

**The Evolution of a Conception of Citizenly
Duty Towards Military Service 1854–1914:
A Study of London Press Discourse**

by

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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ABSTRACT: This dissertation investigates how personal military service, which during the immensely popular Crimean War of 1854-6 was regarded as the business only of an abstract and lowly soldier-class, had by the eve of the Great War taken on the aspect of a clear and universal citizenly duty in London press discourse. It utilises text-searchable digitised newspaper archives to exhaustively review the whole body of relevant press debate in thirteen key London periodicals, identifying key shifts and trends in press conceptions of civilian military obligation over the six decades between the outbreak of the Crimean War in 1854 and the eve of the Great War in 1914. The analytical narrative that emerges highlights the importance of key events, including the Crimean War, Indian Mutiny, wars of Prussian expansionism, and Boer War, in promoting and shaping the coherent conception of citizenly duty towards military service that would go on to underpin not only the mass enlistments of 1914 but also the acceptance of conscription in 1916. It suggests also the important role of broader cultural and political trends – in particular, the advent of militarist Imperialism, the growing legitimacy of the state, the shift towards a more collectivist ‘social democratic’ liberalism, and the emergence of ‘contractual’ theories of citizenship – in facilitating a reconciliation between the military imperative towards mass civilian military participation and existing liberal values and ideologies. This dissertation reveals that the societal consensus on the duty to enlist in 1914 was by no means a foregone cultural conclusion, nor indeed the relic of an earlier heroic age, but rather the dynamic product of evolution and contestation over six decades. The present study not only provides vital context to our understanding of the ‘rush to the colours’ of 1914, but also represents the first historical investigation of an important and much-neglected aspect of the relationship between war and society.

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LONG ABSTRACT:

The ‘rush to the colours’ of August–November 1914 is the subject of both enduring fascination and considerable mystery. The conventional interpretation was long one of young men caught up in a general unthinking frenzy of latent patriotic fervour, besieging recruiting offices across the country. In recent decades, scholarship has tended to complicate this picture, highlighting the diversity of individual responses to recruiting calls. But while many factors likely influenced the decision to enlist, most historians agree that the mass volunteering of 1914 took place in a cultural milieu that powerfully endorsed military participation as the patriotic duty of all able-bodied young men. Indeed, it was less that ‘joining up’ had acquired an intrinsic appeal than that failure to participate in a war approved by society as both necessary and just had acquired a powerful social stigma. The duty to fight – and, if necessary, die – for one’s country was a socio-moral norm of prodigious seriousness and potency during the Great War, and one that underpinned not only the mass volunteerism of 1914, but also the acceptance of conscription in 1916.

We tend, today, to look back on this sentiment as a kind of ‘obsolete patriotism,’ the last gasp of a more chivalrous, heroic Victorian moral code. Yet this impression is a mistaken one. The socio-moral norm that dictated self-sacrificial military participation in 1914 was no straightforward relic of Victorianism. On the contrary, the idea that in-principle support for a conflict involved an obligation to offer personal military service would have seemed just as strange to mid-Victorians as it does to us today. In 1854, only sixty years before the outbreak of the Great War, Victorian Britain had entered another European conflict, one similarly regarded as a momentous and righteous undertaking. The strength of popular support for the Crimean War (1853–56) was so immense as to force the hand of a reluctant government, earning the conflict the name of ‘The People’s War.’ And yet, despite a

crippling recruiting crisis, ordinary Englishmen persisted in standing aloof from personal service. For respectable Englishmen, personal service was at best an act of rather baffling supererogation; at worst, a status lowering disgrace.

Certainly, every experience of war is unique, and the Great War did present a more immediate geopolitical threat to Britain than the Crimean War. But closer examination seems to indicate a fundamental difference in assumptions about the civilian's responsibility towards personal military service even before the outbreak of the two conflicts. In 1854, neither support for war nor patriotic allegiance to the state were understood to involve a duty towards personal military service. In 1914, however, the assumption that people ought to fight (in person) the wars they accepted to be just was a broadly accepted socio-moral norm. What happened to popular conceptions of civilian military obligation in the interim to explain these very different assumptions? When, why and how did support for war transform from an abstract political commitment to a personal call to action?

This dissertation represents the first scholarly attempt to address these important questions. By documenting and interpreting changing conceptions of civilian military obligation in thirteen key London newspapers over six decades, this study traces the evolution of a coherent conception of citizenly duty towards military service in London press discourse between the outbreak of the Crimean War and the eve of the Great War. Until recently, this kind of longitudinal study of press discourse would have been a practical impossibility. The advent of digitised, text-searchable full runs of historical newspapers in the last decade, however, imparts the ability to exhaustively review the whole body of relevant press debate – tens of thousands of articles, letters and reports referring both directly and indirectly to the issue of civilian military obligation – over a sixty year period. By taking in the broad sweep of press discourse, this dissertation is able to identify patterns, shifts and trends in the way the citizen's duty towards military service was conceived of and articulated. Further, by tracing correlations with specific events and contemporary social, cultural, and political developments, it is able to offer an analytical interpretation of the process by which personal military service took on the aspect of a citizenly duty by the eve of the Great War.

This study indicates that upon entering the Crimean War in 1854, the London press overwhelmingly assumed soldiering to be the business solely of a professional minority

drawn from the lowliest classes of men. This assumption was manifested in the war itself, when despite immense public support for ‘moral intervention,’ ordinary people proved stubbornly unwilling to countenance actual military service. Faced with the paradox of poor recruiting for a popular war, the London press reaffirmed a morally neutral ‘market’ view of military participation, blaming the insufficient appeal of military service on a competitive economy and thereby exonerating the public of any culpability for the recruiting crisis. But while the Crimean War revealed the absence of any real conception of citizenly duty towards military service, it also inspired a new emphasis on ‘national’ responsibility for war, a new sense of the moral virtues of soldiering, and a new degree of middle-class identification with and ‘ownership’ of military affairs. Thus, while mid-century understandings of soldiering as ‘a trade like any other’ prevailed during the conflict, the experience of the Crimean War set in motion the slow evolution of a new conception of personal responsibility for the waging of war.

Quickly thereafter, the intense emotional charge of the Indian Mutiny inspired a powerful moral imperative towards voluntary service, providing a new vision of military participation as a virtuous, chivalrous and patriotic act worthy of respectable men. This new respectable vision of military service, further worked upon by the war scare of 1858-9, found permanent expression and lasting influence in the form of the Victorian Volunteer movement. The rapid rise of a conception of respectable, ennobling, patriotic civilian military participation between 1857 and 1860 represented a significant turnaround from the strict division of the civilian and military spheres, and disdain for the latter, that had prevailed before the Crimean War. The re-imagining of civilian military service as a patriotic act worthy of respectable men was a crucial pre-condition to the emergence of a sense of citizenly obligation towards military participation. By 1860, participation in the national military system had become respectable, even laudable. It remained, however, essentially supererogatory: a matter for the conscience and inclinations of the individual, rather than a citizenly obligation *per se*.

Ultimately it was the thorny idea of citizenly *liability* towards military service that would prove most difficult to reconcile with English values and culture. The idea of inherent liability to military service (which in turn might be used to justify hated compulsory measures) was an extremely difficult fit with a popular liberalism that had no coherent theory of the place of military service in subject-state relations, that revered personal liberty above all, and that remained deeply ambivalent about war. But in her aversion to

formal civilian military obligations, Britain was falling increasingly out of step with the rest of the Western world. The decade 1862-1871 gave the London press two potent examples of the 'citizenly obligation' thesis in practice. Both the American Civil War and the wars of Prussian expansionism powerfully signalled that the wars of the future would be fought not by small bodies of career soldiers, but by the whole manhood of nations, drilled and organised into citizen armies on the basis of universal liability to military service. The stunning rise of Prussia, in particular, inspired awe and admiration for the citizen-soldier ideal. But while the London press expressed new enthusiasm for the idea of a 'national' or citizen army, the strong-state, conscriptionist Prussian model conflicted with the traditional English aversion to compulsion that still pervaded press discussion. It is testament to the profound impact of Prussian military might that by 1870 the London press had begun to openly endorse not only an inherent citizenly obligation towards military service, but also the prospect of actual compulsion (albeit in the lesser native form of the Militia Ballot). But with the unification of Germany on 18 January 1871, taken implicitly as a sign that the object of her ambition had been achieved, the debate steadily lost momentum.

The fundamental principle of citizenly liability to military service had been essentially recognised, and the London press had even gone some way in reconciling this universal liability with popular liberalism, though the issue of compulsion remained a sticking point. Most significantly, spectatorship of Prussia's phenomenal successes had drawn attention to Britain's undeniable military weakness when compared with the mammoth conscript armies of her Continental rivals. But the debate hinted at drastic and unpopular measures – either huge expenditure or the introduction of compulsory service – against the relatively remote contingency of invasion. Furthermore, the very idea that subjects were *obliged* to participate did not yet sit comfortably with the English fetish for absolute liberty of conscience where military participation was concerned. In the absence of serious threat or equivalent stimuli between 1872 and 1898, sheer inertia prevailed.

Nonetheless, the broader social, cultural and political developments of the last quarter of the nineteenth century made an important contribution of their own to the development of the citizenly obligation thesis. The advent of a militarist Imperialism, the ongoing integration of the military into civilian society, the shift from Victorian individualism to a more collectivist atmosphere, and the emergence of 'contractual' theories of citizenship all helped to lessen the apparent incompatibility between the notion of civilian liability to

military service and English popular values and ideologies. It is only from the standpoint of this thesis and its long-term view of London press discourse that we can see just how influential these developments may have been on press attitudes to civilian military obligation. It was not so much that the London press found a way to resolve the incompatibility between mid-Victorian liberalism and the citizenly obligation thesis, but that popular liberalism itself had, in the last quarter or the nineteenth century, begun to subtly modify into a form more easily reconcilable with the idea of an inherent citizenly obligation towards military service. When combined with a returning sense of military vulnerability after 1890, these developments made for a public sphere newly conducive to the citizenly obligation thesis.

The litmus test of the Boer War (1899-1902) showed that the swirling debate of the last half century had, in fact, done much to promote acceptance of a citizenly duty towards military service. Significant civilian volunteering not only for home defence, but also for active service in South Africa, testified to the internalisation of a sense of duty towards military participation even in overseas conflicts. Furthermore, the war's shocking reversals were taken as signs that British military inferiority could no longer be ignored. The anxious, insecure international atmosphere of the post-Boer War years drove further interest in civilian military participation as a means of redeeming civil society, securing the Empire, and preparing for the war between Great Powers that commentators seemed more and more sure was coming. Meanwhile, the cultural trends of the late Victorian period – the shift towards a more collective view of society, the growing legitimacy of the State, the emergence of a 'contractual' theory of citizenship, and the militarist glorification of war and struggle – all continued to intensify in the Edwardian age, facilitating a reconciliation between liberal values and idea of inherent citizenly liability to military service. While the desirability and necessity of compulsion remained contentious, both compulsionists and voluntarists shared the belief that military participation in the hour of need was a clear and acknowledged citizenly duty. By the eve of the Great War, therefore, the idea that Englishmen were inherently obligated to offer personal military service in the hour of national need towards had become a fundamental assumption of press debate in the respectable London press. It is in the context of this view of citizenly obligation, so greatly extended from that which had been entertained six decades previous, that the ideological dimensions of the 'rush to the colours' of 1914 must be understood.

This study provides the first history of the development of a coherent conception of

citizenly duty towards military service in London press discourse. It identifies and traces for the first time the irregular but ultimately cumulative evolution of this conception from 1854, when civilian military participation was all but unthought-of, to the eve of war in 1914, when the inherent and universal duty of Englishmen to lay down their lives 'for King and Country' had become a shared assumption of London press discourse. It highlights the influence of specific events and experiences, and suggests that wider cultural and political developments – particularly the shift to a more collective 'social democratic' liberalism around the turn of the century – played a key role in facilitating the reconciliation of existing values and the newfound imperative towards civilian military participation. This dissertation also points to the importance of the London press itself as both a reflector and a driver of respectable values and attitudes about war. It indicates that public recruiting behaviour consistently correlated more closely to the conceptions of citizenly military duty expressed in the London press than to the expectations of Britain's leaders, suggesting the immense power of mass media both to reflect the prevailing winds of public opinion, and to actively shape it.

The present research also has important implications for the broader study of war and society. It reveals that the societal consensus on the duty to enlist in 1914 was by no means a foregone cultural conclusion, nor indeed the relic of an earlier heroic age, but rather the dynamic product of active evolution and contestation over six decades. It also demonstrates the fact that enthusiasm for war and a sense of duty towards participation in war are two very different things, and, indeed, not always correlated. Awareness of this distinction, together with the broader contextualisation of conceptions of citizenly duty towards military service offered by this dissertation, cannot help but place future enquiries into the role of 'duty' in motivating enlistment on surer ground. Similarly, by underscoring the distinction between enthusiasm for military imagery, values and themes on the one hand, and perceptions of citizenly duty towards military service on the other, this study can also impart much-needed nuance and precision to a scholarly vision of late-nineteenth-century popular militarism, imperialism and jingoism that has sometimes tended towards oversimplification. In its synthesis of sixty years of London press discourse on civilian military obligation, its interpretation of the process by which a coherent conception of citizenly duty towards military service emerged, and the insights it can offer to the broader study of war and society, this dissertation represents an important contribution to our understanding of an almost wholly neglected topic.

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This dissertation is dedicated to my parents Jim and Anita, for whom my love, gratitude and admiration are beyond articulation, and to RJ: my best friend, my soulmate, and now, happily, my husband.

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Note: citing digitised historical newspapers

This study is based on a longitudinal review of press discourse. Its main sources are digitised historical newspapers, all of which have been accessed electronically via the relevant databases. As yet, however, there is no established standard for the citation of digitised historical newspaper articles. The method used for citing occasional digital sources, which calls for the inclusion of URL address and access dates, would be excessively cumbersome for a study depending so heavily on digitised material. I therefore do not include database URLs or access dates in the footnotes, instead providing a complete list of newspaper titles, databases and URLs in the bibliography. To allow for corroboration either digitally or in hard copy, I include article title (as recorded by the relevant digital database), periodical title, date of publication and page number for all articles cited.

Introduction

Dulce et decorum est, pro patria mori.

The ‘rush to the colours’ of August–November 1914 is the subject of both enduring fascination and considerable mystery. At its heart lies the apparent willingness of young Britons to abandon their homes and risk life and limb ‘at duty’s call’. The conventional interpretation was long one of young men caught up in a general unthinking frenzy of latent patriotic fervour, besieging recruiting offices across the country. In recent decades, scholarship has tended to complicate this picture, highlighting the diversity of British responses to recruiting calls across both regional and occupational lines, and indicating that deeply felt patriotic obligation was often inseparable from economic necessity, group loyalty, social pressure, and complex individual and local allegiances.¹ But while many factors likely influenced the decision to enlist, most historians agree that the mass volunteering of 1914 took place in a cultural milieu that powerfully endorsed military participation as the patriotic duty of all able-bodied young men. The offer of personal military service in the hour of England’s need was represented with overwhelming unanimity in public discourse as ‘an obvious duty – the duty required by both honour and

¹ P. Simkins, *Kitchener's Army: The Raising of the New Armies, 1914–16* (Manchester: 1988) pp. 59, 94–9, 107–12, 112–6; J. M. Winter, ‘Britain's 'lost generation' of the First World War,’ *Population Studies*, 31 (1977) pp. 449–466; P. E. Dewey, ‘Military Recruiting and the British Labour Force during the First World War,’ *Historical Journal*, 27.1 (1984) pp. 199–223; C. Hughes, ‘The New Armies’ in I. F. W. Beckett and K. Simpson (eds.), *A Nation in Arms: a Social Study of the British Army in the First World War* (Manchester, 1985), pp. 102, 120; D. Morton, *Fight or Pay: Soldiers' Families in the Great War* (Vancouver, 2004); J. M. Bourne, *Britain and the Great War, 1914–1918* (New York, 1990) p. 219.; and D. Silbey, *The British Working Class and Enthusiasm for War, 1914–1916* (London, 2005).

ordinary manliness'.² From the pulpit and the pages of the popular press, from school-rooms, music-halls and sports-fields, came the resounding call to arms: 'We shall want every man who is able and willing to do his duty by his country... There is no place amongst us for the idler or the loafer. England needs all her sons'.³

Indeed, it was less that 'joining up' had acquired an intrinsic appeal than that failure to participate in a war approved by society as both necessary and just had acquired a powerful social stigma. Public consensus on the existence of a socio-moral imperative towards enlistment pervaded press discussions of the war effort and was central to propaganda and the work of the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee.⁴ It contributed, too, to the power of peer-influence. The utilisation of 'social inheritance' was the genius of the Pals Battalions, and feminine socio-moral pressure, symbolised memorably by the white-feather giver, was also brought powerfully to bear on potential recruits.⁵ That this sense of a duty towards enlistment was the primary driver of the 'rush to the colours' is difficult to say; that enlistment was understood in the public sphere to *constitute* a clear citizenly duty is readily apparent. The duty to fight – and, if necessary, die – for one's country was a socio-moral norm of prodigious seriousness and potency during the Great War, and one that underpinned not only the mass volunteerism of 1914, but also the acceptance of conscription in 1916.

We tend, today, to look back on this sentiment as a kind of 'obsolete patriotism', the last gasp of a more chivalrous, heroic – and, perhaps, naïve – age.⁶ The earnest sense of duty

2 'Football And The War', *Spectator*, 28 November 1914, p. 741.

3 'England's Call', *The Times*, 25 August 1914, p. 7.

4 R. Douglas, 'Voluntary Enlistment in the First World War and the Work of the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee,' *Journal of Modern History*, 42.4 (1970) pp. 571–572.

5 R. C. Brown and D. Loveridge, 'Unrequited Faith: Recruiting the CEF 1914–1918,' *Revue Internationale d'Histoire Militaire* [France], 54 (1982), pp. 59–62; Simkins, pp. 79–100; and N. F. Gullace, 'White Feathers and Wounded Men: Female Patriotism and the Memory of the Great War,' *Journal of British Studies*, 36.2 (1997) pp. 178–206.

6 As typified by the title of W. J. Reader, *At Duty's Call: A Study in Obsolete Patriotism* (Manchester, 1988). This thinking is reflected also in the idea that willingness to kill or die for one's socio-political community is a phenomena of a 'heroic age of warfare' which western states have now long since left

contemplated by potential recruits and the crushing symbolic power of a white feather are often represented as quaint, almost incomprehensible relics of an essentially Victorian moral code. Yet this impression is a mistaken one. The socio-moral norm that dictated self-sacrificial military participation in 1914 was no straightforward relic of Victorianism. On the contrary, the idea that in-principle support for a conflict involved an obligation to offer personal military service would have seemed just as strange to mid-Victorians as it does to us today. In 1854, only sixty years before the outbreak of the Great War, Victorian Britain had entered another European conflict, one similarly regarded as a momentous and righteous undertaking. The strength of popular support for the Crimean War (1853–6) was so immense as to force the hand of a reluctant government, earning the conflict the name of ‘The People’s War’. And yet, as Richard Cobden complained at the time, a public that enthusiastically supported the war in principle nonetheless perceived very little obligation to support it in practice.⁷ Despite a crippling recruiting crisis, ordinary Englishmen persisted in standing aloof from personal service, considering the actual waging of war the business of an abstract, unseen and largely unthought-of soldier class. For respectable Englishmen, personal service was at best an act of rather baffling supererogation; at worst, a status lowering disgrace.

Certainly, every experience of war is unique, and the Great War did present a more immediate geopolitical threat to Britain than the Crimean War. But closer examination seems to indicate a fundamental difference in assumptions about the civilian’s responsibility towards personal military service even before the outbreak of the two conflicts. In 1854, neither support for war nor patriotic allegiance to the state were understood to involve a duty towards personal military service. Nothing but actual invasion was understood to obligate ordinary Englishmen to take up arms, in which case his imperative was the immediate defence of his home and family. In 1914, however, the

behind. See E. Luttwak, ‘Toward Post-Heroic Warfare,’ *Foreign Affairs*, 74 (1995), pp. 109–122; and ‘Post-Heroic Military Policy,’ *Foreign Affairs*, 75 (1996), pp. 33–44.
7 British Library, Add. MSS 43,650 folios 125–6: Cobden to Bright, 15 August 1855.

assumption that people ought to fight (in person) the wars they accepted to be just was a potent and broadly accepted socio-moral norm. What happened to popular conceptions of civilian military obligation in the interim to explain these very different assumptions? When, why and how did support for war transform from an abstract political commitment to a personal call to action?

The primary goal of this dissertation is to illuminate these questions: to document and interpret the process by which personal military service took on the aspect of a citizenly duty between the outbreak of the Crimean War and the eve of the Great War.⁸ The issue of the emergence of a conception of citizenly obligation towards military service is all the more mysterious and significant given the larger military paradox that underlay England's international position in the so-called 'long nineteenth century'. After the Napoleonic Wars, a war-weary Britain had focused her energies on demilitarisation, peace and liberalisation. Almost all of the European Powers, on the other hand, had emerged from the Napoleonic Wars with a precedent for compulsory military participation, and, in many cases, an expectation of further militarisation. The nineteenth century saw great shifts in European military organisation – most notably, the adoption of schemes of universal service across Europe. Above all, the emerging behemoth of Prussia rose to dominance on the back of her popular militarist ideologies and universal military service tradition. The adoption of conscription and the shift towards mass citizen armies by the other Great Powers essentially mandated similar mass civilian mobilisation by Britain if she was to have any hope of remaining militarily competitive. Such mass mobilisation could only be achieved in one of three ways: by huge expenditure on a greatly expanded professional

⁸ The Oxford English Dictionary defines 'citizen' as both 'a member of a state' and 'an enfranchised inhabitant of a country'. I use the term 'citizenly' in the former general sense, to denote a universal (male) obligation founded in membership of the state. My terminology of 'citizenly duty' should therefore be taken to concern all Englishmen, enfranchised or unenfranchised, though indeed the burgeoning identification of civilian military obligation as a duty of full political citizenship (attendant to the right of representation) is one of the themes of this dissertation. Technically, of course, as members of a monarchical state Britons are 'subjects' rather than 'citizens'. "citizen, n.". *OED Online*, September 2011, Oxford University Press.
<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/33513?rkey=CXpe36&result=1> (accessed 13 December 2011).

army, by conscription, or by virtue of a pervasive popular ideology that would motivate mass voluntary enlistment. The first was never really an option in a liberal society that highly valued economy and still retained a latent aversion to a large professional standing army. The second and third both, in their own ways, depended on a recognition of inherent citizenly liability towards military participation. The emergence of a coherent conception of citizenly duty towards military service, therefore, was effectively mandated by military necessity.

The obstacles against such an idea were, however, formidable. First off, the pacific, anti-militarist spirit of the early Victorian age strongly prejudiced respectable Englishmen against the very idea of military participation, which was seen as the proper business of a professional minority drawn from the lowest social ranks. The idea of an inherent and universal obligation towards military service (in any capacity other than immediate defence of one's own hearth and home) was doubly repugnant because the idea of *liability* to military service was fundamentally in opposition with the principles of popular liberalism – particularly maximum individual freedom and non-intervention in social and economic life – as understood by mid-Victorians.⁹ To compel a man to serve in the military was to infringe his individual right to choose his own path, and to assume for the State a falsely absolute authority. Indeed, the dominant spirit of popular liberalism in Victorian England was hostile not only to compulsory military obligations, but even to any *sense* of strong obligation towards the State, given the prevailing emphasis on individual conscience, diversity and the need to protect the individual from the pressure of 'majority' public opinion.¹⁰ Englishmen took pride in their nation's morally neutral, 'professionalised' approach to military manpower, and remained jealously protective of their freedom from any hint of military obligation.

⁹ The centrality of classical liberalism as a popular ideology in the Victorian era is noted by John Gray, who calls the nineteenth century in England 'a golden age of theory and practice.' J. Gray, *Liberalism* (Milton Keynes, 1986), p. 26.

¹⁰ A. Carter, 'Liberalism and the Obligation to Military Service,' *Political Studies*, 46 (1998), p. 77.

Even more significantly, the existence of the Channel and the comforting fact of British naval supremacy mitigated to a great extent against the need for the kind of expanded land forces that would require mass civilian participation. The Napoleonic Wars had left Britain without meaningful rivals as the most powerful naval country in the world. After victory in the Battle of Navarino in 1827, there were no major battles until 1914, and Britain's navy remained larger than its next two rivals combined. As well as buttressing British economic and imperial policy, acting as an influential pressure in diplomacy, and supporting the various localised engagements that were a staple of the so-called 'Pax Britannica', the navy was also understood to be Britain's principal safeguard against invasion, and therefore the bulwark that protected the British public from the need to sustain a vast army along Continental lines. Britain could remain safe, the argument ran, so long as she retained unchallenged control of the seas, and could therefore make of the Channel an inviolable barrier. Should she be forced to forsake her pacific ways, she expected to exert pressure by blockade and bombardment, while Continental allies fought any necessary land battles. The power of the Royal Navy was an enduring source of pride and reassurance, lessening the importance of the nation's land defences and thereby diminishing the necessity for consideration of civilian military obligations.¹¹

The sense of security engendered by the Navy, however, was not absolute. The nineteenth century saw countless invasion scares of varying duration, impact and importance. The vulnerability of the English military system became apparent as early as 1852, when an invasion crisis merited the preparation of a militia ballot to the great alarm of many liberals. Furthermore, changes in naval technology in the latter part of the century – most notably the introduction of steam – increasingly chipped away at the inviolability of the Channel, raising fears that a lightning attack could slip through the Navy's net and deposit

¹¹ See R. Parkinson, *The Late Victorian Navy: The Pre-Dreadnought Era and the Origins of the First World War* (New York, 2008), Ch. 1; and L. Sondhaus, *Naval Warfare, 1815–1914* (New York, 2001).

an enemy army that could overrun Britain's paltry land defences in a matter of days. Still, naval primacy remained Britain's best hope, her highest military priority, and an enduring counter-argument against the need for army expansion either by voluntary or compulsory means. Each scare prompted discussion, but the fact that no invasion actually eventuated tended to be taken as a reassurance of the sufficiency of Britain's defences – though the reality was simply that the system continuously evaded real testing.

But even if (and it was a hotly contested *if*) volunteers could be relied upon for home defence, what of England's military role abroad? Dwarfed by the military manpower resources of her continental rivals, how could England hope to defend her Empire from their rapaciousness? How, moreover, was she to credibly assume the role of international arbiter and champion of the 'liberties of Europe' that both Palmerstonian and Gladstonian international policy advocated? The navy could exert powerful diplomatic and economic pressure and act as a powerful support to localised military actions, but where all-out war was concerned, Britain remained rather too dependent on the cooperation of allies for fighting on land. The impulse to safeguard 'justice' and 'liberty' on the Continent, and 'civilisation' and 'English values' within the Empire, was a powerful contributor to a number of Britain's military actions and interventions in nineteenth century, and the paradox of military defence of liberal ideals continued to pose a problem for governments and military reformers throughout the nineteenth century.

Liberal theory offered no clear solution. On the whole, liberal thinkers tended to ignore the question of the citizen's obligation either to defend the state or to assist it in the promotion of just causes abroad.¹² They were mainly concerned with individual rights and not the role of community¹³ – and tended moreover to accept the implicit class bias that happily

12 A. Carter, 'Liberalism and the Obligation to Military Service,' pp. 68–81.

13 See E. Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (London, 1910), p. 93; R. Scruton, *The Meaning of Conservatism* (Harmondsworth, 1980), p. 34; G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Right* (transl. by T. M. Knox, Oxford, 1987), p. 209; S. Avineri, *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State* (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 194–6.

equated taxation of the propertied classes with conscription of the poor.¹⁴ They also tended to hope that war might soon be transcended by the spread of liberalism, free trade and international economic interdependency, rendering the question irrelevant.¹⁵ Most significantly, liberal theory lacked a strong concept of citizenship, and thus had no real ideology of the reciprocal rights and duties of belonging to a State.¹⁶ More willing than most English liberals to acknowledge such rights and duties, John Stuart Mill did explicitly accept that citizens may be obliged to render military service to their state, but the issue remained peripheral to the major concerns of his work.¹⁷ There was simply no place for civilian military obligation within contemporary liberalism, and when liberal theorists dealt with the idea at all it was usually in the context of justifying resistance to military service.¹⁸

Victorians were thus left with a dilemma. As the century wore on, they increasingly understood that Britain's military system was an inadequate response to the great shifts in military organisation taking place across the Channel. But the prevailing mood of liberalism and the strength of opposition to formal military obligations largely precluded the adoption of any comparable system. The commitment to liberal voluntarism was strong and ever intensifying, rendering compulsory civilian obligations unthinkable without significant ideological adjustment. Even the *idea* of citizenly obligation towards military service was a fraught one for a liberal cultural that so strongly privileged individual conscience. The tension between English liberalism, pacifism, and civilianism, on the one hand, and Continental militarism on the other, was not one that could be easily

14 M. Walzer, *Obligations: Essays on Disobedience, War and Citizenship* (Cambridge MA, 1970), pp. 110–11.

15 This utilitarian view can be found in Bentham and in many nineteenth century liberals including Herbert Spencer, and it was a popular view in mid-Victorian Britain, promoted by Cobden and Bright. J. S. Mill endorsed this belief in 1848, but by 1867 had become critical of it. See H. Spencer (E. Mack, ed.), *The Man Versus the State* (Indianapolis, 1981). D. Read, *Cobden and Bright: a Victorian Partnership* (London, 1967); J. S. Mill, *Principles of Political Economy* (London, 1848), p. 582; and *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, Vol. 28 (Toronto, 1988), p. 222.

16 Carter, p 70.

17 Carter, pp. 76–8.

18 Carter, p. 68.

resolved, and it was the cumulative attempts of contemporaries to grapple with this paradox that shaped the story of how and why popular conceptions of the duty towards military service changed between 1854 and 1914.

Astonishingly, the mystery of the emergence of a socio–moral imperative towards military participation by 1914 has been almost entirely overlooked by historians. In general, civilian attitudes to war and soldiering are still relatively new area of scholarly investigation. For many years, the field of British war studies was dominated by consideration of battles, politics and high command. After the status of the study of war's impact on society began to rise in the 1960s, historians turned their attention to the domestic front, producing a range of seminal works on the social and economic consequences of war for society and its institutions. But the relationship between civilians and the wars waged on their behalf continued to suffer from scholarly neglect until the 1980s, when scholars such as David Englander, Edward Spiers and Ian Beckett began to redirect attention to ordinary soldiers and their worlds.¹⁹ The last three decades have seen a modest flourishing of interest in the cultural dimensions of Britain's wars, with motivation for enlistment, morale, discipline and philosophical attitudes toward war all receiving sophisticated treatment.

And yet, the issue of contemporary understandings of the citizenly duty towards military service – as distinct from war ‘enthusiasm’ – has received no direct scholarly attention. It has been widely acknowledged that the latter nineteenth century witnessed a growth in patriotic, imperialist expression, the rise of British militarism, and the development of what Michael Paris has called ‘the pleasure culture of war’.²⁰ The predominantly rural,

19 For example D. Englander and J. Osborne, ‘Jack, Tommy, and Henry Dubb: the Armed Forces and the Working Class,’ *Historical Journal*, 21.3 (1978), pp. 593–621; E. M. Spiers, *The Army and Society, 1815–1914* (London, 1980); R. Bessel and D. Englander, ‘Up from the Trenches: some Recent Writing on the Soldiers of the Great War,’ *European Studies Review*, 11.3 (1981) pp. 387–95; and I. F. W. Beckett and K. Simpson (eds.), *A Nation in Arms: a Social Study of the British Army in the First World War* (Manchester, 1985).

20 See A. Summers, ‘Militarism in Britain before the Great War,’ *History Workshop Journal*, 2 (1976), pp. 104–123; J. M. MacKenzie (ed.), *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester, 1986) and (ed.)

peaceful, insular society rural inherited by Victoria had, by the accession of Edward VII, transformed into a highly jingoistic, xenophobic and militaristic imperialist power, which, in boasting of the virtues of Pax Britannica, carefully overlooked the incipient conflicts of an industrialized Imperial society. Historians have attempted to explain the ‘war enthusiasm’ of 1914 by reference to the promulgation of militarist and imperialist ideologies through popular literature, the jingo press, public schools, sports, youth groups, and the increasingly militant Church of England.²¹

And yet, not only are the causes and evolution of these militarist ideologies still largely obscure, but the difference between the growing appeal of military images, values and themes and the emerging sense of duty towards participation remains almost entirely unrecognised. After all, as Cobden himself recognised, there is an important ‘distinction between the zeal for the war, as displayed in speeches, leading articles, resolutions, and cheers, and that exhibited in the form of solid bone and muscle’.²² The Crimean War and a half-century of smaller colonial conflicts proved that a population can enthusiastically support military action, celebrate military prowess, adulate martial values, and enjoy war as a ‘spectator sport’, without feeling any obligation to offer personal service. It seems likely that the rise of British militarism and enthusiasm for war to some extent facilitated the development of an accompanying sense of moral obligation towards military participation, but the two are avowedly not the same thing.

Public perceptions of the army itself (rather than to war in the abstract), are perhaps more closely indexed to attitudes about the necessity of actual military participation.

Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880–1960 (Manchester, 1984); and M. Paris, *Warrior Nation: Images of War in British Popular Culture, 1850–2000* (London, 2000) p. 303.

21 See for example Summers, ‘Militarism in Britain before the Great War’; W. J. Reader, *At Duty’s Call: A Study in Obsolete Patriotism*; O. Anderson, ‘The Growth of Christian Militarism in Mid-Victorian England,’ *English Historical Review*, 86.337 (1971), pp. 46–72; C.D. Eby, *The Road to Armageddon: The Martial Spirit in English Popular Literature, 1870–1914* (Durham, 1987); and J. Peck, *War, the Army and Victorian Literature* (London, 1998).

22 R. Cobden, *The Political Writings of Richard Cobden*, Vol II (London, 1903), Pt VI, Essay 1, pp. 84–5.

Fortunately, in this area we have the benefit of a number of excellent works on the organisation, public image and civil–military relations of the Victorian army. Scholars such as Edward Spiers, Alan Ramsey Skelley, Ian Beckett and Gwyn Harries–Jenkins have shown how broader currents in Victorian society were mirrored in the changing structure and culture of the army.²³ While in 1850 the army represented a tradition that was already anachronistic, by 1914 it had transformed – albeit fitfully – into a highly professionalised and sophisticated military force. The metamorphosis was attended, of course, by frustrations: the army struggled to adapt to the new military realities of the latter nineteenth and early twentieth century, and key factors such as the social composition of the forces and the insoluble problem of insufficient recruiting were scarcely ameliorated despite the best efforts of military reformers. But the period did see the public image of the army improve significantly. Over the course of the long nineteenth century, the army’s reputation for crudity, ignorance and brutality was gradually ameliorated as it was steadily brought into line with civilian standards and sensibilities.²⁴

As Alan Ramsay Skelley has shown, the debacle of the Crimean War brought the deplorable conditions of barrack life into the public eye, resulting in a raft of reforms aimed at improving the health, education and living conditions of the rank–and–file.²⁵ Kenneth Hendrickson has also delineated the efforts of charitable organisations to improve the moral health of soldiers.²⁶ Meanwhile, the abolition of flogging, branding and other

23 E M Spiers, *The late Victorian Army, 1868–1902* (Manchester, 1992); A R Skelley, *The Victorian Army at Home: The Recruitment and Terms and Conditions of the British Regular, 1859–1899* (London, 1977), I. F. W. Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition, 1558–1945* (Manchester, 1991); G. Harries–Jenkins, *The Army in Victorian Society* (Toronto, 1977).

24 J. Sweetman, ‘Public Attitudes Towards the Army: Early Years, 1827–1852,’ *Army Quarterly and Defence Journal*, 118.1 (1988), pp. 60–4; G. Harries–Jenkins, *The Army in Victorian Society*.

25 A. R. Skelley, ‘The Tragedy of British Military Education: the Cardwell Reforms, 1868–74,’ *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, 3.2 (1971), pp. 15–23. See also R. L. Blanco, ‘The Attempted Control of Venereal Disease in the Army of Mid–Victorian England,’ *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, 45.184 (1967), pp. 234–41; and ‘Education Reforms for the Enlisted Man in the Army of Victorian England,’ *History of Education Quarterly*, 6.2 (1966), pp. 61–72.

26 K. Hendrickson, *Making Saints: Religion and the Public Image of the British Army, 1809–1885* (Cranbury, N.J., 1998); ‘A Kinder, Gentler British Army: Mid–Victorian Experiments in the Management of Army Vice at Gibraltar and Aldershot,’ *War & Society* [Australia], 14.2 (1996), pp. 21–33; ‘Winning the Troops for Vital Religion: Female Evangelical Missionaries to the British Army, 1857–1880,’ *Armed Forces & Society*, 23.4 (1997), pp. 615–34.

'barbarous measures' of military discipline brought the military more into line with civilian sensibilities.²⁷ Hendrickson goes so far as to suggest that by 1890 the public image of the army had been transformed from 'a moral wasteland populated by degenerate men without scruples and without religion' into a heroic Christian force.²⁸

This optimism is, perhaps, slightly overstated. Recruiting remained a struggle throughout the nineteenth century, and the army was unable to erode the stigma of enlistment until well after the turn of the century.²⁹ As M. A. Ramsay points out, the Oxford English Dictionaries of 1876 and 1890 offer sub-definitions of 'soldiering' as 'bullying', 'malingering' or 'shirking responsibility', while as late as 1916 Lord Roberts and others traced the public's unwillingness to accept conscription back to their general disdain for soldiers.³⁰ But it is undoubtedly true that, in theory at least, the latter nineteenth century saw a great elevation in public perceptions of the army *as an institution*. The emphasis on the brutality and barbarism of army life that had underpinned the pacifist literature of the 1840s had all but disappeared by the end of the century, while the establishment of the Red Cross in 1863 and the inaugural Geneva Convention in 1864 further promoted the professionalisation and moral improvement of military practice. It is reasonable to hypothesise that these improvements helped to ameliorate some of the negativity that had previously surrounded soldiering, making it a more acceptable option for 'respectable' Britons. While the literature on public attitudes to the army points to the growing acceptability of military service, however, it similarly fails to engage with the issue of civilian military *obligation*.

The literature on civilian participation in the wars of the period is also patchy in its dealing with the idea of a citizenly duty towards service. The great paradox of poor recruiting in a

27 See R. L. Blanco, 'Attempts to Abolish Branding and Flogging in the Army of Victorian England before 1881,' *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, 46.187 (1968), pp. 137–45.

28 Hendrickson, *Making Saints*, pp. 22, 142.

29 Spiers, *The Army and Society*, p. 49.

30 M. A. Ramsay, 'Review: Kenneth Hendrickson,' *The Journal of Military History*, 65.1 (2001), pp. 202–3.

popular war presented by the Crimean War, for example, has been seldom recognised by historians.³¹ C. Bayley's study of the administrative and ideological difficulties encountered in recruiting Britain's foreign legion is the only significant work dealing with British army recruiting practices during the Crimean War, and while it does provide some summary of the factors that impeded recruitment at home (including negative perceptions of the army and the rival attractions of high employment and colonial emigration), it fails to interrogate the ideological implications of the failure of popular recruiting.³²

The historiography of the Boer War is richer in this regard. In addition to some commentary on the motivations of volunteers in the expanding body of general works on the Boer War, a number of excellent new studies on the significance of Boer War volunteering have been produced in the last decade.³³ Will Bennett must take credit for much of this new enthusiasm – his vividly-written 1999 account of Boer War volunteers deftly highlights the tension between the English tradition of the gifted amateur and a new respect for professionalism and efficiency, while leaving plenty of room (and inspiration) for more detailed scholarly studies of the motivations and attitudes of volunteers.³⁴ Stephen Miller and E.W. McFarland provide just such studies, persuasively arguing that, while economic and social factors were bound to influence action, patriotic obligation in the wake of the disasters of Black Week was the most widespread reason for voluntary

31 With the exception of Olive Anderson, who offers an insightful discussion of the failure of popular recruiting but does not focus on its cultural dimensions. O. Anderson, 'Early Experiences of Manpower Problems in an Industrial Society at War,' *Political Science Quarterly*, 82.4 (December 1967), pp. 526–545.

32 C. C. Bayley, *Mercenaries for the Crimea: the German, Swiss, and Italian Legions in British Service, 1854–1856* (Montreal, 1977).

33 For consideration of the role of duty in motivating enlistment see H. Pelling, *Popular Politics and Society in Late Victorian Britain* (New York, 1968); R. Price, *An Imperial War and the British Working Class: Working-Class Attitudes and Reactions to the Boer War, 1899–1902* (London, 1972); H. Cunningham, *The Volunteer Force: A Social and Political History, 1859–1908* (London, 1975), pp. 38–41; Spiers, *The Army and Society*, p. 44; and R. Gray, *The Aristocracy of Labour in Nineteenth-Century Britain, c.1850–1900* (London, 1981). For general discussion of the Boer War, see T. Pakenham, *The Boer War* (London, 1979); T. Jackson, *The Boer War* (London, 1999); D. Judd and K. Surridge, *The Boer War* (London, 2002); and J. Gooch (ed.), *The Boer War: Direction, Experience and Impact* (London, 2000).

34 W. Bennett, *Absent-minded Beggars: Volunteers in the Boer War* (South Yorkshire: 1999).

enlistment.³⁵ While suggesting a greatly heightened acceptance of personal obligation towards military participation in comparison with the Crimean War, these studies do not, however, attempt to analyse the nature or origins of that obligation, its treatment in public discourse, or its implications for the evolution of the 'duty to serve' in English culture.

The culmination of that evolution was, of course, demonstrated in the atmosphere of public patriotism and social pressure that surrounded the mass voluntary enlistments of 1914 (and facilitated the eventual acceptance of conscription in 1916), and it is here that the literature comes into its own. As already noted, for many decades vague references to patriotism and adventure were the main explanation given for so-called 'war enthusiasm'. Ian Beckett and Keith Simpson's 1985 volume *A Nation in Arms: A Social Study of the British Army in the First World War* offered the first major scholarly investigation of the relationship between society and the military in Britain's first truly total war. It challenged a number of pre-existing views, not least the extent and significance of the alleged 'rush to colours' in 1914, which Beckett suggests did not define British attitudes to the war, but was rather a public 'mood' that can be dated from 25 August to 9 September 1914 and was intimately related to the perception of military and moral urgency prevalent in public discourse.³⁶ Since then, our understanding of British 'war enthusiasm' has benefited greatly from the nuanced studies of Timothy Bowman for Ireland, Adrian Gregory for England, David Silbey and Nigel Quinney for the British working class, and Hew Strachan in a comparative context.³⁷ These interpretations have highlighted the diversity of British

35 S. M. Miller, 'In Support of the "Imperial Mission"? Volunteering for the South African War, 1899–1902,' *Journal of Military History*, 69.3 (2005), pp. 691–711; and *Volunteers on the Veld: Britain's Citizen Soldiers and the South African War 1899–1902* (Norman, 2007); E. W. McFarland, "'Empire–Enlarging Genius": Scottish Imperial Yeomanry Volunteers in the Boer War,' *War in History*, 13.3 (2006), pp. 281–310.

36 Beckett and Simpson (eds.), *A Nation in Arms*, pp. 7–8.

37 T. Bowman, *The Irish Regiments in the Great War: Discipline and Morale* (Manchester, 2003); A. Gregory, 'British "War Enthusiasm" in 1914: A Reassessment' in G. Braybon (ed.), *Evidence, History, and the Great War: Historians and the Impact of 1914–18* (Oxford, 2003); D. Silbey, *The British Working Class and Enthusiasm for War*; N. P. Quinney, 'Edwardian militarism and working-class youth,' (Unpub. DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 1987); and H. Strachan, *The First World War. Vol. 1: To Arms* (New York, 2001).

responses to recruiting calls, both geographically and by industry, class and occupation.³⁸ They have also highlighted the many practical and self-interested factors contributing to enlistment.³⁹ Significant correlations have been observed between unemployment figures and rates of voluntary enlistment.⁴⁰ Likewise, Desmond Morton has shown that family situation and the provision of separation allowances were a crucial factor in enlistment.⁴¹ This is backed up by David Silbey's recent work into working class enlistment, in which he persuasively argues that pragmatic factors such as employment, pay, and the prospect of adventure were masked and sanctified by the strength of popular patriotism.⁴²

Nonetheless, general historical opinion largely concludes that while many factors influenced enlistment, there was an extremely high degree of public consensus on the moral imperative towards service, as a matter of 'duty and obligation rather than missionary zeal'.⁴³ This consensus informed not only the deeply felt patriotic obligation of individuals, but also the group loyalty and social pressure that Peter Simkins has argued were often inseparable from it.⁴⁴ While the extent to which the strength of public consensus on a duty to participate actually motivated enlistment is controversial, the mere fact of this consensus represents a stupendous change from the mid-Victorian period. Unfortunately, even the extensive literature on the Great War does not satisfactorily address the precise *nature* and *origin* of the popular consensus in favour of the moral duty to offer personal service in war. Its attempt to assess the role played by so-called 'war enthusiasm' in motivating enlistment has been hindered by the lack of clear differentiation between enthusiasm for war and obligation towards it. Further, while historians such as

38 P. Simkins, *Kitchener's Army: The Raising of the New Armies, 1914-16* (Manchester, 1988) pp. 94-9, 112-6; J. M. Winter, 'Britain's 'lost generation' of the First World War,' *Population Studies*, 31 (1977), pp. 449-66; Peter E. Dewey, 'Military Recruiting and the British Labour Force during the First World War,' *Historical Journal*, 27.1 (1984) pp. 201-2.

39 Silbey, p. 189.

40 Dewey, pp. 199-223; Simkins, pp.107-12; C. Hughes, 'The New Armies' in Beckett and Simpson (eds.), *A Nation in Arms*, pp. 102, 120.

41 Morton, *Fight or Pay*.

42 Silbey, p. 189.

43 Simkins, p. 357.

44 Simkins, p. 59.

John Bourne have highlighted the many different understandings of ‘patriotism’ at work, each originating in complex individual and local allegiances, there remains a tendency to ignore the fundamental historicity of the citizenly duty towards enlistment.⁴⁵

The scholarly treatment of the ‘patriotic duty’ motivation in the Crimean, Boer and Great Wars further reflects how the tendency in war studies to examine conflicts in isolation has limited the discussion and interpretation of the larger cultural trends and transitions at work between these milestone conflicts. Somewhat better in this capacity is literature focusing on the changing form of military service, which necessarily takes a longer-term view. While it considers military obligations primarily from the perspective of the state rather than the subject, it gives a good overview of the level of civilian acceptance or resistance to increased military obligations at various junctures. The vogue for regimental studies is of little use here; local in their outlook, these works limit their analysis primarily to campaign matters and make no mention of problems or attitudes encountered in recruiting.⁴⁶

Far more helpful is the body of work focused on civilian military participation. Hugh Cunningham's *The Volunteer Force: A Social and Political History* broke new ground in 1975 as the first full-length examination of the Victorian Volunteer revival. Cunningham emphasised the social importance of the movement, and was the first to locate the volunteering phenomenon within the context of burgeoning middle-class values, as “the military expression of the spirit of self-help, Victorian capitalism in arms,” – an idea that was to be extremely influential in later studies of military volunteering.⁴⁷ Cunningham's study set in motion a modest flourishing of scholarship concerned with military volunteer corps, with Ian Beckett's work on Victorian volunteer discipline, training, recruitment and

45 J. M. Bourne, *Britain and the Great War, 1914–1918* (New York, 1990) p. 219.

46 For example, B. Mollo, ‘The Victoria Rifle Regiment of Volunteers,’ *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, 52.210 (1974); and K. W. Mitchinson, *Amateur soldiers: a history of Oldham's volunteers and territorials, 1859–1938* (Oldham, 1999).

47 Cunningham, *The Volunteer Force*.

social significance helping to raise the profile of the subject throughout the 1980s.⁴⁸ Perhaps the greatest contribution to the burgeoning history of civilian military participation came in 1991 with Beckett's *The Amateur Military Tradition, 1558–1945*.⁴⁹ This synthesis of recent scholarly studies and documentary evidence offers a comprehensive history of Britain's auxiliary military forces from Anglo Saxon times to the Second World War, highlighting both Britain's long history of civilian military participation, and her persistent aversion to compulsory military obligations.

This body of literature on the changing form of non-professional civilian involvement in national defence tends to support Patricia Morton's salient argument that Victorian volunteering was actually more a civilianisation of home defence than a militarisation of the general public.⁵⁰ All the same, as Cunningham and others have shown, it was key to the spread of military practices and values amongst the wider population.⁵¹ In 1898, around 23% of the male population aged between 17 and 40 had either current or previous experience in the regular or auxiliary forces, with perhaps 8% of British men aged 15–49 having served in the Volunteers alone by 1903.⁵² It seems likely that the growth in this kind of personal military or quasi-military experience both reflected and contributed to both the growing acceptability of military participation and the emergence of a conception of citizenly obligation towards national defence. In its documentation of the changing form of civilian military participation, and its reflections on the social meaning of Volunteering in the Victorian era, the literature on England's 'part-time' soldiers comes closest to hinting at changing contemporary understandings of civilian military obligation.

48 I. F. W. Beckett, 'The Problem of Military Discipline in the Volunteer Forces, 1859–1899,' *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, 56.226 (1978), pp. 66–78; 'The Local Community and the Amateur Military Tradition: a Case Study of Victorian Buckinghamshire,' *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, 59.238 (1981), pp. 95–110, 161–70; and *Riflemen Form: A Study of the Rifle Volunteer Movement, 1859–1908* (Aldershot, 1982).

49 I. F. W. Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition, 1558–1945* (Manchester, 1991).

50 P. Morton, 'Another Victorian Paradox: Anti-Militarism in a Jingoistic Society,' *Historical Reflections* [Canada], 8.2 (1981), pp. 169–89; and, 'A Military Irony: the Victorian Volunteer Movement,' *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies*, 131.3 (1986), pp.63–70.

51 Cunningham, *The Volunteer Force*, pp. 49–50.

52 Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition*, p. 200.

Unfortunately the issue remains ultimately in the background, and has not received direct attention to date.

Where, then, are we left by existing scholarship? As we have seen, it offers almost no recognition of the mysterious evolution of a public sense of moral obligation towards military participation. Nonetheless, we can identify a number of trends in the historical approach to this general area. The first is the scarcity of discussion of longer-term, gradual transitions in attitudes to war, in favour of a conflict-specific approach. The second, related trend is the tendency to assert the influence of ideology without reference to the long-term causes and origins of such ideology. Finally, there is a lack of differentiation between the appeal of war and the sense of personal responsibility to participate in it, and no interrogation of the difference between active and passive militarism. Essentially, at present we have almost no understanding of how civilian military obligation was conceived of throughout the long nineteenth century, how such conceptions were shaped, or how to explain the very different understandings of duty manifested in the public response to the Crimean and First World Wars. The very idea of a duty towards military service itself, as distinct from enthusiasm for war or military participation, lacks both clear definition and historical context. This not only means that discussions of the effect of ‘patriotic duty’ as a motivation for enlistment are founded on rather uncertain ground, but also represents a sizeable gap in our understanding of the relationship between war, culture and the individual.

This dissertation therefore represents the first attempt to write an analytical pre-Great War history of the idea of citizenly duty towards military service: its origins, influences and fitful evolution in the sphere of public opinion.⁵³ How, then, to best begin answering this

⁵³ This study deals only with conceptions of civilian obligation towards participation in the nation’s land-based forces. The Royal Navy was, of course, a crucial context for this discussion, constituting as it did the bulwark against the need for continental-style mass armies. But civilian participation was of little relevance to the navy as an actual fighting force, because the navy mostly required highly trained seamen, and thus could not draw on the general civilian population to any large extent. The

complex and neglected question? This research deals with a cultural transition between two contrasting experiences some sixty years apart. By its nature, such an intellectual problem requires a longitudinal approach, an analysis not of the many complexities of a discrete historical moment, agent or event, but rather of continuity, change and influence over a longer period of time. Given the sixty-year period of coverage, this kind of study requires the limitation of other research parameters if it is to be both workable and meaningful. It must narrow its focus to a defined field, and to a set of sources with adequate reach, impact and continuity across the span of the period under examination.

Firstly and most importantly, this dissertation focusses exclusively on conceptions of civilian military obligation in public discourse. The term *discourse* is, of course, a loaded one, from which a variety of meanings, theories and applications have developed. On the most fundamental level, it refers simply to a corpus of texts or communication connected by a common aspect such as medium or topic and thereby sharing particular structures, coherence and meaning.⁵⁴ For the purposes of this study, we use the term primarily in this, simplest, sense, to denote the body of discussion and debate relevant to the issue of civilian military participation. But broader theories of discourse are also helpful in framing the methodology and informing the analysis of this study. The linguistic concept of discourse is based on the idea that texts have a meaning that goes beyond their functional internal structures, and is grounded in their particular historical, social and political context.⁵⁵ Discourses are ways of knowing, valuing, and experiencing the world. They are both reflections of their social, intellectual and political climate, and active forces for the regulation, normalisation and assertion of certain views and modes of thinking. By examining changes in discourse – that is, in the discursive structures and systematised

issue of civilian obligation towards service was therefore rather a moot point for the Royal Navy, at least outside Britain's skilled maritime communities.

