire entanglements and fireswept zones over men exposing themselves in the open, but of one will over another weaker will." Commanding the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force during the Gallipoli Campaign in 1915 possibly caused Hamilton to reconsider this claim.[46]

As much as successful offensives against Afghans and Boers contributed to a culture of the offense in the British Army, there were conflicts around the globe which could have caused unbiased observers to question whether those lessons would apply against a conventional European army. The French Army's use of the mitrailleuse in the Franco-Prussian War showed how even poorly-led Soldiers in defensive positions could stymie massed offensives. In that same war, Prussian artillery was so effective against French troops advancing in the open that an artillery regiment defeated a French division-sized attack at the Battle of Gravelotte in 1871 without any infantry support.[47]

The British Army sent observers to assess the Russo-Japanese War as well. In 1904 Ian Hamilton witnessed the Battle of Yalu and commented on the effectiveness of Japanese indirect fire artillery tactics, in contrast to Russia's traditional direct-fire artillery. Hamilton noted, "The Japanese were invisible and comparatively invulnerable, the Russians were conspicuous and everywhere most vulnerable."[48] In this engagement Hamilton witnessed a preview of the massive artillery barrages of the Somme and Verdun, but European artillery doctrine did not yet encompass scientific fields like predicting the point of impact of indirect fire. What the British

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[46] Travers, *The Killing Ground*, 45.

[47] Arthur T. Coumbe, "Combined-Arms Operations in the Franco-German War of 1870-1871," *Field Artillery* (August 1988): 10-16.

[48] Ian Hamilton, *A Staff Officer's Scrap-book during the Russo-Japanese War* (London: Edward Arnold, 1906), 109-110.

Army did take from the Russo-Japanese War, however, was a validation that offensive action against prepared defenses was still feasible so long as the attackers were sufficiently committed.[49]

It is not simply hindsight bias to say that perhaps British officers, with their colonial experience, could have recognize the fallacy in that lesson. Twice at Omdurman the Mahdist army attacked British lines with over 50,000 charging Dervish warriors armed with rifles and spears. Each time, the British defeated the attackers and inflicted over 50% casualties against a numerically superior force.[50] A war correspondent described it as "not a battle but an execution."[51]

The British observed that the zeal and patriotism of the Dervish could not overcome massed machine gun and artillery fire. This appears to be an instance of Thomas Kuhn's "paradigm theory", as the British Army discounted these lessons as anomalies that did not fundamentally alter their view of warfare.[52] [53] To the British, the Russo-Japanese War was just a conflict between second-rate nations with less applicability to European war. The British Army leadership could similarly discount the lessons of the Dervish failed assaults as irrelevant because they were African warriors, lacking the discipline of European armies.[54] As Winston Churchill, put it, the British perceived the Dervishes as driven by "mad fanaticism" alone.[55] So, despite

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[49] James Sisemore, "Russo-Japanese War: Lessons Not Learned" (master's thesis, US Army Command and General Staff College, 2003), 109.

[50] Farwell, *Queen Victoria's Little Wars*, 335.

[51] Ibid., 336.

[52] Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 1-65.

[53] Thomas Kuhn's "paradigm theory" is a concept that describes fundamental changes in a scientific field that lead to a scientific revolution. In Kuhn's 1962 book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, "anomalies" are events that cannot be explained through the existing "normal science."

[54] Frederick Maurice, "Omdurman" in *Nineteenth Century 44* (London: Samson Low, Marston & Co., 1898), 1054.

[55] Winston Spencer Churchill, *The River War: An Historical Account of The Reconquest of the Soudan*, 2 Vols., ed. Col. F. Rhodes (London: Longmans, Green, 1899), 82-164, accessed 13 February 2019, https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/mod/1898churchill-omdurman.asp.

their colonial experience, the British entered 1914 believing that massed assaults against modern weaponry could still succeed with sufficient fortitude, a similar attitude to their French and German counterparts.[56]

That the British discounted previous experience was partly a result of a culture of anti-intellectualism within the British officer corps. As Wolseley said while serving as the Commander-in-Chief, "I hope the officers of Her Majesty's Army may never degenerate into bookworms."[57] Reflecting the era and the relatively narrow segment of the population officers were drawn from, officers considered for high promotion were sometimes judged by their family lineage. General Sir William Nicholson, successor to Lord Roberts as the professional leader of the British Army, questioned the nomination of an officer who had risen from the ranks to command the Staff College because of his "want of breeding."[58]

Thus, the men mostly likely to hold high command in 1914 were products of a system which rewarded aggressiveness, minimized intellectual abilities, and drew its leaders from a narrow segment of both society in general and the officer corps specifically. This did not preclude success against indigenous forces. Evelyn Baring, Kitchener's chief diplomat in the Sudan, wrote immediately after the British victory at Omdurman, "No occasion arose for the display of any great skill in…military science. When once the British and Egyptian troops were brought face to face with the enemy, there could…be little doubt of the result."[59] Against a peer army, however, much more effective leadership would be required. During the Boer Wars, itself

[56] Jones, *From Boer War to World War*, 58.

[57] Yorck von Wartenburg, *Napoleon as a General, Vol. 1* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1902), v.

[58] Keith Jeffrey, *Field Marshall Sir Henry Wilson: A Political Soldier* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 78.

[59] Byron Farwell, *Prisoners of the Mahdi: The story of the Mahdist Revolt which frustrated Queen Victoria's designs on the Sudan, humbled Egypt, and led to the fall of Khartoum, the death of Gordon, and Kitchener's victory at Omdurman fourteen years later* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 314-315.

a preview of the challenges to come, Wolseley ironically lamented, "What we are now most in want of is good generals."[60]

Despite the deficiencies that British Army culture produced in its general officer class, the news was not all bad for the British going into 1914. Of the 157 battalions which made up the initial BEF, 138 of them were commanded by officers with previous combat experience.[61] Although the systemic promotion biases had skewed the leadership, this was less crippling with a professional army than a conscripted one. The army's regimental culture meant soldiers who had served together in the same organization for years were better able to compensate for poor leadership. As historian Michael Howard said, "Like well-trained horses, [British soldiers] can carry even indifferent or incompetent riders."[62]

Influence of Colonial Wars on the Size of the BEF

Britain's officer corps, with combat-experienced tactical leaders and neophyte operational leaders, stood in marked contrast to the French and German armies of 1914. In those armies, few leaders had seen intensive combat since the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871, but both armies possessed many generals and staffs who were comfortable commanding and controlling formations larger than a division.[63] One reason for the discrepancy between the Continental leaders and the British was simple: the French and German armies had large conscripted armies with which to train. When the war began in 1914, Germany could field ninety-eight divisions, organized into thirty-five corps, totaling 1.9 million men under arms. France, with 1.3 million men in uniform, put seventy-two divisions in the field under the

[60] Farwell, *Queen Victoria's Little Wars*, 341.

[61] Spencer Jones, "Command Amidst Chaos: Leadership in the BEF" (lecture at the Western Front Association President's Conference, Birmingham, UK, 05 July 2014), accessed 30 October 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5xqf5VeOGmU.

[62] Peter Liddle, *Britain Goes to War: How the First World War Began to Reshape the Nation* (London: Pen & Sword, 2015), 85.

[63] Mallinson, *1914: Fight the Good Fight*, 5.

command of twenty corps. These massive military establishments had existed for years before the war, both on active and reserve service, and routinely conducted large-scale field exercises involving tens of thousands of soldiers.[64]

Into this massive clash of combatants, the British Army sent six infantry divisions and one cavalry division, organized under two corps, made up of 150,000 men. Of the total BEF, around 55% were reservists, meaning less than 80,000 active-duty soldiers were available for what would become Europe's existential conflict.[65] Major General Sir Henry Wilson, British War Office Director of Military Operations, said of the BEF's small size, "There is no military problem to which the answer is six divisions."[66] Certainly in comparison to the Continental armies mobilizing in August 1914 this appeared true.

Between the active and reserve components, the British Army in that same month stood at over 280,000 men.[67] Additionally, the British Indian Army, consisting of British and native Indian troops had a strength of 240,000 soldiers. France and Germany deployed as much of their total force into the battles of 1914 as possible, while the British only deployed just over a quarter of their total end strength to France.

Although Germany also had overseas possessions, the government declined to provide forces to defend them once war broke out. This meant these colonies were vulnerable to attack by the British, which they did.[68] In 1914 and 1915 numerous German colonies in Africa and the

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[64] "Forces and resources of the combatant nations in 1914," in Encyclopedia Britannica, accessed 11 March 2019, https://www.britannica.com/event/World-War-I/Forces-and-resources-of-the-combatant-nations-in-1914.

[65] John Mason Sneddon, "The Company Commanders," in *Stemming the Tide: Officers and Leadership in the British Expeditionary Force, 1914*, ed. Spenser Jones (Solihull: Helion & Co., 2013), 326-327.

[66] Allan Mallinson, "The British Expeditionary Force and the Great War," *The RUSI Journal* 159, no. 4 (August-September 2014), 44-49.