54 S. Mills, *Discourse* (London, 1997), p. 7.

55 The theory of communication denoted by the word 'discourse' was comprehensively addressed by the French philosopher Michel Foucault (1926–1984) in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* in 1969 (trans. A. M. Smith, London, 2007). Other important philosophers who have contributed to and elaborated upon discourse theory are Valentin Voloshinov (1895–1936), Michel Pêcheux (1938–1983), Louis Althusser (1918–1990), and Paul Hirst (1947–2003).

opinions, concepts and assumptions visible across the whole corpus of texts under investigation – we can therefore trace wider changes in the meaning and values attached to particular ideas.⁵⁶ Further, an awareness of the ‘institutional nature of discourse’, its fundamental rootedness in social, political and intellectual circumstances, underpins and legitimises our attempt to draw connections between press discourse and the events, pressures and cultural currents external to it.⁵⁷ Close investigation of public discourse, therefore, allows us not only to trace the emergence of a popular conception of citizenly duty towards military service, but also offer an interpretation of the broader influences upon its development.

As a study of discourse, it is worth stating at the outset, this dissertation does *not* constitute an attempt to decipher the individual motivations behind military participation. Obviously the history of a phenomenon is far more than the language of that phenomenon. Ideas and principles are not the only, or even perhaps the dominant, influencer of behaviour; and particularly in the case of a high-impact action such as military participation, a myriad of specific circumstances, pragmatic concerns and relationships inevitably affect choices. Untangling the motivations behind such choices is an immense task, even in the case of a single tightly defined conflict or community, and to attempt an interpretation of worth over a sixty-year period is a practical impossibility in a dissertation of this scope. Therefore, while I will attempt to respect and reflect, where appropriate, on the *correlation* between ideas of civilian obligation and action (in the realms both of policy and of individual behaviour), the task of ascertaining degrees of *causality* is more properly left to successive inquiries. My concern is, instead, with the development of socio-moral conceptions of military participation in public discourse: not why men chose to participate, but when and why (if at all) respectable society at large agreed that they *ought* to.

56 Mills, p. 17.

57 Mills, p. 11. Though, since some experiences are irreducible to language, discourse can never reflect the entire context of human experience. H. Arendt, *On Revolution* (London, 1990), p. 18.

Obviously, the sphere of ‘public discourse’ is far larger than could be countenanced by a study of this kind, taking in mediums as diverse as popular literature, church sermons, public lectures, popular songs, pamphlets and satirical prints, and music-hall. By far the primary and most prestigious vehicles for public debate on national policy in the long nineteenth century, however, were the major metropolitan popular periodicals. Facilitated by the advent of universal education, the spread of mass literacy, and the abolition of stamp duty, the emergence of a mass national press was one of the most important cultural developments of the Victorian era.⁵⁸ Countless newspapers, journals and magazines brought national issues and debates for the first time into the reach of the masses, and from mid-century on constituted the most influential sphere of respectable public discussion.⁵⁹ Editors displayed a savvy awareness of popular moods and aimed to please their audiences; they also had the ability to set agendas and intensify and prolong various debates and movements of opinion.⁶⁰ The most successful periodicals, such as *The Times*, were so adept at shaping and reflecting the prevailing mood of the middle classes – to their great profit – that they became practically synonymous with respectable public opinion. To contemporaries, the stupendous impact of the respectable popular press on public and political opinion was beyond question – one of the marvels of the era. To historians, if looked at critically and with an eye to historical, political and economic context, the popular press still provides our best window into contemporary conceptions of the socio-moral dimensions of civilian military participation.

This dissertation, therefore, focuses exclusively on conceptions of citizenly duty towards military service within the sphere of national press discourse. It further restricts its field of inquiry to the Anglo-centric public debate carried out in the London-based ‘national’ press. For the purposes of this study I will not be considering local variations within England, or differing discourses in Scotland, Ireland and Wales, though I hope successive

58 Eby, *The Road to Armageddon*, pp. 4, 111.

59 L. Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers* (Oxford, 1985).

60 M. McCombs & D. Shaw, ‘The agenda-setting function of mass media’, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 36 (1972), pp. 176–187.

research will add these vital perspectives. When referring to the State and its official and military forces, I use the term ‘British’ for the sake of accuracy. This should not, however, be taken to imply broader cultural homogeneity: the discourse I examine is avowedly English, and indeed London–centric, in character. In analysing culture I therefore prefer to err on the side of specificity in referring to ‘Englishmen’ and ‘English values’. Still, there will be broader resonances. The London ‘national’ periodicals I study often presume to speak for the broader British community; the term ‘English’ was used to mean ‘British’, and vice–versa, well into the twentieth century. In its study of press discourse, this study takes the line of AJP Taylor, in that ‘where the Welsh, the Scotch, the Irish, or the British overseas have the same history as the English, my book includes them also; where they have a different history, it does not’.⁶¹

This means that the ‘public’ participating in our ‘public discourse’ is not an all–inclusive one either in terms of nationality, geography or class. Rather, it is the largely urban middle–class readership of the ‘respectable’ London press, described by one of the newspapers studied as ‘the kind of people who busy themselves directly with civil affairs, – the intelligent, level–headed and vigilant portion of the public’.⁶² This is, however, an appropriate sub–set of the public for study, since despite the multiplicity of sections or classes within Victorian society, each with their own differing standards of propriety, the upper and upper–middle classes nonetheless dominated in the sanctioning and policing of mainstream, ‘respectable’ socio–moral norms.⁶³ Moreover, though the press of other cities and regions also contributed significantly, the London press remained at the centre of

61 A. J. P. Taylor, *English History 1914–1945* (Oxford, 1965) pp. v–vi.

62 ‘THE CHIEF LESSON OF THE WAR’, *Spectator*, 30 December 1899, p. 977. The ‘attentive public’ concept was proposed by political scientist Gabriel Almons in *The American People and Foreign Policy* (New York, 1950) ch. 7., to refer to the public interested in foreign policy (for our purposes, we refer to the public interested in national and military issues). For more recent discussion of the concept, see D. Devine, *The Attentive Public: Polyarchial Democracy* (Chicago, 1970) and R. Weissberg, *Public Opinion and Popular Government* (Englewood Cliffs NJ, 1976) pp. 246–48.

63 E. M. Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society: A Social History of Victorian Britain, 1830–1900* (London, 1988), pp. 360–1.

national debate, its respectable press constituting a ‘dominant discourse’ with which other important newspapers engaged.

The goal here is not to assess the potentially limitless variation in opinion between individuals or communities, or the extent to which the opinions of the respectable press were adopted by the masses, but to trace changes in the conception of civilian military obligation in the ‘dominant discourse’ of the respectable London press.⁶⁴ The broader variances of public opinion on the topic of civilian military obligation, and the perspectives of differentiated ‘publics’ like the military, the political establishment or the working classes, are all well worthy of in-depth investigation, but remain necessarily beyond the scope of this doctorate. Our concern is instead with evolving consensus amongst the opinion-makers and social arbiters of respectable London society, and there is no better place to find this than within their favoured medium for national discussion: the respectable popular press.

Of course, ‘public opinion’ is itself a slippery concept, and we should be wary of imposing a false consensus or unity upon the mass of heterogynous viewpoints that constitute even the middle class or ‘attentive’ public. We cannot assume that the views articulated in the popular press are straightforwardly representative; the issue of reading and representation is both complex and subtle.⁶⁵ And yet, while we must always be cognisant of the problematic nature of media representation, and of the existence of cross-currents and counter-currents even to the most dominant ideas, long-run analysis of the popular press provides our best insight into contemporary assumptions, preoccupations and priorities. The shifting content, tone and framing of the debate on civilian military participation in the national press gives us clues as to what contemporaries judged worthy of attention, what was deemed as important and what trivial, what valued and what scorned, what

64 L. Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers* (Oxford, 1985).

65 See for example J. Corner, *Studying Media: Problems of Theory and Method* (Edinburgh, 1998); J. Bignell, *Media Semiotics: An Introduction* (Manchester, 1997); and N. Fairclough, *Media Discourse* (London, 1995).

contested and what taken for granted. By examining patterns and trends in press discourse on civilian military obligation, therefore, we can trace the broad evolution of conceptions of citizenly duty towards military service over time. Given the rootedness of discourse in contemporary circumstances, analysis of the broad sweep of press debate further allows us to construct an interpretation of the influence of specific events and phenomena upon ideas of civilian military obligation, and of how contemporary cultural trends and developments affected the potency and persuasiveness of such ideas.

This study calls, therefore, for the identification and close reading of the whole corpus of discussion relevant to ideas of civilian military obligation over the course of six decades. In the past, using hard-copy or microfiche records, this would have been a practical impossibility. There is simply no way that such an immense period could be ‘browsed’ in such a way as to include all relevant material. A methodology which targeted specific dates and events would be workable, but could never capture the entirety of debate, and by excluding the assumptions about civilian military obligation expressed during ‘quiet times’ would miss out on key calibrations of attitudinal change over time. Fortunately, however, the last five years have seen rapid advance in the digitisation of historical newspapers. In addition to the stand-alone digitisation of specific titles there are now three major historical newspaper digitisation projects underway: Proquest’s *British Periodicals I and II* archives, and Gale’s *The 19th Century British Library Newspapers* project and *The 19th Century UK Periodicals* project.⁶⁶ Digitisation allows for the comprehensive searching of full runs of Victorian and Edwardian periodicals by keywords and phrases, allowing us to identify every article mentioning those relevant terms. This means huge quantities of

⁶⁶ *British Periodicals I and II*: full runs of 460 titles between 1680 and 1940 –

<http://www.britishperiodicals.chadwyck.co.uk/>

The 19th Century British Library Newspapers: full runs of 48 titles between 1800 and 1900 –

<http://find.galegroup.com/bncn/>

The 19th Century UK Periodicals: full and partial runs of 92 periodicals as of December 2011

(projected to include nearly 600 when complete) between 1800 and 1900 –

<http://find.galegroup.com/ukpc/>

Unfortunately, because the latter two databases terminate at 1900, digitisation of early twentieth-century titles remains patchy.

relevant material can be brought to light for the first time, and examined qualitatively as a near-comprehensive body of discourse. It is only through the boon of digitisation, indeed, that we are able to conceive of a study like this at all.

Digitisation is a relatively recent phenomenon, however, and there exists as yet very little methodological guidance or precedence on its usage. Archivists have indicated, therefore, that usage of digitised newspapers has tended to overlook the new potential for long-run studies, instead simply allowing for more efficient identification of articles relevant to discrete personalities, dates and events within traditional research methodologies.⁶⁷ For this study, therefore, I have had to develop an original research strategy, designed to unlock the potential of digitisation. I utilise a simple but innovative methodology based around the use of both ‘constant’ and ‘period-specific’ keywords and phrases (full list provided in the appendix to this dissertation). Each sub-period of study was first searched with a series of ‘constant’ keywords – so called because they are used over the whole period of study, providing an element of continuity against which to calibrate discursive and attitudinal change. Reading of the articles turned up by these ‘constant’ keywords would then suggest further keywords of relevance to the particular debates and events of the period, enabling further searching.

The guiding concern of this strategy is that the examination of press discourse be both as comprehensive and as dispassionate as possible, so that the discourse itself – rather than any preconceived notions of what is or is not significant – may guide the analysis. While obviously an element of pre-judgment is unavoidable in the selection of these initial keywords, they are consciously designed to be as neutral as possible. Terms as broad as ‘war’ and ‘soldiers’ operate as kinds of catch-alls, making sure that texts with subtler but no less significant relevance to our question are not omitted. The ‘period-specific’

67 P. Leary, ‘At Sea: Illusion and Promise in Digital Exploration of the 19th-century Press,’ paper presented at ‘Digitised History: newspapers and their impact on research into 18th and 19th century Britain’, 20 July 2010, British Library, London.

keywords build an element of responsiveness into the methodology, facilitating more comprehensive coverage of debate along lines suggested by the discourse itself. Close reading of the whole body of relevant articles then allows for analysis of patterns and trends not only in the ideas, opinions and assumptions expressed, but also in the preoccupations and boundaries of discussion, the argumentative logic, the points of contestation and consensus, and the use of vocabulary (such as the changing meanings and frequency of usage of words like ‘citizens’ or ‘shirker’). Even disengagement or silence on certain topics has been interpreted, where such omission suggests meaning in itself. Above all, rather than impose pre-existing interpretations and expectations I have sought to read press discourse with both an awareness of context and an open mind, and to allow it, as far as possible, to speak to its own influences, preoccupations and priorities.

Given the comprehensive attention to each source demanded by this methodology, and the sheer amount of press material produced over the sixty-year period of our investigation, it has been necessary to limit our scope to a workable number of titles, selected on the basis of three criteria: impact, diversity and longevity. In order to maximise the significance of this study, the periodicals selected had to be of significant reach, circulation and esteem, and therefore constitute important and influential participants in national debate. Selected titles also had to represent diversity of political orientation and area of interest, and include daily, weekly and illustrated newspapers so as to help neutralise the particular political agendas of proprietors and ensure an impression of press discourse that is as complex and representative as possible. Lastly, they must also have circulated for as much of the period under investigation as possible, to allow us a better chance of identifying shifts and trends within the otherwise stable parameters of each source. Taking these criteria into consideration, thirteen digitised periodicals were selected for study.

The first and most obvious title for examination is the nation's leading daily, *The Times*.⁶⁸ In the early 1850s, it was selling up to four times as many as its main rivals – the *Morning Herald*, *Morning Post* and *Morning Chronicle* – combined.⁶⁹ The author A.W. Kinglake wrote that during the 1850s, 'women and practical men simply spoke of *The Times*' when they wanted to cite public opinion.⁷⁰ From the 1860s on, it began to suffer from the rise in competition from the penny press, but after 1890 an energetic new editor, Charles Morley, guided it back to a premier position. Broadly pro-free trade, Church of England and liberal-conservative in political orientation, it nonetheless had a reputation for independence. In 1900, Mitchell's wrote that it was 'the only paper which men of all parties, and all classes, read and speak of. Other papers may be more preferred by particular classes, but all read *The Times*, who can'. To contemporaries, its stupendous impact on public and political discussion was beyond question. The visiting German novelist Fontane, likewise, commented that 'even the most sensible Englishmen (unless they are professional politicians and belong to a particular party) are nothing more than 100,000 echoes of *The Times*'.⁷¹ Media historian Matthew Engel agrees that *The Times* was the newspaper most closely associated with public opinion throughout the nineteenth century, and indeed was 'regarded as close to infallible' until 1887, when it was duped into making unfounded allegations against the Irish leader Charles Parnell.⁷² Given its keen interest in matters both social and military, its tradition of strong editorial and lively correspondence, and its full digitization, *The Times* is a central source for this study.

Its chief daily rival, the leading Tory paper the *Morning Post* (1803–1937; digitised to 1900),⁷³ is also a key source.⁷⁴ The *Morning Post* held a strongly High Church, protectionist and ultra-English editorial line, and was favoured by upper class and rural

68 *The Times Digital Archive, 1785–1985* (fully digitised) – Oxford access URL:

http://infotrac.galegroup.com/itw/infomark/0/1/1/purl=rc6_TTDA?sw_aep=oxford

69 M. Engel, *Tickle the Public: One Hundred Years of the Popular Press* (London, 1996), p. 21.

70 A. W. Kinglake, *The Invasion of the Crimea*, vol 2 (Edinburgh, 1877), p. 84.

71 T. Fontane, *Journeys to England in Victoria's early days* (London, 1939), p. 115.

72 Engel, *Tickle the Public*, p. 21.

73 *The 19th Century British Library Newspapers* – <http://find.galegroup.com/bncn/>

74 G.A Cranfield, *The Press and Society: From Caxton to Northcliffe* (London, 1978), p. 157.

readers.⁷⁵ It was the most reactionary of all English newspapers with regards to issues such as free trade and Irish nationalism,⁷⁶ but also maintained a High Tory policy of compassionate government of the working classes, idolizing Disraeli and approving the promotion of public education and health even when it was the work of liberal governments.⁷⁷ Interestingly, it was also the "favourite organ" of Palmerston.⁷⁸ At the other end of the political spectrum, the *Daily News* (1846–1912; digitised to 1900)⁷⁹ offered a very different perspective on current affairs. Founded as Radical, pro-free trade, pro-Movement party, the *Daily News* was known in the early 1850's as the 'Cobden Organ' due to its 'uniformly Liberal' politics and advocacy of free trade – though, as Aled Jones points out, it readily rejected Cobdenite 'peace views' in favour of energetic advocacy of the Crimean War.⁸⁰ Throughout its lifespan it retained both its liberal character and its high circulation, successfully representing what Jones has called a 'more popular class of independent liberals' until well into the twentieth century.⁸¹ Rounding out the dailies for this study is the *Pall Mall Gazette* (1865–1921; digitised to 1900),⁸² an originally Liberal journal that drifted towards independent unionism by the end of the century. 'Written by a corps of intellectuals for an elite audience',⁸³ the *Pall Mall Gazette's* focus on the analysis of political and social questions and 'causes' makes it a rich source of commentary for this enquiry.⁸⁴

Weekly newspapers, on the whole, tended to adopt a more analytical, editorial tone than the news-driven dailies, and are therefore of particular use for this study. Perhaps the most important of these in terms of public debate was the *Spectator* (1829–1925; fully

75 A. Ellegard, *The Readership of the Periodical Press in Mid-Victorian Britain* (Goteborg, 1957), p. 4.

76 Cranfield, p. 210.

77 Cranfield, p. 209.

78 K. Jones, *Fleet Street & Downing Street* (London, 1919), p. 76.

79 *The 19th Century British Library Newspapers* – <http://find.galegroup.com/bncn/>

80 A. Jones, *Powers of the Press: Newspapers, Power and the Public in Nineteenth-Century England* (London, 1996), p. 153.

81 Jones, *Powers of the Press*, p. 78.

82 *British Periodicals I and II* – <http://www.britishperiodicals.chadwyck.co.uk/>

83 J. Knelman, *Twisting in the Wind: The Murderess and the English Press* (Toronto, 1998), p. 139.

84 H. R. Fox Bourne, *English Newspapers*, vol 2. (New York, 1966), p. 274.

digitised).⁸⁵ The circulation of this Broad Church Anglican, rationalist, Tory paper declined during the 1860s, when purchase by a US proprietor saw it support the unpopular North during the American Civil War, but it soon recovered and by 1895 was the top weekly in the Empire.⁸⁶ Recognised throughout the nineteenth century, according to Richard Fulton, ‘as among the most politically influential weekly newspapers in Britain’, the *Spectator* is an important contributor to this discussion.⁸⁷ So too is its political rival, the liberal *Speaker* (1890–1907; fully digitised),⁸⁸ which was created to oppose the *Spectator*’s hostility to Home Rule.⁸⁹ Another important and outspoken commentator on social and political issues was the *Examiner* (1808–1881; fully digitised).⁹⁰ After 1865 it repeatedly changed hands, resulting in a loss of purpose and a rapid decline in both the number and the social status of readers.⁹¹ For many years, however, it was a well-regarded and articulate espouser of Radical ideas, with a respectable circulation of around 4,645 in 1865.⁹² More vigorously radical was *Reynolds’s Newspaper* (1852–1923; digitised to 1900),⁹³ which appealed to a more plebeian readership interested in radical social reform.⁹⁴ It enjoyed excellent circulation throughout the nineteenth century and, given its special interest in the abolition of flogging and other brutal anachronisms in the military, has much commentary of merit to this enquiry.⁹⁵ The slightly more up-market and less politically extreme *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper* (1849–1918; digitised to 1900)⁹⁶ was even more popular amongst ‘readers lower to lower middle class, educational standard low,

85 *British Periodicals I and II* – <http://www.britishperiodicals.chadwyck.co.uk/>

86 R. H. Tener and M. Woodfield (eds.) *A Victorian Spectator: Uncollected Writings of R. H. Hutton* (Bristol, 1989), p. 3.

87 R. D. Fulton quoted in A. Sullivan (ed.), *British Literary Magazines*, vol 2, (Wesport CT., 1983), pp. 391–398.

88 *British Periodicals I and II* – <http://www.britishperiodicals.chadwyck.co.uk/>

89 Tener and Woodfield (eds.), *A Victorian Spectator*, p. 8.

90 *The 19th Century British Library Newspapers* – <http://find.galegroup.com/bncn/>

91 Ellegard, *The Readership of the Periodical Press in Mid-Victorian Britain*, p. 9.

92 ‘Examiner, The’, *The Waterloo Directory of English Newspapers and Periodicals 1800–1900* – <http://www.victorianperiodicals.com/series2/ShowArticle.asp?id=92112> (accessed 04/11/09)

93 *The 19th Century British Library Newspapers* – <http://find.galegroup.com/bncn/>

94 Ellegard, p. 7.

95 V. Berridge, ‘Content Analysis and Historical Research on Newspapers’ in M. Harris and A. Lee (eds.) *The Press in English Society from the Seventeenth to Nineteenth Centuries* (London, 1986), pp. 201–218.

96 *The 19th Century British Library Newspapers* – <http://find.galegroup.com/bncn/>

politically mainly liberal'.⁹⁷ Considered by one media historian to have been the most widely read paper of Victorian England, its sheer popularity recommends it as an important source.⁹⁸

There were also a number of popular weeklies not given to extensive analysis of political and social issues, but whose forays into public debate were rendered all the more significant by their infrequency. The moderate/unionist *Observer* (1791–1952; fully digitised) was one such.⁹⁹ It had a reputation for eschewing political criticism and discussion of public affairs, preferring to offer 'twice as many murders, assaults, robberies, fires, accidents, offences, as any other paper, and [to] sell proportionably'.¹⁰⁰ Nonetheless, the *Observer* was one of the most important of London's four Sunday papers by 1890, and its occasional comments on public affairs are often illuminating.¹⁰¹ *John Bull* (1820–1892; digitised 1820–1868, 1870–1879, 1883, 1886, 1891)¹⁰² shows a similar preoccupation with scandal, but provides its own upper-class Tory, conservative, High Church perspective.¹⁰³

Amongst the illustrated periodicals, the *Illustrated London News*¹⁰⁴ and *Punch Magazine* (1841–1992; digitised to 1900)¹⁰⁵ are by far the most significant. Politically neutral and technologically innovative, the *Illustrated London News* constituted 'the epitome of respectability and suitable for consumption and display in middle-class homes' throughout the long nineteenth century.¹⁰⁶ *Punch*, 'the venerable superstar of English comic

97 Ellegard, p. 6.

98 Engel, p. 28.

99 *ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Guardian & The Observer* – <http://search.proquest.com/hnpguardianobserver/>

100 H. Hobson, 'The Obscure Years 1822–1915,' in L. Russell (ed.) *The Pearl of Days: an intimate memoir of the Sunday Times 1822–1972* (London, 1972) p. 14.

101 A. Aspinall, 'Statistical Accounts of the London Newspapers, 1800–36.' *English Historical Review*, vol 65 (1950), pp. 222–234, 372–382.

102 *The 19th Century UK Periodicals* – <http://find.galegroup.com/ukpc/>

103 H. Barker, *Newspapers, Politics, and English Society, 1695–1855* (Harlow, 2000), pp. 203, 204.

104 *The Illustrated London News Historical Archive, 1842–2003* (fully digitised) – <http://find.galegroup.com/iln/>

105 *The 19th Century UK Periodicals* – <http://find.galegroup.com/ukpc/>

106 G. Beegan, 'The Up-to-Date Periodical: Subjectivity, technology and time in the late Victorian press,' *Time & Society*, 10.1 (2001), pp. 113–134.

periodicals', was also comfortably middle-class in orientation, though it employed a faint whiff of radicalism for much of its satire.¹⁰⁷ The latter was more likely than the former to directly editorialise on public debate, but in their various ways, both provide useful perspectives on nineteenth century public opinion.

Such is the cast of characters for this study; what of its themes? Prospective influences upon press conceptions of military obligation can be seen to fall within a broad framework of determinants. These include: (1) mechanistic changes in communication – e.g. the spread of literacy, the emergence of the popular press, the advent of war reportage; (2) external political determinants – e.g. wars, military developments abroad, and the international system as a whole; (3) internal political determinants – e.g. Palmerstonian adventurism, Disraeli's popular conservatism, the emergence of Labour, and the shift towards collectivist and welfare politics; and (4) socio-cultural determinants – e.g. the rise of respectable society, the politicisation of the working classes, popular religiosity, and intellectual currents such as Imperialism, militarism and social Darwinism.

For an understanding of the key developments within this framework of determinants, we turn to existing literature. With the notable exception of the lead-up to the First World War, scholarship has so far failed to connect meaningfully with the issue of changing civilian willingness to offer personal service in war. But if historians have overlooked the mystery of the emergence of a sense of citizenly duty towards military service itself, they have nonetheless suggested, through their elucidation of other social and cultural changes, a number of possible contributors toward it. The extensive literature on the social and economic changes taking place in this period – continuing industrialisation, urbanisation and the growth of the middle classes – is illuminating, particularly since voluntary military participation has often been intimately connected with the assertion and legitimisation of

107 Ellegard, p. 22.

middle class status, values and concerns.¹⁰⁸ More generally, rising standards of living and the mechanistic factors of universal education, the spread of mass literacy and the expansion of the popular press all allowed for a greater sense of connection between ordinary Britons and the goals of the wider nation and empire.¹⁰⁹

Domestic and international political circumstances may also have affected public attitudes toward military participation. There is an excellent body of literature dealing with the revived expansion of empire during this period, though the stake that ordinary Britons felt in imperial fortunes is under contention.¹¹⁰ Britain's involvement in the imperial scramble for Africa, together with the growth of her imperial rivals and the humiliating setbacks of the Crimean and Boer Wars, are generally believed to have contributed to a general sense of ongoing struggle in defence of national interest, and that this sense of struggle helped to put military service in the light of a moral duty does not seem an implausible hypothesis. In the domestic political sphere, a link between willingness to offer military service and citizenship/enfranchisement has long been posited.¹¹¹ The socialism, unionism and welfare politics that developed during the period may also have affected the personal stake Britons felt in national military actions, predisposing them to accept the concept of reciprocal obligations between subject and state.¹¹²

108 This connection emphasised in Cunningham, *The Volunteer Force*, and Morton, 'A Military Irony: the Victorian Volunteer Movement'. Useful general works include F. Bedarida, *A Social History of England, 1851–1975* (New York, 1980); E. M. Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society: A Social History of Victorian Britain, 1830–1900* (London, 1988); and J. Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit: A Social History of Britain, 1870–1914* (New York, 1993). For class, see R. McKibbin, *The Ideologies of Class: Social Relations in Britain, 1880–1950* (New York: 1990); J. Benson, *The Working Class in Britain, 1850–1939* (London, 1989); W. D. Rubinstein, 'The Size and Distribution of the English Middle Classes in 1860,' *Historical Research*, 61.144 (1988) and A. Kidd and D. Nicholls (eds.), *Gender, Civic Culture and Consumerism: Middle-Class Identity in Britain, 1800–1940* (New York, 1999).

109 Silbey, p. 189.

110 R. Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century, 1815–1914: A Study of Empire and Expansion* (Lanham, Md., 1993); D. S. A. Bell, 'Empire and International Relations in Victorian Political Thought,' *Historical Journal*, 49.1 (2006), pp. 281–98; and S. Attridge, *Nationalism, Imperialism, and Identity in Late Victorian Culture: Civil and Military Worlds* (London, 2003).

111 See for example A. Clark, 'Changing Concepts of Citizenship: Gender, Empire, and Class,' *Journal of British Studies*, 42.2 (2003) pp. 263–71; J. Garrard, *Democratization in Britain: Elites, Civil Society and Reform since 1800* (London, 2002); and N. F. Gullace, *The Blood of Our Sons: Men, Women, and the Renegotiation of British Citizenship during the Great War* (London, 2002).

112 See G. Finlayson, *Citizen, State, and Social Welfare in Britain, 1830–1990* (New York, 1994); and 'A Moving Frontier: Voluntarism and the State in British Social Welfare 1911–1949,' *Twentieth*

Culturally, the period was a mass of energy, creativity and contradiction, with the spread of literacy securing growing audiences for a diverse array of ideologies, and it is likely that these cultural and ideological upheavals may have had implications for public understandings of civilian military obligation. Most obviously, the late Victorian age's militarist and imperialist fervour has been well documented, and subject to a number of extremely insightful analyses.¹¹³ Some historians have focussed on the militarist pomp that prevailed after 1886, while others have stressed the anti-modern cult of the simple life and its promotion of military participation as an antidote and escape from the artificiality and effeminacy of modern life.¹¹⁴ Social Darwinist thinking, fuelled by anxiety about military decline, national degeneration and the possibility of 'race suicide', was also highly influential and may have pushed Britons into identifying personally with the military struggles of the nation.¹¹⁵ So, too, was religion instrumental in promoting a moral duty towards military participation, though the topic has been rather neglected by historians.¹¹⁶ Gender conditioning and obsession with the 'performance' of male/female binaries has also been identified as a contributor to male enthusiasm for military participation.¹¹⁷ And yet throughout the period we must also note the presence of a persistently anti-militarist strain. Recent years have seen the publication of a number of groundbreaking works on the

Century British History, 1.2 (1990) pp. 183–296; and L. Barrow and I. Bullock, *Democratic Ideas and the British Labour Movement, 1880–1914* (New York, 1996).

113 Influential works include Paris, *Warrior Nation*; Summers, 'Militarism in Britain before the Great War'; D. Edgerton, 'Liberal Militarism and the British State,' *New Left Review* 185 (1991) pp. 138–69; J. A. Mangan, 'Duty Unto Death: English Masculinity and Militarism in the Age of the New Imperialism,' *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 12.2 (1995), pp. 10–38; and G. Dawson, *Soldier heroes: British adventure, empire and the imagining of masculinities* (London, 1994).

114 T. J. Jackson Lears offers an excellent discussion of the antimodern impulse in the American context in *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880–1920*, Revised ed. (Chicago, 1994) See also E. J. Leed, *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War I* (New York, 1979).

115 M. Hendley, "'Help Us to Secure a Strong, Healthy, Prosperous and Peaceful Britain": the Social Arguments of the Campaign for Compulsory Military Service in Britain, 1899–1914,' *Canadian Journal of History*, 30.2 (1995) pp. 261–88; and B. Luckin, 'Revisiting the Idea of Degeneration in Urban Britain, 1830–1900,' *Urban History*, 33.2 (2006) pp. 234–52.

116 O. Anderson, 'The Growth of Christian Militarism in Mid-Victorian England,' *English Historical Review*, 86.337 (1971) pp. 46–72 remains one of the best analyses. For more general discussion of the changing religious landscape, see A. D. Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England: Church, Chapel and Social Change, 1740–1914* (London, 1976); C. D. Field, 'Marching to Zion: Faith and the Victorians,' *Labour History Review*, 55.1 (1990), pp. 49–61; J. A. Moses, 'The British and German Churches and the Perception of War, 1908–1914,' *War & Society [Australia]*, 5.1 (1987) pp. 23–34.

117 M. C. C. Adams, *The Great Adventure: Male Desire and the Coming of World War I* (Bloomington, 1990).

British peace movement, which have further fleshed out our understanding of this anti-militaristic tradition in the nineteenth century.¹¹⁸

The atmosphere in which attitudes toward military participation was formed was thus an extremely complex one, but from the literature emerge four interconnected themes that resonate throughout this study. The first is the growth and consolidation of ‘national’ identities,¹¹⁹ and the shift, noted by Hugh Cunningham, from the oppositional, radical patriotism that was the legacy of the eighteenth century to a more conformist, conservative, nationalist and racist allegiance both focussed upon and propagated by the State.¹²⁰ The second is the rise of militaristic Imperialism and its associated glorification of struggle and war in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, which rendered popular patriotism increasingly inseparable from an emphatically British form of militarism.¹²¹ The third, related, theme is the increasing integration of the military into civilian society, facilitated by such factors as growing public participation in the auxiliaries, popular spectatorship of military demonstrations and displays, the advent of war reportage, and the gradual moral rehabilitation of the army’s public image.

Fourth and final is the subtle but marked shift in popular liberalism and the way it conceptualised the relationship between the individual and the State. Scholars have remarked upon the transition, in the latter part of the nineteenth century, from a Victorian individualism that emphasised individual conscience and the absence of restraints upon personal liberty, to a more collectivist view of society, focussed on social fairness and equality of opportunity and increasingly accepting of an active, interventionist role for the

118 See M. Ceadel, *Semi-detached idealists: the British peace movement and international relations, 1854–1945* (Oxford, 2000) and P. Laity, *The British Peace Movement 1870–1914* (Oxford, 2002).

119 R. Colls, *Identity of England* (New York, 2002); A. Grant and K. J. Stringer (eds.), *Uniting the Kingdom? The Making of British History* (New York, 1996); T. Koditschek, ‘The Making of British Nationality,’ *Victorian Studies*, 44.3 (2002) pp. 389–98; and M. Girouard, *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman* (New Haven CT, 1981).

120 H. Cunningham, ‘The Language of Patriotism 1750–1914’, *History Workshop J*, 12.1 (1981), pp. 8–33.

121 J. A. Mangan, ‘Duty Unto Death’; J. M. MacKenzie (ed.), *Popular imperialism and the military: 1850–1950* (Manchester, 1992).

State.¹²² Emerging theories of citizenship, meanwhile, increasingly emphasised the ‘contract’ between subject and State as one constituted of reciprocal privileges and obligations.¹²³ Underlying and facilitating all four themes, of course, was the consolidation of national public opinion by means of mass literacy, mass education and the emergence of the popular ‘national’ press. Discussion of these four key themes, and the literature that informs them, is integrated into the chronological narrative that follows. But the reader should also be aware of them as gradual and overarching influences, and keep them in mind as we investigate the larger picture of evolving conceptions of civilian military obligation.

This dissertation, therefore, traces changing conceptions of civilian military obligation within the discussion and debate of thirteen major London periodicals. By analysing correlations with external phenomena, it also suggests the role of a number of events, pressures and cultural trends in shaping the consensus on a citizenly duty towards military service in place by the eve of war in 1914. This study reveals, over the course of sixty years, the fitful development of the idea of civilian military participation from a relic of the barbaric past to a charitable (but supererogatory) act of public spirit, and thence to an entrenched principle of citizenship which could fairly be compelled. The dissertation that follows shows how the reality of Europe’s shift toward mass conscript armies created an ideological dilemma for a nation outwardly promoting the values of liberalism, civilianism, voluntarism and a ‘civilised’ division of labour. What emerges is a picture of

122 This shift in the nature of English liberalism has been discussed at length by scholars. See E. Barker, *Political Thought in England 1848–1914* (London, 1963); M. Freedman, *The New Liberalism: An Ideology of Social Reform* (Oxford, 1978); J. R. Hay, *The Origins of the Liberal Welfare Reforms 1906–1914* (London, 1975); E. P. Cheyney, *Modern English Reform: From Individualism to Socialism* (New York, 1962); H. C. G. Matthew, *The Liberal Imperialists: the ideas and politics of a Post–Gladstonian Elite* (Oxford, 1973); J. P. Plamenatz, *Consent, Freedom and Political Obligation* (2nd ed. Oxford, 1968); and H. J. Schultz, *English Liberalism and the State: Individualism or Collectivism?* (Lexington MA, 1972).

123 Finlayson, *Citizen, State, and Social Welfare in Britain* and ‘A Moving Frontier: Voluntarism and the State in British Social Welfare 1911–1949,’; Clark, ‘Changing Concepts of Citizenship: Gender, Empire, and Class’; and Barrow and Bullock, *Democratic Ideas and the British Labour Movement, 1880–1914*.

ongoing conflict between military expediency, on the one hand, and both liberal values and sheer inertia, on the other. Britain's divergence from contemporary norms of citizen participation, and her resultant vulnerability, were powerfully highlighted by the Crimean War, the Indian Mutiny, and the example of Prussian expansionism, resulting in the rapid post-Crimea development of the idea of a civilian responsibility for national defence and the prosecution of the nation's 'just wars'.

By 1871, public discourse widely acknowledged the inadequacy of Britain's military forces next to the mass citizen armies of the continent, and recognised that only a massive expansion of civilian military participation could render Britain truly secure. Such an expansion, however, would be either deeply controversial (since the conscription which underpinned Continental systems was entirely at odds with British liberalism), or immensely costly (if the voluntarist/professional system was to be preserved) – all for a contingency (invasion or total war) that was generally regarded as remote. Popular faith in the Royal Navy and the inviolability of the Channel further encouraged a sense that Britain did not *have* to compete with the mass armies of other European powers, and in the decades of peace between 1871 and 1898 the explicit debate on civilian military obligation largely sank into stagnation.

But other internal and external determinants *were* changing, not least the revival of Imperialism and the development of a more reciprocal theory of State–subject relations, both of which worked to reconcile the principle of citizenly obligation to military service with contemporary Liberal values. In 1899, the ideas that had swirled ineffectually for the past three decades were finally tested. Significant civilian volunteering for the Boer War testified to the internalisation of a sense of duty towards military participation even in overseas conflicts. Furthermore, the war's shocking reversals were taken as signs that British military inferiority could no longer be ignored. From thence, the Edwardian military participation debate was dominated by the conflict between advocates of

compulsory National Service and those who believed Britons could be trusted to come forward voluntarily as duty dictated, with both points of view ultimately serving to reinforce the notion of an inherent civilian obligation towards military service. By the eve of the Great War, the idea that Englishmen were inherently obligated to offer personal military service in the hour of national need towards had become a fundamental assumption of press debate.

This dissertation traces the episodes of crisis and challenge that advanced popular conceptions of military obligation from 1854 to this point. Chapter One offers a brief pre-history of civilian military service in Britain, contextualising the period under investigation and orienting the reader with the origins of Britain's divergence from both her own tradition, and contemporary military practice, by the 1850s. From thence, the dissertation is organised chronologically. Chapter Two, 'The Crimean Crucible, 1854–1856' reveals both the absence, in press discourse, of any real sense of citizenly obligation towards personal military service during the Crimean War, but also the emerging conviction that the nation's wars should be fought by an army truly representative of the nation. In Chapter Three, 'The Volunteer Impulse, 1857–1861', we note the stupendous cultural resonance of the Indian Mutiny, and the emotional, personal, moral compulsion to participate it inspired. When combined with an invasion scare in 1859, this sentiment spilled over into the Volunteer Revival, an initially middle-class movement wherein civilians formed self-governed infantry corps (of doubtful utility but lofty socio-moral status) for the purposes of national defence. The early years of the Revival are examined in detail in this chapter, as is the nature of the 'duty' they espouse.

Chapter Four, 'The Dawn of Prussianism, 1862–1871', first examines how spectatorship of the brutal and bloody American Civil War dispelled the aura of romanticism the Volunteer Revival had created around military participation, before turning to the effect of Prussia's sweeping victories between 1866 and 1871. The astonishing rise of Prussia

inspired both admiration for the citizen–soldier model and considerable fear, such that that the dreaded ‘conscription’ was spoken of as a near–inevitability by the London press. As Chapter Five, ‘Other Priorities, 1872–1898’, explains, however, the advent of a long period where invasion scares and imperial outrages were few and remote saw the unpleasant implications of the post–Crimea debate largely shelved. And yet, as this chapter details, the social, cultural and political changes of the period did work subtly to facilitate the wider acceptance of a duty towards military participation. Chapter Six, ‘Volunteers for South Africa, 1899–1902’, investigates the rhetoric and meaning of civilian participation in the Boer War, noting widespread acceptance of the principle of a ‘moral duty’ towards service, and examining in particular the extension of that duty to an overseas conflict. Chapter Seven, ‘The Duty of National Service, 1903–1914’, investigates rising conviction on the subject of civilian military obligation in the decade before the Great War, and culminates in an assessment of the assumptions about the duty towards military service in place in place by the eve of the First World War.¹²⁴ I then conclude with a broad discussion of the findings, implications and unique contributions of this study.

This dissertation seeks to provide a workable chart for an area never before mapped: the evolution of conceptions of the citizen’s duty towards military participation in the national press, and the events, circumstances and cultural trends that shaped them. It reveals that the societal consensus on the duty to enlist in 1914 was by no means a foregone cultural conclusion, nor indeed the relic of an earlier heroic age, but rather the dynamic product of active evolution and contestation over more than six decades. This study represents the first foray into an important and much neglected historical question. Though the history of military obligation that follows is already of considerable scope, it is inevitably only part

¹²⁴ The aim of this study is to contextualise the atmosphere of patriotic duty and mass enlistments of 1914 by identifying the conception of civilian military obligation in place by the outbreak of war, and tracing its origins and evolution over the previous sixty years of press discourse. This study terminates, therefore, on the eve of war, and does not attempt to interpret the further effects of the specific events of July–August 1914 on press understandings of civilian military obligation.

of an even larger and more complex picture. But we must see the parts clearly before we can make sense of the whole, and the first and most important part is surely the elucidation of the very idea of a citizenly duty towards military service, as revealed in that most prominent of mass mediums, the national press. The proper contextualisation and historicisation of the *concept* of military obligation is not only important in and of itself, but is also crucial to our understanding of the role of duty – especially the ‘official’ patriotic duty promulgated by the mass media – in motivating actual enlistment. Without a more subtle understanding of the changing relationship between patriotism and personal action, between militarism and moral obligation, our understanding of the relationship between war and society remains incomplete.

CHAPTER ONE

England's Forgotten Military Tradition

For us to properly understand the meaning and significance of civilian conceptions of military obligation in the mid–nineteenth century, we must first be able place them in the context of the broader trajectory of civilian military participation over the course of British history. England has often been characterised historically as a largely unmilitarised, even anti–militaristic nation. As we shall see, by the early Victorian period her gentry were among the least militarised elites in Europe, her army was marginalised and unpopular, and her people were both proud and jealously protective of their freedom from military obligations. It important to understand, however, that the near–total separation between civilian and military spheres that characterised early Victorian England was considerably at variance not only with contemporary European practice, but also with England's own wider historical tradition. As Beckett has shown, civilians had played a role in the immediate defence of their communities for the greater part of England's history.¹ Indeed, the medieval and early modern periods were marked by the steady extension of civilian military obligations by England's rulers. This cumulative push to extract more military service from the civilian population, however, also inspired growing public hostility. By the modern era both the principle of civilian military obligations, and public aversion to such measures in practice, were firmly entrenched in England society.

¹ I. F.W. Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition, 1558–1945* (Manchester, 1991).

In the crucible of the great Napoleonic Wars (1799–1815), the public hit upon a compromise between the two in the popular Volunteer movement, a voluntary phenomenon which mobilised the population like never before, but also subverted the formal, compulsory military channels of the State. Thrown off track by the success of this compromise, England’s tradition of formal civilian military obligation thereafter fell away in the decades of peace and liberalisation after Waterloo, leaving mid–century Englishmen with no real sense of citizenly duty towards military service. The first half of this chapter provides a summary from secondary literature of England’s tradition of military service, and its lapse in the decades after the Napoleonic Wars. Thereafter we begin the work of press analysis, examining in detail the Militia Bill debate of 1851–2 in order to establish the assumptions about civilian military participation in place on the eve of the Crimean War, when this study commences. Together, these two discussions serve as a background and pre–history to the elucidation of evolving notions of citizenly duty towards military participation between 1854 and 1914 that is the purpose of this dissertation.

Evidence of pre–existing defensive customs and obligations, such as systems of warning beacons, stretches back into England’s antiquity.² In the early middle ages, the tradition of *posse comitatus* was already well established, giving local chiefs and sheriffs the right to mobilise the people for the capture of felons or for local defence. In this period, however, wars were usually fought by small bands of noblemen warriors: household troops, mercenaries, and noble followers bound to the service of a king by personal allegiance, patronage, and the gift of land and privileges. It was not until the eighth century that a concept of inherent military obligation began to emerge as a direct consequence of the increased granting of land in perpetuity, which threatened the time–honoured system of securing the military service of successive generations with conditional gifts of non–hereditary ‘loan–land’. In response, the Mercian Kings came up with the idea of ‘the

² Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition*, p. 8. Given that much of the information in this section is drawn from secondary sources, footnotes referring to the information given in the paragraph as a whole will be placed at the end of each paragraph.

common burdens', declaring all landowners subject to military service in the King's army (the *fyrð*), as well as to participation in bridge maintenance and fortification. By the mid-ninth century the idea had caught on in all the kingdoms, and the 'common burdens' were recognised as an obligation of land tenure across the British Isles. Though technically the service obligation fell on the landowner, he was able to send a substitute or pay to hire a mercenary. By the eleventh century, therefore, the *fyrðmen* were mostly professional warriors recruited from the nobility and upper classes of the peasantry.³

After the Norman conquest, military obligations became more universal, with all able-bodied men between 15 and 60 liable to bear arms in a category of service that reflected their social status. The 'knightly' feudal host continued, as did the *fyrð* quota of military tenants, and the bulk of the serf population was made liable for the first time to a general levy. But although levies were infrequent, small, and of short duration, the system was marked by non-cooperation with service obligations and power struggles between the Crown and local political elites. Aristocratic retinues (now based almost entirely on personal contracts for service rather than on tenurial loyalty) therefore appeared a simpler and less controversial way of raising troops, and continued to play a far more significant role in the conflicts of the age than the levy system.⁴

It was not until Tudor times that the concept of a single unified English 'militia' began to emerge. Henry VIII called upon levies more and more frequently, signalling the start of a shift in military participation from the upper to the lower classes that had already taken place in most of the other nations of Europe.⁵ At the same time, the revival and creation of national military institutions throughout Europe, together with the dissemination of classical works on the conduct of war from authors such as Vegetius, gave new currency to the concept of communal defence as a civic virtue and an expression of political stability.

³ Beckett, pp. 8–10.

⁴ Beckett, pp. 12–13.

⁵ C. G. Cruickshank, *Army Royal: Henry VIII's Invasion of France, 1513* (Oxford, 1969), p. 204, cited in Beckett, p. 19.

Mary Tudor's 1558 Militia Act finally dispensed with the feudal host, creating a national militia wherein all classes were liable to be drafted for training 'musters' or active service. Elizabeth I maintained the principle of universal liability, but in practice worked towards a more skilful, efficient militia by only mustering men had been specifically selected and trained by professional soldiers. These 'trained bands' were an important element of the nation's defence against invasion, but after 1585 were also sent abroad on expeditionary campaigns in Brittany, Normandy, the Low Countries and Ireland. Between 1585 and 1602 possibly 14–18% of able-bodied males were levied in England and Wales for overseas campaigns.⁶ This increased usage of the trained bands, together with the ease with which the wealthier classes avoided service, met with a corresponding surge of resistance. Elizabeth I succeeded in firmly entrenching militia obligations in England, but her increased demands also scored a resentment of military service deeply into the popular psyche.⁷

The first three decades of the seventeenth century saw this resentment compounded by wider tension between the Crown and the counties. After 1630 musters became less frequent, and the militia acquired the reputation for inefficiency, ill-discipline and general insignificance that would continue to dog it for more than two centuries. During the Civil War, different militia bands declared different allegiances, but their efficacy was limited by almost universal unwillingness to serve out-of-county. With Charles II's return, effective control of the militia passed to the 'Lord Lieutenants', the principal channels of influence and patronage in the counties. Recognising the importance of the militia as a safeguard of the political settlement, these local elites were newly committed to making the militia system work.⁸ At the same time, the rhetorical association between the militia and political liberty was experiencing a new peak, with a general growth in popular arguments for the

6 J. J. N. McGurk, 'The Recruitment and Transportation of Elizabethan Troops and their Service in Ireland, 1594 – 1603', Unpub. Ph.D., Liverpool, 1982., p. 109., cited in Beckett, p. 26.

7 Beckett, pp. 16–28.

8 A. Fletcher, *Reform in the Provinces: The Government of Stuart England* (New Haven, CT., 1986), pp. 319–31, cited in Beckett, p. 50.

militia as a constitutional check against the threat to liberty offered by a standing army. In practice, however, the tumultuous party politics of the period precluded any real steps toward the improvement of the militia. Spectacularly poor performance in the field against Monmouth's rebellion earned the militia the ire of James II, and an inadequate response to the Jacobite rebellion saw it sink almost entirely into ridicule and strategic insignificance.⁹ If 1745 represented the militia's nadir, it at least gave impetus to agitation for serious reform. The invasion scares of the previous decade focussed public attention on defensive efficiency, and the militia ideal was gradually seen less as a constitutional check than as a cost-efficient alternative to further expansion of the standing army. After a rather tortured development, legislation for England's own 'New Militia' was passed in May 1757. The bill represented a compromise between the military advantages of universal liability and the desire of the gentry to pass the burden of military service down the social scale. In theory, the New Militia was to be raised by an unprejudiced ballot of able-bodied men, but plentiful exemptions and provisions for substitution by a £10 fine meant that large numbers found it relatively easy to avoid service.

All this placed the militia burden firmly on the poorest classes, who resented it greatly. The first ballot in 1757 provoked rioting in 13 counties. Interestingly, these riots seem to have been largely a response to poor explanation of the compensation provisions and popular fear of overseas enlistment, indicating perhaps that the objection was not to service *per se*, but to service without clear limits and compensation. The militia had raised only half its proposed total when the threat of invasion intervened in 1759 to galvanise public support. Even this support was fleeting, and over the next few decades, any attempt to extend military obligations was met with suspicion and resentment. Anti-militia riots flared up when the militia became permanent in 1769, and thereafter when embodiment or expansion

⁹ Beckett, pp. 38–59.

of the militia was proposed or enacted in 1775, 1778, and 1779 in response to the hostilities in America.¹⁰

The example of the American Revolutionary War, however, made government all the more determined to impose military obligations on the civilian population. Having seen British generals effectively harried by lightly armed, lightly trained local militiamen, many in Britain's ruling elite became strong supporters of the potential efficacy of civilian military participation, and also believed it to be a unifying patriotic antidote to localism, political division and dynastic instability.¹¹ There were considerable doubts, however, about the receptivity of Britons to the idea of civilian military participation. A correspondent of Pitt's expressed the pervading concern when he questioned in 1794 whether 'the "rising in a mass" or becoming an "armed nation" at short notice [was] congenial with the spirit of Englishmen'.¹²

Despite the long presence of military compulsion in English history, Georgian England remained a comparatively unmilitarised society. The mania for professional army expansion and modernisation that was sweeping Europe did not capture the British imagination. The army itself remained unpopular, and material conditions for soldiers actually worsened during the period as military expenditure was cut and military wages fell behind the advancements made by civilians, and the army continued to struggle for recruits.¹³ In Scotland, a more integrated military tradition lessened the civilian/military divide and army and auxiliary recruitment were both very successful, with perhaps one in eight adult males serving in some military capacity by 1796.¹⁴ Ireland's situation was more fraught, but in both countries the strength of military commitment threw into stark relief

10 Beckett, pp. 62–9.

11 E. H. Gould, 'To Strengthen the King's Hands: Dynastic Legitimacy, Militia Reform and Ideas of National Unity in England 1745–1760', *Historical Journal*, 34 (1991), pp. 329–48.

12 C. Buchanan to Pitt, 21 February 1794, Chatham MSS, PRO30/8/117, fos. 26–7, quoted in J. E. Cookson, *The British Armed Nation, 1793–1815* (New York, 1997), i2.

13 Cookson, *The British Armed Nation*, p. 21.

14 Cookson, p. 35.

the comparative unpopularity of military service in England, and the continued marginality of the army in English society. By contrast, Englishmen tended to equate professional military service with servitude, and remained deeply suspicious of any hint of civilian military obligations.¹⁵

On the eve of the French Wars, therefore, Englishmen were the heirs of a civilian military tradition stretching back into antiquity, but also of a strident aversion to compulsion. The experience of the struggle against Napoleon had crucial implications for civilian military participation in Britain. This gargantuan conflict saw ‘the addition of mass’ to modern war, as European states created unprecedentedly large military forces and organised themselves into ‘armed nations’ through adoption of various modes of compulsory universal service. Numerically inferior and dangerously vulnerable, England had no choice but to respond to this new imperative. In 1794, legislation allowed for the acceptance of voluntary offers, bringing in 5000 voluntarily enlisted militiamen and also inspiring the creation of two new civilian auxiliary forces, the Volunteers (volunteer infantry) and the Yeomanry (volunteer cavalry, largely drawn from the wealthy and politically reliable farming class). But Britain's coastline remained woefully undefended, even after her largest ever requisition of manpower in 1796 brought in 60,000 militiamen by ballot, and government was advised that at least 38,000 additional men were required to safeguard the nation.¹⁶

The two ministers responsible for Britain's defence, Henry Dundas and William Windham, favoured the extension of compulsory measures: balloting for the militia, and potentially legislation for a levee-en-masse along French lines. Crucially, however, they also opened the door for further acceptance of voluntary offers of service. At the very height of the invasion scare in April 1798, Dundas passed the crucial 'Defence of the Realm Act' authorising the collection of complicated information about men, livestock and property,

¹⁵ Cookson, i2.