[67] United Kingdom War Office, *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire during the Great War* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1922).

[68] Strachan, "Operational Art and Britain," 103.

Pacific fell to British and Dominion forces, such as the Gold Coast, German South West Africa, Samoa, and New Guinea.[69] Germany made the strategic decision to concede its colonies (temporarily, as they saw it) in order to fight the main effort in Europe. However, Great Britain could not make such a choice. Its economic and strategic power was firmly tied to its overseas possessions. If the British pulled too many forces out of India or Africa, it is possible their colonies and their British administrators would face revolts similar to the Indian Rebellion of 1857.[70] This did not only tie down forces at the far reaches of the Empire, but in Ireland as well. In 1916 Irish revolutionaries launched the Easter Rising, forcing 16,000 British troops to suppress the rebellion.[71]

A final reason for the small size of the BEF was the refusal of the British government to consider conscription. Major General Wilson, in an earlier assignment as the Commandant of the British Staff College, argued vehemently for conscription. Speaking to Field Marshal Roberts in 1905, Wilson advocated for going "the whole hog and by compulsion form[ing] a great reserve."[72] Although popular within the officer corps, there was little appetite for conscription among British politicians of either major party.[73] Partly this reflected the British tradition of the primacy of the Royal Navy. As First Sea Lord, Admiral Jackie Fisher said in 1905, "Our national life depends absolutely and solely upon the Navy…the Army was no use without it to save the Empire from ruin."[74]

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[69] "The Loss of the German Colonies," Encyclopedia Britannica, accessed 11 March 2019, https://www.britannica.com/event/World-War-I/The-loss-of-the-German-colonies.

[70] Farwell, *Queen Victoria's Little Wars*, 84-93.

[71] Siobhan Sullivan, "The Easter Rising: Boston College collaborative project illuminate Ireland's journey to independence," *Boston College News*, 28 March 2016, accessed 12 March 2019, https://www.bc.edu/bc-web/bcnews/nation-world-society/international/bc-ireland-commemorates-easter-rising.html.

[72] Brian Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College 1854-1914* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1972), 262.

[73] Ibid., 262.

[74] Strachan, "Operational Art and Britain," 103.

Yet on numerous occasions in the late 19th century, the British Army did save imperial possessions from ruin. Conscription was not required in these cases because of the effective use of native colonial soldiers fighting alongside the British Army. In the Mahdist War of 1881-1889, the majority of British-led forces consisted of Egyptian troops.[75] The doomed General Charles Gordon was besieged at Khartoum with over 7000 Egyptian Soldiers, led by a handful of British officers.[76] At the Battle of Omdurman, only 8200 of the nearly 26,000 men under Kitchener were British, with the remainder being Egyptian or Sudanese.[77] This pattern repeated itself during the First and Second Anglo-Afghan Wars, as the bulk of British forces came from the British Indian Army.[78] At roughly the same time as these wars of empire, the Continental European powers were fighting the wars of German unification, requiring the mobilization of field armies numbering hundreds of thousands of conscripted men.[79] The comparatively small number of British forces needed to fight the colonial wars protected the British public from similar requirements.

Even in colonial wars fought without "native" colonial troops, the British did not need to draft massive field armies. Because of the racial attitudes of the era, both the British and the Boers considered the Second Boer War of 1899-1902 as a "white man's war."[80] This meant that Basutos, Zulus, and Bantus were unavailable for front-line service, but thousands of volunteers from the British Dominions of Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, along with white South Africans, filled the shortfall.[81] All told over 100,000 soldiers from the dominions fought in the war.

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[75] Edward M. Spiers, *Sudan: The Reconquest Reappraised* (London: Routledge, 2013), 2.

[76] Churchill, *The River War*, 50.

[77] Farwell, *Queen Victoria's Little Wars*, 335.

[78] Ibid., 211-217.

[79] Citino, *The German Way of War.*

[80] Farwell, *The Great Anglo-Boer War*, 40.

[81] Ibid, 40.

British Operational Art in the Sudan, 1898

Based on their colonial experiences, the British entered World War I without the large conscript armies possessed by the other belligerents. Even after the catastrophic losses that were to come in 1914, the British government did not institute conscription, relying on its colonial war formula of increased recruiting and using troops from throughout its overseas possessions.[82] This meant the BEF, a small force in keeping with British practices, could not win battles of attrition and required excellent operational leadership to ensure it did not needlessly suffer losses it could not sustain. That its operational leadership was not equal to the challenge was at least partly a result of colonial actions where British generals rarely displayed such leadership.

Beyond doctrinal and organizational circumstances, a major factor in the BEF's operational challenges in 1914 was that the colonial wars extracted little penalty for poor "operational art", as it is deemed today.[83] US Army *Field Manual (FM) 3-0* defines operational art as, "the cognitive approach by commanders and staffs – supported by their skill, knowledge, experience, creativity, and judgement – to develop strategies, campaigns, and operations to organize and employ military forces by integrating ends, ways, and means."[84] Within that definition, US Army doctrine characterizes several factors as "Elements of Operational Art," such as basing, tempo, end state and conditions, center of gravity, lines of operation, and risk.[85]

In his analysis of British operational art, historian Sir Hew Strachan wrote, "If operational art had a home, it would be the corps, a self-contained formation capable of independent operations."[86] The lack of corps-sized formations in the British Army before 1914 certainly played a role in limiting their leaders' skill in operational art. But the absence of

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[82] Beckett, Bowman, and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, 104-106.

[83] US Department of the Army, *Field Manual (FM) 3-0 Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2017), 1-20.

[84] US Army *FM 3-0*, 1-20.

[85] Ibid.

[86] Strachan, "Operational Art and Britain," 104.

existing headquarters and staff is not an all-encompassing excuse. In most colonial wars the British fought in the latter part of the 19th century, their commanders had the opportunity to demonstrate an understanding of the elements of operational art. That multiple colonial wars achieved their strategic aim speaks to some competence in this regard. For example, the Boer Wars ended with the British establishing the Union of South Africa as a British Dominion.[87] The Second Anglo-Afghan War ended with the British in control of Afghan border areas and the Afghan government's foreign policy. But at the operational level, numerous leaders made mistakes which the British Army survived because of superiority in technology and resources.

Field Marshal Kitchener is today known as the mustachioed face on the famous "Britons, Lord Kitchener wants you!" recruiting posters of World War I.[88] Before that, he served as the commanding general of the Anglo-Egyptian Army at the Battle of Omdurman. In that action he made operational errors that could have led to a strategic defeat against a different enemy.[89]

First, after using his artillery and machine guns to successfully repel an assault of 10,000 Dervish warriors with few British losses, Kitchener determined the enemy force had culminated. In line with his assessment, Kitchener ordered his army out of the defensive positions that had enabled his firepower to be used so devastatingly Had reconnaissance been effective, he would have understood that over half the Mahdi army (of which the Dervish were a part) had not yet been committed to the fight.[90]

Kitchener planned the advance of his entire army to the city of Omdurman along the most direct line of operation. He ordered his cavalry regiment, the 21st Lancers, to reconnoiter the

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[87] Farwell, *Great Anglo Boer War,* 442.

[88] Peter Simkins, *Kitchener's Army: The Raising of the New Armies, 1914-1916* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 122-123.

[89] Farwell, *Queen Victoria's Little Wars*, 332.

[90] Ibid., 336.

route, neglecting to first ascertain the status of the enemy army to his front.[91] In abandoning his defensive positions and moving his army south towards the city, Kitchener was risking exposing his flank to an attack in order to seize terrain his enemy did not yet occupy. That the British were not in contact with that enemy, and were unsure of its disposition, added additional risk.[92]

The Mahdist army took advantage of this opportunity and launched an attack by 20,000 Dervishes at the Anglo-Egyptian Army's flank. Covering the flank was Colonel Hector MacDonald's brigade of 2,000 Sudanese and Egyptian soldiers. MacDonald's tactical skill and British firepower superiority enabled his brigade to defeat the attack by a force ten times its size. It was a "near run thing" as MacDonald's men were down to their final rounds of ammunition when the Dervish attack finally faltered.[93]

[91] The 21st Lancers' subsequent charge into Mahdist lines across unsuitable terrain was not an operational error as much as it was a tactical blunder by the regimental commander.

[92] Cyril Falls, "The Reconquest of the Sudan, 1896-1899" in *Victorian Military Campaigns*, ed. Brian Bond (New York: Praeger, 1967), 295.

[93] Farwell, *Queen Victoria's Little Wars*, 337.