¹⁶ Beckett, pp. 77–8.

and also calling for the raising of 'armed associations'. The public response was marked in its preference for one form of service – the independent, civilian-run Volunteers.¹⁷ In just a few months, Volunteer numbers rose from 54,000 to 116,000, constituting the first peak of the 'Volunteer movement' that has come to be regarded as the greatest popular movement in Georgian Britain.¹⁸ So many offers were received that the government was forced to refuse many, prioritising Volunteer corps in large coastal towns. Manned predominantly by the middle classes but with a fair complement of the lower orders, these corps were raised, organised and officered by local elites. They had no state-determined terms of service other than the provision of pay for one or two days drill a week, which meant they were responsible for their own training, drill and management and were free from military discipline unless called out by the state. Members could withdraw, with notice, at any time and, crucially, were offered first conditional exemption (from 1794) and then universal exemption (from 1799) from the militia ballot.¹⁹

The movement was solidified by the renewed invasion threat in mid-1803 – which, with 80,000 French troops massed along the channel and a huge flotilla of transport craft at the ready, was perhaps the most dire in Britain's modern history. The General Defence Act of July 1803 called for the military training of all single men and married men with less than two children under ten for service in the militia or army of reserve. This '*levee en masse*' legislation would be suspended, however, if enough volunteers came forward. Under the combined threat of invasion and the indiscriminate hand of a *levee en masse*, the Volunteer movement exploded to a level of popularity never before seen. Government administrators were unable to handle the surge, and were forced to limit Volunteer numbers to six times a county's militia quota.²⁰ The House of Commons was advised in December 1803 that the sum of Volunteers across the country was just shy of 500,000, though a more conservative

17 Reference to members of the so-named Volunteer corps of the Napoleonic Wars and the Victorian Volunteer revival after 1859 will henceforth be distinguished from other kinds of voluntary military participation by the capitalisation of Volunteers, Volunteering, etc.

18 Cookson, p. 71.

19 Beckett, pp. 80–84.

20 Beckett, p. 96.

estimate puts effective rank-and-file Volunteers and Yeomanry at just over 342,000 in January 1804.²¹ The additional payment, ballot exemption and uniform allowances in place for post-1803 Volunteers gave the movement a strong materialistic appeal, resulting in a far broader social composition. At the peak of civilian participation, more than 2,000 Volunteer corps were existent.²² Between 1798 and 1808 Volunteers always formed more than half the total home force, and sometimes even two-thirds of it.²³

As noted in the last chapter, recent scholarship on the Volunteer phenomenon has emphasised the many benefits of Volunteer membership (not least of which was exemption from the militia ballot), challenging the extent to which the moral ideology of ‘national defence patriotism’ really motivated participation.²⁴ We can deduce that while the French Wars saw unprecedented civilian participation in home defence, the sense of moral obligation towards service was significantly limited and overtly conditional. Unlike 1914, when Britons seemed, by and large, happy to serve in the form requested by the state, in the Napoleonic Wars the professional army continued to struggle for recruits. It was never able to tap into the middle-class social catchment that fed the Volunteers, and it continued to fight an uphill battle against popular suspicion and elite contempt, even while its victories were widely celebrated. Furthermore, despite the best efforts of government, the most obvious outlet for notions of civilian military ‘duty’, the militia, was equally unpopular for most of the war, and recruitment rioting and mass ballot evasion were regular features of the years of highest civilian mobilisation. Evidently, there was little conception of military service as public duty where compulsion was concerned.

21 House of Commons Papers, 9 and 13 December 1803, cited in Beckett, p. 103.

22 Cookson, i7.

23 Cookson, p. 66.

24 D. Eastwood, ‘Patriotism and the English state’ in M. Philp (ed.), *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics* (New York, 1991) pp. 158–61; and Cookson.

24 C. Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars, 1793–1815* (Totowa N.J., 1979) p. 102; N. Rogers ‘The sea Fencibles, loyalism and the reach of the state, in M. Philp (ed.), *Resisting Napoleon: The British Response to the Threat of Invasion, 1797–1815* (Burlington Vt., 2006), pp. 41–60.

Rather, the preferred model of 'service' was one offered voluntarily, temporarily, conditionally, and on its own self-determined and overtly limited terms. By joining a Volunteer corps, Britons were rallying to the defence of the King and Country, but not in the manner requested of them, nor indeed on the terms that would most benefit the national defence effort. Instead, they funnelled the prevailing patriotic spirit into their own system of participation: one which was more compatible with their civilian aspirations, concerns and expectations, and which allowed for greater independence from state control. The essence of the problem faced by the State, as Beckett has noted, was the difficulty of 'harnessing patriotism to obligation under firm central control'.²⁵ Volunteering was always a short term and rather ad hoc solution to this problem, attended as it was by all the limitations of 'pre-bureaucratic localism, social privilege, economic interest, and popular anti-militarism'.²⁶

But, given the urgency and desperation of the situation, Britain's leaders were in no position to refuse civilian aid. They accepted that Volunteering was the way in which the public wanted to contribute, counting the unifying effects of the movement a trade-off with lower efficiency.²⁷ Crucially, invasion – the threat of which was the *raison d'être* of the Volunteer movement – never eventuated. As such, the dubious military efficiency of the corps, the real conviction of individual Volunteers, and the essential soundness of the Volunteer principle were never tested. This was an early example of a problem that dogged military reformers and strategists throughout the nineteenth century: non-invasion meant that the efficacy of theories of civilian participation and home defence could never be assessed in practice, making it extremely difficult to hold them accountable on the one hand, or discredit them on the other. In the absence of any real test, the scale and popularity of the Volunteer movement triumphed, overshadowing governmental strategies for compulsory participation and weakening the argument for their necessity.

25 Beckett, p. 88.

26 Cookson, p. 14.

27 Cookson, p. 69

Cookson has argued that the mass conscription of French citizen–soldiers in 1793 signified for both France and Britain the advent of a new conception of military service as a public duty, underwritten by a national patriotic ideology.²⁸ Certainly British leaders were heavily influenced by the general extension of public military obligations that was occurring on the continent, and the period saw concerted efforts to similarly co–opt and coerce Britons into military service. And yet, unlike other European nations, Britain did not emerge from the period with a new precedent for or expectation of universal conscription. This, despite achieving a level of militarisation never before seen amongst Britons, with perhaps one in six able–bodied men serving in the army, navy, militia, Yeomanry or Volunteers by 1809.²⁹ To be sure, the experience of the Volunteer movement did introduce a generation of Britons to the rhetoric of the patriotic citizen–soldier and contribute to the ongoing normalisation of civilian participation in war. For the first time, it also encouraged the respectable middle classes, who had hitherto stood aloof from service, to consider their duty to national defence. Though the structure of participation remained an *ancien regime* in the sense that local and county elites retained organisational control, the very scale of civilian mobilisation and the patriotic rhetoric that infused it anticipated the universal service and social consensus of the twentieth century warfare state. But the scale and dominance of the British Volunteer movement also cemented the voluntarist principle, and by undermining the validity of compulsion, painted the duty to serve as a fundamentally supererogatory act.

The unifying and mobilising effects of the movement were offset by an erosion in State control over military affairs, since Volunteer corps retained both their civilian character and their independence from military authority. In many ways, it was the Volunteer movement, along with Britain's proud libertarian tradition, that diverted Britain from the trajectory towards universal military service followed by her Continental rivals – and

²⁸ Cookson, p. 17.

²⁹ Beckett, p. 121.

suggested by her own tradition of civilian military participation. Considered in the glow of Allied victory abroad and non-invasion at home, the Volunteer movement appeared a tolerable compromise between the English aversion to compulsion and the increasingly urgent military demands of the modern state. Unlike in other European nations, voluntarism managed to prevail in Britain, alleviating the desperation of the situation and sapping political will for serious military reform for most of the next century.

Diverted by the Volunteer 'solution', England proceeded to further downplay the military obligations of the people and diverge from the path of her European rivals. While Prussia doggedly implemented (in the face of harsh criticism from almost all quarters) the universal conscript system that was to become the model for the rest of Europe,³⁰ Britain progressively rolled back the already scanty military obligations of her own people. Even before the war had ended, successive war ministers had set about dismantling the Volunteer movement. Membership had already dropped off after the threat of invasion lessened, not least because the downward shift in social composition after 1803 had damaged the prestige of the force. Castlereagh encouraged those that remained to transfer into a new force, the 'local militia', which was supposed to combine the localist spirit of the Volunteers with the tighter State control of the 'regular' militia (the latter had by now become increasingly orientated around providing recruits for the regular army).

But while a good many Volunteer officers agreed to transfer to the better-supported new force, as had happened with previous militia policies in 1757 and 1796 the government failed to adequately explain the purpose and responsibilities of the local militia. Consequently there was considerable (inaccurate) fear that local militiamen might be liable for overseas service and confusion about pay and allowances, and many counties had to resort to the ballot to finish off their quotas. (As it happened, by the last months of the war

³⁰ See U. Frevert, *A Nation in Barracks: Modern Germany, Military Conscription and Civil Society* (Oxford, 2004).

local militias had voluntarily undertaken overseas service in America, Holland, France and the Mediterranean, after which neither the local nor the regular militia was regarded as an *exclusively* domestic force, though their primary purpose remained that of freeing up regulars for priority action.)³¹ The continental campaigns provided an excuse for the final disbandment of the few remaining Volunteer corps, their muskets being required for the Prussian uprising against the French in March 1813.³²

After Waterloo, the militias too were steadily disbanded. Neither was called out for training after 1815, and in May 1816, the ballot was suspended. New ballots were ordered in 1821 and 1825, but popular aversion to compulsion had grown exponentially. From 1830, compulsion was increasingly equated with tyranny, and a virtue was made of Britain's divergence from the European nations increasingly adopting conscription throughout the nineteenth century. The newly formed National Union of the Working Classes urged workers to refuse military service without corresponding extension of the franchise. This concept was taken up by other working-class organisations like the Chartists and the Anti-Corn Law League, with the slogan 'No Vote, No Musket' popularised in 1846. The strength of militia interests in Parliament prevented the absolute dismantlement of the militia permanent staff, and despite the fact that the militia had no real existence after 1832, appointments continued to be made in a number of counties. But politicians perceived support for compulsion as political suicide. Though it remained enshrined in law and, in fact, had to be formally suspended each year, the militia ballot was never again attempted after 1831.

The 'other' volunteer force, the Yeomanry, fared rather better in the years of domestic unrest that followed Waterloo thanks to its reputation for political reliability. Twice it was drastically reduced and then hastily recalled, first in response to the 'Swing' disturbances,

31 Cookson, p. 64.

32 Beckett, pp. 114–116, 120.

and then again during the Chartist agitation of 1842. Its ties to the country establishment contributed to the enduring public image of the yeomanry as a conservative instrument of class oppression, 'over-zealous for cutting and slashing' in aid of elite interests, and the 11 dead and 400 injured at 'Peterloo' cast a long shadow over the force.³³ Generally, however, the Yeomanry were regarded well enough even by Whig administrations to be called out in the interests of order. The force was well suited to maintaining order in an unpoliced, hierarchical rural society, but increasingly, the most urgent troubles faced by government were those born in industrialised, urban communities, requiring a more flexible, less cumbersome solution. Peel's solution was a national police constabulary force. Growth of county police forces was slow, but these provisions did signal a decline in the importance of the Yeomanry and other auxiliary forces in the maintenance of order. Furthermore, the period after 1848 saw a general growth in economic success, paternalism and disciplined wage labour, which all combined to mitigate some of the drivers of unrest and promote social order. The greater confidence this created meant that armed forces, whether regular or auxiliary, were rarely called out between 1848 and the Fenian disturbances of 1867.³⁴

Between 1830 and 1848, Britain's overwhelming tendency was toward liberalisation, demilitarisation, and social reform. Public and political attention focused primarily on domestic issues, particularly the extension of the franchise and the Chartist agitation. The question of the citizen's role in the military system, and the implications of Britain's divergence from the mass conscription models of her Continental rivals, were largely forgotten amidst the blessings of peace. As the liberal newspaper the *Speaker* was later to put it, 'As soon as our swashbuckling military era ceased – which was some period subsequent to the battle of Waterloo – common-sense got a chance, and the ideas of civil life began to predominate'.³⁵ Enjoying a sense of sublime confidence and security founded

33 Lt. General Sir William Napier's journal entry for 15 August 1839, *The Life and Opinions of General Sir Charles Napier*, vol 2 (London, 1857), p. 73., quoted in Beckett, p. 135.

34 Beckett, pp. 133–43.

35 'THE POINT OF HONOUR', *Speaker*, 4 August 1894, p. 128.

on the overwhelming supremacy of the Royal Navy, by 1850 England was a nation self-consciously liberal, and largely unmilitarised, even anti-militaristic.

There was, of course, a romantic tradition of military virtue, nowhere more evident than in the celebration, even deification, of the military heroes of the last great war. As scholars like Olive Anderson and C. I. Hamilton have shown, by 1850 there was already a lively tradition of military and naval hagiography.³⁶ Heavily influenced by Evangelicalism, the characteristic intellectual milieu of the early and middle nineteenth century, studies of the lives of great generals and naval captains emphasised their Christian virtue, and particularly their honour, humility and self-sacrifice.³⁷ The two greatest heroes, and the subjects of innumerable biographies, statues and memorials, remained Lord Nelson and the Duke of Wellington, who only died in 1852. The ‘Iron Duke’ was heralded for his loyalty, duty, constancy and gentlemanly civility (often in counterpoint with the egotism, cruelty and self-aggrandisement of Napoleon).³⁸ After his death, a million and a half lined the funeral route to St Paul’s, and Tennyson’s ‘Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington’ captured the heartfelt ‘mourning of a might nation’ for Wellington and his ‘long self-sacrifice of life’.³⁹

The image of the ‘gentleman-officer’ – honourable, self-sacrificing and humbly patriotic – provided a romanticised model of military duty that would serve as an element of continuity over the next decades. It did not, however, necessarily promote the notion of civilian duty towards military participation. While the Christian virtue of the ‘gentleman-officer’ could serve as an example to all in their own small lives, his greatness was not

³⁶ O. Anderson, ‘The Growth of Christian Militarism in Mid-Victorian England’, *English Historical Review*, 86.337 (1971), pp. 46–72; C. I. Hamilton, ‘Naval Hagiography and the Victorian Hero’, *Historical Journal*, 23.2 (1980), pp. 381–398. See also W. E. Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830–1870* (Yale, 1957), ch. 12; A. O. J. Cockshut, *Truth to Life: The Art of Biography in the Nineteenth Century* (London 1974); and J. W. Reed, *English Biography in the Early Nineteenth Century, 1801–1838* (Yale, 1966).

³⁷ Hamilton, ‘Naval Hagiography and the Victorian Hero’, pp. 386–7.

³⁸ E M Spiers, ‘War’ in F J O’Gorman (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Culture* (Cambridge, 2010) p. 81.

³⁹ E M Spiers, ‘War’, p. 82.

something to which the ordinary man could reasonably aspire. It was a heroism of Great Men, of generals and admirals, and thereby specific to both class and exceptional talent. The rank and file enjoyed little such acclaim of their virtue and honour, and indeed remained largely outside the margins of respectable society. Furthermore, the sense of duty personified by the 'gentleman-officer' was the duty *of* a soldier, not the duty *to be* one. Therefore while the gentlemanly honour and patriotic self-sacrifice of the 'Great Men' of the last war perpetuated a celebrated and influential image of martial duty, it was not one that in any way asked the participation of ordinary civilians.

Indeed, by mid-century it was overwhelmingly assumed that ordinary civilians had no significant obligation towards national defence (other than to resist actual invasion). Both home defence and the waging of war were considered to naturally devolve to a (largely despised) voluntary minority of professional soldiers. The de-legitimisation of formal military obligations that had begun with the Volunteer 'solution' was further bolstered by liberal ideology, which increasingly equated compulsory military service as antithetical to a free and civilised state. Pacifist ideas also enjoyed new popularity and reach, peaking with London's hosting of the 5th International Peace Congress in 1851.⁴⁰ The mid-point of the century saw a spirit of genuine optimism that the threat of war had at last been superseded by new international interdependencies (political, economic and ideological). With expectations of continuing peace and prosperity, contemporaries gave little thought to military affairs. France's rapid advances in steam navigation and ironclad technology in the 1840s and 1850s did occasion some concern, with the pessimistic warnings of leading soldiers about Britain's vulnerability to invasion sparking something of an invasion panic in 1847-8.⁴¹ Authors like Sir Francis Head ('The Defenceless State of Great Britain') capitalised on the atmosphere of national insecurity, but the panic was of relatively short

40 See M. Ceadel, *The Origins of War Prevention: The British Peace Movement and International Relations, 1730-1854* (Oxford, 1996) and D. Nicholls, 'Richard Cobden and the International Peace Congress Movement, 1848-1853', *Journal of British Studies*, 30.4 (1991), pp. 351-76.

41 Beckett, pp. 143-5.

duration.⁴² The fall of Louis Napoleon's government in February 1848 assuaged public fears, allowing the warnings of the doomsayers to be dismissed as unduly alarmist. At the mid-century mark, a new, intensely 'civilianist' generation looked confidently forward to a robust and peaceful future defined by trade, prosperity, industry and, above all, popular liberalism.

Therefore when, after 1850, the pacific spirit rapidly and, seemingly without warning, unravelled, Englishmen found themselves struggling to reconcile the imperatives of national security with the emerging liberal discourse which had come to dominate popular opinion. When Louis Napoleon's *coup d'état* put a Bonaparte back on the French Imperial Throne in December 1851, the neglected and inadequate state of Britain's national defences finally became the subject of serious and urgent consideration in the public and political spheres, even overshadowing the other great event of 1852, the death of Lord Wellington. But what to do about it? Despite the urging of professional soldiers, the expense of augmenting Britain's regular forces was considered politically untenable in a climate that valued economy above all else. Instead, a succession of administrations turned their attention to the reform of the militia, which it was hoped could form an inexpensive reserve to the nation's regular defences. Upon the outbreak of the 1851 panic, Prime Minister Russell was the heir to an inconclusive tangle of plans combining the regular and local militias, all centred upon the reintroduction of the old 'constitutional' militia ballot.

But public distaste for the ballot had, if anything, increased in the long decades since it had last been employed. Aware of the undoubted unpopularity of the ballot, Russell attempted to alleviate its harshness by turning the militia into a local force, liable to service out-of-county only in the case of imminent invasion. Palmerston, who possessed very different ideas on the militia and was still smarting from his dismissal from the Foreign Office, strongly attacked Russell's effort. He proposed an amendment based on the 1802

42 F. B. Head, *The Defenceless State of Great Britain* (London, 1850).

legislation, reverting the bill to a 'regular' militia with limited provisions for substitution – an amendment that subsequently passed, resulting in Russell's resignation on 20 February 1852. The Derby administration that followed was thus effectively mandated to solve the militia problem in line with the 1802 legislation. But the writing was on the wall: wholesale compulsion was no longer compatible with the liberal values and inclinations of the public. The solution, for Home Secretary Spencer Walpole, lay in a little creative interpretation of the historical precedent. The clauses in previous militia acts allowing for voluntary enlistment under exceptional circumstances were repositioned as the real intent of the legislation. However dubious the logic, this dodge allowed the government to assure the public that the ballot would only be used as a last resort, should voluntary enlistment fail.⁴³

Localisation, provisions for substitution, and the virtual suspension of the ballot: these concessions represented a clear recognition of the unpopularity of personal service obligations. But the public was far from mollified. The militia bill was attacked on all sides, and provoked a fierce press debate. Like any, this debate involved a great many heterogeneous values, influences and viewpoints, and yet close examination reveals a surprising level of consensus on the civilian's role in national defence. We therefore commence the detailed press analysis of this thesis with the 1852 Militia Bill debate. Above all, three implicit assumptions can be seen to underpin the entire debate: (1) that routine military participation ought to be the realm of a professional minority; (2) that compulsion was fundamentally unacceptable to a modern liberal state; and (3) that in the event of invasion, the English people would come to the defence of the nation freely and voluntarily, but were otherwise not obliged to contribute personal military service.

To begin with the first of these assumptions, evident throughout the debate was a consistently professionalised conception of military participation, built on a fundamental

⁴³ Beckett, pp. 147–8.

belief in the division of labour. ‘Ours is a highly cultivated, advanced, and artificially disposed social system, where every man has his particular business, and does and is fit for no other’, asserted the *Morning Post*. ‘Our soldiers and sailors are soldiers and sailors exclusively, and our civilians are accustomed to consider the business of war as having nothing to do with any but those who have made it the object and calling of their life’.⁴⁴ The delegation of military responsibility to a voluntary, professional minority was perceived as a hallmark of an advanced society, beneficial to both military and economic efficiency. It was, wrote *The Times*, ‘better to train and pay a certain portion of the population to do the fight for the rest, than to interrupt the pursuits of the community by a larger but less effective muster’.⁴⁵ This belief pervaded the entire debate, both for the conservatives who insisted regular forces are ‘better, and, in the main, cheaper national defences than all the amateur systems of war and sham standing armies of volunteers that any panic could suggest’,⁴⁶ and for the liberals scandalised by the attempt to ‘take a man by ballot and force him, without a soldier’s option, or even a soldier’s pay, to do a soldier’s duty’.⁴⁷

The community as a whole, of course, had responsibility for its own defence in an abstract sense, but in an advanced, modern state built on the principle of the division of labour, men could discharge this communal duty in one of two ways: either by voluntarily accepting the trade of the soldier and his professional duty to fight, or (as appropriate to the majority) by paying for this professional minority via taxes and government expenditure. Tax-paying was treated as no less patriotic a contribution to national defence than actual participation; indeed, *The Times* found it necessary to gently remind its readers that ‘it is only fair that they who do not choose to go soldiering themselves should pay those who will, and that at

44 ‘Multiple News Items’, *Morning Post*, 27 January 1852, p. 4.

45 ‘If Lord JOHN RUSSELL intends to measure our’, *The Times*, 5 February 1852, p. 4.

46 ‘Multiple News Items’, *Morning Post*, 27 January 1852, p. 4.

47 ‘The soldier’s duty’ to risk life and limb in service of the Queen was real enough, but it applied only to the professional soldier voluntarily enrolled, and no Englishman was morally or patriotically obliged to take such a step. ‘So effectually has the militia question been ab—’, *The Times*, 24 February 1852, p. 5.

the market price of the work'.⁴⁸ There was, of course, an implicit and pervasive class bias that the poorer classes would be the ones to fight, and the respectable classes the ones to pay, but both were understood to have their proper place in the military system of a civilised society.

This entrenched understanding of a fair division of labour and responsibility between the fighting minority and the funding majority meant that even a strictly voluntary Militia Bill was begrudged by those who felt that 'that the country has been called upon to do that for itself for the doing of which it has amply paid already'.⁴⁹ 'Englishmen do not like to pay for work to be done', grumbled *Lloyd's*, 'and then to be called upon to be their own workers'.⁵⁰ Having discharged their own duty as taxpayers, Englishmen considered the government to have failed in its duty to use these funds to provide adequate defences, especially given the prevailing market-based understanding of military manpower, which insisted that provision of competitive wages would secure all the men needed. *The Times* complained bitterly that 'we are compelled to take the matter into our own hands, and turn soldiers ourselves, because all the millions we expend cannot, from some inexplicable fatality, afford us an available army or a really efficient and well-managed navy'.⁵¹ The endemic public demand for political economy was, of course, neatly overlooked in this argument.

Considering this widespread perception that Britain's military shortcomings reflected a failure of leadership and organisation, the mere idea that men might be *compelled* to participate in an activity to which they perceived no moral obligation was all the more horrifying. To the liberal press in particular, it looked like an attempt by the government to make up for its own wasteful incompetencies by, as the *Examiner* put it, 'stealing the

48 'Unfortunately for its own popularity and peace', *The Times*, 18 May 1852, p. 4.

49 'Unfortunately for its own popularity and peace', *The Times*, 18 May 1852, p. 4.

50 'LLOYD'S WEEKLY LONDON NEWSPAPER', *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 23 May 1852, p. 7.

51 'Unfortunately for its own popularity and peace', *The Times*, 18 May 1852, p. 4.

service for which it will not pay the honest price'.⁵² This brings us to the second assumption underlying the entire debate, from both sides of the political divide: that compulsion was no longer a legitimate or morally justifiable option. Throughout the formulation, debate and passage of the Militia Bill, it was the inclusion of the ballot that most fuelled popular outrage. In the absence of any sense of inherent citizenly obligation towards military participation, compelling civilians to enter the military sphere was regarded as a fundamental trespass upon individual liberty, 'a gross injustice'⁵³ not to be borne by a liberal people. 'The conscription is a lottery of life,' wrote *The Times*, 'and is so far worse than common forms of slavery, inasmuch as it falls most heavily on the most industrious, most responsible, and most occupied members of society' – not by coincidence the classes which had hitherto almost entirely exempted themselves from military participation, and who formed the respectable readership of *The Times*.⁵⁴

Naturally, it was the liberal and radical periodicals that were most outraged by the principle of compulsion; *Reynolds's Newspaper* went so far as to declare it 'beyond all questions that the enrolment of the militia is *not* suggested by any fear of invasion, but is to help the army, the police, and the disciplined pensioners, in resisting what are called the encroachments of democracy'.⁵⁵ But the neutral and conservative newspapers, while less invested in the debate, also considered compulsion an outdated and dubious expedient. Across the board, the popular press was united by a sense that times had changed since the last war, and that the English people themselves had fundamentally altered. The liberal press celebrated the awakening of Englishmen to a sense of their own freedom, dignity and rights. *Reynolds's* and its more radical brethren suggested a liberation from the ideological manipulations that had turned working men into cannon fodder for centuries, declaring public antipathy to the militia 'a strong proof of the growing intelligence of the people' and noting that 'government in England it is clear no longer possess the power of exciting a

52 'THE CONSCRIPTION', *Examiner*, 22 May 1852, p. 321.

53 'So effectually has the militia question been ab—', *The Times*, 24 February 1852, p. 5.

54 'Unfortunately for its own popularity and peace', *The Times*, 18 May 1852, p. 4.

55 'THE INFAMOUS MILITIA BILL', *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 4 April 1852, p. 1.

mad enthusiasm at will, ... such patriotism as our rulers admire is becoming but a secondary consideration to convenience'.⁵⁶ But all agreed a fundamental shift had taken place, rendering the old methods of compulsion unacceptable. 'To raise the militia as it was raised 50 years ago would be a pure impossibility', stated *The Times*, noting that henceforth 'the people are to be appealed to for their active assent'.⁵⁷

Without that active assent, even a compulsory system backed by law and prerogative was bound to fail. Without moral legitimacy, suggested several periodicals, the militia ballot would not command the loyalty or the obedience of a free people, who would therefore feel little obligation to cooperate in a service that, in practice, relied upon balloted men turning up when called:

After all, it is a question whether the conscription is any longer possible, and whether the volunteer principle is not the utmost limit of enlistment these days. ...What is to hold a people who are fast becoming birds of passage, always on the wing, ever flitting and fleeting? No legislation is so injurious as that which aims at a power which the State does not actually possess, and can never acquire...⁵⁸

It was frankly acknowledged that 'there are many who will readily assist a neighbour to escape from this work', and such a practice was, if not condoned, implied to be the inevitable result of imposing an unjust and unpopular measure upon a free people.⁵⁹ In addition to condemnation of the ballot in principle, then, the liberal press conceded no real moral imperative to obey it, should it be put into effect. Conservatives insisted upon substitution as a legal channel through which to avoid service and revert to the normal funding/fighting dichotomy, asserting that 'loyal men of family' would never 'allow their sons to be forced to serve even for twenty-eight hours, cheek-by-jowl, with those of chimneysweeps'.⁶⁰ *The Times* noted the illogic of substitution, calling it 'nothing but

56 'LORD DERBY'S MILITIA NUISANCE,' *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 12 September 1852, p. 7.

57 'If the Manchester school of politicians conceive,' *The Times*, 31 March 1852, p. 4.

58 'Unfortunately for its own popularity and peace,' *The Times*, 18 May 1852, p. 4.

59 'It is a common fate of important measures in,' *The Times*, 8 June 1852, p. 5.

60 'TO THE EDITOR OF THE JOHN BULL', *John Bull*, 21 February 1852, p. 122.

voluntary enlistment after a circuitous process, in which the bounty is paid by individuals instead of the State' but along with most liberal periodicals endorsed its inclusion in the Bill.⁶¹ This relaxed attitude to the prospect of evasion underscores the absence of any potent sense of moral obligation towards service, even when clearly endorsed by both law and precedent.

Even Walpole's setting aside of the ballot, except as a last resort, failed to dim liberal outrage. Undoubtedly, it was a pragmatic comfort, but in the liberal press the debate had long ago left the realms of pragmatism for the lofty orbit of principle. The inclusion of compulsory provisions in any capacity was seen to undermine and de-legitimise the entire Bill. Governmental protestations that defence of hearth and home was, after all, a natural and popular duty – and therefore to compel it was not unjust – failed to convince the liberal press. Everyone acknowledged the essential obligation to participate in the rebuffing of actual invasion, and equally expressed complete confidence in the willingness of Englishmen to come forward freely in such an emergency. But, as *The Times* pointed out, this was rather an argument against than in favour of compulsion:

It was asked in the last debate, what hardship could be alleged by the young men of Great Britain in being called upon to defend their own homes? Perhaps, in some sense, very little indeed; but the argument surely destroys itself. If this duty is not natural and popular [sic], why resort to the conscription?⁶²

In any case, as was pointed out repeatedly throughout the debate, 'rising in defence of one's country and spending one's time drilling for the militia are two totally different things'.⁶³ The third assumption underlying the entire discussion was an implicit understanding that the English people would come to the defence of the nation freely and voluntarily in a true (and proven) emergency – but that their obligation to personal military

61 'The opinion of the country will probably so far,' *The Times*, 29 March 1852, p. 4.

62 'The opinion of the country will probably so far,' *The Times*, 29 March 1852, p. 4.

63 'A.Z. CALLING OUT THE MILITIA', *Daily News*, 24 March 1852, p. 4.

service ended there. There was no duty to participate in the general defensive (still less, offensive) military system. Nor was there any obligation to render oneself fit to defend the nation, should the hour of need arise, in the meantime. ‘It is not that we are unwilling to defend our country that we raise our voices against the Militia Bill; but it is, as you have often proved, “uncalled for,”’ wrote one correspondent to the *Daily News*, ‘[and] we are not willing, until just cause is shown, ...to be made slaves’.⁶⁴

Martially inclined civilians were free, of course, to offer their part-time voluntary services, and the London press almost universally expressed faith in the patriotic generosity of the people. Were the odious militia ballot renounced in favour of ‘an unqualified appeal to the patriotism of the country’, suggested *The Times*, ‘we are confident would not be in vain, and would only be responded to all the more readily in the hour of actual need’.⁶⁵ Newspapers like the *Examiner* and the *Daily News* were great supporters of volunteer rifle clubs, as an independent, civilian-minded channel for spontaneous voluntary military participation that did not undermine the proper separation between the civilian and the professional military spheres. The *Daily News* argued that, while it was not in the English character to enrol in a national guard, ‘once persuade the English nation that there is real need of fighting – that there is something substantial to be gained by it – and soldiers will rise up on every hand’.⁶⁶ This rich potential for patriotic participation, not as a duty, but a munificence freely given was, however, undermined and weakened by the silent threat of the ballot that lay behind the Militia Bill.

All agreed the patriotic generosity of military participation in peacetime simply could not be compelled. As one would-be volunteer and correspondent to the *Daily News* put it, the government could not ‘make us patriots by courtesy’.⁶⁷ The ballot was therefore doubly criticised, not only for compelling the unwilling, but for repelling the willing, and therefore

64 ‘W.G., CALLING OUT THE MILITIA’, *Daily News*, 1 March 1852, p. 3

65 ‘It is a common fate of important measures in,’ *The Times*, 8 June 1852, p. 5.

66 ‘LONDON, TUESDAY, JANUARY. 27’, *Daily News*, 27 January 1852, p. 4.

67 ‘W. J. A., VOUNTEERS v. MILITIA’, *Daily News*, 23 February 1852, p. 6.

undercutting that spontaneous enlistment the deficiency of which it was supposed to supply. ‘The Englishman will often do spontaneously what he could never be forced to do,’ wrote *The Times*, ‘and it is not at all unlikely that many will refuse to volunteer, merely from the feeling that they might perhaps be made to serve against their will’.⁶⁸ The patriotic volunteer spirit, asserted the liberal press, was certainly alive and well in England, but those willing to assist ought to be permitted to do so voluntarily, independently, and in the manner they see fit. ‘If England is to be rendered safe’, wrote one willing volunteer, ‘let her citizens be allowed to ensure her safety in their own way’.⁶⁹ To compel civilian participation for general defence was thus not only unjust, as civilian obligation ended with resistance of invasion, but also negated that noble spirit of voluntarism that was England’s ultimate safeguard.

These three assumptions – that military participation ought to be the business of a professional minority, that compulsion was unacceptable in modern England, and that civilians would come forward freely in the event of invasion but owed no further service – show us much about contemporary understandings of civilian obligation. But there are also insights to be gleaned from what is omitted from the debate. Most notably, while a sense of the connection between the duty to military service and the political rights of citizenship was an important element of radical opposition to the Militia Bill, it was seldom referenced in the popular press. The catchphrase ‘no vote, no musket’ had been in use since the 1830s, and still featured regularly in the verbatim reports of anti-militia meetings reported in the liberal press. And yet press debate, editorial and correspondence overwhelmingly failed to engage with, or draw upon, the language and ideas of citizenship.

It was left to the radical rabble-rouser *Reynolds’s* to explicitly link military service and the franchise. Still, it stopped short of suggesting military service as an actual *obligation* of full

⁶⁸ ‘Unfortunately for its own popularity and peace’, *The Times*, 18 May 1852, p. 4.

⁶⁹ ‘THE RIFLE CLUBS, THE GOVERNMENT, AND THE MILITIA’, *Daily News*, 23 March 1852, p. 4.

citizenship; rather, it defended the working class's disinclination to volunteer their service when they had so limited a 'stake' in the nation. Regular correspondent Gracchus opined that 'if every Englishmen enjoyed the same rights of citizenship, then, morally, all would be equally liable to serve in a national force; but under our present system of partial political freedom it were absurd and unjust to expect that those who derive no advantages from certain of our institutions can feel the same interest in their maintenance as others who possess all the privileges and rights they can afford'.⁷⁰ The whole problem of safeguarding the nation, suggested editor George Reynolds, would be simply solved by 'putting the whole mass of the people in possession of their political rights. They would then all feel – aye, even to a man – that they had a real stake in the country; and ... would rush in glorious enthusiasm and in irresistible numbers to encounter the foe'.⁷¹ Again, it is worth noting that *Reynolds's* picture of military participation was still centred on the emergency of invasion, and stopped short of legitimising participation in peacetime as a citizenly obligation. *Reynolds's* did suggest that should a compulsory expedient be enforced (even without moral legitimacy), 'those who possess votes should first be drawn. Let the privileged classes be the first called upon to take up arms in defence of their privileges...'⁷² But the concept of citizenship as a contract of rights and obligations (potentially including an obligation towards military service) was still very much in its infancy in the 1850s. The language of citizenship and its obligations was almost entirely absent from the debate, and remained limited even amongst those who would co-opt the issue to their reformist agenda.

What did enjoy a broad consensus, as we have seen, was the general sense that ordinary civilians owed no inherent debt of military service, except in the case of invasion, and that the survival of the 'obnoxious principle' of the ballot in the Militia Bill was therefore both morally illegitimate and fundamentally out of step with the advances made by liberal

70 'LORD DERBY'S MILITIA NUISANCE', *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 12 September 1852, p. 7.

71 'THE INFAMOUS MILITIA BILL', *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 4 April 1852, p. 1.

72 'LORD DERBY'S MILITIA NUISANCE', *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 12 September 1852, p. 7.

society. *The Times* regarded it as injurious to progress, and despaired that ‘here, in the middle of the nineteenth century, after thirty–seven years of uninterrupted peace with our continental neighbours, we are once more asserting the right of conscription’.⁷³ In reality, however, the 1852 Militia Bill was instrumental in dismissing that ‘right of conscription’ from the realm of practical politics. For despite the dire predictions of opponents of the Bill, the actual raising of the new militia went fairly smoothly. As *John Bull* and the *Morning Post* had predicted, voluntary enlistment was sufficient to formally suspend the possibility of a ballot as early as September 1853. The militiamen enrolled were generally more respectable than had been feared, and with considerable economic and social benefits springing from the presence of a regiment, the militia increasingly won the support of local communities.

The response in the liberal press, which had, after all, predicted the utter failure of a Bill desecrated by the mere threat of the ballot, was at first rather muted. They soon recovered, however, to claim the success of voluntary recruiting as proof that compulsion was no longer either acceptable or necessary.⁷⁴ The Militia Bill (*sans* ballot) was reinterpreted as having established the principle of voluntarism in England, ultimately proving the death blow for compulsion in England for more than half a century to come. Already weakened by the ‘solution’ of the Volunteer alternative in the Napoleonic Wars, and further alienated by decades of peace and liberalisation, the legitimacy of formal (compulsory) military obligations could not survive the public outrage provoked by what was already a severely watered–down legislation. This devaluation of the liability of the people to military service, even in the throes of invasion panic, sent a powerful message. In the centuries–old struggle between public aversion to compulsion and government preference for its military efficacy, the principle of voluntarism had emerged – for the time being – as the clear winner.

⁷³ ‘It is a common fate of important measures in,’ *The Times*, 8 June 1852, p. 5.

⁷⁴ ‘By common consent, a topic which not long ago’, *The Times*, 5 January 1853, p. 4.

CHAPTER TWO

The Crimean Crucible, 1854–1856

Hitherto, the British public appear to have regarded the army as an abstraction, – as something which the Government and Parliament can provide, from some source apart from themselves. This illusion has been dispelled by putting ourselves in contact, as friend and foe, with the two greatest military empires of the Continent.

– Richard Cobden, 1856¹

The Crimean War (1853–1856, entered by Britain in March 1854) was, as the popular press so loved to assert, ‘the people’s war’. The strength of the popular mood for military intervention was enough to force a cautious government into war, and to elevate to new heights of popularity those politicians who had most accurately perceived the bellicosity of public opinion. As a wildly popular ‘moral intervention’, the Crimean War provides us with an excellent litmus test for contemporary attitudes toward military participation. To what extent, if any, did English public discourse suggest a moral obligation towards personal service in a war it judged both just and necessary – a war, indeed, which it had been instrumental in bringing about? Certainly, sweeping popular enthusiasm for the ‘moral crusade’ created an instinctive expectation of plentiful ‘crusaders’. And yet, when push came to shove, the public that had bayed for war proved remarkably unwilling to fight it. Throughout the war, recruiting for both the army and militia was desperately inadequate. Rather than corresponding to the crusading popular spirit, recruiting behaviour embodied the pre-war assumption that military service was neither the business nor the duty of ordinary, respectable Englishmen.

Faced with the paradox of poor recruiting in a popular war, the London press disavowed any connection between in-principle support for war and the obligation to participate. It

¹ R. Cobden, *The Political Writings of Richard Cobden*, vol 2 (London, 1867, ed. 2011) pt VI, Essay 1, p. 186.

asserted the pre-war conception of military service as a morally neutral 'trade like any other', excusing the public of any culpability and blaming the recruiting crisis on the insufficient attractions of a military career in a competitive economy. And yet while public discourse during the Crimean War revealed the absence of any serious sense of duty towards enlistment, the conflict did have important consequences for the future development of this sense of citizenly obligation. By promoting a sense of public responsibility for the nation's wars, by encouraging popular identification with soldiers and soldiering, and by retrospectively imbuing Crimean veterans with the moral virtues of patriotism, public service and self-sacrifice, the Crimean War marked the beginning of the gradual evolution of a sense of citizenly duty towards military participation that is the subject of this dissertation.

What, then, was the origin of this 'peoples war'? If the Militia Bill of 1852 was a result of defence alarmism at home, English popular enthusiasm for the Crimean War was predominantly the product of two other important developments in public opinion in the 1850s. The first was a counter-trend of popular crusading sentiment directed abroad. After the revolutions of 1848, England saw a steady growth in liberal interventionist rhetoric, symbolised above all by the Palmerstonian conception of Britain as guardian of the 'liberties of Europe'. Even Richard Cobden, despite his earlier belief in a 'no foreign politics' approach, had by 1850 accepted 'moral intervention' in certain European conflicts as an appropriate tool for the ultimate promotion of idealistic objectives.² The second trend was popular Russophobia, shown by John Gleason and Margot Finn to be a major element in English mid-century opinion.³ By the 1850s Russia was seen as a despotic, backward behemoth, against whose rapacity, a growing sector of the public argued, 'moral intervention' would surely one day prove a duty.

2 M. Ceadel, *Semi-detached Idealists: the British peace movement and international relations, 1854-1945* (Oxford, 2000) p.19.

3 J. H. Gleason, *The Genesis of Russophobia in Great Britain* (Cambridge, MA., 1950); and M. Finn, *After Chartism: Class and Nation in English Radical Politics 1848-1874* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 175.

When, in the spring of 1853, a squabble erupted between Russia and Turkey over control of Christian holy sites, the English public was therefore inclined towards ‘moral intervention’. As the diplomatic crisis unfolded in Constantinople, support for Turkey became highly fashionable in England and public pressure mounted for a tougher line on Russia. In the hands of the popular press, intervention took on the aspect of a moral crusade: a ‘sacred duty’, a vindication ‘of law over violence – of the conscience and reason of mankind over barbarous tyranny and overbearing might’.⁴ The consensus in favour of war was overwhelming, sweeping away traditional enmities and forging unlikely ententes both abroad and at home. France, which was not only a traditional enemy but as recently as January 1852 had been seriously considered as an invasion threat, became a trusted ally. Louis Napoleon’s own despotic tendencies were pointedly ignored, as was the less than liberal treatment inflicted upon the Christian subjects of the Ottoman Empire. At home, the cause for ‘moral intervention’ united opposite ends of the political spectrum. The conservative press cared little for Turkey’s plight but responded to Russia’s insolence, to the opportunity to enforce Britain’s seniority amongst European powers, and, in some quarters, to the rejuvenating prospect of war. But the radicals and liberal press were equally vociferous in the clamour for intervention.⁵ As well as being strongly opposed to Russian expansion and sympathetic to the plight of Poland and Hungary, radicals also had a soft spot for Turkey, which had been regarded as something of a defender of liberty in Europe ever since it had offered sanctuary to Kossuth in 1849.⁶

Cannily, Palmerston managed to embody this complex consensus, posing as a radical by crusading for the rights of oppressed nationalities and the principles of constitutional liberty abroad, whilst simultaneously keeping conservatives in the fold with his fierce defence of British honour and robust approach to foreign policy. In contrast, Prime

4 ‘London, Monday, January 9, 1854’, *The Times*, 9 January 1854, p. 6.

5 Shopkeepers, working-class voters and Chartists were similarly aggressive in support of war. A. Taylor, ‘Palmerston and Radicals, 1847 – 1865,’ *Journal of British Studies*, 33. 2 (April 1994), pp. 157–179.

6 A. Taylor, p. 165.

Minister Aberdeen was increasingly criticised for weakness and indecision as he continued to work for a peaceful solution. Correctly perceiving that ‘our pacific policy is at variance with public opinion, so it cannot long be persisted in’, Clarendon and Russell threw their lots in with the war party.⁷ With intervention almost a foregone conclusion, it was the brutal destruction of the Turkish fleet at Sinope in December 1853 that proved the last straw. In the face of overwhelming press and public support for war, Aberdeen was forced to accede, and in February, amidst scenes of popular euphoria, Britain dispatched the first regiments of her expeditionary force to Malta. A formal declaration of war against Russia followed on 27 March 1854.

As we have seen, the England that entered into war in 1854 was a society that preferred a strict separation of civilian and military labour, abhorred compulsion, and considered the obligation of the people to personal service to have been entirely superseded by their contribution as civilian taxpayers (excepting, always, the case of imminent invasion). At the same time, however, they expressed great faith and pride in the ability of the voluntary system to meet England’s military needs. No civilian obligation towards personal service in overseas wars was admitted – and yet, contemporaries seemed confident that enough men would magnanimously choose to offer it, should it ever be required.

The lead-up to the Crimean War was characterised by the same optimistic vagueness. Despite the fact that recruiting for the army in wartime had been attended by significant problems throughout Britain’s modern military history, and the further depression of recruiting since the Napoleonic Wars, the Aberdeen ministry seemed largely complacent about Britain’s military manpower resources on the outbreak of war. Public discourse was similarly optimistic about Britain’s ability to meet the manpower demands of war in the east. The pages of the popular press rang with confident assertions of the willingness of

⁷ Quoted in H. Temperley, *England and the Near East* (London, 1936) p. 344.

Britons to come forward in support of the war, however vague the form of that support might be. ‘Every honest man’s head and heart are against the Czar Nicholas’, asserted *The Times*, ‘and in the hour of need every hand, too, will be raised against him’.⁸ A modest influx of volunteers upon the outbreak of the war only confirmed public confidence, the *Observer* declaring that ‘we are recruiting at the rate of 1,000 men a week, and have as little fear of wanting the raw materials of soldiers as if we had a legion of spies and a whole army of crimps to enforce the utmost rigours of conscription’.⁹

The obvious fact of the war’s popularity was the main driver of the expectation of plentiful volunteers. The underlying assumption that ordinary citizens were not, in fact, morally obliged to ‘turn soldiers’ was temporarily obscured by the sweep of patriotic rhetoric. ‘In Old England the age of chivalry has not yet passed away’ wrote the *Morning Post*, ‘and ...her people still possess that public spirit and “pluck” which ... incites the brave and the honourable to fight in a cause which they believe to be sacred, as they know it is just’.¹⁰ While not to be interrogated until much later in the war, a sense of the assumed connection between in-principle and recruiting support for war was key to this public confidence. The *Examiner* took this connection for granted, assuring its audience ‘[the fact that] it is the most popular war the country has ever waged ... renders recruiting of unexampled facility’.¹¹ There was an implicit sense that popular support for war would naturally to correspond to personal willingness to fight, even if that correspondence did not equate to an obligation.

Contemporaries drew confidence not only from public support for the war, but also Britain’s large population, which had doubled since 1814. While admitting the current deficiencies in the militia and army, and the rival attractions of full employment, rising

8 ‘To The Editor Of The Times. A "STATES"-MAN’, *The Times*, 24 December 1853, p. 8.

9 ‘HOW WE MEAN TO CARRY ON THE WAR’, *Observer*, 19 November 1854, p. 4.

10 ‘WAR WITH RUSSIA’, *Morning Post*, 28 March 1854, p. 4.

11 ‘THE POLITICAL EXAMINER’, *Examiner*, 23 December 1854, p. 813.

wages and emigration, *The Times* did not apprehend much difficulty in securing an adequate supply of men:

It is true that the country has been largely drained by emigration, and that labour of all kinds is in steady demand; but, on the other hand, the population of the kingdom has greatly increased since the last war, a strong military spirit prevails, and we are as yet only at the beginning of our resources. ... At this rate there will certainly be no lack of soldiers.¹²

This apparent naivety is striking to the modern scholar. Increases in military strength appear to have been regarded as little more than a matter of persuading Parliament to accept higher military estimates. As Richard Cobden noted, respectable Englishmen were apt to think of the military forces as entirely distinct from their civilian world: as 'an abstraction – as something which the Government and Parliament can provide from some source apart from themselves'.¹³

This was the most remarkable aspect of public discourse on the Crimean War: the disjuncture between the strength of personal identification with the war and its aims, and the complacent assumption that the actual fighting would be done by someone else. The division-of-labour mentality that had underlain the Militia Bill debate in 1852 also defined popular responses to the Crimean War. *The Times* was quick to assure its respectable audience that 'the greater part of us will only be called upon to endure sacrifices, and thankful we should be that our part in the noble struggle is not more severe'.¹⁴ Not even the honest working man was expected to enlist. 'Nobody asks that every magnanimous tailor or anti-Russian coalheaver shall go himself to the war', wrote *The Times*. 'He is only asked to put down a few shillings in the year.'¹⁵ In its proud assertion that the manpower needs of the war would not be begrudged 'either by those out of whose pockets they have to come, or by those who have the comparatively easy task of

12 'The misgivings of those who were disposed, like', *The Times*, 8 May 1854, p. 8.

13 R. Cobden, *The Political Writings of Richard Cobden*, vol 2 (London, 1867, ed. 2011) pt VI, Essay 1, p. 186.

14 'War is declared. A peace which has lasted the', *The Times*, 29 March 1854, p. 9.

15 'If there is anything to remark on in the new', *The Times*, 9 May 1854, p. 9.

voting for them', the *Daily News* successfully abstracted flesh-and-blood recruits entirely out of the picture, in a manner not atypical of London press discourse as a whole.¹⁶

So who was to wage Britain's wars, to swell the ranks of her regiments and, if need be, to secure victory at the cost of life and limb? The answer was so ingrained as to be scarcely worthy of mention. The fighting was to be done by those to whom it had always fallen: the lowliest and crudest classes, the desperate and dissolute fringe of society. This assumption pervaded almost every discussion of the war. It was, after all, the traditional view of military manpower. For centuries, it had been plainly asserted that 'the worst man made the best soldier', and Britons had long ago internalised this conception of soldiery as the task of the least respectable members of society. By 1854, middle-class commentators liked to think that the wretched condition of the soldier had been somewhat elevated by the liberal and educative reforms of the 1840s.¹⁷ Nonetheless, prejudice against the army lingered, and in real terms, the unchanged pay of the private soldier and failure of the army to redirect its recruiting officers to more respectable recruiting pools prevented any real change in the class composition. The dregs of society had fought Britain's battles for centuries past, and most Britons had no first-hand experience of war that would lead them to question this complacent reliance on the unseen, abstract soldier-class.

But as Englishmen were soon to see, neither public enthusiasm for war, nor a large population of eligible males could guarantee a sufficient rate of voluntary enlistment. The Crimean War demonstrated the danger of the vague, optimistic assumption that 'someone else' – the abstract soldier-class – would take care of the fighting itself, as the population at large stood determinedly aloof from military service. Britain's population growth meant that the number of military-age males had approximately doubled between 1814 and 1854. And yet, somehow, the nation struggled to maintain an army in the Crimea

16 'LONDON, THURSDAY, MAR. 2', *Daily News*, 2 March 1854, p. 4.

17 J. Sweetman, 'Public Attitudes Towards the Army: Early Years, 1827–1852,' *Army Quarterly and Defence Journal*, 118.1 (1988); G. Harries-Jenkins, *The Army in Victorian Society* (Toronto, 1977).

amounting to barely half that which Wellington had commanded at Waterloo.¹⁸ In the seven months of war before the Battle of Inkerman (5 November 1854), the army attracted only around 2000–3000 recruits per month.¹⁹ This was slow by any standards, and the radical newspapers the *Daily News* and *Reynolds's* both warned of potential recruiting problems ahead, but since the army had yet to suffer serious casualties, the problem was largely ignored.²⁰ The Battle of Inkerman, however, brought home to the English public that the war was likely to be of longer duration than initially anticipated, and that 'in undertaking a war with Russia we were not prepared for the difficulties and duration of the struggle'.²¹ Public sympathy was aroused by the first-hand accounts of the horrors and deprivations of camp life, and the popular press began to stress the need for large-scale reinforcements. The three months after the Battle of Inkerman saw a slight increase in recruiting, with around 6,000 new recruits enlisted per month from November 1854 to January 1855, and the public was repeatedly reassured that everything was going smoothly.²² But the quality of new recruits was very poor, and as the battles of Alma, Inkerman and Balaclava took their toll on the British forces the need for reinforcements grew increasingly urgent.

Contributing to the problem was governmental indecision about the real target of recruiting for the army. One party urged recruitment from the militia (now an entirely voluntary, professional part-time force); the other, direct recruitment from the civilian population. The former group, which included Sidney Herbert, Lord Russell, Commander-in-chief Lord Hardinge, Lord Raglan, Prince Albert, and the Queen herself, put little stock in untrained civilian volunteers, believing the militia not only imparted

18 R. H. Patterson, 'Our Rural Population and the War,' *Blackwood's Magazine*, LXXVIII (1855), p. 734; cited in O. Anderson, 'Early Experiences of Manpower Problems in an Industrial Society at War,' *Political Science Quarterly*, 82.4 (December 1967), p. 528.

19 Parliamentary Papers 1854–55, IX pt. iii (247), 'Fourth Report from the Select Committee on the Army before Sebastopol', Appendix 14, p. 351.

20 'THE RECRUITING SERVICE', *Daily News*, 24 August 1854; p. 5; and 'THE EXIGENCIES OF THE ARMY', *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 10 September 1854, p. 12.

21 'The Army In The Crimea. A PATRIOT', *The Times*, 15 November 1854, p. 7.

22 Parliamentary Papers 1854–55, IX pt. iii (247), 'Fourth Report from the Select Committee on the Army before Sebastopol', Appendix 14, p. 351.

essential training and discipline, but also made men more likely to make the leap to service in the line.²³ The pre-eminence of this party in the recruiting drive after Alma, Balaclava and Inkerman gave little impetus to civilian volunteers. It did see an increase in the passage of militia professionals into the regulars, with those militiamen joining the line in the first half of 1855 almost equaling the equivalent total for the whole of 1854.²⁴ But growing use as a draft-finding body for the army was not calculated to reinvigorate an already floundering militia, and by the end of 1855, the strength of the militia stood at 25,000 – less than half its 1855 establishment figure.²⁵ The militia could not supply large-scale reinforcements to the line without bleeding itself dry; the solution to the manpower crisis would have to be found elsewhere. In the eyes of many, including the Peelite Duke of Newcastle who became Secretary of State for War in 1854, more active recruiting from the general public had long been required. Perceiving by the autumn of 1854 that patriotism alone was insufficient to fill Britain's military ranks, Newcastle sought to sweeten the deal for potential recruits with a higher enlistment bounty. By then, however, Britain's urgent need was for immediate, battle-ready reinforcements, not green civilian recruits.