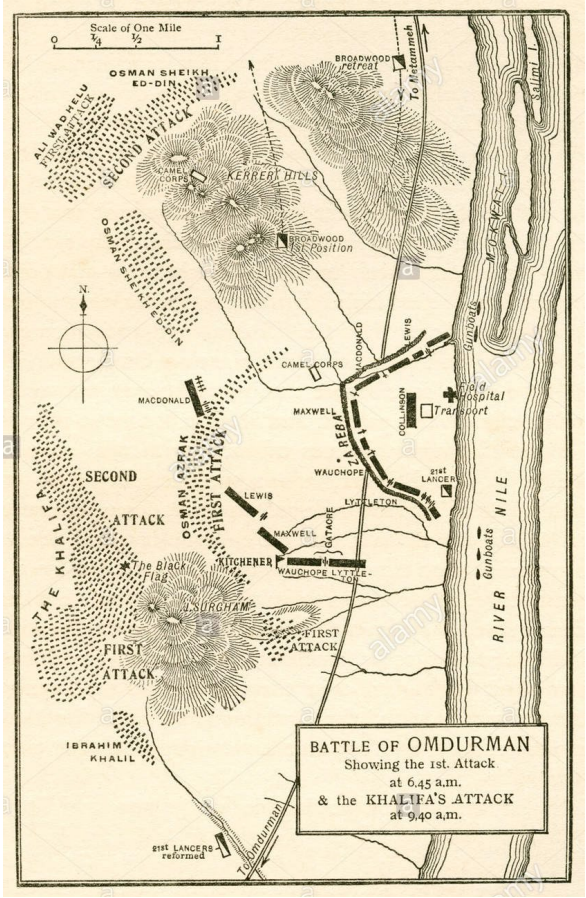

Figure 2. The Battle of Omdurman. G.A. Henty, *With Kitchener in the Sudan: A Story of Atbara and Omdurman* (London: Blackie & Son, 1903), 230.

Kitchener's army, using the Nile River as their main line of communication, was already operating near the limit of its operational reach.[94] Had MacDonald's brigade not withstood the attack, the British would have likely been forced back to their basing areas in Egypt. Defeating the Mahdi and reconquering Sudan would have required a new campaign. The British Army in the Sudan had made potentially costly operational mistakes. It did not pay a high price in terms of casualties or strategic success because the Mahdists lacked the capability to exploit those errors. However, the British Army's next opponent in Africa would be more capable.

[94] Farwell, *Queen Victoria's Little Wars,* 337.

British Operational Art in the Second Boer War, 1899-1900

With the onset of the Second Boer War in 1899, the British Army deployed to South Africa with two objectives. First, they had to relieve the cities of Ladysmith, Mafeking, and Kimberly, which the Boer forces had besieged. Second, the British government tasked General Redvers Buller with destroying the Boer Army and defeating the Transvaal leader Paul Kruger.[95] Buller faced a Boer opponent armed with state-of-the-art Mauser rifles, 155mm howitzers, and Maxim machine guns.[96] Both the strategic situation and the enemy's technological prowess meant the British did not have the luxury to sit in defensive positions and wait for the enemy to be butchered by British firepower, as in the Sudan. They needed to be capable of conducting offensive operations against a prepared enemy, fighting with modern weapons.

Upon arriving in South Africa, Buller split his army into three columns to relieve the three cities under Boer siege, negating much of his advantage in mass. He personally led the force assigned the relief of Ladysmith. A Boer force of 4500 men led by Louis Botha blocked the route to Ladysmith at the Tugela River near Colenso. Arrayed in prepared defenses and using the wide river as its line of defense, the Boers appeared formidable, but by digging in had forfeited their mobility. Rather than take advantage of this with his own ability to maneuver, Buller ordered a massed frontal assault. Even so, the British possessed a sufficient advantage in firepower to defeat the Boers with proper coordination and preparation. Buller and his staff failed in this duty however. As Buller's subordinate Major General Neville Lyttelton wrote after the battle, there was "no proper reconnoitering of the ground, no certain information as to any ford by which to cross the river, no proper artillery preparation, no satisfactory targets for the artillery, no

[95] Edward M. Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army 1868-1902* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992) 306-307.

[96] André Wessels, "Afrikaners at War" in *The Boer War: Direction, Experience and Image*, ed. John Gooch (London: Cass, 2000), 80.

realization of the importance of Hlangwane."[97] Hlangwane was a hill which dominated the geography of the Colenso battlefield, yet Buller and his staff did not plan to seize what should have been recognized as key terrain. In another failure of operational art, Buller's brigade commanders received only vague objectives in a series of uncoordinated attacks.[98]

Once he launched the attack, Buller made little effort to coordinate among his brigades. The lack of reconnaissance meant the lines of operation planned for his attacking elements were frequently unsuitable for that purpose. Tragically, due to inadequate reconnaissance, Major General Arthur Fitzroy Hart marched his 5th Infantry Brigade in Napoleonic close order straight onto a peninsula jutting into the Tugela River. Surrounded on three sides by Boer trenches, Hart took over 500 casualties in an hour from effective Boer fire and from men who drowned trying to attack across an unfordable river.[99]

Other brigades achieved more success though, and had Buller been able to calmly assess the entire battlefield and make decisions the attack might still succeeded. Instead of providing effective command for the entire army, however, Buller engrossed himself in trying to save an artillery battery from capture. Doing the job of a captain, Buller ordered several attempts to save the guns which were in rifle range of Boer trenches. Each attempt failed, with dozens of men and horses shot down. Witnessing the slaughter, Boer General Botha remarked afterward, "I was sick with horror that such bravery had been so useless."[100]

Two British brigades did have local success in achieving their objectives, but required reinforcement from Buller's reserves. However, Buller, no longer able to assess the situation, ordered a general withdrawal with eight fresh battalions still uncommitted.[101] General Lyttelton's

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[97] Farwell, *The Great Anglo-Boer War*, 124.

[98] Ibid., 124.

[99] Ibid., 130.

[100] Ibid., 135.

[101] Ibid., 136.

epitaph for the battle described Colenso as "a deplorable tactical display."[102] Amid the fallout, General Buller was replaced by General Roberts (the future army commander-in-chief) as commander of British forces in South Africa.

Buller was not alone in his neglect of effective operational art. He was indicative of the British Army's promotion system based on personal courage and political connections. Colenso was Buller's first battle in an independent command, and he failed the test. The British Army's struggle to plan and execute operationally was systemic, and cannot be laid at one commander's feet. General Kitchener, the victor of Omdurman, soon arrived in South Africa and took up where Buller left off.

Lord Roberts named General Kitchener his chief of staff and de facto second-in-command when Roberts took over Buller's command in South Africa.[103] Roberts conceived of a "Great Flank March" which would outflank the Boer forces and relieve the siege of Kimberly.[104] Using a line of operation supported by a railway line and two rivers, General Sir John French led the British cavalry on the movement, which surprised the Boers and lifted the siege on 15 February 1900.

With their current positions no longer tenable, the Boer army of 7000 men under Pieter Cronje established defensive positions on the near-side of the Modder River. The ensuing Battle of Paardeberg began on 17 February, but an ill General Roberts did not lead the British Army. General Kitchener assumed command by his position as Roberts' chief of staff, although he was not the senior general on the field.

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[102] W. Baring Pemberton, *Battles of the Boer War* (London: Batsford, 1964), 147.

[103] Tony Heathcote, *The British Field Marshals 1736–1997* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 1999), 193.

[104] Farwell, *The Great Anglo-Boer War*, 191-193.

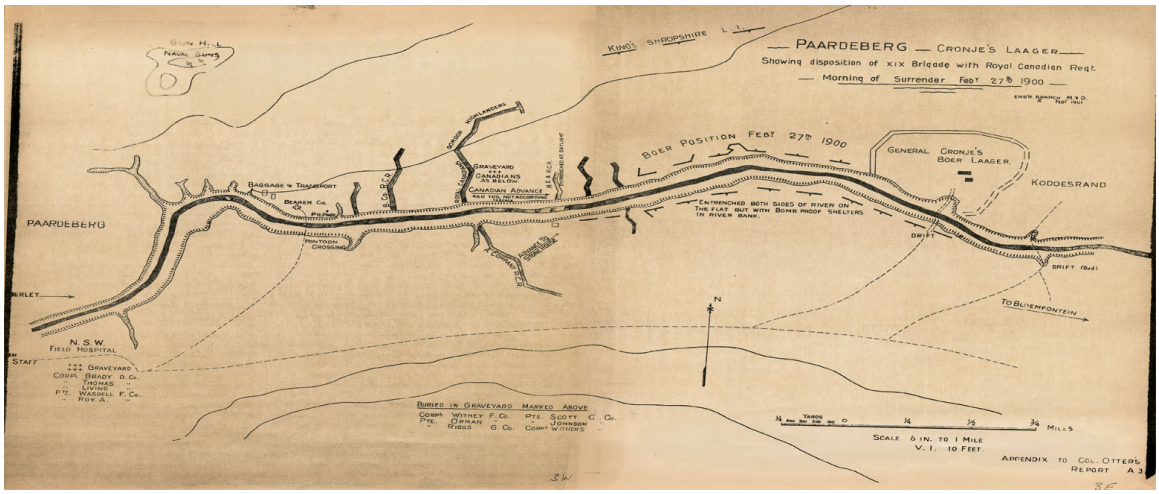

Figure 3. Paardeberg: Cronje's Laager. Canadian War Museum, accessed 10 February 2019, https://www.warmuseum.ca/cwm/exhibitions/boer/map-paardeberg3_lrg_e.html.