In desperation, the British government turned to foreign aid. Having already failed to secure all the allies they required, Britain attempted to raise a new type of corps, in which foreign nationals volunteered their services as private individuals. The Foreign Enlistment Bill was entirely in keeping with Britain's manpower strategies in previous wars, but for the great 'people's war', it was a deeply divisive and controversial expedient. After all, despite hints of concern throughout the summer of 1854, the public had been repeatedly assured by government that recruiting was proceeding well, and their largely unthinking confidence in the willingness of the unseen soldier class to volunteer had yet to seriously waver. The sudden appearance of such a dramatic and humiliating measure (to

23 O. Anderson, p. 530.

24 C. C. Bayley, *Mercenaries for the Crimea: the German, Swiss, and Italian Legions in British Service, 1854–1856* (Montreal, 1977), p. 38.

25 Bayley, *Mercenaries for the Crimea*, p. 38.

contemporary eyes) was baffling and unsettling. Was England in a far graver military situation than they had been led to believe? Was it really true that ‘the British people, whose enthusiasm for the war is only too great, and who have, in fact, driven on the Government to do what it has done, much against its will, is not to be trusted for the supply of men for the war’?²⁶ The suggestion was hugely alienating to a people who, despite their own unwillingness to serve, set great stock on the ‘national’ nature of the struggle and felt that the employment of foreign ‘mercenaries’ was beneath the dignity of Britain. Prospective foreign enlistees were branded bloodthirsty, amoral mercenaries, sure to terrorise the English communities they were exposed to. Worse, they brought down the entire moral character of the war – and on this theme the conservative press was especially strident. ‘Those who fight... in the service of a State to which they owe no duty, are mere hirelings, scarcely differing from the assassin who cuts throats for a bribe’, wrote *John Bull*. ‘Without the moral ingredient of a public duty and a legitimate service, war becomes wholesale murder’.²⁷ Entrusting the prosecution of Britain’s moral crusade to disinterested foreigners–for–hire would therefore undermine the righteousness of the war, and stain forever the honour of the nation.

A small number of periodicals – the *Daily News*, the *Observer*, and *Lloyd’s Newspaper* – were willing to be pragmatic. They pointed out that foreign enlistment had been of invariable usage in most of Britain’s wars, and argued that, in any case, the importance of Britain’s sacred mission in the Crimea trumped popular prejudice, moral niceties and wounded pride. ‘Any way, and at all cost, Nicholas must be beaten and caged within his own confines’, declared *Lloyd’s*, and to this noble end ‘we would enlist, if we might, the very powers of mischief against him; recruiting, even at the gates of Pandemonium, its fiery legions’.²⁸ For the majority of the popular press, however, the ends did *not* justify the means. Furthermore, most periodicals professed their disbelief that such an expedient was

²⁶ ‘It is a common observation that mothers are’, *The Times*, 18 December 1854, p. 8.

²⁷ ‘THE PROPOSED FOREIGN LEGION’, *John Bull*, 23 December 1854, p. 807.

²⁸ ‘SWORDS ON HIRE’, *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper*, 24 December 1854, p. 1.

even required, asserting that there were plentiful recruits still to be had in England. It is testament both to contemporary faith in the volunteer spirit, and readiness to believe in governmental inanity, that on the whole the popular press took the Foreign Enlistment Bill as evidence not of real crisis, but of governmental laziness and incompetence (or in the case of *Reynolds's Newspaper*, an aristocratic plot 'to gratify the German sympathies of the Court', and to avoid placing 'arms in the hands of too many of the British population').²⁹

The Times declared itself baffled by the move: 'Not only is the war itself eminently popular, – not only has every soldier been elevated in the estimation of his countrymen...but the actual terms of the service have now become exceedingly attractive...Under these circumstances, where can be the difficulty?'³⁰ The radical *Examiner*, while admitting no objections on constitutional or xenophobic grounds, nonetheless felt unable to support 'the preference of aliens while the source is unexhausted which supplied the heroes of the Alma, Balaklava, and Inkerman'.³¹ And the conservative *John Bull* flatly denied any need at all for such a measure, calling it 'a gratuitous, a wanton insult to our army, to our militia, and to the whole population both of the British isles'.³² To be fair, the confusion of commentators in December 1854 was understandable; it was not until several months later that the real extent of the recruiting crisis would become obvious to all. But the almost hysterical tenor of the press response to the episode implies more than simple bewilderment. The outpouring of shame and disgust revealed a new sense of public ownership of, and identification, with the war, and a sense that the honour of the whole people would somehow be impugned if not enough men could be found to fight such a popular war. This was a small, but significant, step in the direction of the citizenry taking more active responsibility for the wars they support.

29 'THE INFAMOUS PROPOSAL FOR THE GERMAN LEGION', *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 24 December 1854, p. 1.

30 'We should think it next to impossible, all things', *The Times*, 16 December 1854, p. 9.

31 'THE POLITICAL EXAMINER', *Examiner*, 23 December 1854, p. 813.

32 'THE MILITIA BILL', *John Bull*, 23 December 1854, p. 806.

As it happened, the Foreign Enlistment Bill proved a costly, divisive and futile waste of time, with administrative and training delays preventing the 10,000 foreign volunteers from arriving in time to see any action at all. But the episode did serve to challenge popular complacency. Despite later defensive disavowals of any moral obligation towards military service, the extent of public dismay at the prospect of Foreign Enlistment revealed the existence of an embryonic (if wholly uncodified) sense that popular support for war ought to equate to willingness to participate, if still on a national, rather than personal level. The failure of the ‘people’ – in practice, the unseen soldier class – to volunteer for a war so tied to national honour and public opinion was not only humiliating, it challenged the whole basis of Britain’s military system. For now, public opinion refused to concede any such failure, instead blaming government perversity for the whole mess. The controversy was a blow for popular confidence, but the dominant response was a reaffirmation that British people should – and still *could* – fight their own wars.

A jittery public found some reassurance in the willingness of government to stand by the voluntary principle – a stance that implied faith in the volunteer spirit and confidence in the military system. Though public opinion had at first described the 1852 Militia Bill as a victory for compulsion, by 1854 ‘Mr. WALPOLE’s deliberate adherence to the voluntary principle, in preference to compulsory enlistment’ was seen as having firmly established the noble principle of voluntarism.³³ True to these sentiments, cabinet not only refused to order the resumption of the militia ballot or of fines for unmet county quotas, but also allowed militiamen who had enrolled before May 1854 and served for 59 days to be discharged on request, despite the fact that the law considered these men bound to further service.³⁴ The dismissal of these men in the midst of a national recruiting crisis shows the genuine strength of public and political commitment to the volunteer principle, and the extent to which any form of compelled service was now considered a fundamental breach of personal liberty.

33 ‘THE MILITIA BILL’, *John Bull*, 23 December 1854, p. 806.

34 Hansard, 3rd series, 1855, cxxxvii, 554, pp. 546, 949, 978, 1173.

For this ‘act of grace’, which reduced many militia regiments to skeleton units, Palmerston was largely responsible, first as home secretary in 1854 and then as prime minister in 1855. His position was judged a noble one, though the conservative press considered the raising of the subject in the first place, by Earl Grey and Earl Malmsebury, ‘an injudicious and disloyal interposition’ which had imperiled ‘the success of the experiment of voluntary enlistment’.³⁵ The London press congratulated the Government for its wisdom ‘in the present temper of the nation, ... in relying upon the voluntary services and the enthusiasm of the Militia’.³⁶ But Palmerston’s ‘act of grace’ was hardly calculated to impress upon the populace the seriousness and importance of their military obligations. Though the ballot had not been employed since 1831, the militia was still the Britain’s primary outlet for formal military service obligations. Palmerston’s trivialisation of these obligations thus effectively conceded a battle between subject and State that had been going on for centuries. The Government had made it plain – the people had no obligation towards military service, no matter how pressing the need.

Ironically, from this point on there was no doubting that the nation was in the midst of a serious recruiting crisis. Despite the introduction of shorter-term enlistment in the desperate situation of February 1855,³⁷ the recruiting shortfall continued to worsen. The situation was no better at home, the militia having fallen to less than 1/3 of its establishment by March 1855.³⁸ The failure of the Government’s hodgepodge combination of approaches – militia recruiting, direct recruiting and foreign recruiting – could no longer be disguised. At the beginning of March, around 90,000 additional men were needed to reinforce the army at Sebastopol. By the end of the month, the government’s

35 ‘We have not the slightest hesitation in asserting’, *Morning Post*, 5 May 1855, p. 4.

36 ‘Multiple Feature Articles Items’, *Illustrated London News*, 16 December 1854, p. 602.

37 Hansard, 3rd series, 1854–55, cxxxvi, 1408, 1599.

38 Hansard, 3rd series, 1855, cxxxvii, 554.

best efforts in domestic recruiting had procured only 4,514.³⁹ *The Times'* Crimean correspondent raged against the situation:

You have been told that you had still an efficient army of 30,000 men in the field; but the men who told you so...did not know that 15,600 men...[were] sent down to hospital, although hundreds and tens of hundreds still lay languishing in tents in camp. Who came to fill their places? A few thousand sickly, sinewless boys...You still kept on dreaming of victorious marches and of reconnaissances in force, while our troops were hardly able to man the trenches...⁴⁰

Even a 50% increase of pay for active service in the Crimea in June 1855 – admittedly poorly publicised – failed to produce a substantial increase in recruiting.⁴¹ The recruiting crisis continued unabated until the end of the war, with the army always at least 25% short of the figures for which parliamentary approval had been secured, in contrast to a peacetime deficiency of around 2%.⁴² ‘The truth is patent to all the world, that we cannot get as many soldiers as we require’, wrote the *Illustrated London News* in December 1855.⁴³ *The Times*, too, conceded the failure of popular recruiting as ‘universally admitted’.⁴⁴

Although the manpower shortfall did not ultimately result in catastrophe for Britain, the insufficiency of popular recruiting during the Crimean War represented the failure of a system England had taken for granted for generations. Admittedly, the traditional recruiting pool was seriously depleted by emigration and rural depopulation, but Britain’s immense population and stupendous enthusiasm for the war should surely have been enough to furnish the numbers required for the Crimea, as numerous contemporaries pointed out. In line with the general backlash against government and military

39 Parliamentary Papers 1854–55, IX pt. iii (247), ‘Fourth Report from the Select Committee on the Army before Sebastopol’, Appendix 14, p. 351.

40 ‘The War. The Siege Of Sebastopol. (FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT.)’, *The Times*, 20 April 1855, p. 5.

41 Hansard, 3rd series, 1855, cxxxix, 438.

42 Parliamentary Papers 1867, XV (3752), ‘Reports of the Commissioners appointed to enquire into the recruiting for the Army’, Appendix E, p. 2a2.

43 ‘The "Raw Material" of Our Armies’, *Illustrated London News*, 15 December 1855, p. 689.

44 ‘London, Monday, November 5, 1855,’ *The Times*, 5 November 1855, p. 6.

administration, many blamed the recruiting crisis on official failings. Public anger at the Foreign Enlistment Bill was fuelled by a belief that plentiful volunteers were still available, if only the government was competent enough to utilise them. But by the spring of 1855, this belief could no longer be maintained. While government policies had indeed been erratic in their logic and often inefficient in their execution, the bottom line was simply that not enough men had come forward to fight. But why was it that such an enthusiastic public failed, in the event, to furnish enough men for the war?

It was to this question that the London press turned its attention in the latter part of 1855. Despite the strong pre-war assumption that military participation in any capacity short of repelling actual invasion was the business only of a professional minority, upon the outbreak of war commentators *had* expressed an expectation that the immense popularity of the war would translate to legions of willing recruits. Proceeding from this implicit connection between popular enthusiasm and willingness to enlist, the logical conclusion upon the *failure* of recruiting ought to have been either a) that the popularity of the war had been illusory, or b) that the nation was guilty of insincerity, cowardice or hypocrisy. This was precisely the logic utilised by Cobden in his famous polemic letter of November 1855:

How is it...[that] not one word of warning has been addressed to the country, or a single appeal made to the people, for a supply of efficient men to fill the vacant ranks of the army, which the people and the people alone, could fill? How is it, on the contrary, that whilst the most uncensored measures have been heaped on the parliament, government, aristocracy, and military commanders, our press, platform, and even our pulpits, have, during all this time, teemed with more fulsome laudation of the people of England than was ever before lavished on a community in the same space of time? ... The popularity of a war is proved by the willingness of people to take part in it. ... If, as we have been told, this war in defence of the 'liberty and civilisation' of a continent which does not think it necessary to defend itself, is the people's war, there will be a response to the appeal; if, on the contrary, it be a war of diplomatists and newspapers, it will fail.⁴⁵

45 'COBDEN ON THE ARMY AND THE WAR', *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 11 November 1855, p. 5.

Cobden's letter outraged the conservative press, who called it a 'cowardly, philo-russian appeal' aimed at nerving the enemy.⁴⁶ The liberal and radical press also responded defensively, the *Examiner* dismissing it 'a very shallow argument for a man of Mr. Cobden's shrewdness'.⁴⁷ Obviously, suggesting either that the people had never supported the war, or that they were guilty now of insincerity or hypocrisy was anathema to a popular press that had been so instrumental in pushing for war.

Heavily disincentivised to admit either possibility, and keen to avoid searching questions about the culpability of the public, the popular press chose instead to utterly disavow its previous expectation of patriotic mass participation. After Palmerston's 'act of grace' in December 1854, which itself seemed symbolically to let Englishmen 'off the hook' for any inherent responsibility towards military participation, paeans to the patriotic volunteer spirit no longer graced the pages of the popular press. Instead, commentators espoused once again a pragmatic, market-based understanding of military participation. They downplayed the patriotic dimensions of military participation, stressing instead that 'the army – or, more correctly speaking, military service – is, among us, a trade which a man may either take up or turn away from at his leisure'.⁴⁸ 'The war has been popular', insisted the *Spectator*, but it would be foolish to expect 'that degree of popularity to call full-grown men with settled habits from their accustomed occupations, from their homes and their families, to a new career, in which they would have ... smaller wages to receive than they were earning in their old employments'.⁴⁹ Martial spirit was one thing, noted *The Times*, but 'martial spirit must be very strong indeed to prompt a man suddenly to relinquish any occupation which gives him a comfortable subsistence at home and encounter the dangers and disagreeables of war'.⁵⁰ Rather than looking to recruiting, those wishing to assess the popularity of the war ought to note the public's uncomplaining

46 'Mr. COBDEN has written', *Morning Post*, 6 November 1855, p. 4.

47 'MR COBDEN ON THE WAR', *Examiner*, 10 November 1855, p. 705.

48 'Until quite a recent period the soldier has been', *The Times*, 29 June 1855, p. 6.

49 'MR. COBDEN'S FACTS AND FALLACIES', *Spectator*, 10 November 1855, p. 1158.

50 'Our rulers have at length made a fair appeal to', *The Times*, 25 November 1854, p. 8.

acceptance of higher taxation and the press' unanimity in urging 'a vigorous and unsparing prosecution of the war', two factors which, 'as Mr. Cobden well knows by his own experience when he headed a popular movement, are the tests of the popularity of a policy'.⁵¹ The recruiting shortfall, therefore, did not reflect insincerity or hypocrisy on the part of the people – it simply resulted from the insufficient appeal of military participation in a depleted and therefore highly competitive labour market.

As such, increasing the pay of the rank and file was the solution most often proffered to the recruiting crisis. 'Man is a dear article in this busy kingdom,' *The Times* asserted, 'and if human labour be required for battle with the Russians, it must be paid for as if it were sought for the construction of a tunnel or a dock'.⁵² The London press also bemoaned that military service offered almost no prospect of distinction or advancement – honours considered essential in attracting the 'respectable' recruits that the service so desired. The idea that capable, ambitious men would give up countless other prospects to enlist, 'knowing that honours and rewards are not for them, no matter what their zeal, intelligence and gallantry may be' was dismissed as preposterous.⁵³ 'Nothing but ambition can draw a man into the field as a soldier', insisted the *Spectator*.⁵⁴ The liberal press, therefore, campaigned vociferously for the provision of some path of promotion from the ranks (though as Olive Anderson points out this was ultimately too incompatible with the entrenched system of the purchase of commissions, and had too much in common with the anti-aristocratic, meritocratic radicalism of the Administrative Reform Association to be seriously contemplated by government).⁵⁵ The deficiency in these pragmatic economic and social attractions was seen as the root cause of insufficient recruiting. 'Raise the wages of the soldier', exhorted *The Times*. 'Raise not only his money wages, but his

51 'MR. COBDEN'S FACTS AND FALLACIES', *Spectator*, 10 November 1855, p. 1158.

52 'London, Saturday, November 3, 1855', *The Times*, 3 November 1855, p. 6.

53 'Military Education. JACOB OMNIUM', *The Times*, 16 January 1856, p. 12.

54 'THE UNEXPLORED RECRUITING FIELDS', *Spectator*, 18 August 1855, p. 857.

55 Anderson, p. 535.

whole condition, – his road to honour, his chances of promotion, his comforts, if necessary his luxuries...and you will soon have an army large enough'.⁵⁶

Most of the proffered explanations of the recruiting crisis were based on the continued assumption that the lowest classes of men would be those to prosecute Britain's divine duty at bayonet point. There was a tacit reliance on the traditional military populations of Scotland and Ireland and the societal dregs of all Britain – the unseen, abstract soldier class. The pages of popular press were full of the suggestions and exhortations of middle-class men directed at government, military administrators, and the recalcitrant lower classes, but it seemed not to occur to such august commentators that they or their sons might have some responsibility to offer military service. For the first half of the war, there was no mention of possible middle class involvement beyond financial donations and, potentially, volunteer work in a medical capacity. Some lone voices did call for the formation of rifle corps along the lines of the Volunteers of the Napoleonic Wars, but the suggestions garnered no real momentum.⁵⁷

A growing awareness of the depletion of the traditional recruiting pool after the post-Inkerman recruiting drive, however, led some liberal and radical commentators to question whether the armed forces could not incorporate a wider segment of the population. A correspondent to *The Times* in December 1854 wondered at how 'the fact that classes constituting, probably, one third of the population' were utterly absent from the military forces 'seems till now never to have occurred to people's minds'.⁵⁸ Many urged the benefits of incorporating middle class talent into the armed forces, citing their 'equal physical strength, courage, and endurance' with lower-class recruits, and their 'higher feelings of honour and patriotism, and greater moral firmness'.⁵⁹ Contrary to the old

⁵⁶ 'We have the most entire satisfaction in recalling', *The Times*, 15 December 1854, p. 6.

⁵⁷ 'The Army In The Crimea. A PATRIOT', *The Times*, 15 November 1854, p. 7.

⁵⁸ 'The Middle Classes And The Army. A PRACTICAL MAN', *The Times*, 29 December 1854, p. 9.

⁵⁹ 'The Middle Classes And The Army. A PRACTICAL MAN', *The Times*, 29 December 1854, p. 9; and 'The Foreign Legion. A CLERK AT 60L. PER YEAR', *The Times*, 19 December 1854, p. 7.

wisdom that the worst man made the best soldier, the *Examiner* argued that ‘the French middle classes thus supply their army with its best soldiers’ and praised the French military system for its ‘wonderfully apt provision for every class’.⁶⁰

Of course there existed no official impediment to the enlistment of such men, nor (insisted the liberal press) any lack of military spirit amongst them, but the social and economic barriers against middle-class participation in the rank and file were generally considered to be insurmountable. *The Times* asserted that, in contemporary culture, ‘everything is done to discourage the universal [martial] passion, and confine the middle classes to their shopkeeping’.⁶¹ The *Daily News* considered it ‘an error to suppose that the army could not be recruited from men engaged in other occupations’, but asserted above all that such middle-class service ‘must be adequately paid for, and adequate motives must be held out for them to serve’ – motives entirely absent from the current military system.⁶² The wealth and political influence required to obtain a commission put it out of the reach of all but the most privileged, while the same conditions that put the lower classes off enlistment in the rank and file rendered it entirely out of the question for middle class men, for whom the social and economic sacrifices it entailed were so much greater. While the Crimean War saw new consideration of the role that the middle classes might play in war, the discussion concluded that, as things stood, Britain’s military system offered no reasonable motive to or outlet for the talent and ambition of the middle-classes.

Conspicuous by its absence in public debate on the recruiting shortfall was any significant formulation of the Englishman’s duty towards personal service in the war. Condemnation of formal, compulsory obligations was absolute. The London press delighted in describing the brutality of Russian conscription, and the dull, resentful and half-hearted soldiers it created. On the subject of conscription, the press was in total agreement; it ‘would not be

60 ‘THE POLITICAL EXAMINER’, *Examiner*, 27 October 1855, p. 673.

61 ‘It is a common observation that mothers are’, *The Times*, 18 December 1854, p. 8.

62 ‘LONDON, MONDAY, JANUARY. 15.’, *Daily News*, 15 January 1855, p. 4.

endured unless an invading enemy were in sight of our shores, when the same free spirit would render it unnecessary. ... We shall have no conscription for our distant wars were Russia ten times as strong, and fifty times as obstinate as she is'.⁶³ But even putting aside the matter of compulsion, public discourse admitted no moral duty towards voluntary service (other than in the case of imminent invasion). The mainstream press insisted upon the perfect liberty of the Briton to enlist or abstain according to the dictates of his personal situation and individual conscience. And while patriotic enthusiasm was a time-honoured feature of rhetoric, it was not expected to weigh heavily on recruitment decisions. It was taken as writ that men comfortably situated 'could not, without an amount of personal sacrifice which it is vain to expect, throw up their present employments and enter the army'.⁶⁴ That this kind of sentiment was expressed without condemnation or judgment is the strongest indicator of the absence of any potent conception of the subject's obligation towards military participation. Indeed, the press expressed pride in Britain's 'rational', 'objective' recruiting appeals, scorning jingoistic bombast as the resort of less sophisticated peoples.

Also absent from public debate was any concerted attempt to link military service with enfranchisement. *Reynolds's Newspaper* complained that the working classes were 'deprived of the rights of citizenship, yet saddled with all its duties – denied the privileges of freemen, but expected to feel all the sentiments, and compelled to submit to all the sacrifices, of patriotism', but since enlistment was generally not depicted as a 'duty' but as a pragmatic professional choice, this radical trope lacked momentum.⁶⁵ Bizarrely, while military utilisation (or, as some radicals saw it, exploitation) of the unenfranchised classes went largely unquestioned, the notion that the legitimacy of commissioned officers depended on their having a 'stake in the country' was a commonplace of public discourse. The liberal press, in fact, spent considerable energy opposing the purchase system on the

63 'The "Raw Material" of Our Armies', *Illustrated London News*, 15 December 1855, p. 689.

64 London, Monday, November 5, 1855, *The Times*, 5 November 1855, p. 6.

65 'REYNOLDS'S NEWSPAPER', *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 6 January 1856, p. 8.

basis that ‘every Englishman who earns his livelihood honestly and has sense enough to appreciate the Government under which we live has “a stake in the country.”’⁶⁶ The implications of the connection between this ‘stake’ and military service for the working classes, however, were not explored.

Ultimately, the litmus test of the Crimean War revealed a great deal about contemporary public attitudes toward military service. While the crusading popular mood created an instinctive expectation of plentiful ‘crusaders’ upon the outbreak of war, popular support for the war failed to translate into popular willingness to enlist. Instead, recruiting behaviour correlated strongly to the pragmatic, morally neutral division-of-labour conception of military service that had prevailed in pre-war public discourse – a view that admitted no moral obligation towards personal service except in the case of imminent invasion. Press explanations of the paradox of poor recruitment in a popular war similarly reverted to this pre-war conception of military service as a mere trade like any other. Public responsibility for the recruiting crisis was disavowed, and non-participation was legitimised on the grounds of the insufficient appeal of the military trade and the propriety of a division of military and civilian labour. Denying any inherent obligation towards military participation, public discourse reduced the whole paradox to a side effect of a competitive economy.

And yet, this marketplace talk was slightly disingenuous. It came only after the insufficiency of recruiting had become obvious, and as such was tainted by a defensive desire to justify the failure of the people to come forward. We ought not to forget that before Britain’s entry into the war there had been a general expectation of plentiful volunteers, driven by the obvious fact of the war’s popularity. Likewise, the immense shame and disgust evinced at the calling of a foreign legion (an expedient entirely in keeping with Britain’s manpower strategies in previous wars) indicated a latent sense that

⁶⁶ ‘The Purchase System, J. O.’, *The Times*, 6 November 1856, p. 7.

it was the responsibility of the nation and its subjects to prosecute their wars, and that the involvement of foreigners was a slur upon the honour of the nation. Clearly, the seed of the notion that popular support for war ought naturally to correspond to personal willingness to fight had already been sown.

Indeed, the experience of the Crimean War, and the public debates it inspired, did much to instigate the evolution of a coherent conception of citizenly obligation towards military service. At the most basic level, the shock offered to British complacency was profound. ‘This war has not improved our position among the nations of the earth’, wrote the *Daily News*. ‘It has published our pretensions and betrayed our deficiencies. We are still the unready Saxons that we ever were’.⁶⁷ England had been made to feel her own vulnerability, and the failure of traditional systems and ways of thinking seemed clear, opening the way for reform. At the same time, the growth of the popular press as a platform for national debate – and the advent of war correspondence – promoted a sense of greater public investment in war. Public opinion, as articulated by respectable popular periodicals, increasingly positioned itself as the best judge of military policy and conduct, and asserted the relevance of military affairs to all Englishmen. Public attitudes toward the army had also been transformed. The war inspired an unprecedented popular identification with ‘our brave boys’ in the field, widespread admiration for their heroism and resilience, and new interest in their welfare.⁶⁸ As *The Times* itself pointed out, ‘the identification of the whole community with the military calling was wholly absent’ until the Crimean War, when ‘every household in the kingdom thus became, as it were, spectators of the sufferings and the glories of the camp’.⁶⁹

Sympathy for the sacrifice of those at the front was expressed unanimously by all classes. It even had its effect on recruiting, which tended to pick up during emergencies, at least

67 ‘The return of peace, if it be not merely the cessa-’, *The Times*, 29 January 1856, p. 6.

68 E. M. Spiers, *The Army and Society, 1815–1914* (London, 1980), pp. 116–7.

69 ‘The last week has witnessed, and the present’, *The Times*, 4 August 1856, p. 6.

during the first half of the war. As Newcastle observed in December 1854, men were more apt to respond to the call of human sympathy ‘when success has been somewhat retarded, when increased energy appears to be necessary’ (though sympathy had its limits; lurid reportage of suffering and neglect at Sebastopol was enough to dissuade even the most sympathetic potential recruit after April 1855).⁷⁰ This new empathy for the hardships of the soldier was also manifested and mobilised in other ways. The press was scathing of government and military mismanagement of the war, accusing it of failing in its duty of care to ordinary soldiers. Many thousands of Britons donated money to patriotic funds, while in the religious and medical professions, a new willingness to offer non-military service in the field, as chaplains, surgeons or nurses, was increasingly in evidence.

Increased public identification with the war and its aims also fuelled a moral elevation of soldiers and soldiering in popular discourse. For the first time, the public felt ill at ease with their traditional reliance on ‘criminals, paupers, and ne'er-do-wells, with a leaven of gullible or easily intoxicated youths’, instead expecting an army as respectable, representative and righteous as the noble cause in which it fought.⁷¹ The respectable classes had not quite taken on board the implications of this expectation and remained largely unwilling to consider personal service, though the recruiting crisis did open dialogue about a possible role for the middle-classes in war. But the meaning of military participation had been subtly transformed. The enthusiastic feting of returning soldiers (in contrast to the subdued reception offered Peninsular veterans) was a manifestation not only of the growth of interest in the army, but also of a new appreciation of the sacrifice and vital importance of Britain’s voluntary soldiers.

The public discourse of commemoration reintroduced the rhetoric of patriotic volunteer spirit that had been quietly retracted in 1855. As well as celebrating the stoicism and courage of veterans in the face of death, disease and deprivation, commentators

⁷⁰ ‘We should think it next to impossible, all things’, *The Times*, 16 December 1854, p. 9.

⁷¹ Anderson, p. 543.

increasingly identified in them the socio–moral qualities of self–sacrifice, selflessness and public spirit. In particular, their perceived prioritisation of national duty over private ties and concerns was praised, *The Times* suggesting that ‘it is the sacrifice of the home affections, the power of subordinating the ties and the sentiments of family to national exigencies and public duties, that constitutes the strength and solidarity of national greatness’.⁷² Commentators stopped short of offering censure to those who had not chosen to make these sacrifices, and declared it right and proper that men discharge their duties to the State in manners appropriate to ‘the several departments of life to which they belong’ – whether that be through military participation, monetary support or political leadership.⁷³ But the London press increasingly asserted the debt owed to those few thousand men willing to take on the whole burden of military participation, thus making a voluntary system possible and permitting the civilian majority to remain on the sidelines. ‘The country is not so much discharging a duty as protecting its own interests when it does honour to the men who brave the hardships and privations of war’, wrote *The Times*. ‘Happily, free from the continental burden of conscription, it recognizes the strong claim upon its gratitude of men whose voluntary and unforced devotion, blended with an admirable discipline, preserves the credit and character of a kingdom.’⁷⁴ The public discourses of grieving, commemoration, and celebration that marked the end of the war therefore acted to retrospectively reposition military participation as an act of national devotion, public service and self–sacrifice, and to suggest a socio–moral interpretation wherein a small minority of soldiers voluntarily discharged what was, fundamentally, the responsibility of all.

The failure of popular recruiting in the Crimean War was a reflection of the entrenchment, over the preceding four decades, of the principle of strict division between the military and civilian spheres, and the complacent assumption that an unseen, abstract

72 ‘The occasion on which Lords PANMURE and’, *The Times*, 10 May 1856, p. 8.

73 ‘LONDON, SUNDAY, JANUARY 7.’, *Observer*, 7 January 1855, p. 4.

74 ‘The last week has witnessed, and the present’, *The Times*, 4 August 1856, p. 6.

soldier–class would provide all the manpower that was wanted. Press discourse disavowed any citizenly obligation towards participation, and popular disdain for the army was still too widespread for most Britons to seriously consider themselves as potential recruits. But the Crimean War was, in itself, a force of change. It was Britain’s first major war in the age of mass national media, and a wildly popular ‘moral intervention’ at that. In the strength and unity of the crusading public mood, in the active role of the press in public debate, in the sheer power of public opinion to shape government policy, the Crimean War was a transformative conflict. From now on, none could underestimate the importance of public opinion, or the influence of the national press in shaping and reflecting it.

In the relationship between the army and society, too, it was a watershed.⁷⁵ New public ‘ownership’ of war led to increased identification with soldiers, and growing unease with the tacit reliance on the margins of British society for military manpower. And despite the ‘marketplace’ explanations that attempted to excuse the mass non–participation of the public, by the end of the Crimean War soldiering had begun to be more than simply ‘a trade like any other’. It had taken on a moral dimension, as an act of self–sacrifice and patriotic service. For the time being, support for war was not considered to involve an obligation to actually enlist; Englishmen had no *duty* to offer personal service in any circumstance short of invasion. But public discourse did reveal subtle signs of change, and the ideological seeds of a citizenly duty towards military service had begun to germinate.

⁷⁵ Spiers, *The Army and Society*, p. 116.

CHAPTER THREE

The Volunteer Impulse, 1857–1861

The youth of the middle classes are astir from one end of the empire to the other. They want no bounty, they desire no favour, they simply ask to be allowed to fight the battles of their country.

- *Daily News*, 23 September 1857¹

One of the most striking legacies of the Crimean War was a new level of popular identification both with the politico–moral aims of the nation’s wars and with the soldiers who fought them. Still, few could have predicted the extent to which this identification would be taken in the years that followed. The period 1857–1861 saw nothing short of a revolution in middle–class military participation. Legions of respectable young Englishmen, whom only a few years before would not have deigned to consider military participation, now *begged* to be accepted – at their own expense – as volunteer guardians of the nation. By the end of 1861, more than 160,000 civilians had joined Volunteer corps, pledging their unpaid service as part of the nation’s defences in peace and war. The Victorian Volunteer revival was a potent demonstration of an emergent volunteer impulse, and a new conception of military service as a virtuous act of patriotism, personal integrity and public spirit. The remarkable shift had its roots in Crimean developments: the focus on ‘national’ armies, the moral elevation of soldiering, the middle–class backlash against the aristocratic military ‘monopoly’ and desire to assert middle–class values, and the growing public discussion of military issues thanks to the advent of war reportage and the emergence of a national popular press. Just as powerful, however, were the specific events, circumstances and debates of the years 1857–1861. From the impassioned public response to the Indian Mutiny to the blossoming of the Volunteer revival, the period saw particularly rich press debate on civilian military participation, and it is a pivotal one for this story.

¹ ‘LONDON, WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 23.’, *Daily News*, 23 September 1857, p. 4.

Perhaps the most important catalyst for the mid-Victorian crystallisation of the volunteer impulse came hot on the heels of post-Crimean reform debate. When news of massacres and atrocities committed by Indian rebels against English subjects broke in September 1857, the London press erupted into ferocious moral outrage.² The Indian Mutiny's emotional resonance was heightened by the fact that the rebels had not discriminated in their brutality between military personnel and civilians.³ The mutiny was seen as an attack not just on the soldiers of the crown, but on ordinary Englishmen and their families, and thus a violation of the sanctity of the military/civilian demarcation. The respectable press discussed the brutalities of the mutineers in highly domestic and gendered terms, playing on the gallantry of its middle-class male readership and encouraging personal identification with the victims.⁴ In comparison with the loftier political ideals of the Crimean War, the Indian mutiny struck an intensely personal and emotional note. As *The Times* observed, 'we felt the importance of the Russian War as politicians, but this war comes nearer home to us and enlists every natural feeling we have'.⁵ The public sphere reverberated with horror, sympathy and frenzied calls for equally brutal reprisals.

To a public primed by the Crimean War to identify with both the moral aims and the waging of the nation's wars, the heightened emotional character of the Indian Mutiny inspired an even greater degree of personal identification and investment. The heated passion surrounding the mutiny also brought forth a newly moralistic attitude towards participation in the struggle. So abhorrent and so personal was the affront that, for many, to do nothing was 'to stand still, and let our wives and daughters be violated and our own

2 *Reynolds's Newspaper* and a few other periodicals deplored the thirst for vengeance, but they were firmly in the minority. E. M. Spiers, *The Army and Society, 1815-1914* (London, 1980), p. 127.

3 The Indian rebellion of 1857 is here referred to as the Indian Mutiny, because this was the term used in the press at the time. In recent scholarship, however, it has been generally understood that the initial mutiny soon took on the aspect of a popular rebellion. T. R. Metcalfe, *Aftermath of the Revolt: India 1857-1870* (Princeton, 1964) and C. A. Bayly (ed.), *The Peasant Armed: The Indian Revolt of 1857* (Oxford, 1986).

4 Press obsession with the brutalities inflicted on Englishwomen was further fuelled by an undercurrent of racial fear and affront. For a scholarly investigation of the gender dimensions of the Mutiny, see A. Blunt, 'Embodying war: British women and domestic defilement in the Indian "Mutiny", 1857-8', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 26.3 (July, 2000), pp. 403-428.

5 'The War-office and the Horse Guards have', *The Times*, 22 September 1857, p. 8.

throats be cut'.⁶ For the first time in more than four decades, therefore, personal military participation was urged on moral grounds, as a matter of individual integrity, gallantry, and Christian fellow feeling. Respectable newspapers from across the political spectrum spoke of 'the duty of Christian men to engage in war when called upon by such an emergency as this'.⁷ The clergy were urged to recruit from the altar, preaching on the moral grandeur of participation and asserting that 'every man who, in his own person or by his influence with another, adds a single true-hearted recruit to the battalions of his country, performs a great deed in the sight of God and man'.⁸ The respectable readers of the London press were similarly exhorted to influence their dependents to join the struggle, with the sentiment that 'the proper business for the youth and strength of England at this hour is in the fields of Hindostan'.⁹

Even more striking, it seemed that the middle classes themselves were beginning to feel a moral impulse towards personal military participation. On 19 September 1857, *The Times* published a passionate letter from 'A YOUNG ENGLISHMAN' testifying to the existence of thousands of well-educated young men in the middle ranks of life 'burning with desire to be led to fight their country's battles and be placed face to face with those insulters and destroyers of our ladies and little children in Bengal'.¹⁰ The publication of this correspondence inspired a flood of similar assertions in the popular press over the weeks and months that followed. The liberal press in particular was besieged, *The Times* reporting the receipt of many hundreds of letters above and beyond those selected for publication.¹¹ Correspondents generally claimed no enthusiasm for fighting nor wish for adventure, but instead cited their own sense of an emotional and moral duty to safeguard British lives and

6 'ONE WHO HAS SERVED 40 YEARS', *The Times*, 25 September 1857, p. 10.

7 'The public cannot complain of any remissness', *The Times*, 1 October 1857, p. 6.

8 'PATRIOTISM IN THE PULPIT', *Examiner*, 31 October 1857, p. 697.

9 'THE APPEAL TO THE MEN-MILLINERS', *Examiner*, 26 September 1857, p.607.

10 'A YOUNG ENGLISHMAN', *The Times*, 19 September 1857, p. 9.

11 'The War-office and the Horse Guards have', *The Times*, 22 September 1857, p. 8; and 'The public cannot complain of any remissness', *The Times*, 1 October 1857, p. 6.

values in India, and to avenge the outrages already committed against their countrymen and women.

This zeal to ‘go forth to India sword in hand, full of vigour and burning with determination, and return not till vengeance had been obtained by murder an hundredfold’ was an astonishing development for classes who had hitherto largely scorned military participation.¹² Moral outrage broke down the strict demarcation between the unseen soldier class and the respectable civilian, with ‘the argument of the economist, that such men are better employed in the careers which they have chosen for themselves, and that we ought to buy our soldier–labour in the cheapest market’ declared ‘quite irrelevant’ in a situation of such moral resonance and urgent need.¹³ But traditional views on military participation were not entirely dissolved, and while the middle class sense of a moral imperative to join the fight was new, old prejudices lingered about the form that engagement might take. Despite concerted government attempts to raise the social prestige of the army, respectable society still considered it an unjustifiable social degradation to enlist in the rank and file, while the purchase system debarred all but the wealthiest and most influential from obtaining a commission. This left middle–class men with no clear, socially respectable outlet for their newly felt moral impulse towards military participation.

From legions of successive ‘Young Englishmen’ came a suggested solution to this dilemma, drawn from England’s amateur military tradition but reworked for a new zeitgeist. They urged the formation of new volunteer rifle corps – serious, well–trained auxiliary units composed of respectable middle–class men. But rather than reviving the amateur home guard of the Napoleonic era, it was proposed such corps might be formed for the purpose of active service in India (under the command of officers from the regular army), on the same terms as the abortive foreign legions of the Crimean War: service only

12 ‘Volunteers For India, ANOTHER YOUNG ENGLISHMAN’, *The Times*, 22 September 1857, p. 9.

13 ‘SCHEME FOR OBTAINING REINFORCEMENTS FOR INDIA’ *Daily News*, 3 October 1857, p.

3.

for a stipulated period, with promotion from the ranks according to merit. The idea met with considerable sympathy from the respectable press and its correspondents, who sent in floods of letters pledging their willingness to serve in such a form. Liberals saw it as a way to circumvent the hated system of purchase and to mobilise the loyalty and vigour of England's most capable and intelligent classes. Better yet, it ran no risk of interfering with ordinary recruiting, since 'those who would alone be affected by it are precisely the class with whom the Recruiting Sergeant never by any chance comes into contact, and never will'.¹⁴ The cry of 'volunteers for India' was soon supported almost unanimously in the pages of the liberal press.¹⁵ The conservative press also applauded the participatory sentiment, but tended to regard the demand for separate middle-class corps as unnecessary, inefficient and potentially divisive. Repudiating the 'fancied degradation attendant upon joining, as a private, the British ranks', the *Morning Post* expressed the desire that would-be volunteers simply join the regular army, thus 'helping to break down the fence of prejudice erected by small-souled conventionalisms in this matter'.¹⁶

Ultimately, the Russell and Derby administrations were also too wary of the expense, the independence, and the potential divisiveness of middle-class volunteers to give any real official momentum to the initiative, and no volunteer offers were accepted. Supporters of the idea regarded this governmental indifference as an insulting affront to middle-class loyalty, and a symptom of the aristocracy's monopoly over military affairs. 'There are men, there are recruits, there are volunteers, to be had for the asking', asserted *Reynolds's Newspaper*. 'But the army system must be changed, and the exclusive selfishness cease to reign, before England can be fitly championed in the vast battle-field which is opening around us.'¹⁷ In the meantime, the unrealised volunteer impulse contributed significantly to the exasperation with the existing military system prevalent in liberal discourse.

14 'LONDON, WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 23.', *Daily News*, 23 September 1857, p. 4.

15 *Reynolds's Newspaper* retained its discomfort with the popular cry for vengeance, but its hostility to the 'aristocratic military monopoly' predisposed it to sympathise with thwarted volunteers. See 'HOW TO POPULARISE THE ARMY' and 'REYNOLDS'S NEWSPAPER', 11 October 1857, pp. 7, 8.

16 'It is the proud privilege of liberal minds', *Morning Post*, 24 September 1857, p. 4.

17 'REYNOLDS'S NEWSPAPER', *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 11 October 1857, p. 8.

That exasperation was worsened by the seeming indifference of the working classes – the only ‘fitting’ participants under the current system – to the moral imperative now perceived and promoted by respectable public discourse. For recruiting for the regular army proved, once again, insufficient. In the crisis month of September 1857, only 2,300 men were enlisted – as *John Bull* pointed out, ‘about a third of the amount confidently expected and urgently required’ for ‘the most popular and enthusiastic war in which England has been engaged for centuries’.¹⁸ When the failure of voluntary recruiting had become obvious in the Crimean War, the newspapers had retreated from their earlier expectation of a connection between moral support and actual willingness to participate, instead pragmatically chalking up the shortfall to the insufficient appeal of a military career. Now, however, the respectable London press took a more censorious tone. No longer was the failure of men to enlist blamed solely on the insufficient attractions of service – now there was an explicit moral dimension to the recruiting response to war. The press bemoaned the deafness of the labouring and lower–middle classes to the call of gallantry and human sympathy. ‘It is admitted that below the classes interested in public affairs our national calamities have made but little impression’, noted *John Bull*, blushing at ‘the sadly niggard and restricted sense of public service which has allowed the martial spirit of the country to be thus cribbed and confined’.¹⁹ The ‘great, unlettered, apathetic class’, concluded *The Times*, was simply ‘not animated sufficiently by a spirit of devotion and self–sacrifice... To them, the victims of Cawnpore and the besieged of Lucknow must cry in vain, for they hear not the voice.’²⁰

The liberal press admitted, not without empathy, that the miserly treatment meted out by Government to Crimean veterans did not help the situation. *Reynolds’s Newspaper* asserted that the ordinary working man ‘has a notion of what his class may expect for fighting the

18 ‘VOLUNTEERS FOR INDIA’, *John Bull*, 17 October 1857, p. 665.

19 ‘THE MILITIA AND “THE SENSE OF THE COUNTRY”’, *John Bull*, 3 October 1857, p. 633.

20 ‘The public cannot complain of any remissness’, *The Times*, 1 October 1857, p. 6.

battles of Palmerston',²¹ while *Punch*, too, sympathised with working class mistrust of the military:

I'll sarve my QUEEN and country true
But not if I bain't sarved so too.²²

But above all, the recalcitrance of the working class to enlist was perceived as the logical extension of their wider moral and political ignorance. Respectable liberal periodicals like *The Times*, *Daily News* and *Examiner* stressed the magnitude of their own efforts to encourage participation, but admitted that their influence was limited to their own educated middle class readership, who, after all, readily understood the grave moral and political character of the Mutiny. But, as *The Times* put it, 'the details which have so roused the more instructed classes are lost to men who labour in ignorance and indifference at their daily task'.²³ Ill-informed, isolated and ignorant, the working classes were considered to be simply unaware of the true nature and significance of the struggle in India, and therefore unheeding of the urgent moral imperative to offer service.

Liberals were optimistic, however, about the receptiveness of the labouring classes to the call of duty, once they had been enlightened. 'It is really remarkable how closely and evidently the moral feelings of those classes depend on the degree of their knowledge', noted the *Daily News*, while *The Times* asserted that 'if our gentlemen are ready to volunteer, and burn with indignation at the atrocities they read, depend upon it, chords exist in the breasts of every rank of men, and only require a genial touch to vibrate as strongly'.²⁴ It was thus the task of influential and educated men to awaken the masses to their duty. Nobles, country gentlemen, community notables, clergymen, local politicians – all were exhorted to take advantage of their positions of leadership to urge the moral importance of the struggle and encourage the working classes to enlist. The *Morning Post*

21 'REYNOLDS'S NEWSPAPER', *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 11 October 1857, p. 8.

22 'MISTRUST OF THE MILITIA', *Punch*, 12 September 1857, p. 105.

23 'The public cannot complain of any remissness', *The Times*, 1 October 1857, p. 6.

24 'LONDON, TUESDAY, OCT. 6', *Daily News*, 6 October 1857, p. 4. and 'The public cannot complain of any remissness', *The Times*, 1 October 1857, p. 6.

echoed a conception of military manpower that was rooted in Britain's feudal tradition when it asserted that 'local and individual influence – the influence of the country gentleman, the town councillor, the farmer, and the employer of labour – cannot be better applied than in promoting recruitment for the army and the militia'.²⁵ But the radical *Examiner* was no less imperious when it came to urging the utilisation of patronage and economic pressure in aid of recruiting. It encouraged every well-to-do reader to 'serve himself to serve the common cause' and dismiss his butlers, footmen and stableboys with the cry "Go where glory waits thee."²⁶ If this gesture failed to waken their latent patriotic spirit, there was yet bruter economic pressure to be applied, in the understanding 'that a footman discharged for such a reason would have no chance of finding another place, and recourse must be had to the recruiting serjeant in a great majority of cases'.²⁷

This callousness reflected the disproportionate moral censure directed at those classes of men who inhabited the edges of respectable middle class society – who could less easily plead ignorance, but who the newspaper-writing class deemed able to enlist without significant social degradation. One such class fell particularly foul of the respectable press – the 'linen-drapers', 'man-milliners' and 'shopmen' who manned the counters of London's fashionable stores. Criticism of such men drew heavily on gender stereotypes about the proper application of labour. Ranging from gentle mockery to outright scorn, the press criticised young shopmen 'for doing what women could do just as well, if not very much better', a misapplication which further 'takes men away from *their* work' – the manly work of military service.²⁸ Such men were deemed sophisticated enough to perceive their duty, and lowly enough to act on it without serious social degradation, and therefore their recalcitrance was judged the result of effeminacy, snobbery or mercenary selfishness. 'Of course we can't expect in this business-minded age to discover that mere chivalry will pass current at the counter', derided *Punch*, a particularly enthusiastic chaffer of the linen-

25 'LONDON, FRIDAY, OCT. 23', *Morning Post*, 23 October 1857, p. 4.

26 'HOW TO HELP THE RECRUITING SERJEANT', *Examiner*, 3 October 1857, pp. 622–623.

27 'HOW TO HELP THE RECRUITING SERJEANT', *Examiner*, 3 October 1857, pp. 622–623.

28 'It is a delicate matter to interfere in any public', *The Times*, 21 September 1857, p. 7.

drapers. ‘Patriotism’s all very fine behind the footlights; but in a business light...“The Pay’s the thing!”’²⁹ In their defence, correspondents from this class of men claimed for themselves the same motives as their social betters in declining personal service: that ‘they should not be rewarded for their patriotism by being deprived of their station in society’.³⁰ But their protestations were largely regarded as unduly precious and snobbish by the newspaper-writing class, who looked down upon both their social status and the ‘effeminacy’ of their occupation. Public discourse did concede that, as in the Crimean war, enlistment still necessitated considerable sacrifice for all but the very lowest, but it had no such tolerance for those classes who could plead neither ignorance nor exclusion from the military system, and who, after all, had only women’s work to forsake.

Ultimately, the improvement of the situation in India cut short the increase of middle-class frustration with the manpower shortage, and the questions both of working class apathy and middle-class involvement were allowed to drift from the centre of public mind for a few years more. But the significance of the discussion that had taken place was enormous. For the first time in almost half a century, public opinion had strongly endorsed active military participation for respectable men. More than that, influential middle-class commentators had articulated a moral *imperative* towards participation. But what was the real nature of this imperative, and what were its conditions and limitations? In the first place, it was primarily a personal, emotional imperative, rather than an obligation emanating from the relationship between subject and State. It was driven not by a sense that all Englishmen owed their State military service as and when required, but rather by an emotional compulsion to defend fellow Christians, innocent women and children, and the principles of English culture from uncivilised and treacherous rebels. The ‘Young Englishmen’ willing to offer personal service in India wrote passionately of Christian fellow-feeling, of pity and of gallantry, but wasted little rhetorical energy on the claims of

²⁹ ‘HEROES AND HABERDASHERS’, *Punch*, 17 October 1857, p. 164.

³⁰ ‘THE LINE, THE LINENDRAPERS, AND THE SHOPWOMEN’, *Daily News*, 24 September 1857, p. 3.

Queen and Country. Indeed, the specific language of loyalist, national or imperial patriotism was used much less frequently than it had been in the discourse of the more overtly ‘political’ Crimean War.

As the lambasting of linen–drapers reveals, the prevalent conception of military obligation was tied far more closely to contemporary ideas of Christian masculinity than to membership of the State or loyalty to the Crown. In fact, the balance of moral power had swung so much in favour of respectable public opinion that the State was cast almost as an obstructor of right–minded public enthusiasm. The keenest would–be Volunteers continued to abhor formal military obligations of any kind. Their insistence on the formation of independent Volunteer corps, despite the desperate need for manpower in the regular forces, showed their willingness to subordinate military utility and the wishes of the State to the maintenance of middle–class values and propriety. And yet, amongst advocates of Volunteer corps there was a sense that, willing middle–class men were *owed* the opportunity to fulfil their moral duty in India in a manner they deemed appropriate, and that it would be an unjust slight on the part of government to deny them. Participation in such a cause was almost a right – one withheld, in the eyes of radicals, by a government committed to maintaining the aristocratic monopoly on military affairs. The desire to serve was a ‘petition’, and ‘a very modest one, proceeding as it does from Englishmen offering themselves to their country, to fight for it and die for it, and begging to be accepted on the same terms as were extended to foreigners’.³¹ The duty towards military service was thus presented as a deeply personal moral compulsion, forced to work through the framework of the State but driven by moral, emotional and spiritual affinities quite separate from it.

It was also, of course, explicitly temporary and tied to a specific mission: the relief of India and the punishment of the rebels. The ardour of the middle–class avenger, wrote *The Times*, was ‘kindled by the circumstances of the particular war in which he fights, whose

³¹ ‘A YOUNG ENGLISHMAN’, *The Times*, 19 September 1857, p. 9.

indignation has been inflamed by some great wrong, and who...thinks he can set this wrong right by fighting, ... [it is] a temporary motive, and that the time of service naturally coincides with the nature of the motive'.³² Military authorities could not reasonably expect to garner any long-term recruits from this temporary middle-class enthusiasm, nor did its advocates suggest turning the suggested new Volunteer corps into more permanent institutions.

For working-class recruits, expectations were less clear. They were supposed to be inspired by the same urgent and specific moral mission, and yet there was no provision for a special term of enlistment which would allow their discharge at the conclusion of the mutiny – rather, the press seems to have vaguely assumed that, once enlisted, the army would remain their profession. In contrast, even for the duration of the conflict, middle-class would-be volunteers did not consider themselves obliged to become soldiers *per se*: such an obligation was negated by what they saw as their effective exclusion from the existing military system. Not only were they not expected to enlist as regular soldiers, but the suggested Volunteer corps were also conceived of in a broadly civilianist light. Promotion according to merit was demanded on principle, and for the benefit of those with longer-term military ambitions, but on the whole it was assumed that Volunteers would essentially retain their civilian character. Though led by their moral values to intercede in the mutiny, they would not renounce their civilian identities or occupations, and would expect to return to them once the mission was complete.

The moral imperative towards service, as articulated in respectable discourse, was also significantly limited and conditional in other ways. As beleaguered shopmen protested, certain classes were still mysteriously exempt from what was otherwise touted as a universal manly duty. *Punch* satirically suggested that 'by way of setting us an example, honourable members [of Parliament] leave words to the ladies, and resort to blows

³² 'The letters that we receive daily following in', *The Times*, 24 September 1857, p. 6.

instead',³³ while *Reynolds's* suggested that clergymen might cease their haranguing of the working classes in order to 'take up the sword or the rifle themselves, and lead their flock to the burning plains of India, and head them in the charge against the murderous sepoy'.³⁴ Satirical barbs aside, the moral imperative towards military service was not considered to be overweening, nor did it necessarily trump other civilian social and personal commitments. The press was unwilling to condemn the respectable Englishmen who 'do not recruit because they cannot be spared; the wants of society at home detain them and absorb their services'.³⁵ The obligation was a personal one, but could be pursued only insofar as permitted by other existing public and private commitments. For the duty-bound Victorian gentleman, the call to avenge the victims of the Mutiny was but one moral imperative among many. *The Times* defended not only its readers, but also its own offices full of educated young men, when it conceded that, after all, 'HER MAJESTY'S Ministers do not offer much encouragement to this sort of service, and most men find the thing simply impossible... Were it not for these things we, too, would be soldiers.'³⁶

Indeed, to a great extent the failings of the existing military system were blamed for preventing the middle classes from 'taking their full share in the defence of the honour and interests of our country'.³⁷ As had been concluded during the Crimean War, the insufficient rewards and prospects of a military career were seen to effectively exclude the middle classes from the military system, and therefore negate any moral obligation towards service within that system. 'To ask a young man to throw up a salary from five to twenty times as much as the pay of a soldier, in order to embrace a soldier's life, with all its hardships and dangers,' argued *Punch*, 'is to call upon him to make a tremendous sacrifice not to be expected.'³⁸ Even frustration with working class apathy was tempered by a sense that the system also failed to adequately reward private soldiers, for whom 'patriotism is, after all,

33 'PATTERNS FOR DRAPERS' YOUNG MEN', *Punch*, 24 October 1857, p. 176.

34 'HOW TO POPULARISE THE ARMY', *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 11 October 1857, p. 7.

35 'It is a delicate matter to interfere in any public', *The Times*, 21 September 1857, p. 7.

36 'Sir CHARLES NAPIER is always amusing, and no', *The Times*, 3 October 1857, p. 8.

37 'A MAN-MILLINER, TO THE EDITOR OF THE 'EXAMINER'', *Examiner*, 3 October 1857, p. 623.

38 'SACRIFICES TOO ALARMING', *Punch*, 10 October 1857, p. 155.

but a profitless and thankless blank'.³⁹ Public discourse applauded the sentiment of a moral duty towards participation, but refrained from heaping too much censure upon individuals for whom such participation would constitute a 'sacrifice too alarming'.⁴⁰

Nonetheless, limited though it was, the sense of moral duty towards participation evinced by the respectable classes was a remarkable break with tradition, and represented a step toward a more serious acceptance of military obligations. The Indian Mutiny gave respectable Englishmen a new vision of noble, almost 'charitable' military participation. The domestic, gendered and highly emotional way in which the Mutiny was reported prompted respectable readers to imagine themselves as the rescuers of fellow-countrymen, the heroes of women and children, and the righteous avengers of the cruelly slain. The Crimean War had already encouraged new appreciation for the courage and resilience of the soldier on the battlefield, but the Indian Mutiny inspired a far more personal ideal of civilian military participation at the behest of individual conscience, gallantry and Christian fellow-feeling. It also provided plenty of new martial heroes, most significantly Major-General Sir Henry Havelock, a career soldier and devoted Baptist whose death attempting to relieve Lucknow elevated him to the rank of 'soldier-saint'.⁴¹ As Olive Anderson has noted, the 'pantheonisation' of Havelock was key to the establishment of the cult of the Christian soldier that would continue to evolve throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, raising the moral image of the army.⁴²

Furthermore, on the back of the humiliations of the Crimean War the 'personal' nature of the Mutiny strengthened the sense that the moral standing of the nation was somehow tied up with the willingness of her people to fight for it. Conservatives and radicals alike took

39 'GRACCHUS, THE SERGEANT KITES NONPLUSSED', *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 18 October 1857, p. 7.

40 'SACRIFICES TOO ALARMING', *Punch*, 10 October 1857, p. 155.

41 For an excellent overview of the Havelock hagiography, see G. Dawson, *Soldier heroes: British adventure, empire and the imagining of masculinities* (London, 1994), pt 2, pp. 79–166.

42 O. Anderson, 'The Growth of Christian Militarism in Mid-Victorian England,' *English Historical Review*, 86.337 (1971), pp. 46–72

up ‘the new common sense cry, of England’s sons for England’s safety’, placing a new degree of moral responsibility on the people – however unequally that moral responsibility was shouldered in practice.⁴³ The existing military system was roundly criticised for offering no fitting place to the middle classes, and thus failing to truly represent the talent and strength of the nation. And though independent volunteer corps never really got off the ground during the Mutiny, the debate established a new precedent. The principle of middle-class participation – under the current system, in the form of Volunteering – was now established as a respectable, honourable and morally conscientious response to national emergency.

The heightened moral charge given to military participation in popular discourse at this time also hinted at the possibility for more systemic change. As the Mutiny wound down, public debate continued on the possibility of broader military participation. Commemoration of the Indian Mutiny (including the award of the Victoria Cross to two civilians) further chipped away at the civilian/military divide, *The Times* asserting that the Mutiny had shown the world ‘that the difference between an Englishman and a soldier is but the colour of a coat’.⁴⁴ An increasing number of commentators called for a new attitude towards military service in general, one in which the responsibility of the individual for national defence was both recognised and supported. The traditional delegation of military responsibility to a small professional minority – what *The Times* called ‘the vicarious bravery of this country’ – was viewed in a more critical light, with commentators offering grim predictions of the fate of a nation ‘of which the bulk will not endure to fight in person, and which shrinks from a militia ballot’.⁴⁵ From both ends of the political spectrum came urging for government to ‘foster instead of throwing cold water on the military spirit of the country, by liberally aiding, and even rewarding, so far as may be, all those who are willing

43 ‘THE MILITIA AND "THE SENSE OF THE COUNTRY"', *John Bull*, 3 October 1857, p. 633.

44 ‘The Victoria Cross was appointed to be a Mili-’, *The Times*, 11 July 1859, p. 8.

45 ‘Lord ELLENBOROUGH is just the man to give the’, *The Times*, 19 October 1857, p. 6.; ‘Discouragements To Recruiting’, *The Times*, 7 October 1857, p. 9.

to arm themselves for the defence of all that is dear to a free and loyal nations, – our families, our homes, our country, our Queen'.⁴⁶

Radical newspapers, perhaps surprisingly, were amongst those most strongly advocating broader military participation. While during the Crimean War they had bemoaned that the burden of military participation still fell primarily on the working classes, they now made much of the politically empowering aspect of military training and participation, denouncing the aristocratic 'monopoly' on military affairs as a conspiracy to keep the people ignorant of arms and powerless. *Reynolds's* went so far as to assert that 'according to the ancient custom and constitution of the country...it is the right of a freeman to have arms; it is his duty to know how to use them', and advocating that 'the whole manhood of England be furnished and trained to the use of arms' and 'the standing military force of the empire cease to be', thus rendering the army truly national.⁴⁷ But radicals were not alone in entertaining visions of widespread public participation. Some conservative newspapers dared even to mention the unmentionable – the possibility of formalising civilian obligations. The *Illustrated London News* professed its bewilderment, considering 'we are told *ad nauseam* that...that the whole population is ready to spring up armed, if they only knew how to set about it', that no one had even *mentioned* the militia ballot as an option.⁴⁸ Emphasising that 'the ballot is not a conscription which is to carry off the whole youth and manhood of the country to foreign service', it suggested that 'perhaps there was not so very much wrong in a 'legal machinery which called on every one who had a stake in the country to contribute to its defence, either in person or by substitute'.⁴⁹

The conservative *John Bull* went further in the name of pragmatism, advocating compulsory military service in line with the French National Guard, for 'now that the destinies of the empire are in the hands of a great uneducated class', participation 'must be

46 'Volunteer Corps. ONE WHO HAS SERVED 40 YEARS', *The Times*, 25 September 1857, p. 10.

47 'HOW TO POPULARISE THE ARMY', *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 11 October 1857, p. 7.

48 'The Defence of the Country', *Illustrated London News*, 24 October 1857, p. 401.

49 'The Defence of the Country', *Illustrated London News*, 24 October 1857, p. 401.

elicited by the regular requirements of military law and not by the fitful appliances of speeches and appeals'.⁵⁰ Such expressions inspired little serious discussion, and did not represent the main current of liberal thought, which held steadfast by the voluntary principle and focussed instead on the provision of a 'fitting place' in the army for the middle classes. But nor were they so marginal as to be excluded from public debate, showing how far that debate had progressed since the pre-Crimean years. Indeed, the consideration of compulsory measures was just one aspect of the growing sense that moral responsibility for fighting the nation's wars ultimately rested on the people themselves – and that soldiering in a righteous cause was now something more than simply 'a trade like any other'.

The idea that it was both appropriate and morally laudable for ordinary citizens to take a role in the defence of the nation, given new currency by the Indian Mutiny, received a further boost from the invasion crisis that followed soon after in 1858–59. The attempt by Felice Orsini to assassinate Napoleon III on 14 January 1858 with a bomb made in Britain resulted a brief anti-English furore in France that furthered England's already widespread sense of national vulnerability. The press was pervaded by the sense that the bellicosity of continental Powers made war both inevitable and imminent, and that, furthermore, Britain's military resources were desperately inadequate. Worse, government seemed as belated and ineffectual as ever in dealing with the threat. Frustrated with the endless succession of war scares and invasion panics, and with little confidence in the official military system, the press suggested that ultimate responsibility for safeguarding the nation might have to devolve to the public.

The familiar dictum that the English people would always come forward freely in the case of invasion was repeated, but the debate now swung in favour of a more prepared approach. It appeared increasingly reasonable that a peacetime reserve was required to

⁵⁰ 'THE MILITIA AND "THE SENSE OF THE COUNTRY"', *John Bull*, 3 October 1857, p. 633.

avoid endless panics, to inculcate the necessary habits of discipline and drill, and to provide ‘a more regular and certain source of supply than the blandishments of recruiting parties’.⁵¹ And, *The Times* asserted, the English were ‘the only people in the world who have not such a force in one form or another’.⁵² There was, of course, the militia. It had languished ever since being pillaged for Line recruits during the Crimean War, and it was reported by a Royal Commission in January 1859 to be in a fairly grievous state.⁵³ Nonetheless, it was still regarded by many as the proper nucleus of national defence and the modern successor to England’s historical tradition of civilian levies.⁵⁴ Furthermore, while the militia had been a paid and voluntarily recruited force since the Militia Bill of 1852, the ballot was still technically available, having only been suspended annually. The reintroduction of the ballot was widely discussed, and actively advocated by a significant number of high profile commentators and military authorities. The liberal press generally stopped short of advocating compulsion, but did express some doubt about whether the voluntary principle could truly be relied upon – *The Times* wondering, for example, if England could not call on those raised by the State (i.e. in workhouses or reformatories) to repay their debt through military service.⁵⁵

By the second half of 1859, however, consideration of the militia ballot had been overwhelmed by the resurgence of the pro-Volunteer campaign. The Indian Mutiny had revived interest in the idea of independent, unpaid middle-class corps, and advocates now urged the revival of the old Volunteer force as an inexpensive, respectable, constitutional and eminently *liberal* pillar of national defence. Championed by the liberal press, the campaign quickly gathered traction and momentum with the public. ‘There can only be one true defence of a nation like ours,’ wrote *The Times*, ‘– a large and permanent volunteer force, supported by the spirit and patriotism of our young men, and gradually

51 ‘When it is said we are not a military nation’, *The Times*, 16 September 1859, p. 6.

52 ‘While two great Continental Powers are on the’, *The Times*, 19 April 1859, p. 9.

53 E. M. Spiers, *The Army and Society, 1815–1914* (London, 1980), p. 163.

54 ‘Manning The Navy. CERDO’, *The Times*, 31 January 1859, p. 12.

55 ‘When it is said we are not a military nation’, *The Times*, 16 September 1859, p. 6.

indoctrinating the country with military knowledge.⁵⁶ The radical newspapers also lent their voices to the campaign. ‘What more chivalrous or economical force could be raised than one composed of volunteer Englishmen, ready and able to fight for their wives, their lands, their children, and their homes?’ asked *Reynolds’s*, interpreting the lukewarm governmental response as yet further evidence of the conspiracy on the part of Britain’s ‘aristocratic rulers’ to keep the people from the knowledge of arms.⁵⁷ More worrying to government was the shift in the moderate liberal press towards a similarly hostile interpretation of official motives. Even *The Times* expressed frustration with the authorities’ dogged insistence on separation between military and civilian spheres, and their wish ‘to have the regular army everything and all the rest of the nation nothing’.⁵⁸

Under mounting popular pressure, Derby’s government reluctantly authorised formation of Volunteer corps in May 1859. Essentially, this was a sop to popular opinion.⁵⁹ It cost government nothing, since participants were to provide their own arms and equipment, and posed little threat to regular recruiting, since men capable of such expense were unlikely to have been candidates for the army or militia. Nonetheless, the announcement was met with an immensely enthusiastic and idealistic response. Tennyson’s poem “Riflemen, form!” was published in *The Times* on May 11, setting a tone of moral grandeur and popular excitement.⁶⁰ The liberal press expressed great confidence that the nation was behind the movement, *The Times* asserting that ‘in six months time we shall be soldiers every man of us’.⁶¹ Sure enough, the ‘Volunteer Movement’, as it was termed by its champions in the liberal press, proved overwhelmingly popular with the public. Crucial support was given by the established church and by women, who were active in Volunteer pageantry and fundraising.⁶² Even after the conclusion of the Franco–Austrian war over Piedmont–

56 ‘While two great Continental Powers are on the’, *The Times*, 19 April 1859, p. 9.

57 ‘WHY ARE WE NOT ARMED AND DEFENDED?’, *Reynolds’s Newspaper*, 1 May 1859, p. 7.

58 ‘Arguments and exhortations are of little use’, *The Times*, 28 April 1859, p. 7.

59 Spiers, *The Army and Society*, p. 165.

60 ‘The War, T.’, *The Times*, 9 May 1859, p. 10.

61 ‘At last, and after a long stage of doubt, Eng–’, *The Times*, 14 May 1859, p. 8.

62 I. F. W. Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition, 1558–1945* (Manchester, 1991), p. 169.

Sardinia in July 1859, and despite significant pacifist and military reformist campaigns, the movement boomed, with 133 separate rifle corps formed in 1859.⁶³ 1860 saw not only the formation of 578 new corps, but also the inaugural meeting of the National Rifle Association, which held as its aim the ‘naturalisation’ of the rifle as Britain’s ‘national arm’.⁶⁴ Though the sense of urgency and national crisis declined after 1860, the movement continued to flourish, and by the middle of the decade it was securely established as a prominent and permanent feature of the Victorian military system. The Volunteer movement proved extremely long lived, surviving in a modified form right up to its amalgamation into the Territorial Army in 1908. As Cunningham has shown, however, the character and class composition of the Volunteers underwent numerous changes during the long life of the force.⁶⁵ During the initial revival period 1859–1861 an aura of romanticism prevailed over what was an essentially middle–class affair. As we will see in successive chapters, however, from 1862 the movement was progressively commandeered by the lower–middle and artisan classes, and its meaning and character in the popular press underwent corresponding shifts.

Here was an entirely voluntary popular movement, ostensibly driven by the patriotic willingness of ordinary Englishmen to participate in national defence. Scholars of the movement have shown considerable interest in the extent to which participants were truly motivated by patriotism, – the ideology which provided their movement with its legitimacy and its moral glow.⁶⁶ Our present concern, however, is not to uncover motives for individual behaviour, but to elucidate the developing concept of personal obligation towards military participation as it unfolded in the sphere of press discourse. Where the

63 Beckett, *Amateur Military Tradition*, p. 168.

64 ‘A National Rifle Association’, *The Times*, 3 July 1860, p. 12.

65 H. Cunningham, *The Volunteer Force: A Social and Political History, 1859–1908* (London, 1975), pp. 18–51.

66 Cunningham, *The Volunteer Force*; I. F. W. Beckett, *Riflemen Form: A Study of the Rifle Volunteer Movement, 1859–1908* (Aldershot, 1982); P. Morton, ‘A Military Irony: the Victorian Volunteer Movement,’ *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies*, 131.3 (1986), pp. 63–70.

Volunteer revival is concerned, the task is to analyse what the press response to this phenomenon says about wider social understandings of the ‘duty to serve’. How, then, did the press understand the nature and meaning of the Volunteer revival before 1862, and what did these understandings reveal about social conceptions of military obligation more generally?

On the whole, the popular press was extremely supportive of the Volunteers. *The Times* was the movement’s great champion, but newspapers from both ends of the political spectrum found something to admire in it. Radicals appreciated its circumvention of the aristocratic military machine and its ‘democratisation’ of military knowledge, while conservatives applauded its spirit of public service and the habits of discipline and obedience it could instil. In press discourse, discussion of the movement was suffused with patriotic and chivalrous rhetoric, reflecting the emerging post–Crimean concept that ‘a free state is most legitimately defended by the stout hearts, the practised hands, the sharp steel of its own citizens’.⁶⁷ The press lauded the volunteer impulse as an act of good citizenship, self–denial, chivalry and public spirit. It had ‘a moral grandeur that cannot be too highly appreciated’, with Volunteers representing ‘the heart, the conscience, the moral strength of England’.⁶⁸ As Cunningham has noted, the Volunteering phenomenon is best understood within the context of burgeoning middle–class values: as ‘the military expression of the spirit of self–help, Victorian capitalism in arms’.⁶⁹ Volunteers were described as the military expression of the ‘nation’ – but a ‘nation’ defined by the civilianist liberal values of the middle class. Volunteers, wrote the *Morning Post*, ‘are not of the classes that replenish the ranks of the line...[or] feed the militia, though they, too, are worthy of all honour and confidence; ...they are of the very marrow and substance of Britain; they are of the working, trading, learning, daring, doing classes’.⁷⁰

67 ‘A FLESH’D SOLDIER, CIVIL TONGUES AND KILLING SWORDS’, *Examiner*, 10 December 1859, p. 788.

68 ‘Our gracious QUEEN will this day’, *Morning Post*, 23 June 1860, p. 4.

69 Cunningham, *The Volunteer Force*, p. 1.

70 ‘Our gracious QUEEN will this day’, *Morning Post*, 23 June 1860, p. 4.

The creation of the Volunteer force was seen as a demonstration of middle class initiative, vigour, persistence and self-possession, while the gift of time, effort and resources demonstrated public spirit, patriotism, and unselfish charity. Much virtue was located in the unpaid, 'self-sufficient' and 'gentleman amateur' nature of the movement, which, while it excluded the masses who could not afford the cost of Volunteer membership, was taken as a guarantee of unselfish motives. Against the sneering of aristocratic and military circles, the popular press vigorously defended the work ethic, earnestness and competency of Volunteers. Indeed, Volunteers were frequently held up in opposition to the aristocratic military tradition, as vibrant symbols of modernity, rationality, commonsense and liberalism. *Punch*, for example, often contrasted rational, manly, forward-thinking Volunteers (on matters such as uniform reform) to a reactionary, arrogant and backward military establishment (in the comic form of blustering veteran officers).⁷¹ The meritocratic structure of the Volunteer force – organised as it was around consensus and the election of officers – offered a further contrast to the ongoing aristocratic monopoly on commissions in the regular army.⁷²

The press was also eager to reinforce the notion that Volunteering was an inherently liberal pursuit. In keeping with the persistent anti-militarism of British society, the Volunteer movement loudly proclaimed itself a wholly sober, liberal and pacific-spirited endeavour. 'Now, here is a movement as strictly defensive as it is possible to conceive', insisted *The Times*. 'Englishmen are only proposing to protect their own homes if anybody should come to attack them. The Volunteers are a home force exclusively; nor can their services ever be required, except in the event of that very contingency which in the eyes even of the Peace Party itself would justify war.'⁷³ Above all, immense pride was taken in the wholly voluntary nature of the movement. 'What despotic states feel themselves compelled to

71 'VOLUNTEERS AND VETERANS', *Punch*, 9 July 1859, p. 11.

72 Though, as Beckett points out, there remained a pervasive tendency to place the nobility in command. Beckett, *Amateur Military Tradition*, p. 71.

73 'People accustomed to Mr. BRIGHT'S style of', *The Times*, 2 June 1859, p. 8.

enforce, England can effect by mere spontaneous volition', boasted *John Bull*.⁷⁴ Indeed, it was widely suggested that 'in England *only* could such a force be raised by the spontaneous patriotism of the nation',⁷⁵ since the Volunteer impulse was the direct military representation of England's unique brand of constitutional liberalism, and 'is just as much the necessary result of vital power being dispersed throughout the body politic as the conscription is the result of its concentration in the person of one man'.⁷⁶ The willingness of Englishmen to participate in the Volunteer movement was understood to reflect the heightened moral awareness and public spirit fostered by a liberal state.

The Volunteer impulse, thus, was interpreted in the popular press as a natural expression of the values and virtues of England's free, educated and vital middle classes. Press discourse expressed a new level of consensus on the desirability and righteousness of voluntary civilian participation in national defence, *The Times* declaring it an index of national moral worth, since 'it is only when a nation is thoroughly sound that the educated and the possessors of property voluntarily take arms into their hands'.⁷⁷ But celebration of socio-moral virtue of Volunteering in the press does not necessarily equate to press endorsement of the idea that Volunteering represented a citizenly *obligation*. Grand charitable acts of all kinds were celebrated in the press, but readers were not censured for their failure to replicate such acts. To what extent, then, did the press represent Volunteering as the fulfilment of a serious personal duty? On the question of whether or not Englishmen were morally *obligated* to participate in national defence (by serving in the Volunteers), public debate was vaguer and more varied.

Representations of military participation as a national duty occurred most frequently in the press between the spring and the winter of 1859, while the war scare was still acute and the

74 'RIFLE CLUBS', *John Bull*, 4 June 1859, p. 361.

75 '1803 AND 1860', *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 1 July 1860, p. 1.

76 'Voluntary Organization For National Defence. A HERTFORDSHIRE INCUMBENT', *The Times*, 29 November 1859, p. 9.

77 'It is now nearly 60 years since the present LORD', *The Times*, 21 May 1861, p. 8.

Volunteer movement was still being established. *The Times* made a mission of ‘rousing people to a sense of their own duties in defending the country’.⁷⁸ Stressing the vulnerability of Britain’s international position, it professed ‘the time has surely come when every man in the three kingdoms should learn the use of arms’,⁷⁹ and pressed its readership to ‘feel its duties, and understand how weak, how dishonourable, is the situation of a people which depends for its safety on hired soldiers alone’.⁸⁰ *The Times* found an ally in this mission in the conservative press, which also proved an ardent advocate of an obligation towards civilian military participation. Indeed, the *Morning Post* declared participation not only in defence against invasion, but in defence of noble principles more broadly, as the duty of a free people. ‘The common sentiment of liberty’, it asserted, ‘...makes every man aware that on behalf of his country he has not only to repel invaders but to defend his own birthright.’⁸¹

Those who endorsed an obligation towards military participation in 1859 often drew legitimacy for their claims, and for the Volunteer movement itself, from Britain’s historical tradition of civilian participation in national defence. ‘This idea was not one written or talked into the mind of the nation;’ wrote the *Spectator*, ‘it grew there; for the habit of self-defence is tolerably ancient in these islands.’⁸² In depicting the movement as a revival of ‘the old national force of the country’, commentators drew parallels not only with the Volunteer Corps of the Napoleonic Wars, but with the Tudor obligation towards archery training, and the Anglo-Saxon *fyrð* – or at least, with mid-Victorian imaginings of such a thing.⁸³ The form and intent of historical military obligations were discussed earnestly in the press, with a number of commentators even claiming the ongoing authority of such ancient laws. ‘The matter of obligation is this, that we are bound to take part with the *posse*

78 ‘The copybooks inform us that perseverance is’, *The Times*, 12 November 1859, p. 8.

79 ‘Volunteer Corps, M. O. O.’, *The Times*, 28 April 1859, p. 10.

80 ‘The copybooks inform us that perseverance is’, *The Times*, 12 November 1859, p. 8.

81 ‘REVIEW OF THE VOLUNTEERS BY HER MAJESTY’, *Morning Post*, 25 June 1860, p. 5.

82 ‘WHO FOUNDED THE VOLUNTEERS, AND WHO WILL FOUND A NATIONAL MILITIA’, *Spectator*, 3 November 1860, p.1047

83 ‘While two great Continental Powers are on the’, *The Times*, 19 April 1859, p. 9.

comitatus to repel invasion, and put down riots and disturbances’, insisted one Volunteering enthusiast and lawyer, citing this obligation as ‘the universal principle of the law’.⁸⁴ While not all were so literal-minded, advocates of Volunteering frequently cited England’s tradition of civilian military participation as a truer expression of the obligations of the people than the heedless, optimistic disavowal of military participation that had prevailed since the French Wars, when ‘a feeling of security had been gradually engendered in the country that was not warranted; a feeling that it was morally impossible for the country ever to be invaded’.⁸⁵ The Volunteer campaign in the popular press expressed considerable frustration with the dilution of England’s tradition of civilian military obligation into the responsibility merely to pay taxes for new regiments. Increasingly, advocates of the movement suggested that delegation by taxation or substitution was only truly appropriate when an individual was *unable* to fulfil his personal obligation. Delegating your military responsibility, under this interpretation, therefore suggested incapacity, unmanliness and degeneracy. The introduction of ‘the people of this hitherto pacific generation ... to the way of their forefathers’ represented a reassertion of national masculinity, vitality and capability, a return to a rightful tradition stretching back into antiquity, and a reawakening of the English people to their responsibility to participate in national defence.⁸⁶

While supporters of Volunteering frequently cited the ancient obligations of the English subject to the Crown, however, in reality the movement was not foremost a response to the needs or request of the State. The revival of Volunteering had been neither sought or particularly desired by government – not least because the generally middle-class Volunteers also attracted significant numbers of the respectable artisans, tradesmen and clerks who might otherwise have been candidates for the militia, itself already feeling the loss of many of the young gentlemen that had traditionally supplied its officer class. While

84 ‘THE VOLUNTEER MOVEMENT’, *Examiner*, 25 June 1859, p. 410.

85 ‘VOLUNTEER RIFLE CORPS’, *John Bull*, 26 November 1859, p. 760.

86 ‘At last, and after a long stage of doubt, Eng-’, *The Times*, 14 May 1859, p. 8.

it certainly attempted to draw legitimacy from England's tradition of civilian military liability to the State, the socio-moral language of the Volunteer Revival reveals a far less State-driven, legalistic understanding of the moral imperative towards participation. Little rhetorical energy was spared on the claims of Queen and Country; indeed, as had been the case with the volunteer impulse during the Indian Mutiny, the State was in fact cast more as an obstructor of right-minded public enthusiasm than as the subject of inspiration and allegiance.

In some ways, the patriotic language of the Revival had more in common with the eighteenth century tradition of patriot protest than with the conservative, state-focussed patriotism of the 1880s and after.⁸⁷ It reflected a middle-class protest against the State and the aristocratic military machine: an assertion of middle-class values and a reclamation of the people's central role in military affairs. The Volunteer campaign revived the old language of the 'constitutional check' offered by a 'people's army'. With the *Examiner* suggesting that free institutions were fundamentally incompatible with the existence of large standing armies,⁸⁸ and *The Times* warning that 'a nation which trusts to a single caste or profession to fight its battles against foreigners will not long preserve its domestic liberties',⁸⁹ the Volunteers positioned themselves as a liberal substitute to expansion of the regular forces of the State. The civilianist nature of the movement was emphasised, the liberal press avowing that 'no man in learning the use of the rifle need forsake his business or his home', and emphatically disassociating the 'peaceful', 'sober', 'fair-minded' Volunteer movement from the illiberal leanings and militarism of the aristocracy.⁹⁰

87 H. Cunningham, 'The Language of Patriotism 1750-1914' in *History Workshop Journal*, 12 (1981), pp. 8-33.

88 'THE VOLUNTEER MOVEMENT', *Examiner*, 14 January 1860, p. 24.

89 'Volunteer Corps. A. H.', *The Times*, 5 December 1859, p. 12.

90 'At last, and after a long stage of doubt, Eng-', *The Times*, 14 May 1859, p. 8.

Indeed, as Patricia Morton has argued, the Volunteer revival was less a militarisation of the general public than a *civilianisation* of military affairs.⁹¹ It was understood in the press to embody civilian values and commonsense priorities of the ‘nation’ – in reality, the middle classes – at a time when faith in government competence had been severely shaken. As a result, independence from government was central to the ideology of the movement. In reality, after the defeat of Derby's ministry by the new Liberal coalition in June 1859, the movement was brought steadily under greater government control. A series of Herbert/Grey circulars confirmed liability to serve anywhere in Britain in the event of invasion or insurrection, authorised 'consolidated' and 'administrative' battalions which brought corps together into units of workable size, and granted support in the form of training courses, instructors and government-supplied rifles. But, convenient fiction notwithstanding, the *idea* of independence from government remained central to pro-Volunteer discourse. This independence hinged on the voluntary, unpaid nature of Volunteering, which not only guaranteed the unselfish nature and ‘moral tone’ of the corps, but also protected the freedom and autonomy of the force. ‘The Volunteers are what their name signifies’, *The Times* asserted. ‘They are not the paid servants of the State, and can never become so without losing much of what makes their organization attractive and their services valuable.’⁹² The high moral tone, romantic appeal and intrinsic value of the movement were attributed to its independence, civilianism and ‘amateur’ nature – the very features that separated it from regular, state-run military participation.

Just as it had during the Indian Mutiny, civilian military participation was represented less as an obligation owed to the State than a *right* claimed by the individual. This was particularly evident in the debate over working-class participation in the movement. From the first months of the Revival it was clear that, just as private expense had helped to secure the genteel character of the 1797 movement, so too would the cost of uniforms,

91 P. Morton, ‘A Military Irony: the Victorian Volunteer Movement,’ *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies*, 131.3 (1986), pp. 63–70.

92 ‘Volunteers have every reason to be satisfied with’, *The Times*, 10 June 1861, p. 8.

equipment and subscription combine to effectively exclude the poorest orders from the 1859 corps. While wary of criticising a fledgling movement that it generally supported, the popular press did express dissatisfaction with the exclusivity of the corps. *Punch*, *John Bull* and the *Examiner* in particular argued that all classes should be united in the patriotic work of national defence and actively campaigned for the reduction of costs for working class participants. The movement, suggested the *Examiner*, ‘must be national or it must come to nothing, and to be national it must comprehend all classes, and be organised and managed with a view to that object. Exclusiveness will be its ruin.’⁹³ Though the *Spectator* persisted in claiming that ‘the natural arrangements of society’ dictated a proper separation between the middle-class Volunteers ‘who put the State to no expense’ and the working-class militia ‘for those who literally have not the means of wholly serving the State free of expense’,⁹⁴ by 1860, a general press consensus had emerged that ‘all classes should be united in so honourable a work as that of national defence’.⁹⁵

Press discourse promoted an egalitarian ethos: that all classes were equal in the Volunteer movement, and that no one need fear a loss of dignity for turning themselves to useful work. The unifying effect of Volunteering was often stressed, although the underlying message was essentially patronising: that Volunteering would elevate working-class men ‘out of the mere inaction and labour in which they live’ and facilitate their assimilation with middle-class culture, rather than that it might provide an arena for mutual understanding and respect.⁹⁶ Nonetheless, it was no longer acceptable in respectable press discourse to suggest that the working classes lacked the ‘stake in the country’ that qualified them as loyal defenders. ‘We will not insult our readers by pointing out what our English craftsmen have to defend and fight for,’ wrote the *Examiner*, ‘nor to prove that their homes

93 ‘THE VOLUNTEER MOVEMENT’, *Examiner*, 24 December 1859, p. 818.

94 ‘ARTISAN RIFLE CORPS’, *Spectator*, 25 August 1860, p. 807.

95 ‘The Volunteer Movement will presently enter’, *The Times*, 15 August 1860, p. 9.

96 ‘M’KNIGHT, W H E, OUR VOLUNTEERS AND OUR WORKING MEN’, *Examiner*, 7 January 1860, p. 4.

and hearths are an heritage as valuable to them as Alton Towers is to its noble owner.⁹⁷ A widely-reported after-dinner quip by the Tory Earl of Hardwicke, that ‘if a weapon were given to a man who had no property, whether it were a civil weapon or a military one, his natural tendency would be to acquire property which he had not got’,⁹⁸ provoked outraged disgust across the board. *The Times* pointedly noted that ‘no thoroughbred English gentleman will ever experience anything but pride at finding his dependents and servants by his side in the ranks of a force the object of which is to ensure the sacredness of the humblest hearth no less than that of the noblest’.⁹⁹

Significantly, however, popular discourse tended overwhelmingly to equate this universal ‘stake in the country’ with the *right* to participate in national defence. Pressure to include the working classes cited not their duty, but their equal claim to the honour and privilege of Volunteer service. Working-class men, suggested the liberal and radical press, deserved the opportunity to ‘claim their right to be enrolled in defence of the kingdom’ no less than middle-class men.¹⁰⁰ Nor did the press consider it an acceptable excuse, as some military and governmental authorities suggested, to say that ‘those whose condition in life does not enable them to afford to [Volunteer], had better remain at home or enlist in the militia’.¹⁰¹ Not only was the militia considered to recruit only from the lowest of the low, and thus threatened social degradation to respectable working-class men, but it also negated the honourable ‘gift’ aspect that gave Volunteering its moral glow. As *Punch* put it, ‘the militia is a paid service, and the Volunteer is not; and humble as they be, there are many of the ‘humbler classes” who are much too proud to enter it’.¹⁰²

97 ‘THE VOLUNTEER MOVEMENT.—AMALGAMATION OF CLASSES’, *Examiner*, 8 September 1860, p. 562.

98 ‘AFTER-DINNER ARGUMENT’, *Punch*, 11 August 1860, p. 57.

99 ‘Artisan Volunteer Corps. A HERTFORDSHIRE INCUMBENT’, *The Times*, 21 August 1860, p. 9.

100 ‘OUR VOLUNTEERS’, *Examiner*, 28 May 1859, pp. 338–9.

101 ‘COST OF VOLUNTEER DRILL’, *Examiner*, 29 March 1862, p. 195.

102 ‘AFTER-DINNER ARGUMENT’, *Punch*, 11 August 1860, p. 57.

Volunteer participation was conceptualised as a patriotic gift from the individual to the community, the giving of which denoted the patriotism, moral fibre and full membership of society of the giver. Its moral worth, its value as a symbol of public spirit, honour, manliness and respectability, derived from the fact that it was given freely, rather than legislated, requested or even necessarily expected. Some took this reasoning further, stressing (as they had during their earlier attacks on the aristocratic military ‘monopoly’) the politically empowering qualities of military participation. One correspondent to *Reynolds’s* reversed the familiar dictum ‘no vote, no musket’, suggesting instead that ‘the working classes never will be put in possession of their political rights until they have first acquired the weapons of freemen, and the knowledge to use them’,¹⁰³ while *Lloyd’s* warned that an exclusively ‘armed and drilled middle-class may assume, on occasions, a very dangerous attitude’.¹⁰⁴ These various depictions of service in the Volunteers as an honour, a gift, a right, and an avenue to empowerment –unfairly withheld from the working classes – tended to undermine the initial conception of Volunteering as the modern-day continuation of England’s former civilian military obligations.

Indeed, from 1860 on, as the atmosphere of urgency and national crisis lessened and the Volunteer movement became more established, the sense that Volunteering represented a principle of citizenly obligation steadily diminished. Where it had once fiercely defended the force against the criticism of military authorities and other naysayers, the press now grew more playful with the Volunteers. It could now afford to chaff them a little for their good-spirited pretensions and occasional absurdities with such ribs as *Punch’s* famous ‘Who Shot the Dog?’¹⁰⁵ There had never been any of the censure for non-participants that one would expect of a movement truly considered a universal obligation, but during the peak phase of ‘duty’ rhetoric in 1859, the potential thorniness of the obvious fact of majority non-participation was reflected in a general silence on the matter. In the more

103 ‘NO MUSKET, NO VOTE’, *Reynolds’s Newspaper*, 5 February 1860, p. 7.

104 ‘1803 AND 1860’, *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper*, 1 July 1860, p. 1.

105 ‘STREET BOY (fortissimo). "Who Shot the Dog!"', *Punch*, 28 April 1860, p. 176.

relaxed atmosphere after 1860, however, the press was more comfortable with the dichotomy between generous Volunteers and grateful non-participants – now termed the ‘non-effective public’.

It was without the former sense of discomfort that *Punch* offered its thanks, ‘for every one who lends his aid to strengthen our national defences, deserves the thanks of every one who wants to be defended by them’.¹⁰⁶ Nor was this gratitude unconditional; it also hinged on an element of reciprocal ‘performance’ from the Volunteers in the form of demonstrations, reviews and other public entertainments. *The Times* reminded Volunteers that they were ‘indebted to the generosity of the non-effective public’ for donations and support, and ‘it would be an ill return for all this sympathy to exclude the people from the opportunities which they would use to encourage and admire’.¹⁰⁷ Clearly, there was no great dishonour perceived in being part of the supportive ‘non-effective public’.

As the war scare faded and the sense of urgency diminished after 1860, the rhetoric of duty towards participation in national defence steadily declined. The (largely pro-Volunteer) press increasingly emphasised the great generosity and self-sacrifice of ‘those citizens who ... have devoted so much of their time, attention, and toil to one of the most useful and generous works in which they could be employed, and who have done so without remuneration’.¹⁰⁸ By lavishing praise upon Volunteers for their generosity and public spirit, however, the press implicitly painted Volunteering as an act of moral virtue above and beyond what was ordinarily expected of civilians: one that exceeded rather than met socio-moral expectations. This kind of language therefore positioned military participation as a kind of supererogatory act of charity rather than a serious national duty.

106 ‘A REAL WORKING MEN'S RIFLE CORPS’, *Punch*, 6 October 1860, p. 137.

107 ‘The events of the Volunteers' Field-day may cer-’, *The Times*, 3 April 1861, p. 8.

108 ‘COST OF VOLUNTEER DRILL’, *Examiner*, 29 March 1862, p. 195.

As the rhetoric of duty declined, the non–military advantages and attractions of Volunteer movement were also progressively stressed. The press noted its function as an outlet for popular leisure and exercise. As well as providing ‘cheerful spectacles’¹⁰⁹ and public amusements, it served as a replacement for ‘old outdoor sports of the people [which] had been long on the decline’,¹¹⁰ the *Morning Post* noting that ‘burgher and yeoman have alike benefited by exercise which, whilst the first of national duties, are not the least in the class of invigorating sports’.¹¹¹ In public discourse, Volunteering was considered a positive force for class relations, since it enabled high and low to ‘meet together and unite shoulder to shoulder in defence of their common country’.¹¹² Volunteering also drew ‘men from the seclusion of their homes into public life’, getting people more involved in their local and national communities and encouraging the development of a broader sense of public spirit.¹¹³ Supporters asserted ‘that men were better men and better citizens for being Volunteers’,¹¹⁴ and that the movement fulfilled an innate desire for moral elevation, honour and public service: ‘It is something to be, to do, to talk about, and to represent in shape and deed the rush which otherwise is a disquieting dream.’¹¹⁵

Obviously, it also offered social advantage and belonging, as a symbol of membership of the middle–class moral community and as an opportunity for what we now call ‘networking’. While it would have been considered indelicate and cynical to cite these expectations in the press, it became clear when the privileges of social distinction were encroached upon that contemporaries understood them to be an essential part of the appeal of the Volunteer movement before 1862. The frustration evinced when it was announced that Volunteer titles and ranks would no longer be announced at Court testified to the sense that Volunteers were entitled to some social advantages or privileges in return for their

109 ‘The public has learnt the complete success with’, *The Times*, 4 September 1860, p. 6.

110 ‘The public has learnt the complete success with’, *The Times*, 4 September 1860, p. 6.

111 ‘LONDON, MONDAY, JUNE 25, 1860’, *Morning Post*, 25 June 1860, p. 4.

112 ‘The Volunteers. ELCHO’, *The Times*, 15 August 1860, p. 5.

113 ‘The public has learnt the complete success with’, *The Times*, 4 September 1860, p. 6.

114 ‘It is exactly two years since the people of this’, *The Times*, 25 May 1861, p. 8.

115 ‘The Volunteers have now been reviewed by the’, *The Times*, 9 November 1860, p. 6.

‘gift’ of service. ‘Already has the ominous question been asked in more than one quarter, “What are we really gaining in return for our time and trouble and money?”’ warned *The Times*, agreeing that ‘it was not unreasonable to expect that some slight privilege or immunity might in return have been gracefully conferred upon them...This great movement will otherwise assuredly soon languish and die out’.¹¹⁶ This kind of thinking reinforced a conception of Volunteering not as a response to inherent national duty, but as a charitable act of public spirit, a ‘free gift’ that nonetheless carried its own expectations of recognition and return.

After the first flush of ‘duty’ rhetoric, much of which was driven by the desire to legitimise and promote Volunteering as a fitting, patriotic and constitutional movement, the conception of Volunteering that emerged in the press could best be described as a vision of middle-class supererogatory duty – of laudable public service above and beyond what was expected of civilians. The self-aggrandisement of the movement and the absence of censure for non-participants indicated that military participation was not yet accepted as an inherent obligation to the state. But the Victorian Volunteer revival did represent an advance on previous conceptions of military participation. The idea that it was inappropriate for respectable, middle class men to take on a military role no longer held any currency in popular discourse (though of course, enrolment in the militia or regulars was still out of the question, and most agreed that the Volunteers were ‘not only of a class which is utterly unfitted for foreign service, but their character and their occupation obviously preclude any such employment’.¹¹⁷

The years 1857–1861 saw the emergence of a noble, romanticised vision of military service and a concerted enthusiasm for broader public participation in national defence. After the shock to public complacency offered by the Crimean War, the intensely

¹¹⁶ ‘Bank Of Volunteer Officers’, *The Times*, 27 April 1860, p. 12.

¹¹⁷ ‘LONDON, SATURDAY, NOV. 12’, *Daily News*, 12 November 1859, p. 4.

emotional and personal nature of the Indian Mutiny broke down the barriers between the civilian and military spheres and encouraged the development of a moral impulse towards participation that was more to do with personal integrity and Christian fellow-feeling than obligation to the State. The atmosphere of national crisis in 1858–9 built upon this impulse to take personal action in defence of English homes and values, and combined with the post-Crimean frustration with the aristocratic military monopoly to inspire the Victorian Volunteer Revival. While it drew legitimacy from older ideas of military obligation, in practice, Volunteering was more to do with the assertion of middle-class virtues than with fulfilment of citizenly duty. From 1862, however, both the Volunteer movement and conceptions of military obligation more broadly began to undergo significant changes. As the middle-class initiators of the movement were replaced by working-class Volunteers, and reports of the horrors of the American Civil War reached an appalled English public, the aura of romanticism that had graced the movement was dispelled. With the awesome power of the Prussian military dawning, military participation was about to take on a far grimmer aspect.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Dawn of Prussianism, 1862–1871

The Force of a nation will for the future consist of its whole able-bodied male population. This is the grand fact which is permanently established by the present war, and which it is idle to overlook.

- *The Times*, 6 October 1870¹

The period 1862–1871 was, in many ways, the decade of citizen soldiery. Both the American Civil War and Prussian expansionism promoted on a world stage the principle and the practice of citizen armies, founded on a universal citizenly obligation towards military service. The implication seemed clear: the wars of the future would be fought not by small standing armies, but by ‘armed nations’. This dawning realisation was reflected in the press, which progressively stressed the military advantages of ‘citizen soldiers’ and identified them as the defining feature of modern warfare. More ominously, the experiences of the period brought home the fundamental insufficiency of Britain’s armed forces next to the immense conscript armies of the Continent. Public discussion of civilian military participation advanced significantly over the course of the decade, and by 1871 almost all of the key ingredients of a coherent conception of civilian liability towards military service – as I refer to it hence, the ‘citizenly obligation thesis’ – had been articulated. And yet, while the idea of citizen–soldiery greatly advanced *intellectually* in this decade, it failed to crystallise into political will or real conviction in Britain. Even at the rhetorical height of the citizen–soldier idea during the Franco–Prussian War 1870–1871, the fundamental suspicion that such an idea, however militarily advantageous, was simply incompatible with English values and institutions was never far from the surface. This chapter highlights the disjuncture between growing intellectual support for the idea

¹ ‘We publish this morning a further letter from’, *The Times*, 6 October 1870, p. 9.

of inherent civilian liability to military service, and the complications and counter-currents that militated against meaningful practical conversion in the decade of citizen-soldiery.

As we have seen, the three years before 1862 had seen a great surge in moral enthusiasm for civilian military participation. The Indian Mutiny and Volunteer Revival produced a sense that volunteering personal service in a righteous cause was a morally virtuous and 'dutiful' act, although, since it was founded not in inherent political obligation but in individual conscience, chivalry and public spirit, an essentially supererogatory one. The London press was also broadly optimistic about the intelligence, moral standing and military potential of citizen soldiers, and hopeful that the shift towards such armies might act for, rather than against, the promotion of peace. This optimism and romanticism was evident in the first press responses to the outbreak of the American Civil War. Though the morality of fraternal war was always complicated, the first press discussions of the conflict imbued it with a certain sincerity and moral grandeur. Like no war in memory, this was a war of peoples, ready to fight for the politico-moral principles they believed in. As a 'crusade' waged by the people in the form of citizen-militias, rather than a mere political quarrel between states prosecuted by professional soldiers, it was taken as emblematic of the modern shift toward citizen-soldiers, and watched with fascinated interest by the liberal press as a potential indicator of not only the nature and efficiency of such a style of warfare, but also its moral dimensions.

It was not long, however, before this optimistic romanticism began to sour. The greatest 'complication' to the pro-citizen soldier message was the growing conviction, from as early as mid-1861, that the war itself was unjust. Though condemning slavery, the London press tended to support the South's right to political self-determination. They characterised the conflict as a one waged 'by the North for the purpose of coercing the Southern States, which in a perfectly legal and open and constitutional manner have put an

end to a contract called the constitution of the United States' and therefore 'one of the most aggressive and unrighteous wars that any people ever carried on'.² In such a war, civilian military participation lost its moral legitimacy. Admiration was expressed for the manly conduct of the South, which *The Times* described as struggling for its very existence 'like one of the States of antiquity, in which the names of freeman and soldier were almost synonymous, leaving the cultivation of the land and the management of ordinary business of life to their wives, their children, and their slaves'.³ The London press agreed that defence of one's own nation or community against external threat was a clear moral duty, and commended the citizen-soldiers of the South for their devotion to that duty. But the citizen-soldiers of the Northern States, as the aggressors, could not claim this moral underpinning to their participation. Subjects under the 'despotism' of Lincoln were judged to have no obligation to volunteer their service, and the State no right to compel it.

This made the introduction of conscription by both sides in the spring of 1862 all the more repugnant to English observers. The London press had noted the manpower difficulties in the North, and interpreted them as evidence that while the people of the North supported the war in principle, it was not so important to them as to inspire personal participation (neatly commandeering the logic that had been rejected so defensively when Cobden had applied it to the failure of popular recruiting in the Crimean War). Only days before the announcement of the draft, the *Morning Post* was so confident that 'conscription is out of the question; it could be justified alone by invasion of the Northern Soil', that it predicted instead that 'from a paucity of men willing to act as mercenaries the Federal Government may be forced to discontinue a contest which, had they not been utterly insensate, they would never have begun'.⁴ The commencement of the draft was therefore met with shocked dismay in the London press. To the numerically inferior South the expediency

2 'KING COTTON v. KING MOB', *John Bull*, 28 September 1861, p. 617.

3 'Notwithstanding the great disproportion between', *The Times*, 1 January 1864, p. 6.

4 'LONDON, TUESDAY, JULY 22, 1862', *Morning Post*, 22 July 1862, p. 4.

was less begrudged, *The Times* allowing that, ‘granting that the war is just and necessary, the means of carrying it on must be found’, and noting that ‘the people of the Confederate States bear it patiently because the war on their part is defensive’.⁵ But while conceding that ‘this is the way in which other nations have carried on life and death struggles, and we must give the Northern leaders the credit of believing that the present struggle for the integrity of the union is a struggle for life or death’, *The Times* made clear that it did not share that belief in the justice and necessity of the war, and neither, apparently, did ‘a large proportion of Northern citizens’.⁶

The London press refused to reproach Northerners either for their reluctance to serve voluntarily, or for their evasion of the draft. ‘If the North were asserting its independence,’ it suggested, ‘its people would rise as one man’, just as the population of the South had done.⁷ But the North was fighting for no such righteous cause, asserted the London press. Despite the Abolitionist rhetoric that had lately attached itself to the war, the press characterised it as ‘primarily a war for empire, in which the question of boundary plays no part and the question of emancipation but a subordinate one’.⁸ The aggressive nature of the North’s impulse to war was therefore judged to negate both lasting patriotic enthusiasm and moral justification for conscription. The Northern draft was denounced almost universally by the London press as morally unconscionable, though naturally the liberal and radical newspapers expressed the most fervent outrage. *Punch* delineated the morality of the situation in the strongest terms in its verse ‘The American Conscript’s Complaint’:

5 ‘The Conscription has been commenced in the’, *The Times*, 30 October 1862, p. 9.

6 ‘The Conscription has been commenced in the’, *The Times*, 30 October 1862, p. 9.

7 ‘The Conscription has been commenced in the’, *The Times*, 30 October 1862, p. 9.

8 ‘The Downfall of American Slavery’, *Illustrated London News*, 18 October 1862, p. 427.

By what law and for what reason must I life and limb surrender?
Not because my country claims me from a foeman to defend her.
Then a duty would demand self sacrifice; but what occasion
Subjects me to death and torture as the soldier of invasion? ...
Hearth and home I'd fight to guard, and consequences little think on,
Won't go South to bleed and rot by order of Dictator LINCOLN.⁹

The strength of feeling against the 'tyranny' of conscription impeded English enthusiasm for citizen-soldiery, pushing the London press to stress the limits, rather than the essential fact, of the civilian's obligation to serve.

Even more viscerally, however, English observers reacted against the astonishing brutality of the war, which led them to question their romantic assumptions about the edifying effects of citizen soldiery. As early as April 1861, *Punch* expressed unease at the progress of the conflict, wondering whether citizen-armies had rescued war from the 'the caprice of rulers' only to land it in 'the madness of the people'.¹⁰ This unease hardened into horror as the bloodshed mounted, the London press reeling especially at the ruthless destruction of the Shenandoah Valley and Atlanta Campaigns. It grappled at length with the idea that so advanced and sophisticated a people could be the perpetrators of 'an amount of suffering unequalled in modern times and among civilized nations'.¹¹ In particular, it wondered at the disconnect between the decent civilians of all classes who formed both armies, and the wanton destruction they wreaked. 'No army ever sent into the field comprised so many persons of good social position as the Federal army then serving', wrote *The Times*, and yet 'it is said that the American War has not only been sanguinary and expensive beyond all known precedents, but has been conducted with signal barbarity and with a disregard of the forbearance which usage imposes on belligerents in the Old World'.¹²

9 'THE AMERICAN CONSCRIPT'S COMPLAINT', *Punch*, 26 September 1863, p. 128.

10 'Whatever may have been the case in former', *The Times*, 30 April 1861, p. 9.

11 'If the history of the American War could be', *The Times*, 1 August 1864, p. 8.

12 'Five years ago the Americans had no history', *The Times*, 19 November 1864, p. 9.

The fact that the relatively elevated social standing of the forces failed to translate into more civilised warfare tarnished the moral appeal of citizen soldiery. The message, as the London press took it, seemed to be that the horror of war overrode all. Reportage and analysis of the war was pervaded by this ever-increasing sense of horror and disgust, the romantic vocabulary of the citizen-soldier that had flourished only a year previous banished by a weary, anti-militaristic cynicism. The *Illustrated London Times* called war ‘an unmitigated evil, ... an absurdity’,¹³ while *Punch* reflected on the hollowness of even the most noble principles in the face of real suffering, confessing itself unable to locate any glory in the base slaughterhouse of war.¹⁴ Far from advocating the advantages of waging war with decent men, it decried that England could not fill her own ranks with unfeeling scoundrels, for the subjection of good men to the horrors of war inescapably constituted a profound tragedy. Forget citizen soldiers, it concluded: ‘Military service, in short, ought to be penal servitude.’¹⁵

Press discourse on the American Civil War did, however, indicate some embryonic notion of citizenly obligation towards war. The Northern campaign and use of conscription were, after all, rejected because they were not considered to be founded in a legitimate cause. Implicitly, then, both civilian military participation and, potentially, conscription could be justified in a truly righteous struggle – probably against invasion, although the dissection of the North’s exact motivations for warring upon the South suggested those with a real politico-moral stake in a war had the right to fight in it. The liberal London press was repelled by the (illegal) recruitment of English and Irish nationals (‘mercenaries’) for a war that was declared to be no business of theirs. Such men were no better than criminals, asserted *Punch*, since they ‘kill for hire or for amusement, and if such killing is not murder, what is?’¹⁶ But the London press was also critical of those *with* a stake in the war – such as Northern clergymen renowned for whipping anti-Southern sentiment – who

13 ‘International Maritime Law’, *Illustrated London News*, 22 March 1862, p. 279.

14 ‘REGIMENTAL ASSASSINS’, *Punch*, 12 October 1861, p. 144.

15 ‘REGIMENTAL ASSASSINS’, *Punch*, 12 October 1861, p. 144.

16 ‘REGIMENTAL ASSASSINS’, *Punch*, 12 October 1861, p. 144.

declined to bear their fair share in fighting the war they so vocally supported. Declining to volunteer, or evading the draft, was not itself the problem: such behaviour was acceptable in such an unjust war. But actively urging, promoting or facilitating war while refusing to serve in person was presented as clear hypocrisy. *Punch* lambasted the outcry from Abolitionist clergymen (nicknamed for the famous Abolitionist novelist Harriet Beecher Stowe) at their inclusion in the draft:

If 'tis wicked of the North to war upon the South,
Oh! Then stretch not your hand forth, and likewise hold your mouth; ...
If this is a holy war, and not a horrid curse,
Sacred calling is no bar; entirely the reverse; ...
For a cause so good and true why scorn to strike a blow?
Why but talk, whilst others do the fighting, PARSON STOWE?¹⁷

This disgust testifies to an emerging sense that passionate support for war ought to correspond to willingness to participate in it – in other words, to put one's body where one's mouth was. It also spoke to a larger preoccupation with fairness and equality in the application of the burdens of war. The conscription was considered all the more horrific for its generous provisions for substitution, which meant that, in practice, a relatively small proportion of those drafted actually served in person. Such provisions were thought to undermine any legitimacy that conscription could claim, by negating the principle of universal citizenly duty and leaving only the tyrannous exploitation of the vulnerable. The *Examiner* deplored a policy whereby 'the bodies of the poor are thus despotically seized for the services of the State, a robbery like that of our press-gangs of former times, but on an incomparably larger scale'.¹⁸ The conviction in the liberal and radical press that so terrible a burden as conscription must, at the very least, be applied with perfect equality to the able-bodied male population, further reinforced the embryonic sense that the defence of the nation (and the prosecution of its just wars) was the collective responsibility of the whole of the people.