Lieutenant General Thomas Kelly-Kenny, British 6th Infantry Division commander, planned to use his artillery to bombard the Boers into surrender, as they were now fully entrenched. Kitchener countermanded Kelly-Kenny and ordered an immediate assault on the Boer positions. Again, a lack of operational art and staff coordination made an already difficult situation worse for the British Army. Kitchener did not adequately describe his visualization of the battlefield to the subordinate commanders, resulting in confusion and uncoordinated attacks. Major General Horace Smith-Dorrien, future II Corps commander in 1914, commanded the 19th Brigade at Paardeberg. Kitchener ordered him to cross the Modder River with his brigade, but gave Smith-Dorrien no reason why he should do so. Smith-Dorrien followed orders and crossed the river against heavy resistance, "in a complete [metaphorical] fog, and knew nothing of the situation…beyond what I could see, or infer, myself."[105]

Kitchener continued his uncoordinated attacks against the Boer trenches throughout the day on 18 February.[106] Kitchener's unrelenting orders to attack became so unbearable that Colonel O.C. Hannay committed to an attack that verged on suicide. Hannay took only 50

[105] Farwell, *The Great Anglo-Boer War*, 207.

[106] John Rickard, "Battle of Paardeberg, 18-27 February 1900," History of War, accessed 05 March 2019, http://www.historyofwar.org/articles/battles_paardeberg.html.

volunteers from his regiment, and conducted a hopeless mounted charge on the Boer lines, killing him and nearly all the men with him.[107] Sunset forced Kitchener to halt his attacks. He planned to re-attack the next morning, but General Roberts, who had heard of the slaughter, came to Paardeberg to take command. Roberts cancelled the attacks and reinstated Kelly-Kenny's original plan to use artillery fires to diminish the Boer defenses.

The "Bloody Sunday" attacks of 18 February cost the British over 1200 casualties without appreciable gain.[108] Once again British Army leaders did not set the conditions operationally for tactical success. In US Army doctrine, commanders are required to describe their visualization of the operation to staff and subordinates, and to direct the accomplishment of that visualization.[109] Kitchener proved unable to do this effectively, as Smith-Dorrien and Hannay's episodes show. US joint doctrine lists "objective" as a principle of operation, meaning all military operations should be for "a clearly defined, decisive, and achievable goal."[110] The objectives Kitchener, one of the most experienced and respected generals in the British Army, gave to his subordinates were not clearly defined. As the day wore on, numerous attacks showed their goals were not achievable. Even without the benefit of hindsight, massed infantry attacks against prepared defenses manned by a combat-proven enemy without any shaping operations to set conditions is not effective operational art.

Despite these operational errors by multiple British general officers, the British achieved their strategic objectives in South Africa. After defeating the Boer armies in the field, and crushing an insurgency with sometimes brutal methods, British forces united all Boer territory

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[107] Farwell, *Great Anglo-Boer War*, 209.

[108] Ibid., 209.

[109] US Department of the Army, *Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 6-0 Mission Command* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012).

[110] US Department of the Army, *Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-0 Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2017), 2-2.

under British rule in the Dominion of South Africa. Although this seemed positive at the time, Britain's success limited reforms after the war. Theorist Edward Luttwak wrote about the "paradox in war."[111] Luttwak counterintuitively proposed victory may harm an army over time, due to the nature of a victorious force to focus on what it did successfully instead of where it failed. Viewed in this light, perhaps a strategic defeat against the Boers may have better prepared Great Britain for the BEF's coming trial in 1914. As it was, the tactical and operational defeats in the first year of the Boer War were embarrassing for the British, and did lead to changes.

Reforms and Preparing to Fight

In 1902, The British government commissioned the Elgin Commission to study tactical, operational, and strategic lessons of the Boer War.[112] The commission produced the Esher Report of 1904, which recommended, among other reorganizations, the abolishment of the British Army Commander-in-Chief. In its place would be an Imperial General Staff, on the model of the German General Staff.[113] This reform, which the War Office accepted, moved the British Army leadership away from the Wellington-model, with commanding generals as great captains. The new general staff eventually increased the professionalism of the British Army leadership, and provided the nucleus of the staff required to support the BEF a decade later.

The Elgin Report also recommended changes to the training and equipping of British infantry, cavalry, and artillery units. It is in these doctrinal and tactical reforms that the Boer War had perhaps its greatest effect on the BEF. The infantry gained a renewed focus on individual marksmanship and the importance of using cover to move on the battlefield.[114] Cavalry, although it clung to the concept of the massed mounted charge, modernized by training in reconnaissance

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[111] Edward Luttwak, *Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2001), 18.

[112] Bond, *The Victorian Army and the Staff College*, 214.

[113] Dunlop, *Development of the British Army, 1899-1914*, 206-213.

[114] Jones, *From Boer War to World War*, 71.

and dismounted tasks that would keep it relevant on the World War I battlefield.[115] The artillery rearmed with new light and heavy cannon. It changed its doctrine to emphasize indirect fire from covered positions to reflect lessons from the Boer and Russo-Japanese Wars. Despite this, some artillery units continued to train moving guns forward to provide direct fire, which would have disastrous consequences at the Battle of Le Cateau.[116]

These changes represented the culmination of lessons learned from the Boer War, and from the colonial wars in general. Although still lacking in operational leadership, the Boer War resulted in the genesis of a professional general staff, and modernized the Army's three primary branches. Had the British Army entered World War I without these reforms, the results would have been disastrous. As Colonel John Dunlop wrote in 1938, "the one man to whom…was due the resurgence of the British Army, was… [Boer President] Paulus Kruger. For England to have been surprised by a Continental War in 1899…would have been a national tragedy."[117]

The Esher Report, followed closely by the Haldane Reforms of 1906 attempted to bridge the gap between the colonial army that had gone to war in South Africa, and the army that would be called to fight in Europe. Sir Richard Haldane, British Secretary of State for War, embarked on a series of reforms, chief among which was the creation of an expeditionary force made up of active service divisions.[118] Financial constraints dictated the size of the force, which is how the BEF ended with six infantry divisions and one cavalry division.[119]

By the time of Haldane's Reforms, British concerns about Germany's designs on the Continent were growing. Britain signed agreements with France in 1904 and Russia in 1907 as diplomatic measures aimed at countering the threat. These agreements did not commit the British

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[115] Jones, *From Boer War to World War*, 206.

[116] Ibid., 156-157.

[117] Dunlop, *Development of the British Army, 1899-1914*, 306.

[118] Ibid., 243-245.

[119] Ibid., 266.

to any role in a coming war, leaving the British with strategic options.[120] The Royal Navy stood ready to embark smaller British Army and Marine elements to conduct operations at the periphery of Germany. [121] Lydell Hart, a veteran of World War I, would argue for such an approach as an "indirect" option.[122]

Rising tensions between 1908 and 1910 led to combined planning between the British War Office and the French Army General Staff. From this planning, led by General Sir Henry Wilson, came the concept of deploying the BEF to France to fight alongside the French Army, far from Royal Navy support.[123] This is the approach that Prime Minister Herbert Asquith put into effect in 1914, when he ordered the BEF to embark for France as soon as possible and take up position on the French left.[124]

Even with the post-Boer War reforms, however, the British Army was not optimized for warfare on the European continent. Not only did the "doctrine of no doctrine" continue right up until World War I, but what doctrine the British Army did produce continued to hedge between continental war and colonial duty. British infantry officer J.F.C. Fuller, in 1914, stated that, "I have no doctrine, for I believe in none. Every concrete case demands its own particular solution."[125] In accordance with this attitude, although *Field Service Regulations 1909* and its successor *FSR 1912* contain recommended tactics for infantry, artillery, and cavalry, they say nothing about doctrine coordinating between the branches.[126]

Asquith ordered the BEF to war, but in reality, the organization existed in name only. Reflecting its ongoing colonial commitments, only 83 of the 157 infantry battalions on active

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[120] Beckett, Bowman, and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, 175.

[121] Hart, *Fire and Movement*, 335-337.

[122] H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy* (London: Faber & Faber, 1967), 5.

[123] Beckett, Bowman, and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, 179.

[124] Harris, *Douglas Haig and the First World War*, 62.

[125] Strachan, "Operational Art and Britain," 109.

[126] United Kingdom War Office, *Field Service Regulations 1909*, 14-20.

service were in Britain available for deployment.[127] Each division in the BEF only trained together 3-4 days per year in the several years prior to 1914.[128] Although the BEF's I Corps staff existed before the war, II Corps stood up in August 1914 by stripping staff from throughout the British Army.[129] General Sir John French served as the BEF commanding general. Kitchener, now Secretary of State for War, named Lt. General Haig, subordinate of both Kitchener and French in the Boer War, and Lt. General Smith-Dorrien, of the Battle of Paardeberg, as I and II Corps commanders, respectively.[130]

Battle of Mons: 23 August 1914

Once in France, General French deployed the BEF on the French left, as planned. Counterintuitively, French advanced the BEF twenty-five km from Mauberge, where he had intended to position, to Mons. At Maubeuge, French could have placed the Sambre River between the BEF and the Germans, while at Mons the only terrain was a militarily insignificant canal.[131] French made this decision even after being warned by his chief of intelligence, Colonel George MacDonogh, that three German corps were approaching the BEF's II Corps.[132]

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[127] Beckett, Bowman, and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, 44.

[128] Travers, *The Killing Ground*, 42

[129] Mallinson, *1914: Fight the Good Fight*, 75.

[130] Hastings, *Catastrophe 1914*, 220.

[131] Beckett, Bowman, and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, 214.

[132] Hastings, *Catastrophe 1914*, 203.

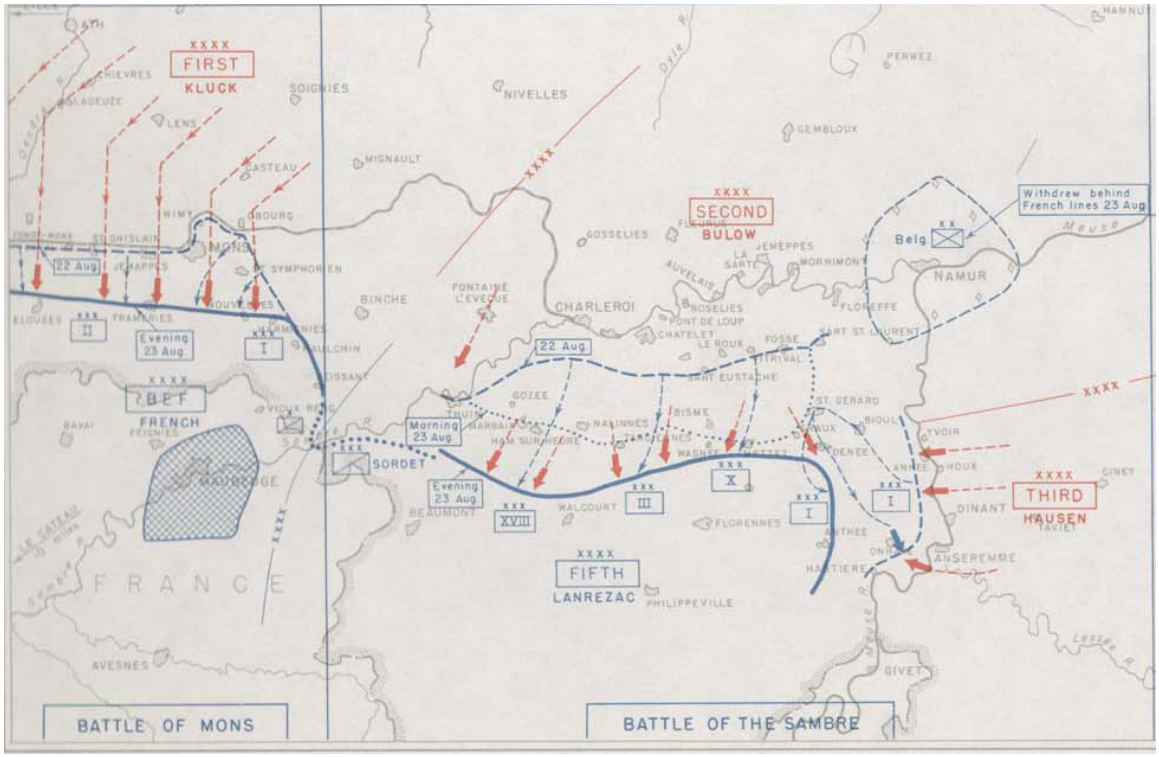

Figure 4. Western Front, 1914: Battle of the Frontiers: Situation 23 August and Operations Since 22 August. Vincent J. Esposito and T. Dodson Stamps, *A Short Military History of World War I - Atlas* (New York: US Military Academy, 1954).

In the colonial wars, British expeditionary forces were usually on the operational offensive. The Royal Navy defended the British Isles, whereas the government typically charged the British Army to advance against an enemy.[133] This tendency, to always advance until meeting the enemy, led French into setting his command in the path of the German First Army. Colonial experiences cannot account for French's actions after deciding to defend at Mons however. Alerted that the Germans were only a few hours away, French left his headquarters to inspect an infantry brigade over thirty kilometers behind the front lines and did not return until near the end of the Battle of Mons. He made no decisions, other than to defend, and then to retreat.[134]

[133] Strachan, "Operational Art and Britain," 100.

[134] Beckett, Bowman, and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, 211-216.

It was the effective marksmanship of the British infantry which prevented catastrophe at Mons. The Boer Wars had exposed British marksmanship as lacking, and post-war reforms focused on fixing this problem. As Edmonds' official history put it, "[the BEF] was incomparably the best trained, best organized and best equipped British Army which ever went forth to war."[135] Infantry training before 1914 consisted of more marksmanship than other European armies, leading one officer to write in 1903, "the British Army…is a better shooting force than any Continental power."[136] Pre-war budgetary restrictions limited each infantry battalion to only two Vickers machine guns, instead of the recommended six. To mitigate this, British infantry practiced the "mad minute," training each soldier to fire fifteen well-aimed rounds in a minute at targets over 300 yards away.[137]

Equipped with excellent Lee-Enfield .303 rifles, British infantry repeatedly broke up German assaults on their positions at Mons.[138] In contrast to the Boer War, the BEF's fire was so rapid and effective their German opponents thought it was machine gun fire. The British also used sniper fire in this battle, "another trick taught to us by Brother Boer," as a sergeant wrote after the battle.[139] By nightfall of 23 August, the BEF had survived on the basis of its marksmanship, and withdrew without being destroyed by the larger German force.

The BEF had delayed the German First Army by one day at Mons.[140] That day's delay had widened the gap between the BEF and the retreating French Fifth Army, now over ten km away. Belatedly realizing the jeopardy he had placed Britain's only field army in, French ordered a general retreat of the BEF. However, he gave no orders for how the retreat should be carried

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[135] James Edmonds, *Military Operations France and Belgium, 1914: Mons, Retreat to the Seine, the Marne, and the Aisne August-October 1914* (London: Macmillan, 1926), 10-11.

[136] Jones, *From Boer War to World War*, 93.

[137] British War Office, *Musketry Regulations Part 1* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1909), 260.

[138] Mallinson, *1914: Fight the Good Fight*, 78.

[139] Jones, *From Boer War to World War*, 99.

[140] Hastings, *Catastrophe 1914*, 212.

out, nor did the BEF HQ staff coordinate anything between I or II Corps.[141] As a British officer wrote, "No one knows what one is driving at, where anyone is, what we have got against us, or anything at all, and what is told us generally turns out to be entirely wrong."[142]

Roberts' Long Flank March against the Boers had been a large operational movement, but nothing like the scale of what the BEF now conducted. Enemies in the colonial wars had typically lacked the means to pursue an army temporarily weakened by a tactical defeat. After the Battle of Mons however, the victorious German Army harassed and pursed the British throughout the Great Retreat.[143] Again betraying the British Army's lack of experience in operational decision-making, French split the BEF in two, putting the Forest of Mormal between his I and II Corps. For seven days of retreating, I and II Corps were out of contact an unable to provide mutual support.[144]

British of Le Cateau: 26 August 1914

Although I Corps faced little contact, II Corps' exhausted soldiers under Smith-Dorrien struggled to stay ahead of the larger German force pursuing them. Smith-Dorrien intuited that further retreat risked destruction and chose to turn and fight at Le Cateau.[145] As much as 1914 showed European armies the futility of Napoleonic tactics against modern weapons, Le Cateau stands as a battle that would have seemed familiar to Marshal Ney and Wellington. The two armies fought on terrain only permitting visibility to about 1.5 km. With no way to gain

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[141] Ibid., 216.

[142] J. M. Craster, *Fifteen Rounds a Minute: The Grenadiers at War 1914* (London: Macmillan, 1976), 37.

[143] Beckett, Bowman, and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, 219-221.

[144] Nikolas Gardner, "Command in Crisis: The British Expeditionary Force and the Forest of Mormal," *War & Society* 16, no. 2 (October 1998): 13-32, accessed 30 December 2018, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1179/072924798791201345.