17 'PARSON STOWE AND THE RECRUITING SERGEANT', *Punch*, 1 November 1862, p. 186.

18 'AMERICAN DIFFICULTIES', *Examiner*, 1 August 1863, p. 481.

Nonetheless, the overwhelming legacy of the American Civil War for English observers was one of horror and disgust. The ‘war of peoples’ in America demonstrated a whole new way of fighting, foreshadowing the mass citizen armies (and trench warfare) of the Great War to come. But wearied by its horrors, English observers generally dismissed the novel tactics and techniques of the war – including its mobilisation of citizen soldiers – as an aberration born of the unique circumstances of the conflict.¹⁹ Lack of sympathy for the aims of the war, the use of conscription, and the sheer horror perpetrated by ‘the people in arms’ all served to stunt English receptivity to the lessons of the war, and to its endorsement of citizen–soldiers as the future of warfare. Distaste for the war as a whole led the London press to implicitly consider citizen soldiery tarred with the same brush, and lessen enthusiasm for it in the English public sphere.

By 1865, therefore, English attitudes to civilian military participation had shifted significantly away from the vision of chivalrous, noble and gallant military service that had flourished in the glory–days of the Indian Mutiny and the Volunteer Revival. The 1860s saw the decline of romanticism associated with military service, and a general weariness and distaste for war. There was a sense in the London press that the cynicism and materialism of contemporary society had loosed modern war from its moral underpinnings. ‘We speak contemptuously of the wild and reckless contests...that form the staple of the Middle Ages, yet we seem to be drifting towards a point which would place us below the statesmen and warriors of those barbarous times’, sighed *The Times* in 1867. ‘There was a feeling of right, however perverse and distorted, at the bottom of many of these wars ... [whereas] we have nothing now to oppose to the warlike spirit fostered by enormous armaments but the predominance of material interests on the side of peace.’²⁰ The energetic debate on military reform that had blossomed since the failures of the Crimean War lost momentum in this atmosphere of war–weariness and gloomy

19 J. Luvaas, *The Military Legacy of the Civil War: The European Inheritance* (Chicago, 1939), p. 46.

20 ‘We are all with great reason congratulating our–’, *The Times*, 16 May 1867, p. 10.

pessimism.²¹ Thanks to the impending release of soldiers enlisted for a limited term during the Crimean War, the problem of recruitment for the regular army drew centre stage. But despite searching and animated debate over a range of possible initiatives, there were few fresh ideas, and almost all focussed on reaffirmed the purely pragmatic motivations for service. ‘It would be absurd to suppose that men would quit any handicraft employment to shoulder a musket for honour and glory, or to serve Queen and country’, stated the *Examiner*.²² The liberal press still held up the notion of a respectable, representative national army as an ideal, but the horror produced by such armies in America made it difficult to reconcile the concept of respectable middle-class manhood with the apparent brutality and inhumanity of war.

This disillusionment had much to do with spectatorship of the American Civil War, but it also coincided with and compounded a number of other domestic trends equally unfavourable to the growth of a sense of citizenly obligation towards military service. Politically, the period was defined by diplomatic disengagement in favour of an emphasis on economy and free trade. Even the hawkish Palmerston resisted entanglement in the American War, despite a number of difficult diplomatic crises. His policy over Poland in 1863 and Denmark in 1864 was less cautious, but the setbacks afforded by Prussia in both cases only served to strengthen antipathy to the old Palmerstonian style of interventionism, and after his death in 1865, the policy of non-intervention became official.²³ Cobden noted the ‘change amounting to a revolution ... in our foreign policy’ and predicted that ‘henceforth we shall observe an absolute abstention from continental politics’.²⁴ This non-interventionist approach was declared boldly and frequently by both the Liberal and Conservative governments of the latter 1860s, leading a former Liberal Foreign Secretary to caution in 1867 that ‘the policy of not meddling is of course the right

21 ‘There are certain subjects which are always dis-’, *The Times*, 31 May 1862, p. 11.

22 ‘THE SOLDIER'S PAY’, *Examiner*, 16 April 1864, p. 242.

23 G. Williams and J. Ramsden, *Ruling Britannia: A Political History of Britain, 1688–1988* (London, 1990), p. 300.

24 5 Nov. 1864 (To M. Chevalier.), cited in G. Williams and J. Ramsden, *Ruling Britannia*, p. 300.

one, but it is not necessary that all mankind should be let into the secret twice a day'.²⁵ Public enthusiasm for 'moral intervention' abroad also appeared to decline after 1862. Whereas Garibaldi's campaign for Italian unification had inspired a modest rash of 'freelance' English volunteers for Italy 1859–1860, equivalent public sympathy for the Polish insurrectionists in 1863 inspired no similar volunteer response. 'Are there no volunteers for Poland?' Where are those who so freely took up arms, not long ago, for Italy?' wondered the *Observer*.²⁶ Despite highly vocal political support for the Polish cause, the public at large now seemed less inclined to consider personal participation as either obligatory or desirable.

This sense of disengagement also extended to Imperial possessions. From 1860, there was a growing sense in both Parliament and the London press that the colonies ought to be self-sufficient in both political and military matters (with the notable exception of India, thanks to the recent Mutiny).²⁷ Fuelled by frustration with the costs of colonial defence, especially the drawn-out and sanguinary Maori Wars in New Zealand, the London press insisted that British soldiers were needed for the defence of their own nation, and demanded that British taxes no longer be squandered in endless frontier squabbles with 'savages'. The colonies were urged to form their own military forces, and thereby cease their unmanly dependence on Imperial support. 'When they have once grown up to the strength of self-defence, what duty remains to us of espousing their quarrels and fighting their battles with the feeble barbarians around them?' asked *The Times*.²⁸ Here, the principle of self-defence dovetailed nicely with the real kernel of the matter: British desire for economy and retrenchment, and the prevailing political logic of disengagement and non-intervention.

25 Williams and Ramsden, p. 300.

26 'Editorial Article 2', *Observer*, 22 March 1863, p. 8.

27 Williams and Ramsden, pp. 301–3.

28 'There are twenty-nine regiments of Infantry', *The Times*, 14 June 1864, p. 11.

War-weariness, disengagement and a general loss of enthusiasm for military matters made for a people reluctant to countenance any extension of the military realm into civilian life. But perhaps even more firmly ranged against the pro-citizen-soldier message inherent in the American Civil War was a second, more active counter-current: that of the consolidation and entrenchment, in this period, of a Liberal Party and the liberal creed of 'peace, retrenchment and reform' for which it stood. For some time, of course, England had been self-consciously 'liberal' in its outlook and institutions. Around the mid-century point, however, various social trends combined to fuel the growth of popular liberalism. The mid-century religious revival, with its earnest emphasis on morality and conscience, weakened sectarian divides and chimed well with the elevated sense of political morality brought by Peelites to parliamentary liberalism.²⁹ Increases in literacy and changes in the press (including the abolition of Newspaper stamp duty) extended the realm of politics and public affairs to a broader non-aristocratic audience, while liberals also found natural allies in the growing urban manufacturing elite.³⁰ A further boost came with the emergence of Gladstone, a charismatic figure who combined High Anglicanism and a certain degree of inherent conservatism with a grasp of radical language and a moral earnestness that appealed to non-conformists.³¹ And although it curtailed Aberdeen's own plans for legal and educational reform, the Crimean War provoked an immense and influential backlash against aristocratic privilege and incompetency, further fuelling the advance of middle-class liberalism.

But it was in the 1860s that the forces of liberalism finally coalesced into a cohesive parliamentary force. Under Palmerston, who combined the loftiest liberal rhetoric with crowd-pleasing bullishness in foreign policy and a slow, steady approach to reform at home, Whigs, Peelites and Radicals gradually coalesced into one 'Liberal Party'. The decade then saw a concerted assertion of 'liberal values', foremost among them economy

29 Williams and Ramsden, pp. 274–5.

30 Williams and Ramsden, pp. 266–7.

31 Williams and Ramsden, pp. 278–9.

in government and individual liberty. In military affairs, this meant reduction of expenditure, retrenchment and absolute adherence to the voluntary principle. Any proposal that even hinted at compulsion, or had the vaguest odour of militarism, was regarded with extreme suspicion. This anti-militaristic, non-interventionist, voluntarist, liberty-above-all mindset was not new to the 1860s – indeed, it had much in common with sentiments prevalent before the Crimean War. But liberalism now had a party, literature, and support organisations, and a firmer, more corporeal presence in the sphere of London press discourse. The precepts of Victorian liberalism, particularly the inviolability of individual liberty and corresponding aversion to any form of governmental compulsion or control, proved difficult to reconcile with the pro-citizen soldier message implicit in the foreign wars of the 1860s, and, as we shall see, this difficulty greatly influenced responses to Prussian expansionism after 1866.

Ironically, the popular liberalism of the 1860s offered a perfect opportunity for investigation, and perhaps even justification, of the idea of civilian military obligation, in the form of the electoral reform debate. After all, the theoretical liability of citizens for military service was one of the most popular arguments against women's suffrage (despite the fact that no actual connection existed between voting rights and liability for military service: most militiamen and soldiers didn't have the vote, most voters were unlikely to be called on to fight).³² *Punch* was by no means alone in mockingly suggesting that 'the ladies who sigh for the suffrage should lose no time in enrolling themselves in regiments of Amazonian volunteers to signify that whilst they demand the rights, they are ready to accept the duties of citizenship'.³³ The old clamour of 'no vote, no musket' was not so far in the past; surely the franchise debate offered the perfect opportunity to clarify both the privileges and the duties of citizens? And yet, despite the simultaneous discussion of both franchise reform and the idea of citizen soldiery, commentators overwhelmingly failed to connect the two ideas.

32 B. Harrison, *Separate Spheres: the Opposition to Women's Suffrage* (London, 1978), p. 73

33 'EVERYTHING BY TURN', *Punch*, 27 August 1870, p. 94.

Only the radical press offered the occasional lone comment. Reinforcing the impossibility of conscription, a correspondent to *Reynolds's Newspaper* asserted that 'the people of England cannot be organised on the Prussian system ... because the majority of the English people have nothing to lose, and those who have, have also urgent private affairs'.³⁴ The *Daily News* was more explicit, suggesting that should conscription ever be required, 'the only chance of getting it is to admit the unrepresented classes to a share of the legislative and executive power. If there is to be a popular army, it must be based upon a decree which has received the assent of the people.'³⁵ But these comments made little impression upon press discourse; the question of civilian military obligations had yet to find a place within the reform, franchise and citizenship debate.

If general disillusionment and disengagement, and the entrenchment of liberal ideas of 'peace, retrenchment and reform' – the slogan taken up by Gladstone after 1868 – in the 1860s both worked against receptivity to the citizen soldier message, a third domestic trend exerted a more ambiguous influence. First and foremost, the notable decline in the prestige and popularity of England's own citizen-soldiers over the course of the 1860s reflected a general sense of disillusionment with civilian military participation. Most agreed that the militia had never really recovered after the Crimean War. With the death its most influential advocates in the early 1860s, the militia was in a reprehensible state, and was widely regarded a lost cause. The Volunteer Force continued to grow, but the horrors of the war in America, the fading impetus of invasion, and the downward shift in class composition after the introduction of a capitation grant in 1863 all chipped away at the social standing of the force.

There were growing doubts, too, about its military utility. 'Something is evidently wrong in the system of the Volunteers', asserted the *Spectator*, identifying 'insubordination and

34 'THE SALE AND MORTGAGE OF THE PEOPLE', *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 26 March 1871, p. 3.

35 'LONDON. MONDAY, NOV. 5', *Daily News*, 5 November 1866, p. 4.

non-appreciation of real military discipline' as particular vices.³⁶ 'Rumours have been swirling for some time prevalent that the recruiting for the Volunteer force is not going on so successfully as heretofore;' noted *John Bull* as early as 1862. 'Croakers are, therefore, beginning to say that the Volunteer force is useless, and are turning into ridicule those whom they freely designate as "deserters" showing the white feather.'³⁷ This early reference to the 'white feather' is essentially illogical – first, in peacetime it was the dedication and discipline, and not the courage, of Volunteers that was in question, and secondly, most of the criticism came from quarters that had never endorsed duty towards Volunteering in the first place. But the defensiveness evident in pro-Volunteering discourse indicates that such criticism was meeting its mark. Criticism and mockery of the force only increased after 1863, particularly from the professional military sphere, where mean-spirited witticisms at the expense of the Volunteers were a favoured subject for after-dinner speeches.³⁸

This decline in Volunteer popularity and prestige had, however, actually gave an unexpected boost to the idea of an inherent duty towards military service. Firstly, in defending themselves against this criticism, advocates of Volunteering turned increasingly to the 'citizenly obligation' conception of military participation. By focussing on the self-sacrifice of Volunteers, and the gratitude owed them by non-participants, the London press, which remained largely pro-Volunteer, attempted to marginalise both snobbish mockery and criticisms of their military efficacy. 1863 and 1864 therefore saw an increased emphasis on the hardships suffered by Volunteers in the serious pursuit of their duty, including physical discomfort, time, expense and ridicule.³⁹ All of this, noted *John Bull*, over and above the standard citizenly contributions of their fellows, for 'they equally with them pay taxes for the army and navy'.⁴⁰ Indeed, while there was still no explicit

36 'THE VOLUNTEER DIFFICULTY', *Spectator*, 15 August 1868, p. 957.

37 'OUR VOLUNTEER FORCE', *John Bull*, 11 January 1862, p. 25.

38 'A CRACK FOR A COLONEL', *Punch*, 4 April 1863, p. 144.

39 'War, we are often told, has two sides', *The Times*, 30 March 1864, p. 8.

40 'OUR VOLUNTEER FORCE,' *John Bull*, 11 January 1862, p. 25.

censure for non-participants, the London press increasingly emphasised the debt that the ‘non-effective’ public owed the Volunteers. Reflecting on a large Volunteer Review, *The Times* pointedly reminded its readers that ‘we who sat at home, or went in and out as suited our fancy or as the sun invited us, are under no little obligation to the men who were marching up from Guildford station to Blackheath just as we were coming down to breakfast’.⁴¹ Volunteers, the London press implied, shouldered the burden of national defence that by right should devolve to all. The press stopped short of condemning non-participants – a position which would have reeked of hypocrisy in any case, since none of the papers required their staff to be Volunteers – but increasingly asserted how unique and fortunate Englishmen were to be able to stand aloof in this manner. The London press reminded its readers that for the vast majority of Europeans, conscription was the norm. The tragedies of the American drafts were discussed at length, and much sympathy was shown for the Polish insurrection, which was understood to have been sparked by the harshness of the Russian conscription in Poland, described by *The Times* as ‘an iniquity surpassing anything told of Christian Governments in this age’.⁴² For the liberal press, consideration of these conscriptions led to profound gratitude that Britain’s noble voluntarist spirit allowed her to escape such measures.

But in stressing the good fortune of Englishmen in being wholly exempt from military service (even in aid of national defence, up to the point of actual invasion), the London press also tended to reinforce the notion that such exemption was a privilege rather than a right – and a privilege currently dependent on the public spirit of a minority of Volunteers. The conservative press, less deferential to individual liberties in general, was most explicit in its sense that the nation ought not to rely on the generosity of the Volunteers to carry a burden that, morally and politically, ought to fall equally upon all Englishmen. ‘Our own theory is, that it is the duty of all, either voluntarily or enforced by law, to fit themselves for the proper defence of the country’, wrote the *Morning Post*. It even called for citizenly

⁴¹ ‘War, we are often told, has two sides’, *The Times*, Wednesday, 30 March 1864, p. 8.

⁴² ‘All the accounts received from Poland bear wit-’, *The Times*, 12 February 1863, p. 8.

participation in national defence to be ‘not a mere emotional pageant, but an institution fixed by laws in the material of the State. Hence we please that Government, by some statutory act, should require all, on attaining a certain age, to yield to the country a military service of three years, either as volunteers or militia volunteers’.⁴³ Such an overthrow of the voluntarist principle in peacetime could not yet be countenanced by the liberal mainstream. But what the London press did agree on, and progressively stressed in the face of the waning prestige of the Volunteer force, was that the work undertaken by the Volunteers was a serious national duty, and one that was, by rights, the duty of all. Their assumption of this duty therefore entitled them to the respect and gratitude of the majority whose safety – and idleness – they helped to preserve.

There was, of course, a flip side to this assertion of Volunteering as a solemn national duty. Although much of the emphasis upon the gratitude owed Volunteers was aimed at casting nit-picking criticism as ungracious and inappropriate, if the Volunteers truly were undertaking a serious national duty, then their serious application to acquiring maximum efficiency was surely crucial. Where the American Revolutionary War had once convinced English observers of the worth of civilian militias, the experience of the American Civil War had highlighted the limitations of ‘the services of persons untrained to arms and acting together for the first time’.⁴⁴ From 1863, therefore, there was a new focus in the press upon improving the efficiency, training and organisation of the Volunteer force. This desire for a more serious, regulated approach also corresponded with a tendency towards greater Governmental control over the force. Even the most ardent supporters of the Volunteers, periodicals like *Punch*, *The Times* and the *Daily News*, indicated that sub-standard or ill-disciplined corps would no longer be indulged. Now more heavily subsidised by government funding, the Volunteers were expected to be more accountable. ‘As we, the nation, pay you now, we propose to look after you a little more sharply, and see that our money is not thrown away’, wrote *Punch*, adding that ‘it is

43 ‘Statistics of the Volunteer Army’, *Morning Post*, 15 August 1862, p. 3.

44 ‘The conduct of the Canadian Ministry, in refusing’, *The Times*, 24 July 1862, p. 10.

well that Volunteers should comprehend that there is to be no more nonsense... No more playing at soldiers.’⁴⁵

This conviction raised the bar for Volunteer corps, creating heightened expectations of efficiency that could not ultimately be achieved. The criticisms of the early 1860s only increased in the second half of the decade, and Volunteer numbers began to drop off after 1868.⁴⁶ The defeat of Garibaldi’s irregular forces at Mentana in 1867 dealt a blow to the Volunteer ideal, and the same year Lord Ranelagh went so far as to publically declare the force a ‘sham’.⁴⁷ Even the London press, for so long the most passionate defenders of the force, now joined long-time critics in demanding that Volunteers behave as ‘energetic men anxious to learn what they can of war, not as full-grown children out for a holyday’.⁴⁸

Once again, however, the humiliation of the Volunteer Force provided an unexpected boost to the development of the citizenly obligation thesis, in that the subsequent loss of faith in the voluntarist principle convinced many of the necessity for compulsory measures. By 1869, the London press had begun to identify voluntarism itself as the problem. ‘Volunteers, in soldiering as well as all other matters, must be allowed more or less to have their own way, or they will not volunteer at all’, wrote *The Times*, noting the predictable effects of this phenomenon upon training and discipline.⁴⁹ Increasingly, contemporaries doubted the wisdom of dependence upon so uncertain a mode of home defence. Such a situation was not, of course, calculated to inspire potential Volunteers, and undoubtedly retarded the image of England’s own outlet for the latent military feelings of her people. And yet it did help to establish a sense that military participation ought to be a serious national duty, and encourage a more critical attitude to the voluntarist principle.

45 ‘VOLUNTEERS! ATTENTION!’, *Punch*, 29 August 1863, p. 93.

46 ‘THE VOLUNTEER CRISIS’, *Pall Mall Gazette*, 28 July 1868, p. 9.

47 E. M. Spiers, *The Army and Society, 1815–1914* (London, 1980), p. 168; ‘LONDON, TUESDAY, DEC. 24’, *Daily News*, 24 December 1867, p. 4.

48 ‘The Review on Easter Monday, 1869, will be’, *The Times*, 5 April 1869, p. 9.

49 ‘The best friends of the Volunteers must regret’, *The Times*, 22 February 1869, p. 9.

The American Civil War had provided an example of how popular support for a military cause could be manifested in the mass mobilisation of the people, but the horrors of the war had distracted from this message, turning English observers off the idea of soldiering altogether. On the domestic front, the ideological landscape of Parliamentary Liberalism with its creed of ‘peace, retrenchment and reform’ offered no place to civilian military participation, further arresting the development of a sense of citizenly obligation towards military service that had begun so promisingly with post-Crimean Volunteer revival. In the prevailing atmosphere of war-weariness, the Volunteers themselves lost much of their earlier glamour, although ironically this resulted in a stronger emphasis upon Volunteering as a serious national duty. But the greatest demonstration of the power of citizen-soldiery, and the period’s most potent influence upon English conceptions of the citizen’s role in war, was yet to come: the behemoth of Prussian expansionism.

Unlike the American Civil War, the breath-taking successes of Prussian citizen-soldiers in the latter half of the 1860s could not be marginalised, dismissed with distaste, or ignored. Prussia’s potent demonstration of the military advantages of mass citizen armies had an immense impact on the London press, exciting an unprecedented enthusiasm for the principle of citizen-soldiery. The rising power of Prussia had been noted for some time, the London press having chided her for her unjustified aggression in the Second Schleswig War against Denmark in 1864,⁵⁰ but the seeming ease and rapidity with which the Prussian forces defeated their erstwhile ally Austria in 1866 took the London press almost entirely by surprise. *The Times* declared itself dumbfounded that ‘within these last two months, a country with a standing Army no larger than our own suddenly raised that Army to a strength of half a million disciplined and effective soldiers, marched against one of the greatest military Monarchies in the world, achieved the most complete victory, and is now again dismissing its triumphant troops into the ranks of civil life’.⁵¹

50 ‘Historians have often been able to show, long’, *The Times*, 19 February 1864, p. 9.

51 ‘Within these last two months, a country with’, *The Times*, 18 August 1866, p. 8.

The spectacle was, in many ways, a terrifying one. ‘We are reminded once more of the inadequacy of our defence,’ wrote *The Times*, ‘and called upon seriously to consider the old Scripture problem, how we shall meet with ten thousand him that cometh against us with twenty thousand.’⁵² The five years after 1866 were marked by a dawning realisation of the military might of Prussia’s mass conscript armies, and, further, of the ‘disposition just now in Europe to make every army Prussian’.⁵³ Few periodicals subscribed to the *Examiner*’s hopeful belief that ‘when Europe has had enough of soldiering it will stop’.⁵⁴ Rather, there was much talk in the London press about the triumph of the ‘armed nation’ over the ‘standing army’ as the defining military characteristic of the modern world. *The Times* described it as ‘that consummation which all Europe sees to be inevitable – namely, that every man must be more or less a soldier’.⁵⁵

Prussia’s successes sent a powerful pro–citizen soldier message, and despite the fact that Prussian expansionism was blatantly aggressive in nature, the London press found itself swept up with awe, admiration and enthusiasm for the citizen soldier model. Even the disapproving *Examiner* could not deny Prussia’s ‘moral triumph over public opinion’ in England.⁵⁶ For the first time, English commentators began to grapple with how mass civilian military participation might fit into contemporary liberal values. In the wake of Prussia’s victory over Austria in 1866, the London press described the Prussian system as exemplifying, not tyrannous militarism, but the ancient principle of ‘citizen soldiery’. *The Times* explained that, forbidden by the terms of the Treaty of Tilsit (1807) to possess a standing army of more than 42,000 men, Prussia ‘reverted to the principle of the feudal ages, that every free man was bound to bear arms for his country in time of war’.⁵⁷ By passing the whole of her able–bodied male population through attenuated military training and then rendering them liable to service only in time of war (as distinct from conscripting

52 ‘Supposing, what is by no means clear, that the’, *The Times*, 8 November 1866, p. 6.

53 ‘THE PRUSSIAN EXAMPLE’, *Spectator*, 20 October 1866, p. 1158

54 ‘THE MILITARY FEVER’, *Examiner*, 8 September 1866, p. 561.

55 ‘The Report of the Royal Commission upon’, *The Times*, 15 November 1866, p. 8.

56 ‘ENGLAND PRUSSIANIZED’, *Examiner*, 15 September 1866, p. 577.

57 ‘Supposing, what is by no means clear, that the’, *The Times*, 8 November 1866, p. 6.

them into a standing army in peacetime), Prussia could summon a sort of ‘pop-up’ army at a moment’s notice despite maintaining only the smallest of peacetime establishments. ‘If every citizen must needs be a soldier when wanted, and if, in order to be a soldier, a certain amount of training is necessary, there can be no doubt that the Prussian is both the most provident and the most equitable system,’ wrote *The Times*, ‘inasmuch as it aims at training every man to be a soldier, and making a soldier’s duty as light as possible to every man.’⁵⁸ Following this logic, the London press referred to the Prussian troops not as pitiful conscripts, but as ‘citizen soldiers’ – a terminology that was quickly and lastingly adopted in public discourse.

This principle of citizen-soldiery was depicted as the triumph not of militarism, but of the ‘civilianist’ values espoused by the Victorian middle classes. For a people still ‘disposed to consider the man engaged in industry as better employed than him who takes to soldier’, the notion of a noble, intelligent and – of course – devastatingly efficient citizen soldiery had significant allure.⁵⁹ Heightening this allure was the prospect that such a ‘national’ military system could facilitate the dispensing of the much-maligned (if still largely abstract) soldier-class. The London press, which only a decade ago had almost universally asserted the ‘division of labour’ approach to national defence as the hallmark of a civilised state, now endorsed the opposite – the severe curtailing of professional soldiery in favour of the nurturing of citizen-soldiers. ‘The bane of modern society is, undoubtedly, the soldier as a caste – the man whose trade is war, who, as his name implied, takes to the killing business for pay’, wrote *The Times*. ‘The wisest legislator is he who substitutes the citizen for the soldier – who produces a soldier partaking in the highest degree of the nature of a citizen.’⁶⁰

58 ‘The Parliament of the North German Confede-’, *The Times*, 21 October 1867, p. 6.

59 ‘THE COMMAND OF VOLUNTEER CORPS’, *Examiner*, 30 November 1867, p. 754.

60 ‘The Parliament of the North German Confede-’, *The Times*, 21 October 1867, p. 6.

There was a new sense that citizen–soldiers represented a moral ideal, since their service was founded in the citizenly defence of the national interest, and not in mercenary interest or ambition. The use of a nation’s citizenry as its military manpower was also considered to aid the greater cause of peace and liberalism – the argument being that nations where the burden of waging war was directly felt by all would be less likely to enter into conflict. ‘What is every man’s business is no man’s trade’, wrote *The Times*. ‘No one has an interest in promoting the briskness of that trade, in favouring its extension or duration.’⁶¹ The *Daily News* attempted to further reconcile citizen soldiery with liberalism with the assertion that, just as citizen soldiers were unlikely to promote war, they were also ill–positioned to ‘separate themselves to become the tools of oppression. They are the strength of constitutionalism and the safeguard of independence’.⁶²

The impact of this admiration for Prussian citizen–soldieri upon the London press was immense. Like Prussia, Britain could not consider a large standing army in peacetime, not because she was forbidden by treaty, but because her national spirit ran against the idea. Her international position, however, mean that she might well require a sizeable army at a moment’s notice. Practically, then, could not she too create a system whereby the pluck, intelligence and dutiful patriotism of her citizens was mobilised into a national force in time of war? Further renouncing the ‘division of labour’ view that had so strongly characterised pre–Crimean discourse, the London press (radical, liberal and conservative alike) increasingly condemned the delegation of military responsibility to a professional minority. What Britain needed, the *Pall Mall Gazette* asserted, was not ‘a class or profession apart, standing aloof from the life of the nation, ... separated from the civil population by a hard line of demarcation, unsympathetic, costly, conservative’, but instead ‘a close union between the civil and military populations, a ... shading–off of the lines of separation’, with the ultimate goal the ability to summon, in wartime, a force truly worthy

61 ‘The Parliament of the North German Confede–’, *The Times*, 21 October 1867, p. 6.

62 ‘LONDON, MONDAY, JULY 15’, *Daily News*, 15 July 1867, p. 4.

of the appellation ‘national army’.⁶³ Not only was such a military system eminently more efficient and more fitting for a manly, egalitarian society, it was also the only way to obtain the numerical strength necessary to safeguard Britain against the ‘armed nations’ of the Continent. ‘So long as we choose to consider ourselves a nation of civilians, paying a special service to protect our persons and property,’ warned *The Times* as early as 1866, ‘we must beware how we attempt to play a grand part or provoke a great war.’⁶⁴

These ideas, brewing over the latter half of the 1860s, assumed momentous significance during the Franco–Prussian War in 1870. The overwhelming success of Prussian citizen soldiers against ‘the finest Standing Army of Europe’ shook English observers even more deeply than had their defeat of Austria in 1866.⁶⁵ It brought home as never before Britain’s likely inability to hold her own in such a conflict, creating an atmosphere of great national insecurity – an atmosphere both reflected by and worked upon by the publication of the first great classic of invasion literature, *The Battle Of Dorking*.⁶⁶ The impact of the war was heightened by a very real fear that Britain might be forced to intervene in defence of Belgian neutrality, guaranteed by the Treaty of 1839. Treaties signed with both belligerents on 9 and 11 August 1870 helped to alleviate these fears, but the ‘Belgian cloud’ had shown just how easily Britain could be drawn into a European war, casting serious doubt upon the non–interventionist supposition of the 1860s that ‘our insular position will free us from the necessity of following an example which has made Prussia the greatest military Power in Europe’.⁶⁷

The lesson of Prussian success seemed clear. Armies must be intelligently organised and professionally officered, but ‘above all, armies must be numerically strong’ – that is, they must encompass the whole power of the people.⁶⁸ With a staggering degree of consensus,

63 ‘OUR FUTURE ARMY’, *Pall Mall Gazette*, 4 January 1869, p. 1.

64 ‘The Report of the Royal Commission upon’, *The Times*, 15 November 1866, p. 8.

65 ‘We publish this morning a further letter from’, *The Times*, 6 October 1870, p. 9.

66 G. T. Chesney, *The Battle of Dorking* (Exeter, 1871).

67 ‘LONDON, MONDAY, OCTOBER 3, 1870’, *Morning Post*, 3 October 1870, p. 4.

68 ‘The organisation of our reserve forces’, *Morning Post*, 17 August 1870, p. 4.

the London press opined that ‘if a larger power is desirable, ... there is only one way in which that can be done. We must do away with our standing army, or the greater part of it, leaving only so much as is required for colonial work, and we must throw the defence of the nation on its civil population.’⁶⁹ To do this, however, it was ‘inevitable that the public opinion of the country should be educated into a contented relinquishment of the easy terms on which its battles have hitherto been fought’.⁷⁰ It was upon this ‘education’ that the greater part of the London press enthusiastically embarked during the last months of 1870.

The Times led the pack, asserting that ‘the art of self-defence is a necessary part of the whole duty of man’, and therefore ‘every man, should be more or less a soldier’.⁷¹ The conservative press largely concurred that ‘the duty of every subject of the Queen to defend his country when called on’ ought not to be limited to the case of invasion, but should include participation in the national reserve in peace as well as war.⁷² Even the *Examiner* swallowed its habitual distaste for the Prussian system in order to endorse its ‘earnestly patriotic’ central principle. Chiding Englishmen for considering ‘that pecuniary sacrifices are the extent of their public obligations’, it argued that ‘the cheerful payment of an income-tax may suffice for the successful conduct of an Abyssinian war, but a national army cannot be called into existence without the recognition of a great principle which has not yet come to be practically accepted by us as an article of political faith – namely, that it is the duty of every citizen to contribute in person to the defence of his country’.⁷³ The concept of an inherent and universal citizenly duty towards military service was asserted with a concreteness never before seen in the Victorian age, as periodicals from across the

69 ‘ARMY REFORM AND THE HORSE GUARDS’, *Examiner*, 28 January 1871, p. 86.

70 ‘LONDON, MONDAY, OCTOBER 3, 1870’, *Morning Post*, 3 October 1870, p. 4.

71 ‘England has now the opportunity of seeing how’, *The Times*, 22 August 1870, p. 7.

72 ‘THE VOLUNTEERS’, *Pall Mall Gazette*, 18 August 1870, p. 1.

73 ‘THE ARMY OF RESERVE’, *Examiner*, 11 February 1871, pp. 142–4.

political spectrum united in an attempt at ‘making men practically understand that they owe something to the country besides paying rates and taxes’.⁷⁴

But while the successes of Prussian expansion (and the resultant sense of Britain’s own vulnerability) had given the citizenly obligation thesis an immense boost in the realms of press discourse, there was a crucial complication inherent in Prussia’s pro–citizen soldier message. English observers might well envy the efficiency, intelligence, and scale of Prussian citizen–soldiery, and seek to emulate these qualities within their own military system. But the elephant in the room was the asset upon which so much of Prussia’s strength depended: the strong–state, compulsionist model. The admiring liberal press attempted to make a distinction between the Prussian system of compulsory training and liability in wartime, and ‘the principle of conscription, which is that the country may call upon every man to bear arms for her in time of peace’.⁷⁵ But the distinction was little more than wordplay – and inconsistent wordplay at that, since the term ‘conscription’ was also frequently used by the same periodicals to describe the Prussian system. No matter which way you looked at it, as *The Times* put it, ‘the keystone of the cheap and effective condition of the great Continental armies lies in a system of conscription which would be highly objectionable in this country’.⁷⁶

Between 1866 and 1870, supporters of compulsory measures – such as the conservative periodical *John Bull*, and the dogged advocate of civilian military participation, Lord Elcho – were emboldened by the Prussian example, but remained firmly in the minority. As we have seen, the consolidation of parliamentary liberalism fuelled the entrenchment of the liberal principles of non–intervention, economy, and personal liberty during the 1860s. In this atmosphere, it was generally admitted that while the power of citizen–soldiery was fearsome indeed, the Prussian model of compulsory military training for all

74 ‘LLOYD’S WEEKLY LONDON NEWSPAPER’, *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper*, 18 December 1870, p. 6

75 ‘Supposing, what is by no means clear, that the’, *The Times*, 8 November 1866, p. 6.

76 ‘Our Military Organization. VEDETTE.’, *The Times*, 28 August 1866, p. 5.

able-bodied men was not compatible with contemporary English public opinion. The 1867 Commission on Recruiting did not even *consider* compulsory measures.⁷⁷ The radical press was most vociferous in its disavowal of the legitimacy of compulsory measures, the *Examiner* insisting that ‘conscription is a mode of recruiting so hateful to the people of this country, and so incompatible indeed with our liberties, that no Government would ever dare to entertain the project. In the mitigated form of the ballot it exists by statute for the recruiting of the militia, that serves only at home and but for a month, yet even this is so odious that the law is in abeyance, and no Government will venture to act on it.’⁷⁸ The liberal press agreed, *The Times* rejecting Lord Elcho’s suggestion to Parliament in 1867 that justification for compulsion could be found in England’s ancient laws:

The Saxon *trinoda necessitas*, incident to the tenure of land ... is far from supporting the hypothesis of a general “liability to personal service” in time of peace. We cannot, however, admit the relevancy of any presumptions drawn from the legal burdens of landowners under the Saxon Monarchy, and, since all feudal duties ceased with the abolition of feudal tenures, we are compelled to seek a statutory origin for the principle of compulsory enlistment. We deny that, apart from the Acts which authorize recourse to the ballot in default of voluntary enlistment, any subject could be compelled to serve... the popular aversion from making soldiers of men without their own consent must be regarded as all but insuperable.⁷⁹

The conservative press was more sympathetic to the concept of inherent liability to compulsory military service, the *Morning Post* calling it ‘an assertion which in the abstract is true enough, no doubt’, but nonetheless dismissed the call for compulsory measures as both impractical and injudicious.⁸⁰ Even supposing the principle of universal liability to be just, ‘public feeling is so thoroughly determined to look with virtuous horror upon all military duty that the idea of conscription cannot be entertained’,⁸¹ and,

77 ‘The Army And The Volunteers. ELCHO.’, *The Times*, 16 February 1869, p. 4.

78 ‘THE FUTURE OF ENGLAND’, *Examiner*, 18 August 1866, pp. 514–15.

79 ‘The discussion in the House of Commons on the’, *The Times*, 27 July 1867, p. 9.

80 ‘LONDON, SATURDAY, JULY 27, 1867,’ *Morning Post*, 27 July 1867, p. 4.

81 ‘THE ARMY’, *Pall Mall Gazette*, 4 February 1868, p. 1.

further, ‘great harm might be done to the cause of army reform if the public were led to believe that its promoters had some covered design of working into a conscription’.⁸² Nor was the conservative London press wholly immune to the prevailing dread of compulsion, the *Morning Post* confessing itself bewildered that any should think it “desirable” to revive a means of obtaining men which has long been abandoned in practice for others more consistent with modern ideas’,⁸³ and the *Pall Mall Gazette* concurring that such an ‘interference...with the liberty of the subject, ought not to be resorted to except as a final measure, and when other plans have failed’.⁸⁴

Nor was the London press (*John Bull* excluded) convinced of the *necessity* of compulsory measures. *The Times* felt ‘sure that the enormous armies of modern times could nowhere be kept up by mere voluntary enlistment’, but then, it was not a mammoth standing army that England wanted, but a small establishment capable of great expansion in wartime.⁸⁵ And in that moment of national emergency which alone justified compulsion, it would be redundant, since ‘plenty of willing recruits would always be forthcoming’.⁸⁶ Of course, it wasn’t quite that simple, as *The Times* was ready to admit. ‘The principle on which all national armament should rest is, theoretically, the very simplest’, it pondered. ‘For a defensive war every man is bound to give both his blood and his wealth for his country. For an offensive war none but voluntary means and forces should be employed’, but ‘the principle is of no avail’, since untrained masses would be of little use in the moment of crisis. Modern states, *The Times* concluded, needed to use ‘the leisure of peace to prepare for the turmoil of war’.⁸⁷

But, the liberal press suggested, this imperative towards military training did not necessarily mandate compulsion in a nation as public-spirited as England. Pointing to the

82 ‘LONDON, MONDAY, APRIL 26, 1869’, *Morning Post*, 26 April 1869, p. 4.

83 ‘LONDON, SATURDAY, JULY 27, 1867’, *Morning Post*, 27 July 1867, p. 4.

84 ‘OUR FUTURE ARMY’, *Pall Mall Gazette*, 4 January 1869, p. 1.

85 ‘Are the recent Treaty of Prague, and the one’, *The Times*, 12 September 1866, p. 8.

86 ‘The discussion in the House of Commons on the’, *The Times*, 27 July 1867, p. 9.

87 ‘The Parliament of the North German Confede-’, *The Times*, 21 October 1867, p. 6.

thriving Volunteer movement, together with Britain's proud voluntarist tradition, *The Times* asserted that 'the problem before us is not how to get the men, for we have got them ready – willing and excellent soldiers'.⁸⁸ The liberal press repeatedly asserted that a national army based on the voluntary principle was eminently possible, but had never been given a fair trial in Britain. 'Central compulsion on the Continent', wrote the *Spectator*, 'is a substitute for a national resolution.'⁸⁹ But 'there is a liberal as there is also an aristocratic organization for armies, and it is to that... that liberal effort should tend'.⁹⁰ A more flexible, modern and liberal (even civilianist) approach to drill, discipline, command and career progression would break down the old barriers to military participation, attracting not only a working class newly educated in its patriotic duties, but also 'those classes who now rarely think (until they are obliged) of entering it – the great middle classes of the nation'.⁹¹ By learning from Prussian principles of organisation, it was theorised, England could graft the moral and military advantages of citizen soldiery onto her voluntarist base, creating an efficient citizen army by patriotic persuasion rather than compulsion.

This rather optimistic thinking, which denied any real incompatibility between Prussian conscript efficiency and British voluntarist inclinations, prevailed during the latter part of the 1860s. But the Franco–Prussian war sent a graver, more insistent message. Press optimism in Britain's ability to merely graft the organisational principles of the Prussian model, while eschewing its bedrock in not the moral duty, but the absolute liability of all men to military service, faltered. There was a strong sense that the playing field had changed, and that the formerly supererogatory 'gift' of participation had therefore transformed into a crucial duty. Britain therefore had only two options if she had any hope of remaining militarily secure. One was to bank on an immense voluntarist reserve; the other was compulsion. As the *Morning Post* expressed it, 'we shall be called upon either

⁸⁸ 'Within these last two months, a country with a', *The Times*, 18 August 1866, p. 8.

⁸⁹ 'AUSTRIA AND ENGLAND', *Spectator*, 28 July 1866, p. 823.

⁹⁰ 'ENGLISH MILITARY REFORM', *Spectator*, 18 August 1866, p. 908.

⁹¹ 'OUR FUTURE ARMY', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 4 January 1869, p. 1.

to give greater efficiency to the Volunteer force – exacting from it vastly greater sacrifices than it has yet made – or that we must in some measure, more or less perhaps modified, adopt the Prussian system’.⁹² This was the same dilemma implicit in the 1866–1869 debate, though there the preponderance of native anti–conscription feeling had obscured the real possibility of choice. But by 1870, as we have seen, the London press had become deeply pessimistic in their assessment of the potential of the Volunteers. Lord Elcho conceded their shortcomings, and further insisted that those shortcomings represented the limits of ‘what it is possible to get out of unpaid volunteers without some screw stronger than patriotism in quiet times, and the only constitutional screw that is really sufficient and available our public men shrink from applying’.⁹³ Perceiving this background of diminishing faith in voluntarism, the *Morning Post* concluded that ‘the idea that much can be made of the Volunteers is dying out, if it be not dead’, and therefore ‘compulsory military service will eventually be found indispensable’.⁹⁴

In desperation, therefore, the London press in 1870–71 not only endorsed the essential citizenly obligation towards personal service, but also, to a degree never before seen, the legitimate *compulsion* of that obligation. Even *The Times*, for so long an ardent supporter of the voluntarist principle, now declared itself in agreement with Lord Elcho that ‘voluntary enthusiasm...has never been sufficient, and we have no reason to hope that it ever will’.⁹⁵ The only option, then, was some form of compulsion. ‘In truth, the whole efficacy of national life consists in compelling all to do that which all acknowledge ought to be done’, *The Times* argued. ‘If every able–bodied man in this country were competent to share in its defence, we might hold our own against all the nations in the world. Every able–bodied man will acknowledge that we ought to be able to do so, and that he himself

92 ‘LONDON, MONDAY, OCTOBER 3, 1870’, *Morning Post*, 3 October 1870, p. 4.

93 ‘The Government and the Volunteers. ELCHO’, *The Times*, 8 January 1870, p. 5.

94 ‘LONDON, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY. 1, 1871’, *Morning Post*, 1 February 1871, p. 4.

95 ‘We publish this morning a further letter from’, *The Times*, 6 October 1870, p. 9.

ought to take his fair share. It is for statesmen and soldiers to decide how this general duty can be practically fulfilled, and then to require its observance.’⁹⁶

Any such duty, though, must apply equally and universally to all classes of men. As the *Examiner* put it, ‘nothing but a law operating equally upon all, and therefore positively burdensome to none, can inculcate that principle of personal obligation to the State which is so important to national strength’.⁹⁷ In particular, the wealthy ought not to be able to escape service. The *Morning Post* reminded its readers that ‘it is the duty of the higher classes to come forward for the service of their country, and in return for the benefits they receive from their country expose their lives and their fortunes for the good of their country’,⁹⁸ while *The Times* asserted that no man should be ‘permitted to commute for money the obligation which may one day be found beyond all price’.⁹⁹ The *Spectator* went even further, insisting that ‘the whole population, without exception, must be subjected to the same training’, since the people would reject any system of lottery or ballot as unduly capricious.¹⁰⁰ Rendering the whole male population liable to military service would have the additional benefit of raising the social standing of military participation, and neutralizing the feelings of ‘class’ which had always segregated the army from the respectable civilian population.¹⁰¹ Indeed, suggested many, far from conflicting with England’s democratic liberties, it would tend instead towards their advancement. The capacity of a truly national reserve army to break down the barriers of prejudice and increase ‘the legitimate influence of the classes entrusted with a share in their defence’, led one correspondent to the *Pall Mall Gazette* to conclude that ‘no more democratic measure could be proposed, not even compulsory education or universal suffrage’.¹⁰²

96 ‘We publish this morning a further letter from’, *The Times*, 6 October 1870, p. 9.

97 ‘THE ARMY OF RESERVE’, *Examiner*, 11 February 1871, pp. 142–4.

98 ‘Multiple News Items’, *Morning Post*, 13 February 1871, p. 3.

99 ‘England has now the opportunity of seeing how’, *The Times*, 22 August 1870, p. 7.

100 ‘WILLIAM MANSFIELD’S PROPOSAL’, *Spectator*, 21 January 1871, p. 66.

101 ‘Recruiting. J. D. SHAKESPEAR’, *The Times*, 16 December 1870, p. 6.

102 ‘CORRESPONDENCE’, *Pall Mall Gazette*, 22 September 1870, p. 3.

And yet, the Prussian model of compulsory service in the regular army was a bridge too far. Even the most pro-compulsion periodicals admitted that conscription for Britain's regular army, employed as it so often was in remote corners of the Empire, was inconceivable. Instead, the London press turned to a more native institution: the militia. Putting aside the disarray into which the militia had been allowed to fall, the shared imagining of the militia as an inherently more serious, state-controlled and orderly institution than the dilettante Volunteer force appealed to a press envious of Prussian discipline and efficiency. Best of all, it came with a ready-made and constitutional medium for compulsion in the form of the militia ballot. Lord Elcho had been lobbying aggressively for 'the modified form of conscription recognized in this country by the militia ballot'¹⁰³ for years, but until the Franco-Prussian War, even he described this view as 'an unpopular opinion'.¹⁰⁴ In the winter of 1870-71, however, the London press largely threw its weight behind the militia ballot, endorsing Elcho's plan to render all able-bodied Englishmen liable, without substitution, to the ballot unless they qualified themselves as militia officers or efficient Volunteers. Indeed, with most serious army reformers now openly professing their support for compulsion, the reinstatement of the militia ballot was discussed as a near-inevitability in the London press.

This was, of course, a remarkable change from the Voluntarist fervour of only years before. *The Times*, which just three years previous had poured scorn upon Elcho's assertion of the ancient liability towards participation in national defence, now professed itself "prepared to go even further than [Elcho] does in estimating the degree of obligation to be enforced".¹⁰⁵ It advocated two years of compulsory military training for all boys at the age of 17 or 18, concluding moreover that 'if the efficiency of our Home Army require a so-called "conscription," we are in no way disposed to regard it as a "bugbear."¹⁰⁶ The conservative press concurred that the duty to participate in national

103 'The Army And The Volunteers. ELCHO.', *The Times*, 16 February 1869, p. 4.

104 'The Army And The Volunteers. ELCHO.', *The Times*, 16 February 1869, p. 4.

105 'We publish this morning a further letter from', *The Times*, 6 October 1870, p. 9.

106 'We publish this morning a further letter from', *The Times*, 6 October 1870, p. 9.

defence could legitimately go much further than the militia ballot. ‘The measure of the State’s necessity is the measure of the citizen’s military obligations’, wrote the *Pall Mall Gazette*. ‘If this necessity were sufficiently urgent, every able-bodied Englishman might at once be draughted off into the regular army. The less exacting systems of military and volunteer service are only favours which in the absence of urgent necessity the State concedes to its subjects.’¹⁰⁷

Never before had the principle of citizenly obligation towards military participation been so strongly – or so unanimously – endorsed in the London press, and the six months after the outbreak of the Franco–Prussian War represented a high point in the development of this principle. And yet, intellectual appreciation for the advantages of a system which mobilised the whole military strength of the population, and enthusiasm for the adoption of such a system in Britain, failed ultimately to equate to significant or lasting change. As Edward Spiers has shown, they did not provide the impetus for Cardwell’s 1871–74 reforms, nor did they persuade him to look to Prussia as a model.¹⁰⁸ ‘The public feeling about the National Defences is strong, but not, we fear, strong enough to create a system of National Defence’, sighed the *Spectator*. ‘The country sees clearly enough that a disorganized nation may be conquered, but ...the only man who could carry a compulsory system of enlistment [Gladstone] either does not believe in danger, or does not think that is the way to meet it.’¹⁰⁹ The intellectual impact of Prussian success was immense, but the impetus to reform was fuelled predominantly by the urgent sense of crisis and inferiority provoked by the Prussian wars. When this sense of crisis and urgency began to diminish, the counter-currents to the pro-citizen soldier message reasserted themselves.

The unification of Germany on 18 January 1871 was taken implicitly as a sign that the object of her ambition had been achieved, and thereafter the debate steadily lost

107 ‘THE VOLUNTEERS’, *Pall Mall Gazette*, 18 August 1870, p. 1.

108 E. M. Spiers, *The Army and Society, 1815–1914* (London, 1980), pp. 186–8.

109 ‘THE PROPER BASIS FOR OUR ARMY’, *Spectator*, 3 September 1870, p. 1054.

momentum. *John Bull*, which had alone abstained from fêting the citizen soldier ideal in 1870, remained in the minority in its insistence that ‘what we need is not an armed nation, but that England should be well defended...The British army is in theory and ought to be in practice the insurance of this country against invasion.’¹¹⁰ But by degrees, advocacy of citizen–soldieri became more moderate, and the ‘complications’ of the strong–state conscriptionist model began once again to loom large in London press discourse. The first sign was an increase in criticism of the Prussian system, and more frequent disavowals of the applicability of that system to Britain (though in reality, the impossibility of applying Prussian–style conscription to the British regular army had been accepted from the start of the debate). *Lloyd’s Newspaper* asserted that ‘nothing would more impede true civilisation than the introduction of the Prussian system of compulsory service into this country’.¹¹¹

From thence, the London press began to express doubts about the ballot for the militia. Even periodicals that had wholeheartedly supported the *theoretical* legitimacy of such obligations now wondered if they were really necessary. ‘The demand for a Militia conscription needs no justification on constitutional grounds, nor is universal liability to military service inconsistent with the usages of the freest States, or incompatible with the widest exercise and enjoyment of popular rights,’ wrote the *Daily News*, ‘[but] numbers of men to bear arms are not our first want; we have them already, without conscription. We are not going to compete with the muster–rolls of continental armies.’¹¹² As early as February, the conservative press (which, *John Bull* excepted, continued to press the advantages of compulsory obligations) conceded that much ground had been lost. ‘So far as public opinion can be gauged, anything approximating to the Prussian system would not be tolerated’, noted the *Morning Post*. ‘The reasons for this are that the very name “Prussian” is distasteful to the country, that the Prussian system is erroneously held to mean the performance of military service by all males of the country, instead of – as is

110 ‘HISTORY OF THE WEEK’, *John Bull*, 14 January 1871, p. 24.

111 ‘LLOYD’S WEEKLY LONDON NEWSPAPER’, *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper*, 29 January 1871, p. 6.

112 ‘LONDON, SATURDAY, JANUARY. 28’, *Daily News*, 28 January 1871, p. 4.

really the case – about thirty percent of them, and that voluntary enlistment suits the genius and the tastes of Englishmen.’¹¹³

Even *The Times* had gone off the idea of the ballot by May 1871. Where once it had held up Prussia’s citizen soldiers as a triumph of ‘civilianism’, it now depicted Prussia as deeply militaristic. ‘Universal conscription, everlasting drill, the spirit of the soldier carried into every profession and every grade of society, from the King to the husbandman – those are the things which have made Prussia what she is’, it asserted. ‘No doubt; but what would such things make of England!’¹¹⁴ The case for compulsory obligations was further dampened by a liberal application of cold water from the Secretary for War himself, Edward Cardwell. Cardwell declared, in terms by now familiar, that Englishmen ought not to submit to conscription, as they were morally bound to take up arms only in the case of actual invasion, when their natural enthusiasm would render conscription moot. As the *Pall Mall Gazette* noted, it was more than a little ‘discouraging to those who thought that the obligation of rendering personal service to the State had been generally recognized, and that the only point in dispute was whether this obligation might not more conveniently be commuted or excused, to find the Minister charged with the military organization of the country flatly denying that any such obligation exists’.¹¹⁵

As it happened, it was Cardwell’s preference for more traditional, incremental reforms of the existing system that would set the tone for the next decades. His 1871–1874 reforms redirected public attention to organisational and structural improvements of the existing system. London press debate, too, returned to milder and more familiar ground. ‘It is all very well to frame theories of military organization, but in a country like this, where conscription is not only unknown but absolutely impossible, the foundation of every

113 ‘LONDON, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY. 1, 1871’, *Morning Post*, 1 February 1871, p. 4.

114 ‘In the matter of our National Defences it must’, *The Times*, 17 May 1871, p. 9.