[145] Martin Samuels, "Friction, Chaos and Order(s): Clausewitz, Boyd, and Command Approaches," *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 15, no. 4 (2014): 65, accessed 21 February 2019, https://www.academia.edu/3818367/Friction_Chaos_and_Order_s_Clausewitz_Boyd_and_Command_Approaches.

observation for indirect fire, the British deployed their cannon alongside the infantry and used direct fire.[146] A German machine gunner commented, "We could see a [British] battery which, according to our doctrine, was located far too far forward…at 1,400 meters [from the German line]."[147] Throughout the battle Germans used direct fire to neutralize British artillery units, with some batteries reduced to one or two guns firing.[148]

The BEF's command and control added to the antique feel of the battle. II Corps operated independently throughout the battle, as both BEF HQ and I Corps under Haig took no action to support Smith-Dorrien. Within II Corps, orders were passed by mounted riders carrying messages across the battlefield, as Kitchener had done in the Sudan. These methods were relics of the earlier colonial era, when native troops lacked the rifles to engage direct-fire artillery, and the pace of operations moved slowly enough for messengers on horseback to relay timely commands. Despite these hinderances, through repeated examples of personal courage by British soldiers, II Corps was able to withdraw and continue their retreat towards the Marne River.[149]

[146] Hastings, *Catastrophe 1914*, 225-228.

[147] Nigel Cave and Jack Sheldon, *Le Cateau 26 August 1914* (London: Pen & Sword, 2008), 52.

[148] Hastings, *Catastrophe 1914*, 228.

[149] Ibid., 225-233.

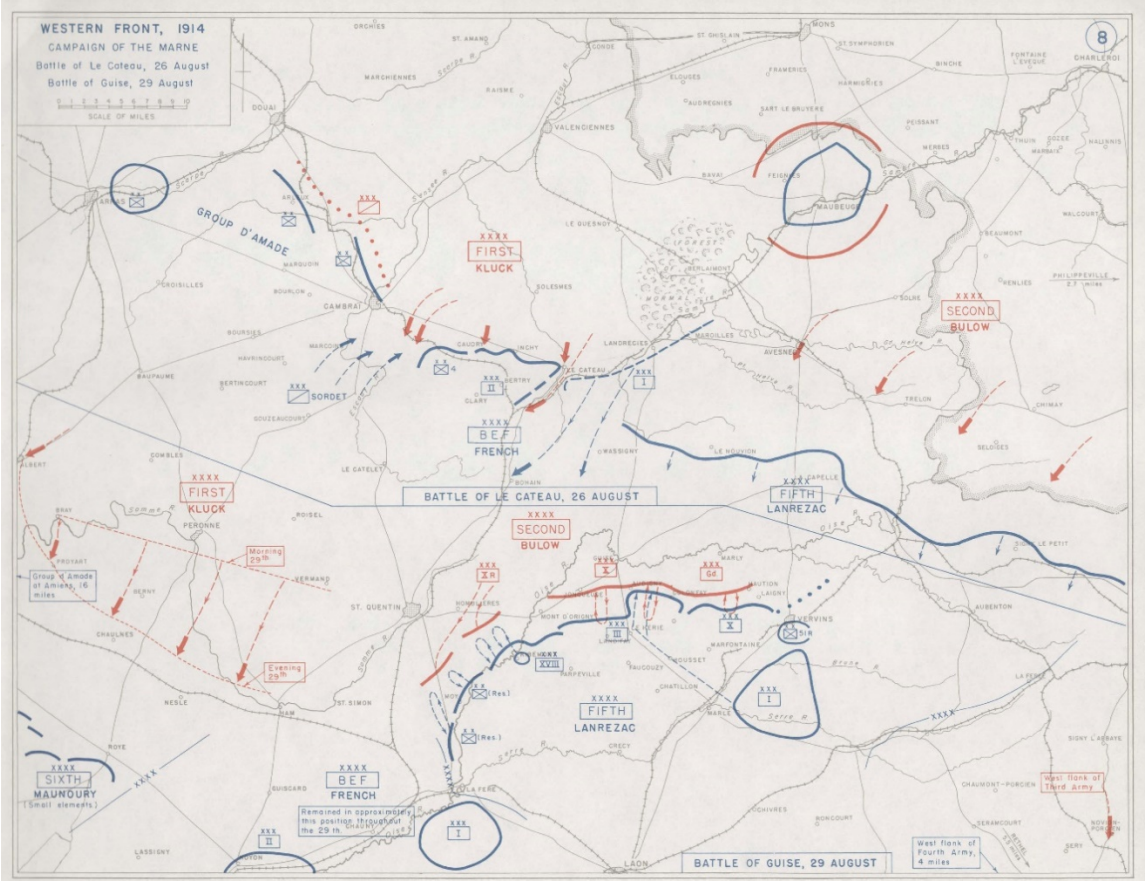

Figure 5. Western Front, 1914: Campaign of the Marne: Battle of Le Cateau, 26 August. Vincent J. Esposito and T. Dodson Stamps, *A Short Military History of World War I - Atlas* (New York: US Military Academy, 1954).

The battles of Mons and Le Cateau highlight another effect years of colonial service had on the British Army's organization. The army was not only built around the regimental and divisional echelons, but centered on the infantry and cavalry, with less emphasis given to support branches. This culture severely hampered artillery and logistics, and their challenges during the Great Retreat were partially a result of this trend.[150]

The British Army entered 1914 without any doctrine to coordinate between infantry and artillery units on the battlefield. After a fratricide involving Royal Artillery firing on infantry, the 1st Infantry Division concluded a lack of "any mutual system of intercommunication between the

[150] Beckett, Bowman, and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, 230-232.

infantry and the [artillery]" caused the incident.[151] Furthermore, British howitzers developed to fight enemies like the Boers were insufficient to counter German artillery concentrations in terms of both range and lethality. Newer, more effective howitzers such as the 4.5-inch howitzer or the 60-pound gun were not available in sufficient numbers in 1914, as a result of budgetary constraints.[152]

The German Army used their superior cannon in an operational role, centrally controlling artillery to mass effects from dispersed firing locations. The British, in contrast, continued to devolve control of the artillery down to the brigade or division level. This gave the Royal Artillery maximum flexibility, but at the cost of making coordination across units for support nearly impossible.[153]

Organizationally, German artillery possessed firing batteries and well-manned artillery staffs at every echelon from Regiment to Corps, with artillery commanders authorized to dictate fire plans to subordinate units. The British had no artillery above the divisional level, limiting Corps and the BEF HQ's ability to weight efforts with additional combat power.[154] Each division had a Commander, Royal Artillery (CRA) with a staff of three officers and little communications capability, leaving artillery commanders unable to centrally control artillery to support operational objectives. In practice, maneuver generals often reverted to Boer War organizations, with the CRA serving as an advisor to the division commander, and the artillery decentralized to subordinate infantry brigades.[155] During the BEF's early battles, the British could not match the

[151] Nicholas Gardner, *Trial by Fire: Command and the British Expeditionary Force of 1914* (New York: Praeger, 2003), 82.

[152] Shelford Bidwell and Dominick Graham, *Fire-power: British Army Weapons and Theories of War 1904-1945* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982), 68.

[153] Jones, *From Boer War to World War*, 155.

[154] Beckett, Bowman, and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, 232.

[155] Bidwell and Graham, *Fire-Power*, 19-21.

German's ability to use fires in support of division and corps operations operational artillery fires, and struggled to conduct counterfire to protect their own infantry.[156]

Compounding the limitations of the BEF's artillery organization were their logistics challenges. Partly this was due to the pre-war British government preparing for continued colonial operations, rather than a large-scale Continental war. If each artillery piece in the BEF fired at its sustained rate of four rounds per minute, the BEF could shoot through its entire planned six months of ammunition in seven hours of combat. Other classes of supply faced similar shortfalls as well.[157]

The War Office tasked the 1904 Mowatt Committee to determine how much ammunition a six-division BEF would require, based on an anticipated campaign that would be similar to the campaigns in South Africa. Large-scale combat in Europe was not used as a planning factor. Even in 1912, when a European war looked increasingly possible, the War Office added additional small-arms ammunition requirements, but did not adjust other types of ammunition or classes of supply.[158] These anticipated supply rates were adequate for an infantry-centric imperial army, but not for a continental army fighting a peer threat.[159]

Kitchener's Intervention and the Battle of the Marne: 06-10 September 1914

Smith-Dorrien's stand at Le Cateau checked the German pursuit and allowed the BEF to continue its retreat, but at a cost to II Corps. Of the 40,000 men the corps began the battle with, almost 8000 were casualties by the time the British withdrew.[160] Not only had II Corps' combat power been degraded, but the battle severely affected BEF commander Sir John French's will to

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[156] Beckett, Bowman, and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, 232.

[157] Jonathan Bailey, "British Artillery in the Great War" in Paddy Griffith (ed.) *British Fighting Methods in the Great War* (London: Frank Cass, 1996), 25.

[158] Jonathan Bailey, *The First World War and the Birth of the Modern Style of Warfare* (London: Strategic and Combat Studies Institute, 1996), 9.

[159] Beckett, Bowman, and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, 230.

[160] Edmonds, *Military Operations*, 182.

fight as well. He was disgusted with the French Army continually retreating, and did not fully grasp the crisis the Schlieffen Plan had inflicted on the French.[161] In a telegram to the War Office in London, French complained, "I do not see why I should again be called upon to run the risk of absolute disaster in order to a second time save them [Field Marshal French assessed that the BEF had thus far saved France from defeat]. I do not think you understand the shattered condition of [II Corps], and how it paralyzes my powers of offence."[162] French proposed withdrawing the BEF out of contact from the Germans to the Normandy port of La Mans, over 200 km southwest of Paris.[163] In effect, French advocated the BEF leave the French Army to their fate, and preserve the BEF as best he could.

Although French let his contempt for the French Army bias his military decision-making, the British had arrived at a strategic crossroads. The BEF's initial operational approach of reinforcing the French Army's left was in jeopardy of failing. If the British government followed Field Marshal French's suggestion, the BEF would withdraw not just from the battle, but effectively from the allied cause in general. Led by Prime Minister Asquith, the British Cabinet rejected French's advice, and Secretary for War Kitchener departed for France to convey the decision in person.

At the British Embassy in Paris, Kitchener met privately with French. The Secretary of War overruled French, and explained to him the BEF would stay in the fight. Kitchener dispatched a telegram to London that night, reporting, "French's troops are now engaged in the fighting line, where he will remain conforming to the movements of the French Army."[164]

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[161] Hastings, *Catastrophe 1914*, 292.

[162] George H Casser, *The Tragedy of Sir John French* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1985), 134.

[163] Edmonds, *Military Operations*, 474-475.

[164] Ibid., 245.

This was the moment when the Schlieffen-conceived wheel thundering toward Paris appeared vulnerable as the German First Army opened its flank towards Paris. Additionally, the German First and Second Armies were struggling to coordinate their actions, resulting in a growing gap between the two formations. Field Marshall Joseph Joffre, commander-in-chief of the French Army, developed a plan to reverse the general retreat and regain the initiative from the Germans. The attack, now known as the First Battle of the Marne, would be an all-out offensive by as much of the French Army as Joffre could muster. His plan required the BEF's help, as Joffre assigned the British the task of advancing into the gap with the French Fifth Army.[165]

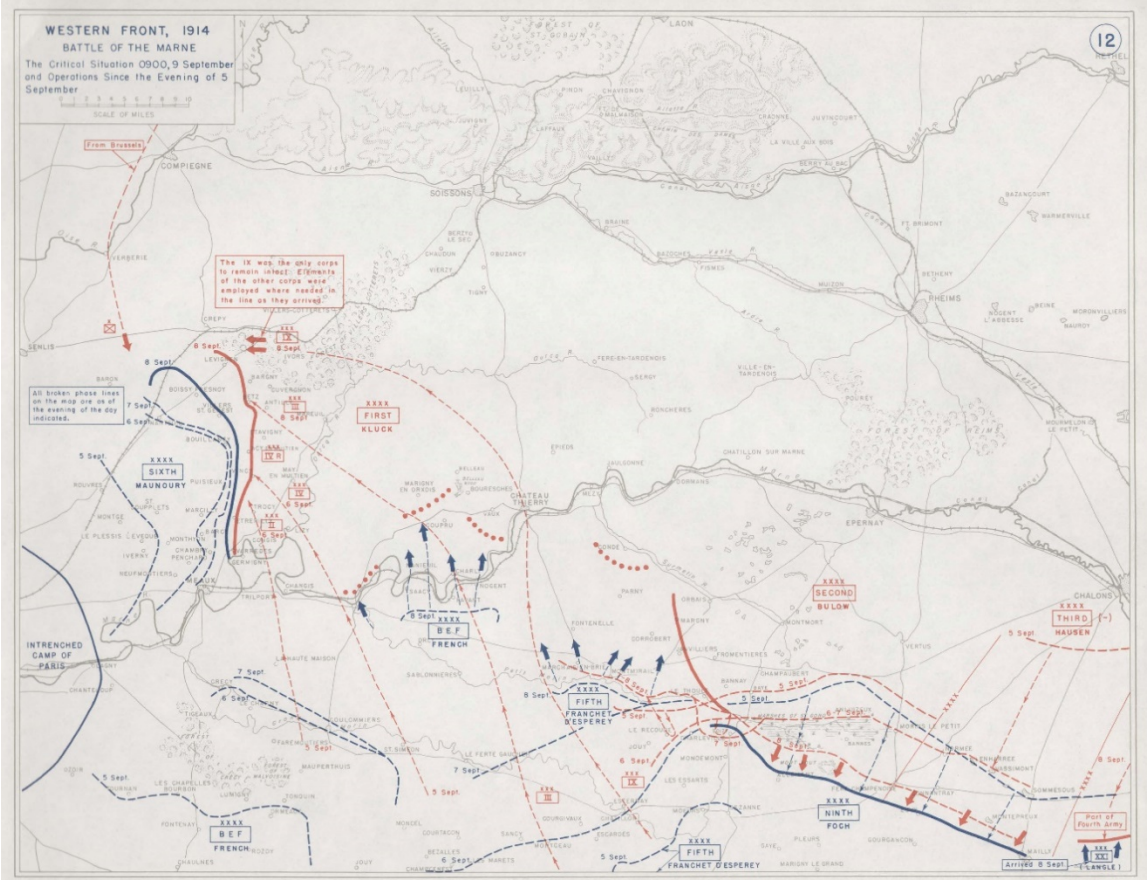

Figure 6. Western Front, 1914: Battle of the Marne. Vincent J. Esposito and T. Dodson Stamps, *A Short Military History of World War I - Atlas* (New York: US Military Academy, 1954).

[165] Hart, *Fire and Movement*, 182-186.

It had taken Kitchener's intervention and the occasion of one of the most pivotal battles of the 20th century to finally reveal the BEF's necessary operational approach. The British would prioritize their alliance with the French over all other considerations, and would risk the destruction of their army to maintain it. For the remainder of the battles of 1914, the BEF would play an important role, albeit a much smaller one than their French allies. When the BEF advanced, it did so cautiously, as British casualties could not be replaced. When the British and French attacked at the Marne River on 06 September, the six British divisions fighting paled in comparison to the 84 French divisions and 51 German divisions involved in the battle.[166]

The BEF advanced slowly, frustrating French and British officers alike. "It's a precious slow pursuit and the German rear-guards seem to delay us very successfully, judging from the constant checks," an apparently exasperated major of the Grenadiers wrote.[167] The gap between the German First and Second Armies widened to fifty kilometers, and still Joffre's headquarters needed to send repeated messages to BEF HQ urging speed.[168] The BEF was conspicuous in its slowness, but by no means unique. Fatigue plagued all armies on both sides.[169]

The BEF's advance into the German gap helped force their retreat beginning on 09 September.[170] The 2,000 British casualties were significant, but paled in comparison to the over 200,000 French casualties, and the nearly 100,000 German dead, missing, and wounded.[171] Despite the BEF's contribution, the British Army was still sized for fighting on the veldts of South Africa, not the European plain.

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[166] Barbara Tuchman, *The Guns of August* (London: Constable, 1962).

[167] Craster, *Fifteen Rounds a Minute*, 76.

[168] Hastings, *Catastrophe 1914*, 322.

[169] Tuchman, *The Guns of August*, 519.

[170] Hart, *Fire and Movement*, 191-193.

[171] Mallinson, *1914: Fight the Good Fight*, 416.

Battle of the Aisne: 13-28 September 1914

The BEF's lack of tempo in the Battle of the Marne caused the allies to miss a critical opportunity, and directly resulted in the stalemate of the trenches. The British (and elements of the French Army) lost contact with much of the German First and Second Armies after the Marne, allowing the Germans to choose the terrain on which to transition to the defense. They chose well, defending along the Aisne River using the ridge at Chemin des Dames as the strongpoint. As a British artillery officer wrote after the battle, "The [BEF's] advance proceeded with insufficient momentum, which permitted the Germans to prepare a strong defensive position…from which we failed to dislodge them."[172]