115 ‘MR. CARDWELL ON THE OBLIGATIONS OF CITIZENSHIP’, *Pall Mall Gazette*, 11 July 1871, p. 1.

system must be the satisfaction of the recruit', asserted *The Times* in a remark that would not have seemed out of place during the Crimean War. 'We must go into the open market for military labour, and pay the market price for it.'¹¹⁶

By the close of 1871, the stupendous groundswell of press support for compulsory measures had all but disappeared. The *Morning Post* held firm to the cause, but could not deny that its moment had, for the time being, passed:

'Lord DERBY did good service in pointing out that "the danger is now rather on the side of indifference and neglect. The stages of the relapse have been well marked. The passing of the Belgian cloud made men's minds more easy. Then the country with one consent came to the conclusion that it would give its money but not personal service for the military requirements of the State. Thereupon it became necessary to find reasons and excuses, and the pleasing idea was broached that as the genius and the conditions of England were essentially different to those of Prussia, it was unnecessary for us to emulate or imitate the military organisation of that country. This idea was too acceptable to be allowed speedily to subside. It was dilated and enlarged upon until it was considered not only unnecessary, but impossible and absurd, to think of copying the Prussia system in any respect.'¹¹⁷

The moment of conviction, when it truly looked conceivable that a massive attitudinal shift could take place, was over. The latter half of the 1860s had seen the first real attempt of English commentators to reconcile the 'citizenly obligation' thesis with the ideals of popular liberalism, but the fit was uneasy. The 'complications' of Prussia's pro-citizen soldier message, and the counter-currents of war-weariness, popular liberalism, non-interventionism, and the declining prestige of England's own 'citizen soldiers', all undermined its capacity to inspire dramatic reform. Once the moment of crisis had passed, press discourse drifted back to perceiving formal military obligations as alien and antagonistic to England's liberal values and heritage. England reassumed a grand attitude of complacency, bolstered by the seemingly universal belief that Britain would not soon be involved in another European War. In the 'quiet times' of peace, the astonishing

116 'On Thursday evening Mr. CARDWELL, in answer', *The Times*, 15 May 1871, p. 11.

117 'LONDON, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 21, 1871', *Morning Post*, 21 October 1871, p. 4.

complacency and sheer inertia of the system formed a formidable obstacle to significant attitudinal or policy change.

But the experiences of the last decade had left their mark. The examples of America and Prussia had normalised the notion of mass citizen–soldiery, and established it as a defining feature of modern warfare. Together, they also moved English conceptions of civilian military obligation in a new direction. The romanticised image of military participation as the chivalrous ‘gift’ of public–spirited gentlemen had been banished by the unromantic slaughter of the American Civil War and the cold efficiency of Prussian conscript soldiers. In its place there developed a more overtly political principle of civilian military participation, dictated not by individual conscience but by the essential duty of service owed by the subject to the State. By 1871, the essential principle of citizenly obligation towards military service was largely established in theory, and even the idea of compulsory measures (such as the militia ballot) had gained some intellectual and moral legitimacy. Opponents of compulsion no longer stressed its ‘tyranny’ with perfect confidence; rather, they asserted it was ‘unnecessary’ in England’s case. Intellectually, the idea of citizen–soldier had made a significant advance. But while the experience of 1862–1871 impressed upon London press discourse the advantages of civilian military participation, the complications and counter–currents of the age prevented real conversion to the idea. There was an almost total failure to adjust to the new military realities of mass mobilisation as revealed by America and Prussia. For now, the complacency and inertia of the system had prevailed. A coherent conception of citizenly duty towards military service had emerged, but there was still much work to do in reconciling this principle with English values, ideologies and inclinations.

Other Priorities, 1872–1898

“It is a very difficult country to move, Mr. Hyndman, a very difficult country indeed”

– Disraeli to Britain’s first Marxist leader H.M. Hyndman, 1881¹

To a significant extent, by 1872 the writing was on the wall for Britain. A broad press consensus had emerged in London that war would henceforth be fought not by small professional forces, but by mass national armies based on the fundamental principle of citizenly liability to military service. The inferiority of Britain’s own military resources in comparison with those of Continental ‘armed nations’ was self-evident. In response to this realisation, press conceptions of the Englishman’s duty towards military service had shifted decisively. And yet, after two decades of rapid post-Crimea change, between 1872 and 1898 the military participation debate entered a prolonged period of stagnation. The key elements of future discussion were all essentially in place by the end of the Franco-Prussian War. But the debate hinted at costly and controversial changes – either a greatly expanded and properly funded Volunteer force, or the dreaded ballot – all against a contingency (invasion) that was regarded as relatively remote. In the past, impetus had been provided by invasion panics and emotionally charged imperial outrages. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, however, these were few and distant, and provoked only temporary spikes of interest in the subject of civilian military participation. Domestic distractions and the further entrenchment of Liberal ideas – Free Trade as well as voluntarism – combined to further sap political will for serious reform. And yet, at the same time, crucial seeds of change were sown in the form of the sweeping social, cultural and politic developments of the period. The growth of Imperialist and Militarist ideology,

¹ H. M. Hyndman, *The Record of an Adventurous Life* (London, 1911), p. 248.

the continued integration of the army into civilian society, the ideological shift from Victorian individualism towards a new collectivism, and the emergence of new theories of ‘contractual’ citizenship all did much to facilitate gradual acceptance of a citizenly obligation towards toward military service. In the last decade of the nineteenth century, an emergent Jingoistic patriotism combined with profound insecurity about British military vulnerability to create an atmosphere newly conducive to ideas of patriotic military participation.

As we have seen, the signal example of Prussian military might made a deep impression on British observers, convincing them that modern war was no longer a matter for small professional forces, but for mass citizen armies. It also threw the staggering imbalance between Britain’s own land forces and those of her rivals into stark relief. The first years of the 1870s therefore saw new questioning of the assumption that Britain’s naval supremacy allowed her to ignore the massive shifts in military organisation taking place abroad – especially now that the shift in power on the Continent effected by the Franco–Prussian War meant that Britain could no longer afford to remain diplomatically disengaged. ‘We have been living too much upon our past glories and ignoring unjustifiably the existence of dangers because they do not absolutely present themselves at our door’, warned the *Morning Post*. ‘In spite of our “ditch,” our navy, and our moral influence, we are at the present moment still unprepared to assist ourselves...and we are therefore second–rate in our position amongst those nations which are armed and arming in such gigantic strength’.² It was all too obvious that, as the *Examiner* put it: ‘were we to take part now in any Continental war ... we would certainly render ourselves ridiculous by the insignificance of the largest force we could possibly send into the field’.³ *The Times* concurred on Britain’s patent unreadiness for war with another Great Power, considering that while Britain’s naval primacy might permit her, at present, ‘to avoid making such tremendous preparations as are

² ‘MILITARY ORGANISATION, (READY)’, *Morning Post*, 24 November 1874, p. 3.

³ ‘B, OUR ARMY’, *Examiner*, 1 March 1873, pp. 220–1.

necessary abroad, ... to these, or something like these, it might come if we plunged into any contest of the first magnitude'.⁴ Even more ominously, rapid advances in naval technology might even undermine the naval supremacy upon which Britain's entire security depended. 'If our Fleet were destroyed – say, by a new invention,' warned the *Spectator*, '– we should have to fight for our national existence with an army scarcely larger than Bavaria could put into the field, – an army, that is, which Germany could extinguish in a week of severe fighting.'⁵

Worries over the numerical inferiority of Britain's land forces were compounded in the middle years of the 1870s by a severe recruiting crisis in both the army and the militia.⁶ There had been hope that the Cardwell reforms could graft the advantages of Prussian organisation onto the British system, by integrating the regular and auxiliary forces and encouraging recruitment through the localisation of brigades.⁷ But by the mid-1870s it was generally accepted that these reforms had done little to address the central problems of recruiting. 'That the Brigade Depot system has so far failed to effect the purpose for which it was organized is beyond question', asserted *The Times* in 1874, concluding that without the underpinning power of conscription, Prussian organisational principles could not get around the fundamental problems of voluntary recruiting in modern Britain.⁸ 'We have not the one thing without which all our organization is worthless', wrote the *Spectator*, '– the living men themselves.'⁹ The familiar culprits of emigration, the competitive labour market, and the failure of the military to offer appropriate inducements to middle-class men were again cited in explanation of the recruiting shortfall.¹⁰ Across the board, an unromantic, market-based view of motivations for enlistment prevailed. As one

4 'An account of the Armaments of Europe', *The Times*, 4 December 1876, p. 9.

5 'THE ARMY AND THE RADICALS', *Spectator*, 4 December 1875, p. 1510.

6 See for example 'OUT O' SOLDIERS', *Punch*, 30 August 1873, p. 90.

7 'ARMY LOCALISATION', *Examiner*, 20 July 1872, p. 712.

8 'The Army Estimates laid upon the table of the', *The Times*, 31 March 1874; p. 9.; and 'That military reform should have had to wait for', *The Times*, 5 October 1874, p. 9.

9 'THE ARMY AND THE RADICALS', *Spectator*, 4 December 1875, p. 1510.

10 See for example 'The Army Estimates laid upon the table of the', *The Times*, 31 March 1874, p. 9; and 'ARMY RECONSTRUCTION', *Examiner*, 10 October 1874, p. 1097–1098.

correspondent to *The Times* put it, ‘the whole question – and a very urgent, serious question it is – of filling the ranks with suitable and contented men is simply one necessitating compliance with the law of supply and demand in the labour market’.¹¹ Reform offering recruits a choice between long and short service was commended by the London press for recognising this ‘inexorable law’ and allowing recruits to ‘satisfy themselves effectually, whatever their inclinations may be’.¹² But recommendations on precisely how to tweak the bargain remained wildly scattered.¹³

Underlying much of the debate was a more fundamental worry that the military and its modes of recruiting had fallen irrevocably out of step with an increasingly prosperous, educated and savvy population. While mainstream commentators stopped short of endorsing the opinion of some representatives of the peace movement that the recruiting crisis was a sign of popular moral progress,¹⁴ there was a widespread sense in the liberal press that it was indeed connected to the increased education and intelligence of the people. ‘The United Kingdom of the present day is prosperous in the extreme; every one thinks he can get on in the world, and is loath to throw away his chance’, wrote *The Times*. ‘Young men have had a fair education, quite enough to make them quick in perceiving their own interests, which a hundred organizations and journals innumerable present to them continually.’¹⁵ *Punch* agreed that ‘it is rather to be feared that the spread of education will create some difficulty for the recruiting sergeant. At least, in proportion as men are taught to think, they must be averse to soldiering, if it involve the least likelihood of active service. To any reflecting man it is a matter of grateful wonderment that, in the absence of compulsory military service, we are able to get any soldiers to fight our battles at all.’¹⁶

11 ‘Desertion. B.’, *The Times*, 6 November 1874, p. 7.

12 ‘The reviews at Aldershot and Woolwich, whatever’, *The Times*, 22 May 1874, p. 9.

13 ‘THEORY AND PRACTICE’, *Punch*, 22 January, 1876, p. 14.

14 ‘CORRESPONDENTS TO THE FRONT!’, *Punch*, 14 November 1874, p. 207.

15 ‘Lord SANDHURST last night called the attention’, *The Times*, 2 June 1874, p. 9.

16 ‘LIST, LIST, O, LIST!’, *Punch*, 7 December 1872, p. 232.

This admission that military service was inherently unpleasant and personally disadvantageous permeated the liberal press during the mid 1870s. There was no hint of the idealisation of citizen-soldiery that had briefly flamed during the years of Prussian expansion, and the idea of a moral imperative towards military participation appeared to have been almost entirely jettisoned from liberal press discourse. In a statement that would not have seemed out of place in the pre-Crimean era, *The Times* observed that ‘an army, in short, and war itself, seem something external to us’, involving ‘the expenditure of a certain amount upon costly instruments...but no more’.¹⁷ Occasionally, a correspondent to the conservative press would rant against ‘the foolish, unpatriotic, and unmanly prejudices which have influenced the councils of Great Britain so long’, urging instead ‘that there can be no injustice, no unfair dealing, in the institution of a tax on the personal service of all able-bodied subjects for the defence and protection of State interests; that we have not been born Englishmen merely to reap the benefits and happiness which is common to all without any equivalent obligation on our part severally’.¹⁸ On the whole, however, the claim of patriotic duty, of ‘loyalty and love of country’ came up only infrequently in a military manpower debate that made ‘too much of material defences, and too little of national spirit’.¹⁹

The question of how to inveigle adequate numbers into military service, and therefore safeguard Britain from mass armies of her rivals, was therefore an eminently practical one. The debate largely revolved around the choice between greater expenditure and compulsory service: as the *Examiner* put it, “‘Your money or your lives” forms the uncomfortable option presented to British taxpayers.’²⁰ Either the British public consent to higher military expenditure (allowing the army to compete with civil employers and providing for a properly-funded Volunteer force), or they consent to the introduction of some form of compulsory military training (thereby creating a mass inexpensive reserve).

17 ‘An account of the Armaments of Europe’, *The Times*, 4 December 1876, p. 9.

18 ‘MILITARY ORGANISATION, (READY)’, *Morning Post*, 24 November 1874, p. 3.

19 ‘O P Q, CONSCRIPTION’, *Examiner*, 17 July 1875, p. 800.

20 ‘CONSCRIPTION OR FRESH TAXATION?’, *Examiner*, 2 January 1875, pp. 5–6.

Increasingly, military authorities urged the benefits of the latter.²¹ In 1874 The Royal United Service Institution granted its inaugural Essay Prize to an essay entitled ‘Universal Conscription: The Only Answer to the Recruiting Question’, and in the House of Commons Major Beaumont ‘strongly urged the adoption of a system akin to that of Germany, by which the whole of our recruits should at once be passed through the regular army’.²²

Discussion of these proposals in the London press reveals a slight softening of press antipathy to compulsion. The fundamental *legitimacy* of compulsion – the inherent right of States to require military service of their subjects – was roundly accepted in principle, and the press even conceded the superior ‘moral tone’ that resulted from the compulsory inclusion of all classes of men in one national army.²³ Even Continental conscription was regarded less as a barbarous tyranny than a pragmatic response to the reality of modern warfare: the Continental nations had noted that the wars of the future would be fought by mass armies and simply had determined to ‘rehearse all this, so far as they can, beforehand’ by passing their able-bodied male population through universal military service.²⁴ But the London press still balked at continental-style conscription for the regular army, denouncing such a measure as fundamentally inapplicable to England.²⁵ Conscription, *The Times* asserted, was ‘a forcible interference with the natural course of existence ... and must thus disorganize the whole domestic economy. The system of voluntary enlistment which we adopt in this country is, in fact, simply an application of the principle of the division of labour... [and] any plan which thus secures a natural division of labour must, in spite of any appearance to the contrary, be really cheap.’²⁶

21 See for example ‘THE DEBATE ON ARMY RECRUITING’, *Examiner*, 24 April 1875, pp. 456–457.; and ‘Recruits For The Army. JOHN MACGREGOR’, *The Times*, 26 December 1874, p. 8.

22 ‘POLITICAL AND SOCIAL’, *Examiner*, 18 April 1874, p. 389.

23 ‘BLIND, KARL, SWISS REFORMS’, *Examiner*, 5 September 1874, p. 956.

24 ‘An account of the Armaments of Europe’, *The Times*, 4 December 1876, p. 9.

25 ‘BLIND, KARL, SWISS REFORMS’, *Examiner*, 5 September 1874, p. 956.

26 ‘The speech of the Duke of CAMBRIDGE at the’, *The Times*, 19 December 1874, p. 9.

Furthermore, the liberal press overwhelmingly presented conscription as a practical impossibility in so liberty-loving a society as Victorian England. The *Examiner* declared that ‘conscription is simply impossible ... freedom-loving people will never again sanction any system which drags men from wives, children and home to fight other folks’ battles against their own will’.²⁷ *The Times* concurred that it was ‘sheer waste of time to discuss the advantages, as some assert, of raising our forces by some kind of conscription’, since ‘nothing short of an invasion would set the English people seriously thinking of carrying out such a system’.²⁸ ‘All acquainted with our military history know that even in times of real danger the Government has never induced the nation to consent to compulsory service in the Regular Army’, it noted. ‘On various occasions some tendency in this direction has been manifested, but the impulse has died of conscious helplessness, with hardly the need of resistance from the public.’²⁹ Therefore, ‘our Army is a Volunteer Army, and must remain so, unless the national character undergo some extraordinary revolution’.³⁰

Rightly perceiving continental-style conscription as a bridge too far for British public opinion, advocates of compulsory measures turned again to the principle of a balloted militia (alongside a voluntary army, to which it could supply recruits in time of war) as a more familiar and potentially less controversial solution. Pains were taken once again to distinguish a balloted citizen reserve from a conscript army, and to emphasise the constitutional foundations of such a force. Such a plan was now openly advocated by the conservative press, and by influential military figures including Lord Sandhurst, Commander in Chief the Duke of Cambridge, and Sir Henry Havelock-Allan, the Victoria Cross-winning son of the hero of the Indian Mutiny. The liberal press, meanwhile, largely accepted the legality and legitimacy of the ballot, reminding the public that it was a ‘sheathed sword’.³¹ But despite its growing concerns about Britain’s inability to wield

27 ‘CONSCRIPTION OR FRESH TAXATION?’, *Examiner*, 2 January 1875, pp. 5–6.

28 ‘Desertion. B.’, *The Times*, 6 November 1874, p. 7.

29 ‘Lord SANDHURST last night called the attention’, *The Times*, 2 June 1874, p. 9.

30 ‘Lord SANDHURST last night called the attention’, *The Times*, 2 June 1874, p. 9.

31 ‘Military criticism on military administration has’, *The Times*, 22 May 1875, p. 11.

military power on the continent, the liberal press still considered compulsion too awful a burden whilst the nation's primary security against invasion, the Royal Navy, remained unchallenged and unchallengeable.³² 'That "silver streak"...still permits us to abide by our old-fashioned system of voluntary enlistment and a small standing army at a time when the whole Continent...is one colossal camp', write *The Times*, though warning that 'if engineering skill could make the Channel as easy to pass as an equivalent piece of land, we should instantly have to establish a great army by conscription'.³³

In the second half of the 1870s, circumstances conspired to further lessen the anxiety of military commentators. Comfort was found in the popular recruiting response to the Great Eastern Crisis (1875–8), which proved a war scare could still be depended on to effect a short-term boost in voluntary participation. If Gladstone's adoption of the 'Bulgarian Horrors' issue the year before had failed to spark the kind of Palmerstonian adventurism he had hoped for, the anti-Russian excitement of the Eastern Crisis was much more in tune with popular Russophobia. The *Examiner* noted with distaste the 'howling ruffians who sing, "We don't want to fight, but, by Jingo, if we do"'³⁴ while *Punch* satirised their enthusiasm to 'defend in the most irrational manner something somebody has called "the mighty heritage bequeathed to them by their sires;" but what that is exactly nobody has any very tangible conception'.³⁵

This spasm of militarism may have been regarded with distaste by the liberal press, but it clearly had a galvanising effect upon potential recruits. The Volunteers, too, experienced a bumper intake in 1878–79, contributing to a partial recovery of prestige as 'an important element of national defence' after a decade of ill fortune.³⁶ This boom gave new substance

32 And also, in this period, achieved at remarkably modest expense: the British defence burden fell progressively to a minimum of 2% of GDP in 1870. P. Pugh, *The Cost of Seapower: the Influence of Money on Naval Affairs from 1815 to the Present Day* (London, 1986), p. 34.

33 'By virtue of lineage, Mr. FORSTER ought to be a', *The Times*, 19 December 1876, p. 9.

34 'NOTES AND COMMENTS', *Examiner*, 16 February 1878, p. 193.

35 'SAVING THE EMPIRE', *Punch*, 29 December 1877, p. 291.

36 'The Volunteer force is now in the twentieth year', *The Times*, 8 January 1879, p. 9.

and credibility to ‘the usual Rule Britannia after–dinner talk about Englishmen being always ready to die for their Queen and country’, reaffirming the belief that compulsory measures were unnecessary in a nation as patriotic and vigorous and England.³⁷ Commentators noted that ‘the apparent imminence of war has had something to do with this sudden accession of recruits to the ranks, and it is possible that the numbers returned this year may not be quite maintained in years to come’, but considered this no ill omen, for it demonstrated that ‘we have and are likely always to have, as a nucleus, a very considerable body of volunteers who are fond of soldiering, and it is satisfactory to find that when it is likely their services may really be required, the numbers, instead of falling off, are increased by thousands, to whom it is presumably some inconvenience to serve, as they are not already in the ranks’.³⁸

The arrival of more difficult economic circumstances in the latter 1870s served to further mask recruiting woes and thereby stave off any real reform. The so–called Long Depression was to last, with temporary spikes and drops, until the mid–1890s, but its first effects were felt on recruiting in 1878, when the intake for the Regulars picked up sharply. Military authorities claimed the improvement as the product of the new short–service scheme, but the London press identified ‘the depression of trade, the numerous disputes between employed and employers (often ending in strikes), and the lock–out of farm labourers’ as the more immediate cause of the spike in enlistments – *The Times* noting that ‘distress is a potent recruiting officer’.³⁹ Still, loath to embark upon the equally undesirable courses of massive expenditure or the introduction of compulsory service obligations, most English observers were quick to seize upon the small boost in recruiting occasioned by the Eastern Crisis, and the ameliorating effects of worsening economic circumstances in 1878, as an excuse to put off consideration of such drastic reform.

37 ‘THE DEBATE ON ARMY RECRUITING’, *Examiner*, 24 April 1875, pp. 456 – 457.

38 ‘NOTES AND COMMENTS’, *Examiner*, 5 October 1878, p. 1249.

39 ‘SKELETON REGIMENTS’, *Examiner*, 1 March 1879, p. 267; and ‘When, some six weeks hence, Colonel STANLEY’, *The Times*, 25 January 1879, p. 9.

The respite, however, was not total, and when the Zulu War and the glut of small colonial conflict 1879–1881 again stretched the army’s manpower resources, the recruiting issue once again attracted press debate. But public opinion had, if anything hardened further against the only two suggested solutions – compulsion and expenditure – since the Eastern Crisis. Calls for compulsory obligations remained isolated and peripheral, bearing out the *Examiner*’s 1879 assertion that ‘the popular instinct is dead against the employment of legal compulsion as an instrument for forcing unwilling men to fight’.⁴⁰ If anything, the voluntarist principle was reaffirmed. The Parliamentary suggestion of making the militia liable to man overseas garrisons was resoundingly rejected in the liberal press, on the basis that it was a violation of the founding principle of the militia, and that it would discourage potential militiamen who, by their nature, ‘have no wish to bid good–bye to civil life...[and] join the service just because they are sure they will not be sent abroad against their wishes’.⁴¹ The London press furthermore noted that the militia had freely volunteered overseas service in all the last major crises, and that it was therefore both unnecessary and dishonourable to bind the militia ‘to do that which it already does voluntarily’.⁴²

Compulsion, therefore, remained out of the question; but greater expenditure was also problematic. Indeed, there was already deep dissatisfaction with the results of England’s considerable military expenditure. The *Examiner* insisted that simply paying soldiers more was not the answer, complaining that ‘the nation does not get the full value of its money, because our military reforms are invariably based on the theory that the British soldier’s soul never soars above pence’.⁴³ Other periodicals agreed, urging that the only way to address the recruiting problem was to raise the conditions and improve the long–term prospects of a military career. Again, the assumption that it ‘is scarcely to be expected that many good men will come forward and voluntarily waste six years – or three – of their life,

40 ‘OUR MILITARY BUDGET’, *Examiner*, 9 March 1878, pp. 294–296.

41 ‘In the House of Lords yesterday there was’, *The Times*, 29 April 1879, p. 10.

42 ‘In the House of Lords yesterday there was’, *The Times*, 29 April 1879, p. 10.

43 ‘OUR MILITARY BUDGET’, *Examiner*, 9 March 1878, pp. 294–296.

from any notion of duty or patriotism' went largely unquestioned.⁴⁴ Accepting that modern-day recruits 'generally enlist with a very clear idea as to what are the advantages and disadvantages... there is very little, or rather no romance about recruiting whatever', commentators focussed on professionalization, flexible terms and conditions of service, and opportunities for advancement.⁴⁵ The thrust of public debate was towards the 'civilianisation' of the military profession, bringing it into line with modern civilian standards and conditions, rather than the 'militarisation' of the populace by way of formal obligations. But public opinion remained as tangled as ever on the precise measures by which military service could be rendered more attractive without incurring unjustifiable expense. Faced with the frustrating and familiar stalemate, it is little wonder that the London press turned to a simpler theme: the need for the colonies to 'recognize the obligation of self-defence' and stop wasting Britain's slender manpower resources hunting down savages and outlaws.⁴⁶

As it happened, the close of the Afghan War in 1881 coincided with an economic slump, allowing recruiting to finally catch up with establishment figures. Though recruiting remained a struggle for the rest of the century, overseas wars produced no major strain, and the ongoing influence of the Long Depression provided a further buffer against manpower shortages. The acute recruiting crisis was over for the rest of the century, and with it went the major impetus towards consideration of possible civilian military obligations. This is not to say, however, that the last decades of the century were devoid of military anxieties. On the contrary, the period saw the steady rise of invasion fears, triggered by the Channel Tunnel debate in 1882 and worked upon by the growing influence of the bellicose Boulanger, and his naval counterpart St Aube, in the French Cabinet. The efficiency and organisation of the army was the subject of close scrutiny, especially after the Sudan

44 'THE BRITISH SOLDIER', *Examiner*, 21 September 1878, p. 1196.

45 'THE YOUNG RECRUIT', *Examiner*, 12 October 1878, p. 1296; and 'When, some six weeks hence, Colonel STANLEY', *The Times*, 25 January 1879, p. 9.

46 'Volunteers For South Africa. A COMMANDANT OF VOLUNTEERS WHO HAVE BEEN IN ACTION', *The Times*, 25 February 1879, p. 11; and 'The extreme gravity, from every point of view', *The Times*, 13 February 1879, p. 9.

expedition of 1884–5 had aroused doubts about the effectiveness of British forces in the field.⁴⁷

Even more frighteningly, British naval supremacy – the bulwark upon which so much depended – appeared to be under threat of erosion. The completion of several long–delayed French battleships in the first half of the 1880s was misrepresented in the press as evidence that the French had more new battleships than the British. At the same time, the navy’s resources were increasingly stretched by the requirements of Imperial defence, with Australia and New Zealand growing wary of French and German ambitions in their region. Growing fears about the vulnerability of the British Isles to invasion culminated in a full–blown invasion scare in the summer of 1888, for which the catalyst was a speech in the House of Lords by Sir Garnet Wolseley, the hero of Tel–el–Kebir, asserting that neither army nor navy could prevent invasion. Salisbury asked the Admiralty and War Office to report on the possibility and the consequences of the French seizing London by a *coup de main*, and, advised by the Admiralty that an invasion was unlikely but mechanically possible, he resolved to take ‘full precautions’ against even ‘a distant possibility’ on the grounds that ‘our stake is great.’⁴⁸

The shape of these precautions, however, represented the continued focus on naval strength as the best safeguard of British security. For some years, public opinion had swung increasingly behind naval expansion in response to the build–up of the French and Russian navies and the critical views of British naval strength presented by a range of naval experts.⁴⁹ Unsurprisingly, therefore, it was the ‘Blue Water School’ – rather than those who feared a ‘Bolt from the Blue’ – that triumphed in the invasion debate.⁵⁰ On 31 May 1889,

47 A. R. Skelley, *The Victorian Army at Home* (London, 1977), p. 259.

48 Quoted in S. Mahajan, *British Foreign Policy 1874–1914: The Role of India* (London, 2002), p. 93.

49 J. T. Sumida, ‘Geography, Technology, and British Naval Strategy in the Dreadnought Era’, *Naval War College Review* 2006 59.3, p. 13.

50 The best account of the 1888 invasion scare is to be found in H. R. Moon, ‘The Invasion of the United Kingdom: Public Controversy and Official Planning, 1888–1918’ (Unpub. Ph.D., University of London, 1968), pp. 19–66.

Salisbury's government passed the Naval Defence Act 1889, marking Britain's formal adoption of the 'two-power standard'. The Act reaffirmed naval strength as Britain's foremost military priority, and, by facilitating the expenditure of £21,500,000 over five years to maintain a number of battleships equal to or greater than the combined strength of the next two largest navies in the world, ended the age of naval dominance at low cost. The enormous influence of the American military strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan, whose concept of 'sea power' was founded in the conviction that a nation's worldwide impact was inextricably tied to its naval power, further fuelled this focus on naval strength, especially after his visits to Europe in the early 1890s.⁵¹ By 1894, the commitment to naval expansion was such that when Prime Minister Gladstone held out against another large programme of naval construction, he found himself unsupported, and resigned.

Minister for War Edward Stanhope did manage to secure £600,000 for fixed defences around the capital, but even he recognized that 'land service has always had to give way to sea service'.⁵² Indeed, he further downplayed the role of Britain's land forces in his oft-quoted Stanhope Memorandum (1888). This document defined the strategic purposes of the army, in order of its priorities, as (1) aid of the civil power in Britain; (2) the provision of reinforcements for India; (3) the provision of garrisons for colonies and coaling stations; (4) the provision of two corps for home defence; and (5) the improbable employment of one of these two corps in a European War. The memorandum made it very clear both that primary responsibility for home defence lay with the navy, and that it was highly unlikely that the army 'would take the field in any European War' – the two 'patriotic' functions around which the civilian military participation debate revolved.⁵³ In the context of these

51 A. T. Mahan's book *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660–1783* (New York, 1890) shaped the strategic thought of navies across the world and contributed to the naval arms race of the 1890s.

52 Quoted in I F. W. Beckett, 'Edward Stanhope at the War Office 1887–92', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 5.2 (1982), p. 284.

53 The Stanhope Memorandum has oft been regarded as old-fashioned, stultifying and abortive (see for example J. Gooch, *The Plans of War: the General Staff and British Military Strategy c.1900–1916* [London, 1974], p.12.) More recently, however, Ian Beckett has suggested that in fact it was a genuine response to the purposes for which the army existed, reflecting both existing strategic orthodoxy and real fears about civil unrest. It also ought not to be forgotten that it did lead to the unprecedented mobilization of the army during the Boer War (even if that mobilization was not, in the

stated military priorities, the nation's capacity for mass civilian mobilisation, and therefore the whole issue of citizenly military obligation, appeared of doubtful relevance, and the debate largely stagnated.

Interest in civilian military participation as a political/civil issue was further retarded by broader social and political developments in the period. The Home Rule debate dominated public discussion, occasioning the breakaway of the Unionists from Gladstonian Liberalism and the splitting of the Liberal party. The hardening of capitalism and the consequent emergence of Labour, growth of trade unions, development of Socialism and rise in labour unrest all distracted from military matters – though, as we shall see, they also undermined complacency to some extent by weakening confidence in the patriotic unity of the people. The political entrenchment of not only voluntarism, but also of Free Trade, also worked against the imperative towards greater civilian military participation. As a philosophy premised on the idea that human relationships should be voluntary and based on mutual consent, and on the understanding that society is best served by a division of labour, Free Trade was not an easy bedfellow of civilian military obligations. It further retarded the debate by perpetuating the hope that the mutual interdependencies of global trade would make war impossible. In this atmosphere of pressing domestic concerns, and without the stimulus of a recruiting crisis to provide arguments in favour of compulsory service, the issue of civilian military obligation lapsed from the forefront of public debate.

And yet, even as the extent and intensity of direct debate on civilian military obligations declined in the latter 1870s and 1880s, a number of broader developments in late Victorian culture acted to perpetuate and promote themes of military duty in a more indirect manner. As Cunningham has noted, the latter part of the nineteenth century saw an increasing emphasis upon loyalty to the State, and the Disraelian popular conservatism of the 1870s

last analysis, actually sufficient for the demands of modern war). I. F. W. Beckett, 'The Stanhope Memorandum of 1888: A Reinterpretation', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 57 (1984), pp. 240–7.

succeeded in positioning patriotism as the ultimate public virtue.⁵⁴ At the same time, the revival of colonialism inspired a dramatic growth in Imperialist rhetoric and ideology.⁵⁵ While mid-century 'free trade Imperialism' had focussed on minimising territorial responsibilities and maximising profit in an essentially commercial and maritime empire, the period after 1875 saw the emergence of a new 'militaristic Imperialism', which played on the imperial challenge offered by Russia, France and Germany and emphasised the moral imperative to extend the Empire by conquest, colonisation and conversion. Influential imperialists including Curzon, Balfour, Milner, and the Liberal faction that would later identify as 'Liberal Imperialists' (including Haldane, Rosebery, Asquith and Grey) began to articulate an imperial creed 'compounded of the concepts of destiny, duty and service'.⁵⁶ These values were increasingly intertwined with notions of patriotism and the 'Imperial mission', and its primary instrument, the military. The role of the army in extending and preserving the empire attracted unprecedented interest and romanticism. Within this vision of Empire, the soldier became no less than an agent of imperial moral destiny.⁵⁷

The result was the accelerated development, in the last decades of the nineteenth century, of British popular militarism: a confluence of overlapping ideas including not only militarist Imperialism, but also Christian Militarism, the 'cult' of masculinity, and a glorification of struggle and war heavily informed by Social Darwinist thinking.⁵⁸ Personality cults sprang up around military heroes like Garnet Wolseley, Frederick Roberts, and, above all, General Charles 'Chinese' Gordon. A deeply religious man, Gordon rose to fame in action against the Taiping rebellion and slavers in Sudan, but it was

54 H. Cunningham, 'The Language of Patriotism 1750–1914', *History Workshop Journal*, 12 (1981), pp. 8–33.

55 E. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire 1875–1914* (New York, 1989) p. 45.

56 J. Richards, 'Popular imperialism and the image of the army in juvenile literature', in J. M. MacKenzie (ed.), *Popular imperialism and the military: 1850–1950* (Manchester, 1992), p. 85.

57 E. M. Spiers, *The Army and Society, 1815–1914* (London, 1980), pp. 206, 216.

58 See A. Summers, 'Militarism in Britain before the Great War,' *History Workshop Journal*, 2 (1976), pp. 104–123.

his death during the fall of Khartoum in 1885 that made him a Christian martyr.⁵⁹ The veneration of Gordon exemplified a broad trend in late-Victorian military hagiography: the shift from an emphasis on the faith, private virtue and ‘inner life’ of the hero to a more ‘muscular’ focus on the active, vital virtues of the patriotic professional warrior.⁶⁰ Gordon was the subject of hundreds of poems, paintings, sculptures and biographies, all celebrating the martial values he had come to embody: not only loyalty, self-sacrifice and self-control, but also, physical prowess, courage, discipline, daring, and ‘pluck’.⁶¹ Building on the tradition that had memorialised the great men of the Napoleonic Wars and made Havelock a ‘soldier-saint’ in the 1850s, late-Victorian hero-worship was a key component of the popular militarist imperialism that, while never consistent (as Gladstone’s 1879 Midlothian Campaign exemplified) nevertheless promoted latent acceptance of military ‘service’.

Mechanistic changes also played a crucial role in the dissemination of imperialist and militarist ideologies. The advent of mass literacy with the Foster Education Act in 1870 did its part in creating a mass audience for what J. A. Hobson has called the “course patriotism” promulgated by the media in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.⁶² Popular culture was flooded with militarist imagery and rhetoric.⁶³ The massive expansion of the newspaper industry between 1880 and 1900 provided a pervasive medium for the glamourisation of distant Imperial battlefields.⁶⁴ Militaristic and patriotic themes dominated in the theatres and music halls, while the contemporary fiction of writers such as Henty and Kipling shaped the values of a generation with their dashing but dutiful martial

59 Gladstone, meanwhile, was cast as Gordon’s murderer for failing to effect his rescue Gordon in time.

60 C. I. Hamilton, ‘Naval Hagiography and the Victorian Hero’, *Historical Journal*, 23.2 (1980), p. 394.

61 See D. Johnson, ‘The Death of Gordon: A Victorian Myth’, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 10 (1982), pp. 285–310; R. Hill, ‘The Gordon Literature’, *Durham University Journal*, 47 (1955), pp. 97–103; and E. M. Spiers, *The Scottish Soldier and Empire, 1854–1902* (Edinburgh, 2006) ch. 5.

62 J. A. Hobson, *The Psychology of Jingoism* (London, 1901). See W. H. G. Armytage, ‘The 1870 Education Act’, *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 18.2 (1970), pp. 121–33.

63 See J. M. MacKenzie (ed.) *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (Manchester, 1986) and (ed.)

Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880–1960 (Manchester, 1984).

64 Spiers, *The Army and Society*, pp. 211–16.

heroes and glamorous depictions of imperial adventure.⁶⁵ Even the British common soldier became a national icon with his likeness plastered on all manner of products and advertisements.

New levels of education, and especially the syllabus and content of that education, were also enormously influential in promoting both military values and the idea of service. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the education system increasingly emphasised ‘service’, ‘loyalty’ and ‘patriotism’, and inculcated schoolchildren with a belief in racial ascendancy and a nationalistic pride in the imperial mission.⁶⁶ Another crucial influence, particularly in the public schools, was the re-imagining of sport as a rehearsal for war. The playing of games was thought to instil core moral values – character, manliness, team spirit, fortitude and a sense of duty – that could be seamlessly transferred into military service.⁶⁷ In addition, pseudo-military youth organisations such as cadet corps and the Boy’s Brigade flourished in the period, popularising and rehearsing military values and practices.⁶⁸

Though the actual popular reception of imperialistic and militaristic imagery – especially amongst the working classes – is difficult to reconstruct, it is reasonable to assume, with

65 See P. Summerfield, ‘Patriotism and Empire: Music-Hall Entertainment, 1870–1914’ in MacKenzie (ed.) *Imperialism and Popular Culture*; J. Richards, ‘Popular imperialism and the image of the army in juvenile literature’ and *Imperialism and Music: Britain 1876–1953* (Manchester, 2001); and C.D. Eby, *The Road to Armageddon: The Martial Spirit in English Popular Literature, 1870–1914* (Durham, 1987).

66 See M. D. Blanch, ‘British Society and the War,’ in P. Warwick and S. B. Spies (eds.), *The South African War* (London, 1980), p. 213; J. Springhall, ‘Building Character in the British Boy: The Attempt to Extend Christian Manliness to Working-Class Adolescents, 1880–1914’, in J.A. Mangan and J. Walvin (eds.), *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800–1914* (Manchester, 1987), p. 66; G. Best, *Militarism and the Victorian Public School* (London, 1975), pp. 128–46; S. Heathorn, ‘“Let Us Remember that we, Too, are English”: Constructions of Citizenship and National Identity in English Elementary School Reading Books, 1880-1914’, *Victorian Studies*, 38.3 (1995), pp. 395-427; and N. Roberts, ‘Character in the Mind: Citizenship, Education and Psychology in Britain, 1880-1914’, *History of Education*, 33.2 (2004), pp. 177-97.

67 There is a large body of scholarship on the games ethic in the school system; the most important works remain J. A. Mangan’s *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian public school* (Cambridge, 1981) and *The Games Ethic and Imperialism: Aspects of the Diffusion of an Ideal* (Harmondsworth, 1986).

68 R.S. Peacock, *Pioneer of Boyhood: Story of Sir William A. Smith* (Glasgow, 1954), p.91; J. Springhall, *Sure and Steadfast: A History of the Boys’ Brigade, 1883–1983* (London, 1983), 94, J. Springhall, *Youth, Empire, and Society: British Youth Movements, 1883–1940* (Hamden CT., 1977).

Cunningham, that the public was not entirely immune to ‘the virus of right-wing patriotism’.⁶⁹ As Anne Summers has shown, militarism was central not only to the ‘official’ patriotism of Empire, but also to both Liberal political culture and much of Anglican and Nonconformist Christianity.⁷⁰ The flourishing of Liberal and independent strains of militarism alongside its official forms suggests the depth to which militaristic values and modes of thought had penetrated English popular culture in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Of course, the rise of ‘British militarism’ did not straightforwardly equate to enthusiasm for personal participation. As we have previously noted, enthusiasm for military display, sympathy for Imperial values, and even the glorification of war do not necessarily imply personal willingness to serve. Indeed, Britain remained strongly anti-militaristic where actual participation was concerned. Military drill in schools, for example, had been required by the Education codes of 1871 and 1876, but, converse to the growth of imperialism, had by the end of century been almost entirely replaced by organised sports and ‘Swedish Drill’.⁷¹ New enthusiasm for the army in principle, moreover, did not result in significantly better recruitment figures (though the exploits of General Gordon at Khartoum in 1884–5 did inspire a temporary boom in Volunteer and Regular recruiting); the army as a career was still shunned by the vast majority of the population.⁷² But the emergency of ‘British militarism’ and Imperialism in the latter nineteenth century was a vitally important context to evolving ideas of civilian military obligations, promoting as it did both the attractiveness of military participation and the idea of service.

At the same time as imperial adventures heightened the popularity of the regular army, it also gave new vigour to the Volunteer movement at home. As Cunningham has demonstrated, the Volunteer movement was key in the gradual legitimisation of civilian military participation and the closing of the gap between the civil and military worlds.⁷³

69 Cunningham, *The Language of Patriotism*, p. 24.

70 See Summers, ‘Militarism in Britain before the Great War,’ pp. 104–123.

71 G. R. Searle, *A New England: Peace and War 1886–1918* (Oxford, 2004) p. 38.

72 Spiers, p. 219.

73 H. Cunningham, *The Volunteer Force: A Social and Political History, 1859–1908* (London: 1975).

Growing steadily throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century, the movement contributed immensely to the spread of military experience and competency amongst British civilians: by 1898 more than 22% of the entire male population of the United Kingdom and Ireland between the ages of 17 and 40 had spent some time either in the army or the auxiliaries.⁷⁴ Volunteer corps and, to a lesser extent, militia regiments, also continued to fulfil important social roles in their communities, and their regular drills, demonstrations and displays were instrumental in increasing public familiarity and sympathy with the military in the latter nineteenth century.

In addition to normalising the principle and practice of civilian military participation, the Volunteer movement also proved a source of considerable pride. Its prestige rose steadily in the 1880s, spurred on by the determined advocacy of the London press.⁷⁵ ‘The Volunteers are deservedly the most popular, as they are the most important, body of men in the country’, noted the *Morning Post*. ‘Every one admires them; every one wishes them well; every one sympathises with their wants; every one wishes to see them better armed, more liberally treated, encouraged, supported, patted on the back in every possible way.’⁷⁶ Though invasion fears persisted, the Volunteers were considered to have ‘immensely contributed to diminish the risk of any attempt being made by an enemy to effect a landing on our shores’ while the attentions of the regulars were engaged in Africa and the Middle East.⁷⁷ ‘A career which began in earnest and then turned to play has become earnest once again, and this in a more steady and more consistent fashion than at first’, asserted *The Times* of the Volunteers.⁷⁸ Only two or three years ago regarded as a ‘sham’ force, they were now lauded as ‘an earnest, well-disciplined, steady, self-respecting army, the cheapest in the world, and equal to the best’.⁷⁹ Even *Punch*, a long-time (if fond) satiriser

74 I. F.W. Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition, 1558–1945* (Manchester, 1991), p.200.

75 ‘A FRIEND IN NEED’, *Punch*, 13 March 1886, p. 122.

76 ‘Multiple News Items’, *Morning Post*, 17 July 1888, p. 5.

77 ‘LONDON, MONDAY, APRIL 10, 1882’, *Morning Post*, 10 April 1882, p. 4.

78 ‘Does our Volunteer force consist of soldiers’, *The Times*, 12 August 1884, p. 9.

79 ‘OUR CITIZEN SOLDIERS AT PORTSMOUTH’, *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 16 April 1882, p. 1.

of the Volunteers, now abandoned its jests at their expense, asking military and ruling elites to do likewise ‘and not talk bow–wow–wow–wow/On the British Volunteers!’⁸⁰

This burgeoning pride in the noble, earnest and self–sacrificing Volunteers had unfortunate consequences for the militia, which continued to decline during the 1870s and 1880s. There was a persistent feeling that the militia had no real purpose in a voluntary system, the two pillars of which were the Volunteers and the regular army. *Lloyd’s* complained that militiamen were ‘neither fish nor flesh’, lacking both ‘the spontaneous patriotism of the Volunteers, and the solidity of men who have made arms the profession of their lives.’⁸¹ The militia enjoyed closer rhetorical association with the principle of universal liability to service than the Volunteer Force, and as ‘the only branch of our land forces to which conscription could in any form be applied’, was the natural heir for any belief in an inherent citizenly obligation towards military participation.⁸² But interest in such an obligation had dwindled since the Franco–Prussian War, causing its advocates to rue the ‘weak moment’ when the militia ballot was first suspended.⁸³ In an age of blossoming imperialism, public pride focussed on the less controversial and far more dashing Volunteer Force.

And yet even as the militia suffered from its association with compulsory military obligations, the Volunteer force itself began to be more closely associated with the notion of universal liability military service in light of another broad social trend: the shift from Victorian individualism to a more collectivist view, focussed on social fairness and equality rather than individual freedom. Sidney Webb has described the emergence in the late nineteenth century of a ‘New England’ that recognised that people are ‘not merely

80 ‘THE BRITISH VOLUNTEERS’, *Punch*, 9 February 1889, p. 70.

81 ‘OUR CITIZEN SOLDIERS AT PORTSMOUTH’, *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper*, 16 April 1882, p. 1.

82 ‘The Militia. EX–LINESMAN AND MALITIA COMMANDANT’ [sic], *The Times*, 25 September 1884, p. 7.

83 ‘The Militia. A. C.O. OF THIRTY YEARS’ SERVICE’, *The Times*, 25 September 1884, p. 7.

individuals, but members of a community, nay, citizens of the world'.⁸⁴ In terms of political ideology, this fed into a shift from the classical liberalism of the mid-Victorian era to a new 'social liberalism', in which the good of the community was increasingly viewed as harmonious with the freedom of the individual, and state intervention in the interests of social justice enjoyed growing legitimacy.⁸⁵ This shift was manifested in such developments as the advent of democracy, socialist renaissance, the formation of the Labour Party, the birth of welfare politics, the spread of the Hegelian progressivism of T.H. Green, and the beginnings of the popular acceptance of government intervention in everyday life (police, compulsory education, hygiene inspectors, etc) that would go on to characterise New Liberalism in the Edwardian era.⁸⁶

Infused also by the 'ethic of service' that justified Empire, London press conceptions of the duty towards military service similarly shifted over time, from the highly moralistic, conscience-driven duty to serve that had characterised mid-Victorian Volunteering (with the exception of the period of Prussian expansion), to a more State-focussed, universal and socially mandatory conception of duty. From 1885 onwards, Volunteering was increasingly presented as the fulfilment of a serious national duty: 'a high mission, and all honour to those who have taken it on themselves and have spared no labour and have shrunk from no sacrifice to fit themselves for its effective discharge'.⁸⁷ The older sense of voluntary military participation as a supererogatory matter of individual moral virtue, generosity and self-sacrifice could still be observed, *The Times* endorsing in 1889 'self-denial as a duty,

84 S. Webb, *Twentieth Century Politics: A Policy of National Efficiency*, Fabian Tract No. 107 (London, 1901), p. 5.

85 G. De Ruggiero, *The History of European Liberalism* (trans R. G. Collingwood, London, 1959), pp. 155–157; M. Freedman, *The New Liberalism: An Ideology of Social Reform* (Oxford, 1978); J. R. Hay, *The Origins of the Liberal Welfare Reforms 1906–1914* (London, 1975); E. P. Cheyney, *Modern English Reform: From Individualism to Socialism* (New York, 1962); H. C. G. Matthew, *The Liberal Imperialists: the ideas and politics of a Post-Gladstonian Elite* (Oxford, 1973); J. P. Plamenatz, *Consent, Freedom and Political Obligation* (2nd ed. Oxford, 1968); and H. J. Schultz, *English Liberalism and the State: Individualism or Collectivism?* (Lexington MA, 1972).

86 Interestingly, though his Hegelian theoretical framework and philosophy of state intervention lent themselves towards a belief in the duty of military service, T.H. Green was himself inclined towards pacifism. T. H. Green, 'Lectures on Social and Political Obligation', in *Works of T. H. Green*, Vol. 2 (London, 1906). See ch. K for a detailed exposition of Green's views.

87 'MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S speech at the presenta-', *The Times*, 28 January 1889, p. 9.

and of submission to discipline as one form of it', and of 'the duty of joining the Volunteers' as a means to 'a higher and nobler life', but participation in national defence was increasingly presented as a citizenly obligation rather than an act of supererogatory virtue.⁸⁸

Non-participation of those who could afford it (in terms of time, money and physical fitness) was now frequently depicted as 'shirking' an inherent duty to the community. The perceived decline in public-spirited, patriotic military participation since the dawn of the Volunteer revival in 1859 was widely bemoaned, one correspondent to *The Times* blasting what he saw as a widespread 'determination to shirk that duty which has been considered the primary duty of every good citizen in every independent State since history began – the duty, I mean, of coming forward to serve your country when called upon in the hour of danger or difficulty'.⁸⁹ The rhetoric previously employed by defensive pro-Volunteer advocates, that stressed how Volunteers shouldered a burden that was rightly the responsibility of the whole people, now became a commonplace assumption of London press debate. The people were frequently reminded that it was only by the continued generosity of the few that they were delivered 'from the fearful burden which all Continental nations are forced to bear in the form of conscription'.⁹⁰

The growing sentiment that participation in the nation's military reserve was the inherent responsibility of all able-bodied patriots found fuller expression in 1889, with the creation of a Patriotic Fund for the Volunteers by the Lord Mayor of London. This charitable fund aimed to supply the material needs of Volunteers, and was founded in 'the general feeling, which has found strong expression already, that those who do not volunteer should bear a share in the expenses of those who do'.⁹¹ The cause proved extremely popular in the

88 'We report this morning LORD WOLSELEY'S', *The Times*, 13 May 1889, p. 9.

89 'Military Service. FRANCIS HASTINGS DOYLE', *The Times*, 25 January 1887, p. 12.

90 'Multiple News Items', *Morning Post*, 24 February 1888, p. 5; and 'IN THE NAME OF ENGLAND—GUNS AND MEN!', *Punch*, 26 May 1888, p. 249.

91 'The LORD MAYOR, in a letter which we print', *The Times*, 3 June 1889, p. 9.

London press. *The Times* declared its aim to “impress upon ... people who do not serve as Volunteers themselves that patriotism demands of them, at any rate, a pecuniary sacrifice”,⁹² while *Punch* delineated the moral equation in straightforward terms:

Every patriot must pay up, in person or purse;
If some shirk the former, why so much the worse;
But let them fulfil the next best form of right
And help the LORD MAYOR in “Arming the Knight.”⁹³

While pecuniary contribution was presented as second best, in patriotic terms, to personal military participation, it at least *acknowledged* the inherent principle of shared responsibility for national defence.

This collectivist perspective on national defence was further bolstered by the ongoing development of the broader notion of citizenship as a contract between the State and the individual, consisting of both privileges and duties. ‘The question whether the citizen is prepared for the duties of the soldier,’ mused the *Spectator* in 1887, ‘lies at the heart of political philosophy’.⁹⁴ Liability to military service was repeatedly cited as a fundamental duty of citizenship, especially as the campaign for female suffrage emerged in the 1880s and ‘90s. Opponents of women’s suffrage challenged their claim to full citizenship on the basis of their incapacity to fulfil the duty of military service. In response, advocates observed that ‘in England, where the vast majority of men pay a very small minority to stand on guard for them, the conscription argument loses much of its effect’.⁹⁵ The *Examiner* pointed out that ‘our military service... is voluntary; nor is any man disenfranchised because he chooses to hold aloof from the army and the navy and the reserve forces’, further noting that, in any case, ‘it is neither essential nor desirable that all should do, or be able to do, the same kind of service to the State; it is enough that every

92 ‘At a meeting of the Committee of the Patriotic’, *The Times*, 17 October 1889, p. 9.

93 ‘ARMING THE KNIGHT’, *Punch*, 15 June 1889, p. 286.

94 ‘THE AGE OF WOMAN’, *Spectator*, 13 August 1887, p. 1084.

95 ‘Mr. Courtney & Women’s Suffrage DONALD A. CAMERON’, *The Times*, 30 September 1893, p. 12.

one should be able and willing to do what in him lies'.⁹⁶ Nonetheless, the equation between possession of the full rights of citizenship and liability to military service only grew in strength over the last decades of the nineteenth century.

The notion that military service was a core duty of citizenship was further reflected in the push for the introduction of military drill in schools. The emphasis, in the late 1870s, on questions of National Instruction naturally promoted discussion of citizenship and its obligations, and military competence was often cited as one of the attributes of intelligent and valuable citizens.⁹⁷ The campaign for military drill in schools was championed by the conservative press. It also received broad support from liberal periodicals, though the latter retained a lingering suspicion of militaristic display and a continued discomfort with the spectre of formal obligations.⁹⁸ Perhaps surprisingly, the liberal press proved willing to consider military training on the grounds of 'national need', but remained unsympathetic to 'social' arguments about the physical and moral benefits of such training. Undoubtedly 'military training is an excellent thing,' noted *The Times*, 'but no motive short of national necessity would make or ought to make a whole people adopt this method of promoting their physical and moral well-being'.⁹⁹ Arguments about national degeneration would assume much greater importance after the Boer War, but for the late Victorian liberal press, the core of the military participation debate was the principle of shared citizenly responsibility for national defence.

By the last decade of the nineteenth century, the advent of New Imperialism and growth of British militarism, the weakening of the divide between the army and society, growing public pride in the Volunteers, and the shift towards a more collectivist view of society, all combined to create an environment more favourable to ideas of citizenly military

⁹⁶ 'FEMALE SUFFRAGE', *Examiner*, 5 June 1880, pp. 686 – 687.

⁹⁷ 'NEWMAN, FRANCIS W, FREE SCHOOLS', *Examiner*, 4 April 1874, p. 340.

⁹⁸ See for example 'AN ABSURD ALARM', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 14 September 1885, p. 1; and 'PHYSICAL EDUCATION', *Examiner* 22 May 1875, p. 572.