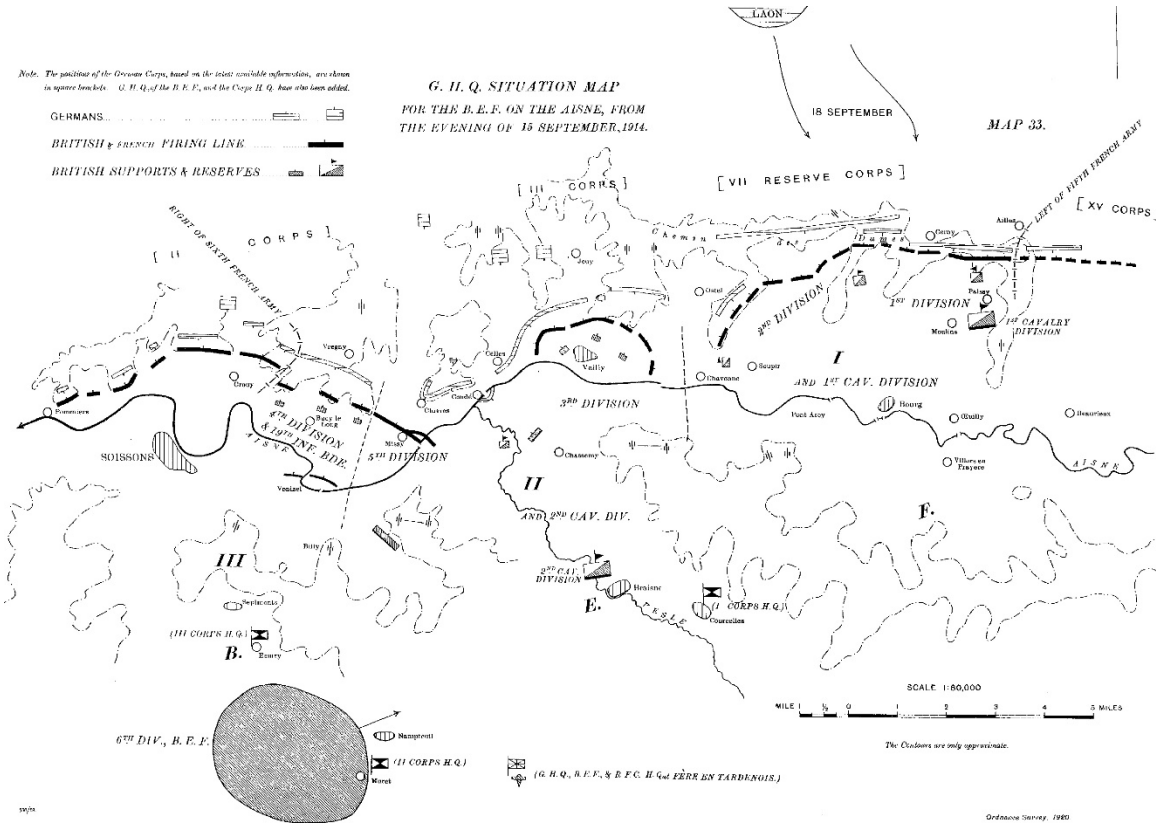

Figure 7. GHQ Situation Map: For the BEF on the Aisne, from the evening of 15 September, 1914. James Edmonds, *Military Operations France and Belgium, 1914: Mons, Retreat to the Seine, the Marne, and the Aisne August-October 1914* (London: Macmillan, 1926).

[172] Paul Kendall, *Aisne 1914: The Dawn of Trench Warfare* (Stroud: Spellmount, 2012), 342.

With two days to prepare for the Battle of the Aisne, the German Army turned Chemin des Dames into a preview of the coming trench warfare. After taking 2,000 casualties in the attack during the Marne, the BEF now averaged 2,000 casualties a day trying to gain the heights. The British general officer struggles with employing operational art that were evident in the colonial wars of years past became apparent again. "[At the Aisne] there was no plan, no objective, no arrangements for cooperation, and the divisions blundered into battle" recounted the official British Army history of the engagement.[173] The British launched repeated attacks on the high ground with equally repetitive futility over the next several days. But the front had stabilized, and now soldiers witnessed the empty battlefield that would characterize the next four years.[174]

Battle of Ypres and the End of the BEF: 19 October - 30 November 1914

The race to the sea began in October, as the allied and German armies attempted to find a flank to maneuver against. By 17 October the race was over, as the front line reached the Belgian coast. Desperately seeking a decision, the armies fought the First Battle of Ypres, where for nearly two months French, British, and German soldiers dug underground to avoid the murderous fire above it.[175] Maneuver warfare would not be seen again on a large scale until 1918.

The slow pursuit by the BEF during the Battle of the Marne likely worsened the operational failures of the Battle of the Aisne. Strategically, however, it is unlikely this was decisive. The BEF simply lacked the scale, and the organization, to actually break the German lines and exploit any success. Had the Germans not made their stand at Chemin des Dames, they would have made it somewhere else in northeast France, and the race to the sea would have occurred from there.

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[173] Edmonds, *Military Operations*, 465.

[174] Hastings, *Catastrophe 1914*, 345-355.

[175] Mallinson, *1914: Fight the Good Fight*, 421-439.

At Ypres the BEF took over 60,000 casualties, putting the total British casualties in August-December 1914 at almost 90,000 men, 100% of the original BEF. Only reinforcements from Britain kept the BEF an effective fighting force.[176] By the famous Christmas Truce, the British Expeditionary Force that had crossed the channel with so many veterans of the colonial wars ceased to exist.[177] It would be replaced in 1915 by Kitchener's New Armies, which would carry on the fight for the next three years.[178]

In the BEF's last act, however, their colonial experience came to the fore one more time. A German corps assaulted the village of Gheluvelt on 31 October in hopes of capturing a road leading to the city of Ypres. The Germans broke the British front lines, and seemed on the verge of a victory. The 2nd Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment, already at 50% strength, counterattacked in a massed bayonet charge, checking the German advance and reforming the British line.[179] Without the organization to achieve strategic victory, and led by general officers unschooled in operational art, British professionalism enabled individual units to still achieve tactical objectives at great cost, as their predecessors had at Colenso and Paardeberg. The end of the original British Expeditionary Force served to buy time for the British government as they built the armies required for sustained Continental warfare.

Conclusion

The British Expeditionary Force's performance and operational approach in 1914 resulted from the effects of the Victorian-era colonial wars. Politically, the unpopularity of conscription left the BEF unable to grow to the necessary size to conduct large-scale combat operations against a peer enemy. Only the galvanizing effect of the BEF's sacrifice on the battlefield eventually made drafting soldiers politically feasible for the British government.

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[176] Beckett, Bowman, and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, 229.

[177] Hart, *Fire and Movement*, 405-425.

[178] Ibid., 403.

[179] Beckett, Bowman, and Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, 227.

Doctrinally and organizationally the BEF reflected the British Army's previous decades spent conducting colonial operations. The published doctrine lacked standardization and proscriptive detail because army leaders did not want to stifle the initiative of tactical leaders. Institutional leaders gave little thought to whether that doctrine would allow the disparate regiments and battalions to come together and fight as a coherent BEF. Once in combat the BEF adapted at great cost in casualties and unachieved objectives. Its infantry-centric nature, fit for colonial wars, left its support branches challenged to bring their capabilities to bear on the modern battlefield.

The lack of a true peer enemy in colonial wars allowed operational leadership to ossify in the British Army. Tactical actions took on outsized importance, as relatively small British forces could defeat much larger indigenous armies. Training focused on the tactical level as well, ensuring commanders and staffs above the brigade level deployed with little understanding of the tasks involved in commanding and controlling large formations. Those leaders were products of a promotion system which did not ensure the best leaders gained high command.

After surviving the initial shock of a battlefield of unsurpassed violence, the BEF recovered and achieved some tactical success against a much larger modern army. This was a result of the professionalism of British soldiers and officers, and the personal courage that tight-knit battalions inculcated in their members. Although its small size prevented it from being able to achieve operational or strategic victory, the BEF supported their ally France and kept Great Britain in the fight until the government could raise large enough armies.

Today, the United States Army is in a period of transition bearing similarities to the British Army's situation in the years between the end of the Boer Wars and the beginning of World War I. Our current operating environment reflects a return to great power competition, and modern technological advances threaten the validity of current doctrine, organization, and

equipment.[180] In the counterinsurgencies of the past two decades, the US Army optimized itself as an infantry-centric force focused at the brigade and battalion level to face non-peer threats.[181]

With the 2017 publication of *Field Manual 3-0, Operations*, the US Army's renewed focus on echelons above brigade is a start towards regaining our competency in large-scale combat operations. The Chief of Staff's modernization priorities, such as updated precision long-range fires and future logistics platforms will, if acted upon, help rebalance the combined-arms force.[182] Renewed rigor at both combat training centers and corps and division Warfighter exercises can mitigate the operational failings the BEF displayed.

Equally important is for the US Army is to retain the flexibility to respond to unexpected changes in warfare. Although the nature of war is unlikely to change, the character of war may change in ways we have not predicted. *Field Manual 3-0* provides a vision of what the Army's senior leaders predict future combat will entail, but it is not and cannot be all-encompassing. The updated doctrine fills a needed gap, to ensure that we are not an army with "a doctrine of no doctrine." More important will be producing effective tactical, operational, and strategic leaders who are able to develop solutions to new problems, without letting experiences of previous wars overly bias their decision-making. If large-scale war becomes necessary, a US Army with those leaders stands a much better chance at achieving its strategic objectives, rather than sacrificing itself to buy time, as the British Expeditionary Force of 1914 found itself required to do.

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[180] *National Security Strategy* (Washington DC: The White House, 2017), 27, accessed 29 November 2018, https://whitehouse.gove/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf.

[181] US Department of the Army, *The US Army Concept for Multi-Doman Combined Arms Operations at Echelons Above Brigade, 2025-2045* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2018), 2.

[182] US Government Accountability Office, Report to the Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives, *Army Modernization: Steps to Ensure Army Futures Command Fully Applies Leading Practices* (Washington, DC, January 2019), accessed 30 March 2019, https://www.gao.gov/assets/700/696537.pdf.

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