⁹⁹ 'The address which LORD WOLSELEY delivered', *The Times*, 26 January 1889, p. 11.

obligation. For the most part of the period, however, the imperial context of military debate, and the persistent focus on the naval foundations of Britain's security, reduced the civilian military participation debate to a half-hearted and largely unfocussed tangle of previously articulated ideas, casuing some to wonder 'whether Governments... are doing their duty by the nation in letting this question slide as they have done up to the present time'.¹⁰⁰

In the mid-1890s, however, Britain's strategic position changed dramatically. Between a Russian-French alliance, an ambitious programme of german naval constuction, and Japan and the United States expanding their spheres, Britain found herself increasingly isolated and insecure. The London press began to reflect on the fact that the shift towards 'armed nations' with the capacity for immense and all-absorbing war, while recognised in public discourse since the 1860s, had yet to be addressed in British military policy. Noting the flourishing of jingoism and Imperialist rhetoric, commentators could not help but contrast this bombast with the ongoing reality of British military inferiority and inertia.¹⁰¹ The 1890s saw moderate liberal periodicals like *Punch* and *The Times* take an increasingly conservative and hardheaded line on defence. They argued that Britain needed a military force capable of contending with the mass armies of Europe if she was to play any role in the great wars sure to come, and yet under contemporary circumstances she struggled even to keep her small professional army at establishment figures.¹⁰² There was a growing sense that Britain could no longer afford to half-heartedly talk and tinker and congratulate herself on her liberalism while her rivals built their strength in preparation for the day of reckoning. 'Enough talk', asserted *Punch*. 'Action is wanted. Delay is dangerous. British empire can't stand still when the rest of the world is moving. The order of the day is "Forward!" – not "As you were!" Entire British race, "Attention!"¹⁰³

100 'Compulsory Military Service. WEMYSS', *The Times*, 4 November 1897, p. 13.

101 'BY JINGO!', *Punch*, 21 November 1891, p. 249.

102 'IS IT GOOD ENOUGH?', *Punch*, 12 March 1898, p. 109.

103 'CALLS TO ARMS', *Punch*, 27 November 1897, p. 252.

This kind of thinking led, in the late 1890s, to a partial revival of the compulsion debate in the moderate and conservative press. London press discourse grappled with the conflict between urgent military expediency, which seemed to call for compulsion, and civilian values, which clung to voluntarism. As *Punch* distilled the dilemma, the debate was essentially about ‘how a ballot for soldiering can be established without seriously affecting the cherished rights of the civilian’.¹⁰⁴ Noting that ‘compulsory military service in some form or another seems to be “in the air,”’ Lord Wemyss continued to agitate doggedly for the reintroduction of the militia ballot.¹⁰⁵ Despite the increased focus on fairness and shared responsibility for national defence, the London press remained uncomfortable with compulsory measures, but depicted them as the threatened ‘only alternative’ if Britain could not find a way to make military service attractive to potential recruits.¹⁰⁶ Even the conservative *Pall Mall Gazette* expressed the belief that the voluntary system that ‘has hitherto served this country... still may be made to do so, if the people only realize in this matter, as in all others, the simple truth that if an article is required it must be paid for’.¹⁰⁷ *The Times* insisted that it was folly to try and mimic the ‘citizen army, short service, ample reserves, and so forth’ of Continental systems, since the key of these systems was conscription, which ‘we have not got...and are not likely to get’.¹⁰⁸ Britain, it asserted, had to professionalise, not civilianise, her army, by making it a long-term ‘profession and a career for the private soldier as well as for the officer’.¹⁰⁹ But advice on how to salvage the voluntary system remained contradictory and confused, leading *Punch* to the gloomy conclusion that, at bottom, recruiting sergeants simply had nothing to offer decent men.¹¹⁰

Over the role of the Volunteers and militia, too, confusion reigned. Great pride in the volunteers dutiful patriotism, but feeling that since chronically under-supported by

104 ‘AT THE SERVICE OF THE SERVICE’, *Punch*, 21 May 1898, p. 231.

105 ‘Compulsory Military Service. WEMYSS’, *The Times*, 4 November 1897, p. 13.

106 ‘THE ONLY ALTERNATIVE’, *Punch*, 4 December 1897, p. 258.

107 ‘THE FUTURE OF THE ARMY’, *Pall Mall Gazette*, 18 November 1897, p. 8.

108 ‘We publish to-day the sixth and last of the’, *The Times*, 30 November 1897, p. 9.

109 ‘We publish to-day the sixth and last of the’, *The Times*, 30 November 1897, p. 9.

110 ‘WHAT TOMMY WANTS’, *Punch*, 5 March 1898; p. 101; and ‘IS IT GOOD ENOUGH?’, *Punch*, 12 March 1898, p. 109.

Government, of doubtful utility. Despite endless lip service for ‘the old constitutional force’, no one was willing to spend the money required to render the militia truly effective.¹¹¹ The Volunteers were a source of great pride for their patriotism and self-sacrifice, but contemporaries entertained the very real concerns that at that moment of national crisis they would prove impotent, since there was no real way to bring them to bear against an invader.¹¹² Furthermore, the whole principle of a civilian reserve for exclusively home defence seemed increasingly out of step with the developments of modern war. Dominant strategic orthodoxy still held that it was the navy, not the auxiliaries, upon which defence against invasion depended (though the problem of how to dominate both home waters *and* distant oceans with finite naval resources was a thorny one, and dominated the intensification of both naval construction and naval strategising after 1890).¹¹³

The London press began increasingly to articulate the thought that if rapid expansion of Britain’s land forces was much more likely to be required for overseas service in a major war than for home defence. There was a sense that the wars of the future would be far more all-absorbing, inextricable and demanding than those of the past. ‘Hitherto, down even to the last wars, when empires have gone to battle it has been a war of soldiers. The next war will be a war of peoples’, noted the *Pall Mall Gazette* with piercing prescience. ‘To bleed each other white, when both combatants are pretty well matched, and when there are millions of men in reserve, is an affair of years.’¹¹⁴ The *Morning Post* agreed that modern war would be more exhaustive of manpower than ever before. ‘Nowadays, when every Great Power numbers its conscript soldiers by the million, every one can see that the outbreak of war against any Great Power must be an emergency’, it wrote, noting too ‘that once engaged in a great war the nation must go through with it’.¹¹⁵ War with a Great Power

111 THE WAY WITH THE MILITIA. *Punch*, 2 April 1898, p. 145.

112 ‘FOR NEITHER DEFENCE NOR DEFIANCE’, *Punch*, 11 September 1897, p. 113.

113 J. T. Sumida, ‘Geography, Technology, and British Naval Strategy in the Dreadnought Era’, *Naval College Review* 59.3 (2006), pp. 89–102.

114 ‘WAR OR PEACE?’ *Pall Mall Gazette*, 19 June 1888, p. 1.

115 ‘Multiple News Items’, *Morning Post*, 23 December 1897, p. 4.

would almost certainly demand mass participation abroad, rendering a civilian reserve sworn only to the 'passive expectancy' of home defence useless. 'From the first, Volunteers have been led to regard the defence of the Empire from a false standpoint', wrote one correspondent to *The Times*:

It is not to defend our "hearths and homes," ...to be brought together in scratch army corps to repel a great invasion on British soil, and generally to sit behind fortifications at home awaiting an enemy, that we need these 230,000 men. ...The questions which ... all true friends of the Volunteers should ask themselves are these:— To what extent can the force...support, feed, or relieve the Army acting — as act it must — beyond our shores?¹¹⁶

This recognition represented an important step in the development of conceptions of military duty. What did the universally accepted duty to defend home and hearth against invasion mean in a world as interconnected and complex as that of the British Empire, where conflict thousands of miles away could draw the whole nation into bitter and exhaustive war against the million-strong citizen armies of Great Powers? What did membership of an auxiliary force mean when that force itself had no practical purpose except as a training-ground? As the *Morning Post* noted, in an age of struggle between Great Powers, the Volunteer motto "Defence, not Defiance" may be 'politically sound, but as a Military phrase it is mere nonsense.'¹¹⁷

Britain's tradition of a small professional army for overseas service and a large civilian reserve for home defence had been rendered obsolete by the advent of mass conscript armies, Imperial ambition, and the end of diplomatic isolation, for Imperial and European interests now held the promise of drawing Britain into exhaustive and manpower intensive wars. Britain's ability to deal with this reality of modern warfare remained a chilling unknown. There was no mechanism in place for rapid expansion of the military for overseas war. The auxiliaries were sworn only to home defence, and public opinion

¹¹⁶ 'The Authorized Scheme Of Defence'? CIVIS.', *The Times*, 31 December 1896, p. 6.

¹¹⁷ 'Multiple News Items', *Morning Post*, 23 December 1897, p. 4.

remained decidedly against any compulsory extension of citizenly duties. As for mass voluntary civilian enlistment, invasion was recognised as the principal catalyst, followed by some imperial outrage such as the Indian Mutiny or the murder of Gordon in Khartoum. The notion of mass civilian volunteering for a war against a Great Power, however, seems not to have been considered. Consensus on the duty of the individual towards military service had come a long way since the Crimean War, but the acceptance of a real, socially mandated duty towards service in an overseas, and therefore not strictly defensive, war still seemed an alien concept.

By the end of the century, very little had been done, in practical terms, to respond to the international shift towards mass citizen armies that had been evident since the 1860s. Certainly, the lessons of the post-Crimean period, and their costly and controversial implications, had been allowed to slide in the absence of imminent threat between 1872 and 1898. And yet this must be understood in context of Britain's military priorities in the latter nineteenth century, which were overwhelming centred on naval dominance and Imperial war – priorities for which civilian military obligation had little practical relevance. That a voluntary army, unaugmented by citizen-soldiers, was sufficient for the purposes outlined by Stanhope in 1888 was not a fundamentally unreasonable supposition – and indeed, in the event it did prove sufficient to meet the conflicts of the Victorian age up until 1899.

Furthermore, England was undoubtedly a very different place by the end of the nineteenth century. The growth of Imperialist and militarist modes of thought, the shift towards social liberalism and the emergence of new theories of 'contractual' citizenship – all widely disseminated thanks to mechanistic changes in literacy, education and the press – had created an ideological atmosphere more conducive to the citizenly obligation thesis. In addition, the ongoing presence of the Volunteers had served for decades as an example of patriotic self-sacrifice and a public reminder of the duty towards national defence, leading

the *Morning Post* to conclude in 1899 that ‘if to–day there is a more widespread and deeper sense of duty to the Nation than there was a generation ago, the change is due in no small degree to the leaven introduced into the national life by the men who once or twice a week have been wearing the QUEEN’S uniform’.¹¹⁸ By the last years of the century, the stalemate of previous decades had been recognised and regretted by the London press, and there was a frustrated push to find policy solutions in the swirl of debate. Everybody agreed on the vague principle of a duty towards military service, but the nature and limits of this duty were far from clear. Nobody knew what to expect should Britain find herself engaged in a serious overseas war. When the test finally came, it would both surprise observers with the reach and intensity of the volunteer spirit, and confirm many of their worst military fears.

¹¹⁸ ‘LONDON, FRIDAY, JULY 7, 1899’, *Morning Post*, 7 July 1899, p. 4.

Volunteers for South Africa, 1899–1902

A good many people are asking in all sincerity, and even with some anxiety, whether it is possible that the character of the English people is materially changing. ... They are extraordinarily ready to go abroad and fight, an inclination they never displayed in the Crimean War; they discuss conscription instead of rejecting it summarily; they are all interested like Frenchmen or Italians in the vicissitudes of a campaign.

– *Spectator*, 26 May 1900¹

When the Boer War first broke out in November 1899, there was little hint that it would prove the most troublesome and important test of the British military system – and the attitudes and assumptions that underlay it – since the Crimean War. It came on the back of a string of relatively cheap colonial victories that had served to boost imperial pride and whet the public appetite for military display without significant setback, cost or concern. Few anticipated that the Boers, a predominantly rural people with no regular army and only a small industrial base, could successfully resist British regulars. The shock and humiliation of significant reverses suffered at the hands of the Boers, therefore, had a profound effect on the national psyche. After decades of fitful and inconclusive debate on civilian military participation, and repeated popular and government refusals to face up to potential emergencies, the Boer War proved an unexpected crucible for ideas on the citizenly duty towards military service, and a crucial test of public sincerity and resolve on the matter. The response to this test was, in many ways, even more unexpected. Well might the *Spectator*, along with countless commentators both domestic and foreign, wonder in May 1900 ‘Has the English Character Changed?’ for the Boer War saw the first real stirrings of an entirely new behaviour: mass volunteering of respectable Englishmen for an overseas war. Drawing on notions of citizenly obligation that had been evolving

¹ ‘HAS THE ENGLISH CHARACTER CHANGED?’, *Spectator*, 26 May 1900, p. 733.

since the 1860s, the war saw popular – and legislative – endorsement of a duty towards personal participation in an overseas war that was without precedent in the nineteenth century. While the conception of duty revealed in the London press often lacked clear definition and remained implicitly limited in important ways, the Boer War nonetheless represented a dramatic crystallisation of the notion of citizenly obligation towards military service, and a crucial precursor to the spirit of August 1914.

From the first, the Boer War struck a chord with public and press that previous colonial wars had not. Not only was it a war against other whites, it was a war ostensibly based on ideology and imperial unity rather than practical acquisition.² Indeed, it was in many ways reminiscent of the outbreaks of both the Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny more than four decades previous. Once again, Britain was embarking upon a moral crusade in defence of the constitutional liberties of a minority population. Just as the unlovely aspects of the Ottoman Empire had been glossed over in 1854, so too were the rapacious, capitalistic Uitlanders redefined as victims oppressed by Boer arrogance and greed. The case was even more poignant because the Uitlanders, in theory at least, could be called ‘fellow-countrymen’, imbuing their plight with an Indian Mutiny–esque sense of protecting colonial kith and kin against alien oppressors. Additionally, it was the Boers who had declared war, rendering the conflict, procedurally at least, a ‘defensive’ one for Britain.

Public opinion asserted Britain’s obligation to ‘maintain the right’ in the Transvaal and thus prove her courage and strength not only to her enemies, but also to her colonial subjects. Intensified by the broader growth in militaristic and Imperialistic modes of thinking chronicled in the previous chapter, public feeling ran hot on Britain’s duty to intervene. ‘If there is Christianity, philanthropy, manliness left in England,’ wrote one correspondent, ‘we should certainly demand that things be put right ... [so that] our own tough fellow–subjects in all parts of the Empire will be able to believe that we are not

2 P. M. Krebs, *Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 9.

selfish weaklings, nor an effete people blinding ourselves by a sham morality to the obligations which bind us, but a Christian nation not afraid to be strong against evil, to do our duty, and to punish iniquity.’³

In the first months of the war, however, there was little thought of large-scale demands upon the civilian population. Though the Boers showed their mettle at battles like Graspan and Belmont, British operations went mostly to plan throughout November 1899, inspiring confidence that British pluck and professional skill would ultimately triumph just as it had in the Afghan War and the Sudan. Public discourse reflected no great sense of crisis or urgency; as Thomas Pakenham puts it, the government and the public ‘shared confidence in a walk-over’.⁴ Nonetheless, the debates of the past decades had had an impact. Even in the confident atmosphere of November 1899, London press discourse assumed a level of basic civilian obligation in support of the war which surpassed any acknowledged in wartime in the last half-century.

From the very first weeks of the war, the London press called upon civilians to shore up the home defences while Britain’s professional military forces were redirected to the seat of war. More than ever before, this duty was understood to transcend class lines, for all classes were now considered to have appropriate outlets for military service. *The Times* echoed the prevailing opinion that ‘all able-bodied young men not serving in the ranks of either the regular army or militia should enlist as Volunteers and thus prepare themselves in the junior branch of the service to take their part in any duty, in a time of real trouble or emergency, that may be required of them for the service of our Queen and country’.⁵ The incessant use of terms like “able-bodied men”, “men of all classes”, “citizens,” “true Englishmen,” and “able-bodied subjects of the Queen” emphasised the connection between masculinity, physical wholeness and the duty towards national defence regardless of class,

3 ‘The Transvaal, W. J. KNOX LITTLE’, *The Times*, 29 August 1899, p. 5.

4 T. Pakenham, *The Boer War* (London, 1979), p. 258.

5 ‘Volunteers and Active Service. ROBERT W. EDIS’, *The Times*, 18 August 1899, p. 8.

creed or status. As another correspondent to *The Times* put it, ‘every male, not a weakling or a cripple, should...learn to bear arms and play his part like a man in guarding our shores’, adding that ‘not even those preparing for Holy Orders should be exempt’.⁶

Commentators in the conservative press went further, suggesting that the time had long since come for the formal recognition of the Englishman’s duty towards personal service in the form of compulsory participation in national defence. In October 1899 the *Morning Post* printed a letter, ostensibly from a Boer correspondent, which taunted the British ‘for their unmanliness in not having conscription’.⁷ While the missive provoked a storm of outrage at ‘Boer ignorance’, correspondents overwhelmingly chimed in with the accusation of foolhardiness in the continued eschewal of any compulsory measures for home defence. The *Morning Post* was flooded with letters arguing that ‘if any nation ever had a reasonable excuse or tremendously urgent necessity for having conscription, it certainly has been the British ever since 1875’.⁸ By early December, the so-called ‘conservative plea for conscription’ – albeit limited to home defence – had gained significant traction throughout the conservative London press, leading some advocates to hope that the ‘thoughtful and patriotic people of the United Kingdom are beginning to see the necessity for that personal sacrifice which we are alone among European nations in refusing to face’.⁹ Defying conventional wisdom that depicted women as advocates of ‘peace at any price’, A BRITISH MOTHER even declared herself desiring of female suffrage solely so that she could vote for conscription and compulsory military drill, insisting ‘that there are millions of women in England having similar feelings’.¹⁰ Conservative editorials, too, supported the campaign for a ‘limited form of conscription’ (the reintroduction of the militia ballot), though it presented such measures more gloomily as ‘very much the least of

6 ‘A Nation Not In Arms. JOHN ADAM FERGUSSON’, *The Times*, 1 November 1899, p. 10.

7 ‘BOER IGNORANCE . B. H. T.’, *Morning Post*, 18 October 1899, p. 3.

8 ‘BOER IGNORANCE?’, *Morning Post*, 21 October 1899, p. 7.

9 ‘LIMITED CONSCRIPTION’, *Morning Post*, 7 December 1899, p. 4.

10 ‘PLEA FOR CONSCRIPTION’, *Morning Post*, 3 November 1899, p. 7.

the evils before us... war being an evil to which we are liable in proportion to our unpreparedness for it'.¹¹

The liberal and radical press, already ambivalent about popular enthusiasm for the war, did not dispute the inherent obligation towards participation in national defence but remained deeply uncomfortable with the idea of compulsion. Believing that the situation in South Africa could never necessitate so terrible an extreme, the liberal mainstream was, for the time being, able to dismiss the 'conservative plea for conscription'.¹² But the debate, coming as it did in the relatively calm and optimistic atmosphere of the first weeks of war, highlighted how support for compulsory measures had quietly grown in the preceding decades of peace. Even more significantly, it encouraged the press to interpret future military successes and failures in the context of this conscription/voluntarism debate, creating a sense that the voluntary system itself was on trial in South Africa.

This was to take on enormous significance in December 1899, when in the space of six days, news came in of three devastating reversals suffered by British forces at Stormberg, Magersfontein and Colenso. The defeats of the so-called 'Black Week' of 9–15 December came as a staggering shock to most British observers and sent the press reeling with disbelief and dismay. That a herd of isolated farmers representing 'two small Republics whose total population is considerably less than the population of Newcastle' could subject the decorated and historic British Army to such utter routs was unthinkable, and its impact on British confidence was profound.¹³ 'A war which was entered into lightly and in a spirit of bombast, which was looked upon almost as a punitive expedition', had become, almost overnight, a terrifying wake-up call on the inadequacies of Britain's military system.¹⁴ The London press was overwhelmed by mortification and gloom for several days, but almost

11 'LIMITED CONSCRIPTION', *Morning Post*, 11 December 1899, p. 6.

12 'LETTERS TO THE UNIMPORTANT', *Punch*, 6 September 1899, p. 112; and 'ALL ABOUT THE WAR', *Punch*, 4 October 1899, p. 160.

13 'CLARKE, G S, NATIONAL DEFENCE', *Speaker*, 14 January 1900, p. 403.

14 'THE CRY FOR CONSCRIPTION', *Speaker*, 20 January 1900, p. 417.

immediately the voluntary offers began to flood in. Government and the press were inundated with civilians pledging their willingness not only to relieve Regulars from home and garrison defence duties, but also to perform active service duties at the seat of war in South Africa. As well as offering their unpaid services, many middle-class Volunteers even offered to pay their own passage to the seat of war.¹⁵ This paroxysm of voluntarism was a manifestation of growing acceptance of middle-class patriotic obligation towards personal service, but it also was a reflex response to the shock of Black Week and the mood of urgent determination it provoked. ‘The effect [of Black Week] has only been to harden the spirit of the nation and strengthen its resolve’, asserted *The Times*, observing that ‘the national spirit is so keenly aroused that any demand made upon it would be supplied, twice and thrice over, by voluntary enlistment.’¹⁶

Secretary for War Lord Lansdowne acceded to public pressure on 18 December, approving the raising of 3,000 men for a new Imperial Yeomanry (the cost of horses and equipment to be covered by the Yeomen themselves) and the formation of the City Imperial Volunteers (CIV), a new company of Volunteers for overseas service drawn from over 53 different Volunteer corps.¹⁷ The public response was immediate and impressive. ‘The appeal to the nation ... has received a response worthy of our race and our history’, noted the *Speaker*, asserting that ‘there will be no lack of men’.¹⁸ Indeed, in response to popular demand, the number of Imperial Yeomanry was subsequently increased to 5,000 and then to over 10,000 before the end of December. In addition, by the end of 1899 almost all Volunteer battalions had formed active service companies (to support their linked regular army battalions in South Africa), together with the CIV providing nearly 20,000 men for the front.¹⁹ In a significant departure from previous government policy, the militia was also invited to serve overseas by special legislation. Though this represented an extension of

15 ‘The Reserve Of Officers. ANOTHER RESERVE OFFICER’, *The Times*, 4 January 1900, p. 5.

16 ‘It is satisfactory to know that the legitimate’, *The Times*, 15 December 1899, p. 11

17 I. F.W. Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition, 1558–1945* (Manchester, 1991), p. 201.

18 ‘THE WAR’, *Speaker*, 23 December 1899, p. 305.

19 Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition*, p. 202.

duty that had been fiercely railed against in peacetime, the strength of the popular patriotic mood swept all before it, and in the end only four of 72 militia battalions declined the honour.²⁰ The preference of respectable men for the Imperial Yeomanry and Volunteers remained pronounced, but even the regular army reaped the benefits of the popular mood taking in some 7,000 new recruits between 1 October 1899 and 1 March 1900.²¹ Nor did the people's contribution end there; throughout the course of the war two more contingents of Imperial Yeomanry went to South Africa, and by war's end on 31 May 1902, the militia, the Volunteers, and the Imperial Yeomanry had together furnished the British army in South Africa with over 100,000 men.²² Behind these figures lay thousands more willing citizen-soldiers, particularly from the working classes, thwarted by their inability to meet either the physical standards of the army or the self-sufficiency requirements of the Volunteers and Yeomanry. Overall, noted one correspondent to *The Times*, nothing 'can have struck the observer more strongly than the anxiety of all good men and true to do personal service to their country in the time of her need'.²³

The implications of this phenomenal surge in recruiting were immense. It indicated that despite the civilian obligation debate having been largely sidelined by naval and imperial priorities in the last three decades, the notion of duty towards military participation had nonetheless found real purchase into the popular psyche.²⁴ The cultural developments of the latter nineteenth century, including the rise of popular militaristic imperialism, pride in the Volunteers, and the advent of a more collectivist view of society had not only solidified

20 Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition*, pp. 200–2. See also D. Judd and K. SurrIDGE, *The Boer War* (New York, 2003) p. 67.

21 I. F. W. Beckett, *Riflemen Form: A Study of the Rifle Volunteer Movement, 1859–1908* (Aldershot, 1982), pp. 212–15.

22 *Return of Military Forces 1903*, cited in S. M. Miller, 'In Support of the "Imperial Mission"? Volunteering for the South African War, 1899–1902,' *Journal of Military History*, 69.3 (July 2005), p. 693.

23 'Rifle Clubs. PRO PATRIA', *The Times*, 6 January 1900, p. 7.

24 Or at least, the middle-class psyche. A number of scholars – most notably Richard Price – have cast doubt on the ubiquity of working class support for the war, pointing to their proportionately lower enlistment rates and electoral support for pro-Boer candidates. See R. Price, *An Imperial War and the British Working Class: working class attitudes and reactions to the Boer War 1899–1902* (London, 1972).

the obligation towards home defence in the hour of national need, but also facilitated a growing acceptance of a moral obligation towards service in an Imperial war. Mechanistic changes in literacy, education and the popular press had also facilitated much greater public identification and investment in the nation's imperial and military fortunes.²⁵

The London press, indeed, now resoundingly affirmed the patriotic moral duty towards personal service in such a struggle. Newspapers of all political orientations celebrated the influx of civilian volunteers as a manifestation of a growing apprehension of patriotic duty in the public at large.²⁶ The body of ordinary civilians volunteering for South Africa was understood to be acting not from any 'burning desire for glory, but with a determination to do its duty and with an intense loyalty and devotion to their beloved Sovereign'.²⁷ Whether or not this was indeed a primary motivator of volunteers has been widely debated, though most scholarship indicates that the claim of patriotic duty was a serious one for many contemporaries.²⁸ More importantly for our purposes, the principle of a civilian duty towards military participation was acknowledged more directly and unanimously than ever before in public discourse. Bernard Porter has noted that 'whether or not the South African War really was a 'popular' war in Britain, it was widely assumed to be so at the time, even

25 This would also prove true of the war itself. The flourishing of war reportage and the efficiency of the late-Victorian telegraphy made the English public immediate and personal spectators of the war, while advances in government censorship and the growing media-savviness of influential military figures like Roberts, Kitchener and Baden-Powell helped to stymy the transmission of negative images. See K. E. Morgan, 'The Boer War and the Media, 1899-1902', *Twentieth Century British History*, 13. 1, 2002, pp. 1-16; S. Badsey, 'War Correspondents in the Boer War' in J. Gooch (ed.) *The Boer War: Image, Experience and Direction*, (London, 2000); J. Beaumont, 'The British Press and Censorship during the South African War 1899-1902', *South African Historical Journal [South Africa]*, 41 (2000), pp. 267-89; and 'The Boer War as a Media War', in P. Dennis and J. Grey (eds.) *The Boer War: Army, Nation and Empire* (Canberra, 2000), pp. 70-83.

26 While the patriotism of the working classes in this period remains a point of historical contention, radical newspapers such as *Reynolds's* and the *Daily News* were enthusiastically approving of the volunteer spirit, see for example 'VOLUNTEERS FOR THE FRONT', *Daily News*, 20 December 1899, p. 7.

27 'The City Imperial Volunteers. ALFRED J. NEWTON', *The Times*, 5 February 1900, p. 11.

28 Earlier work tends to suggest the primacy of economic motivations, see R. Price, *An Imperial War and the British Working Class: Working-Class Attitudes and Reactions to the Boer War, 1899-1902* (London, 1972); R. Gray, *The Aristocracy of Labour in Nineteenth-Century Britain, c.1850-1900* (London, 1981); and E. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire, 1875-1914* (New York, 1989). More recently, however, historians have argued against this interpretation. See S. M. Miller, 'In Support of the "Imperial Mission"'; H. Cunningham, *The Volunteer Force: A Social and Political History, 1859-1908* (London, 1975), pp. 38-41; and E. M. Spiers, *The Army and Society, 1815-1914* (London, 1980), p. 44.

by those who opposed it'.²⁹ In the same way, whether patriotic duty was indeed the motivator of the rash of enlistments for South Africa or not, it was certainly assumed to be so by the London press. Gone were the vague disavowals of responsibility that had characterised the Crimean War, and even the individualistic romanticism of the Indian Mutiny was largely superseded. If anything, the impulse towards military service in the hour of national need was taken for granted as a natural patriotic imperative.

Most striking and novel, of course, was the extent to which this emerging popular sense of duty towards personal service was extended to an Imperial war. In London press responses to the Boer War we see a broadening of the concept of a fundamental duty towards home defence to include defence of the wider Empire, and the family of 'fellow countrymen' that constituted it. The Englishman's 'sacred duty to preserve inviolate his great inheritance', was increasingly understood to mean taking his share not only in 'the noble task of national defence', but also in 'maintaining the right wherever the Queen's sceptre extends'.³⁰ Even the radical press, often sceptical of the imperial venture, expressed a sense of the duty of Englishmen to 'uphold the flag of our Empire on veldt and kopje'.³¹ The immensely enthusiastic volunteer response of the colonies served to further reinforce the idea of an imperial family bound by mutual obligations of aid and defence – and to increase pressure on Englishmen to prove their equivalent patriotism, loyalty and courage. The expression, by an unnamed colonial newspaper, that "we are all Englishmen when England has to fight, and we are all ready to take our part," was oft cited in the London press as 'the main impulse which has sped the colonists over the sea'.³² Much emphasis was placed upon the concept of Imperial defence as the responsibility of 'every able-bodied subject of the Queen, not alone at home but in every dependency of the Crown',³³ the *Daily News* counting the outbreak of war responsible for finally 'bringing home to the minds and hearts

29 B. Porter, 'The Pro-Boers in Britain', in Warwick and Spies (ed.) *The South African War* (Harlow, 1980), p. 239.

30 'A Nation Not In Arms. JOHN ADAM FERGUSSON', *The Times*, 1 November 1899, p. 10.

31 'VOLUNTEERS FOR THE FRONT', *Daily News*, 20 December 1899, p. 7.

32 'REEVES, W P, HON, THE COLONIES AND THEIR GIFT', *Speaker*, 16 December 1899, p. 286.

33 'A Nation Not In Arms. JOHN ADAM FERGUSSON', *The Times*, 1 November 1899, p. 10.

of our people a deeper and more vivid sense of the responsibilities which our Empire imposes upon each of its citizens'.³⁴ This extension of the boundaries of 'home' defence was highly significant in the way in which it normalised civilian volunteering for overseas conflicts – and suggested the possibility of a yet wider understanding of the acknowledged duty towards 'home defence', which could possibly include the defence of not only British lives and property, but also British values, reputation and even socio–political interests abroad.

Still, the duty towards Imperial defence remained a vaguer, less emphatic and less clear–cut duty than the obligation towards the defence of Britain against invasion. It was generally understood, for example, that overseas service exceeded the legal duties of Volunteer and militia battalions, and neither could therefore be mobilised for South Africa without their specific consent. As the Queen herself put it, the militia battalions and Volunteers who served in South Africa did so 'without the coercive influence of plain, unmistakeable duty', and therefore were all the more deserving of gratitude for their supererogatory patriotism and self–sacrifice.³⁵ This sacrifice was all the greater since it was often middle–class men who gave up their time, money, personal comfort, safety and even social status to 'take their share with "Tommy"'.³⁶ The 'extraordinary' nature of civilian volunteering for overseas service was further reflected in a general understanding that (just like the proposed volunteers for India four decades earlier) such men were temporary soldiers only, and should not be prevailed upon to do more than the specific patriotic mission for which they had enrolled. The transportation home of Regular troops in preference to the Yeomanry and Volunteers as the war wound down in the autumn of 1900, for example, was widely criticised in the London press. By unnecessarily retaining civilian volunteers at the front, 'the Government is unfairly taking advantage of patriotism', wrote A YEOMAN'S MOTHER to *The Times*. 'They came forward to help fight their country's

34 'Ladysmith and London', *Daily News*, 20 January 1900, p. 4.

35 'HER MAJESTY the QUEEN has demonstrated', *The Times*, 19 December 1900, p. 9.

36 'Our Modern Heroes. C. M. D.', *The Times*, 25 October 1900, p. 15.

battles, not to do police duty. The work now remaining in South Africa is for the professional soldier, and the Volunteer who has chosen a civil career should be the first to be sent home.’³⁷

These responses, along with the hyperbolic feting of returning civilian volunteers (in most cases by unabashed non-participants), indicated that the ‘duty’ towards personal service in South Africa was generally still understood to be a supererogatory one, a manifestation of especial personal virtue and patriotism rather than a basic obligation truly expected of all able-bodied men. Still, there was an emergent current of censure for non-participants visible in press debate. In line with earlier rhetoric, volunteering for active service was presented as a proof of manliness on both the individual and national level, and the ‘manhood of the nation’ was increasingly cited.³⁸ The London press emphasised the imperative to demonstrate the potency and grit of Englishmen alongside ‘real’ soldiers, and national vigour, strength and manliness alongside the enthusiastic volunteer contingents of the colonies.³⁹ This emphasis on the manly virtue of volunteering for the front cast implicit aspersions on those staying home. It was still accepted that there were some men ‘whose avocations in life preclude their taking an active part in war’, and such men were entreated to find some way (such as fundraising) to ‘do their utmost ... to work for the same cause’.⁴⁰ But while non-participants were still instructed to ask themselves ‘what have we as yet sacrificed for our country?’ and ‘In what way can we best serve her?’, there was a sense that fundraising and other support activities were fundamentally inferior to personal service.⁴¹

37 ‘The Imperial Yeomanry. A YEOMAN'S MOTHER’, *The Times*, 16 November 1900, p. 5.

38 ‘The Nation And The Government. HENRY C. BURDETT’, *The Times*, 17 January 1900, p. 10.

39 ‘The world has not been slow to mark or to’, *The Times*, 19 December 1899, p. 9; ‘THE COLONIAL CONTINGENTS’, *Morning Post*, 13 October 1899, p. 5.

40 ‘A Field Hospital For The Imperial Yeomanry. BEATRICE CHESHAM.; GEORGIANA CURZON’, *The Times*, 29 December 1899, p. 5.

41 ‘The Auxiliary Forces And The Country. C. G. HEATHCOTE’, *The Times*, 23 December 1899, p. 3.

One correspondent to *The Times* declared that those who ‘sit idle doing nothing at home’ were the more rightful objects of pity than ‘he who gives his life for his Queen, his country, and his duty’, for ‘his slate is clean’.⁴² Another referred to those serving abroad as ‘the best kinds’, while ‘the second best kind ... stay at home and mind the shop’.⁴³ There is plentiful evidence in the press also of peer pressure exerted on men in the auxiliaries to volunteer for the front, and of competition in the self-sacrifice stakes. The *Speaker* noted with discomfort that ‘many Volunteers have been driven out to South Africa by the moral fear of being branded as physical cowards’.⁴⁴ ‘In the present ferment’, agreed one Volunteer Officer, opting to remain at home and fulfil the home defence duties of the Volunteer force ‘probably requires a truer courage than to volunteer for the front’, since ‘excellent men do not like to run the risk of having to appear to be in an invidious position’.⁴⁵ Though it still retained more of a supererogatory character than later enlistment in the First World War, volunteering for service in South Africa nonetheless reflected a growing sense of obligation towards defending ‘the interests of Empire and the rights of our fellow-countrymen in the Transvaal’.⁴⁶

But what was the source of this obligation? Certainly, the sense of duty articulated in the London press was not narrowly focussed on the State as a political entity. An ‘oppositional’ strain of patriotism, which imbued the people with a legitimacy superior to that of the crown/State, remained alive and well in Boer War discourse. Just as had been the case in aristocratic backlash after the Crimean War, press discourse tended to depict the English public as quicker, bolder and more selfless in recognising the urgency of the situation and taking action than the Government. The belief, for example, that ‘the general public is more alive to the extreme danger of our present condition of inexpertness with the rifle than are the authorities who are responsible for our national lack of skill in this most

42 ‘The War In South Africa. DUNRAVEN’, *The Times*, 26 December 1899, p. 5.

43 ‘Volunteer Sharpshooters. HENRY SETON-KARR’, *The Times*, 27 December 1899, p. 5.

44 ‘THE WEEK’, *Speaker*, 2 June 1900, p. 233.

45 ‘Our Volunteers And Foreign Service. SENEX’, *The Times*, 28 December 1899, p. 7.

46 ‘The attention of the people of the British’, *The Times*, 13 January 1900, p. 9.

important means of defence', was voiced fairly commonly by correspondents to the mainstream press.⁴⁷ There was a sense that Government could not necessarily be relied upon, and that the people therefore had a duty to organise themselves in defence of their heritage.⁴⁸ The *Spectator* declared the lesson of Black Week that 'the public cannot afford to leave its Army to the experts on one side and Parliament on the other'.⁴⁹

In particular, there was considerable anger at Government 'snubbing' of offers of voluntary service. *The Times* criticised Governmental reluctance to call out the Reserve or to properly utilise the militia and Volunteers in the first months after Black Week, and sympathised with the patriotic 'men who are now eating their hearts out in enforced inaction'.⁵⁰ Reservists petitioned Government that 'if we are not to be utilized, it would be far kinder to disband us and let us take our chances in some other branch of the service at a time of national stress'.⁵¹ There was even a sense, familiar from the time of the Volunteer Revival, that volunteer military participation was a kind of right owed by Government to the nation's manhood, and that 'the authorities have no right to ...[refuse] the services of men who have no thought but to do their best to help their country in this her time of need'.⁵² This righteous indignation reinforces the impression that the duty towards personal service in the hour of need was still more personal and emotional than a direct allegiance to the State and its Government. Just as 'citizenship' was generally understood in social, rather than political terms, so too was patriotic duty orientated around the honour and social heritage of the British people (symbolised with least discomfit by the domestic figure of the Queen), rather than the authority of the State.

Similarly, despite almost unanimous support for civilian participation in the Boer War, the press resisted characterising it as 'official patriotism'. Liberal and radical newspapers took

47 'Rifle Practice For Our Citizen Force. W. A. BAILLIE-GROHMAN', *The Times*, 25 December 1899, p. 2.

48 'Volunteer Development. R. M. LITTLER', *The Times*, 2 February 1900, p. 4.

49 'THE CHIEF LESSON OF THE WAR,' *Spectator*, 30 December 1899, p. 977.

50 'The Reserve Of Officers. UNUS EX ILLIS', *The Times*, 30 December 1899, p. 14.

51 'The Reserve Of Officers. ANOTHER RESERVE OFFICER', *The Times*, 4 January 1900, p. 5.

52 'The Volunteers And The War Office. ROBERT W. EDIS', *The Times*, 1 February 1900, p. 15.

pains to set the English duty to volunteer apart from the unthinking obedience of Continental armed nations, depicting it as emanating from a free and intelligent people rather than imposed by a hierarchical State. There was a persistent defensiveness in the liberal press about any hint of militarism. Expressing over-stated disapproval of music-hall jingoism and the disorder of Mafeking night, the liberal press asserted a sober, dutiful image of English volunteers in the Boer War. The *Daily News* suggested that the phenomenon of Boer War volunteering represented the broader development of ‘the national character in the direction of greater seriousness and a more personal sense of responsibility’ for Britain’s noble heritage.⁵³ England’s citizen-soldiers, *The Times* repeated *ad nauseum*, were free volunteers of conscience, animated by ‘sober, quiet’ apprehension of their moral duty towards their nation and the cause of right rather than by the dictate of a strong and militaristic State.⁵⁴

While strains of ‘oppositional’ or ‘unofficial’ patriotism persisted, however, on the whole London press discourse in the Boer War did represent a shift towards a newly State-focussed conception of the duty towards military participation. Unlike the volunteer impulse in the India Mutiny, impetus to service in the Boer War was less a matter of human sympathy than one of responsibility as a citizen of the Empire. Indeed, for the first time, London press discourse on civilian military obligation drew substantively and explicitly on the language of citizenship. *The Times* in particular took an interest in the idea of military service – or at the very least, military competency and preparedness – as part of the contract between citizen and State. Correspondents referred to ‘the duty of every man in this or any other country to be prepared to take up arms in defence of that country’ as ‘a duty imposed by citizenship’, further noting that society at large was ‘beginning to realize that a citizen fails in his duty who cannot himself shoulder a rifle with the confidence that he can use it as well as any man who is likely to be brought against him’.⁵⁵

53 ‘Ladysmith and London’, *Daily News*, 20 January 1900, p. 4.

54 ‘The Nation And The Government. HENRY C. BURDETT’, *The Times*, 17 January 1900, p. 10.

55 ‘Conscription Or Cadets. MEATH’, *The Times*, 23 July 1901, p. 4; and ‘Rifle Clubs. PRO PATRIA’, *The Times*, 6 January 1900, p. 7.

To be sure, while the press of all political orientations used the term ‘citizen’ liberally and largely unselfconsciously, the actual meaning of the term remained vague and ill defined. The interchangeableness of the terms ‘citizens’ and ‘able-bodied men’ shows us that for the most part, public discourse accepted the former term as synonymous with the more technically proper term ‘subject’, rather than using to refer only to those enjoying full political rights as per the modern concept of ‘citizenship’. When periodicals as diverse as *The Times*, the *Morning Post* and *Daily News* spoke of the duty of able-bodied male ‘citizens’ to cultivate basic military competency, they were not excluding the some 40% who, despite the 1867 and 1884 Reform Acts, remained unenfranchised. This was partly sheer oversight on the part of public discourse, which tended to talk as if all Englishmen enjoyed the full political rights of citizenship. But it also indicates that the duty to participate in military defence of the nation (and increasingly, the Empire) was owed not primarily because of the political privileges of ‘citizenship’, but because of the broader social privileges inherently possessed by all Englishmen, through both their gender (superior physical strength and mental resolve) and their nationality (liberty, prosperity, and the many resplendent virtues of the English culture and race).

The indeterminate usage of the term ‘citizen’ in this debate also reflected the failure, despite great public interest in the subject of reform over the previous decades, to persuasively link the duty of military service with the privilege of the franchise in a cohesive theory of citizenship. The women’s suffrage debate had come closest to dealing with the concept, with suffragists rebuffing the familiar assertion that women were disqualified from the franchise by their inability to carry out military service by pointing out the majority of voters did not serve in the military, and a great many of those that served in the military did not have the vote. Weighed down by press distaste for the women’s’ movement, the debate failed to spark serious discussion of the link between military service and citizenship. During the Boer War, however, commentators did begin to articulate a link between the duty to military service and fully enfranchised ‘citizenship’,

though the discussion remained tangled and diffuse. Accepting the suffragists' point about the lack of practical correlation between military service and citizenship, a number of contemporaries reversed the old 'no vote, no musket' equation, asserting that full political rights ought indeed to be conditional on an Englishman achieving military proficiency, and thus rendering himself fit to do his duty in the hour of need. As one correspondent to *The Times* put it, 'I can conceive no better claim to this privilege [of the franchise] than that of the man has...qualified himself for the proper discharge of the first duty of a freeman.'⁵⁶ Other correspondents suggested disqualification from other privileges of citizenship – amongst them, the old-age pension, service under the Crown, University degrees, and admission to the Bar – for any who 'defaulted' on the obligation of personal military participation.⁵⁷ The question of whether military service was a duty of formal citizenship, or simply of membership of British culture and society, remained obscure throughout the course of the war. But the rhetoric of citizenly obligation increasingly emphasised the contract between individual and State as a context for socio-moral norms, reflecting the growing legitimacy of the State as an object of allegiance and a source of moral and patriotic authority.

The overwhelming press consensus on the moral duty to contribute personal service to the war effort wherever possible, together with the extension of that principle to include an overseas conflict in the month following Black Week, revealed that the swirling and often seemingly unproductive debate of previous decades had, in fact, done much to further public acceptance of a citizenly obligation towards military service. But as British military fates in South Africa continued to falter into 1900, the London press increasingly questioned whether the Englishman's duty towards military participation went far enough. British defeat at Spion Kop in January 1900 provoked renewed anxiety about national military capability under a voluntary system. As the CIV, militia and Imperial Yeomanry

⁵⁶ 'The Militia Ballot. ROBERT YERBURGH', *The Times*, 13 April 1900, p. 9.

⁵⁷ 'RETIRED, OLD-AGE PENSIONS AND A HOME DEFENCE RESERVE', *Spectator*, 26 January 1901, p. 139.

set sail for South Africa in January–March 1900, many expressed doubts that a voluntary system could provide the manpower necessary for a longer war. The regular commitment had already left Britain denuded of troops for home defence, leading Wyndham to acknowledge on 12 February 1900 that the nation depended mainly on the Volunteer Force for defence against raid or invasion at home.⁵⁸ This led to a mini–invasion scare in the London press, and the resurgence of the earlier discussion about compulsory participation in home defence.

Correspondents in the *Morning Post* and *Pall Mall Gazette* had never stopped agitating for consideration of compulsory measures, intensifying their campaign after Black Week.⁵⁹ Letters demanded, in increasingly shrill tones, ‘is the nation rightly aware of the Empire’s peril? Does the electorate grip the fact of peril, that it shirks the question of universal service, whereby each man might take a rightful hand in the defence of the Motherland? We are a free people. Shall history write us down a feeble one?’⁶⁰ Significantly, the conservative campaign accepted that Continental–style compulsory military service in the regular army was an unequivocal non–starter. But this didn’t necessarily mean, it argued, that compulsion itself was inherently wrong or illiberal. One correspondent pointed out the ‘delusion’ that assumed a necessary contradiction of terms between compulsory obligations and ‘a free people’:

We are a free people, yet we are compelled to pay taxes for the support and education of the poor; ... In fact, there are a hundred and one ways in which our solidarity with the community at large is impressed on us by laws of compulsion. Is it, then, outrageous or unreasonable to call on the citizens of a great Empire to prepare themselves to defend it in time of need by a period of military training and discipline?⁶¹

58 Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition*, p. 205.

59 ‘CORRESPONDENCE’, *Pall Mall Gazette*, 21 December 1899, p. 11.

60 ‘THE NECESSITY FOR CONSCRIPTION’, *Morning Post*, 18 December 1899, p. 7.

61 ‘THE NECESSITY FOR CONSCRIPTION’, *Morning Post*, 29 December 1899, p. 7.

Indeed, in the anxious atmosphere of the first months of 1900, compulsory measures were starting not to look quite so ‘outrageous or unreasonable’ even in liberal newspapers. While the mainstream press had largely ignored the conservative plea for conscription before Black Week, *The Times* now entertained a debate on the justice of compulsory measures that was surprisingly open and non-condemnatory. A series of letters asserted that ‘the time-honoured and rooted objection of all Englishmen to compulsory service...may have become utterly worn out and unsuited to our present position in the world’,⁶² and that, indeed, the ‘solid fact’ that ‘a purely voluntary system can never fulfil our requirements except at inordinate cost...has long been apparent to most thoughtful persons’.⁶³ Regular correspondents MILES and Lord WEYMYSS continued their campaign to reinstate the long-suspended militia ballot, urging not only that ‘compulsory service in the Militia ... become the basis of our military system’, but also that it ‘not be hampered and nullified from the Imperial point of view by being restricted to “home defence.”’⁶⁴ Editorials held back from endorsing compulsion, but went so far as to suggest, with Lord Salisbury, that perhaps the British Constitution and its insistence on absolute liberty was unsuited to waging war in the modern era. ‘It is satisfactory enough in peacetime, but as an instrument of war it suffers from serious defects’, noted *The Times*. ‘If this were not the case we should not always be beaten in the beginning of our serious struggles.’⁶⁵

In general, the year 1900 saw outright popular antipathy to compulsion increasingly replaced by a more thoughtful, moderate approach. While radical newspapers remained staunchly opposed, correspondence in more mainstream liberal periodicals reveals a shift towards greater acceptance of the notion of compulsory military obligations.⁶⁶ The mainstream press seemed at last convinced that ‘nobody has ever proposed conscription on

62 ‘The Country And Compulsory Service. F. S. N. B.’, *The Times*, 5 January 1900, p. 15.

63 ‘National Defence In The House Of Commons. CUSTOS’, *The Times*, 19 February 1900, p. 5.

64 ‘Our Military System. MILES’, *The Times*, 30 January 1900, p. 4.

65 ‘The debate in the House of Lords yesterday’, *The Times*, 31 January 1900, p. 9.

66 ‘MORE LESSONS OF THE WAR’, *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 14 January 1900, p. 12.

the Continental model’, that Englishmen would never be dragged from their homes to fill the ranks of the regular army, to serve continuously for years in barracks, or to man garrisons in India – and furthermore, that continual superfluous denunciations of such outcomes were becoming tiresome.⁶⁷ With this spectre removed, discussion of more limited measures took a less hysterical tone. Correspondence to the liberal press also pointed out the paradox of ‘the unreasoning horror in which a nation that welcomes compulsion in civil affairs shrinks from its application to military service’.⁶⁸ The *Spectator*, in particular, provided a platform for liberal pro-compulsion views, with even its editorial team acknowledging that since ‘it is important that means should be available for the expansion of the *personnel* of our military strength ... without the elements of uncertainty that must attach to the operation of the voluntary principle’, it seemed likely that ‘the hitherto annual suspension of the Militia ballot may, and probably will, have to be given up’.⁶⁹

A growing number of commentators also suggested that the belief of Britain’s leaders that the people would never submit to such measures was outdated.⁷⁰ Real public consultation, they suggested, would reveal a sober and pragmatic people ready to take on their rightful duties in a spirit of fairness, equality and responsibility. Nor, stressed some, would the formalisation of a duty already acknowledged in principle into organised practice offer any threat to national liberties. ‘Can the recognition of a national duty, self-imposed by a free people, be in any sense an infringement upon its freedom?’ wondered the *Spectator*.⁷¹ Several periodicals pointed out that the examples of Switzerland and Holland proved that compulsory military service did not imperil national freedom. It stood to reason that Britain, ‘better and more safely than any other nation, can offer to our country the noble sacrifice of a personal military service without placing in jeopardy those great principles of

67 ‘LORD ROBERTS is developing his plan of’, *The Times*, 17 February 1900, p. 11

68 ‘WARREN, E. P., UNIVERSAL MILITARY SERVICE’, *Spectator*, 10 March 1900, p. 346.

69 ‘COMPULSORY PHYSICAL TRAINING v. CONSCRIPTION’, *Spectator*, 3 February 1900, p. 164.

70 See for example ‘WARREN, E. P., UNIVERSAL MILITARY SERVICE’, *Spectator*, 10 March 1900, p. 346; and ‘Our Military System. MILES’, *The Times*, 30 January 1900, p. 4.

71 ‘WARREN, E. P., UNIVERSAL MILITARY SERVICE’, *Spectator*, 10 March 1900, p. 346.

constitutional liberty which we love so well'.⁷² All that was required to overcome the inertia of the past, the *Pall Mall Gazette* asserted, was strong leadership. 'The nation is awake to its needs at last', it asserted. 'Let the Government lead the nation.'⁷³

The government response, however, was not calculated to please the pro-compulsion lobby. In February 1900, the new 'military scheme' was released. It concerned itself chiefly with home defence, and rather than formalising universal military obligations, it focussed on bolstering Britain's national defences by increasing the resources, efficiency and commitment of the Volunteers. The announcement met with a mixed response in the London press. The radical newspapers, which had regarded the compulsion debate with hostility and suspicion, were delighted. The *Daily News* congratulated the Government for its affirmation of "Encouragement not Compulsion," and for its rightful reliance 'on the patriotism of a free people'.⁷⁴ *Lloyd's*, too, responded with pleasure, reaffirming its belief that 'subjects of the British Empire pride themselves on being free, and no compulsion will be needed to make them fight if once they see the Empire menaced'.⁷⁵ *Reynolds's*, on the other hand, needed more convincing before it would believe that compulsory measures were not in the works. 'We advise all our friends who rightly dread conscription not to shout before they are out of the wood, and they are certainly not out yet', it warned its readers. 'The war will not be over for months to come [and] we shall be much surprised if (unless the tone of the nation has greatly changed) a formidable step to conscription is not announced by whatever Government is in power.'⁷⁶

At the other end of the spectrum, the *Morning Post* and *Pall Mall Gazette* were disappointed and disheartened by what it saw as 'funking' on the part of Government. Commentators railed against the irrationality of a culture insisting upon the patriotic duty

72 'Compulsory Military Service. GEORGE F. SHEE', *The Times*, 26 January 1900, p. 11.

73 'A LESSON AND ITS MORAL', *Pall Mall Gazette*, January 1900, p. 1.

74 'Encouragement not Compulsion', *Daily News*, 13 February 1900, p. 4.

75 'OUR NEW ARMY', *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 18 February 1900, p. 12.

76 'A MILITARY EMPIRE', *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 18 February 1900, p. 4.

of military participation, but refusing to see that duty fairly apportioned amongst all Englishmen. ‘Will anyone deny that it is the duty of our youth and manhood to defend the interests and honour of their country?’ challenged one correspondent. ‘What, then, prevents us from adopting a system which has proved so useful to all other States?’⁷⁷ But both periodicals were forced to admit that while the majority of military and political figures were privately awake to the wisdom and inevitability of compulsory measures, ‘outside this narrow circle the idea of compulsory service is intensely distasteful, and seems to be inherently repugnant to the genius of our people’.⁷⁸ The *Pall Mall Gazette* reluctantly concurred that the nation was not yet ready, noting that ‘our friends abroad may, no doubt, succeed in making us an Empire in arms, but not a nation of conscripts yet awhile’.⁷⁹

The pro-compulsion lobby did, however, have a lasting and influential convert in *The Times*. Given its long-standing interest in the Volunteer force, *The Times*’ initial response to the ministerial scheme was dominated by consideration of its implications for Volunteers. The scheme granted a range of concessions, including the provision of modern guns, funding for transport, and a number of regular commissions for Volunteers, but it also outlined new standards of efficiency, and requested that, supported by an allowance, Volunteers go under canvas for training camps of one month for infantry and three months for artillery.⁸⁰ These initiatives were an attempt to address the charge of commentators like Lord Rosebery that the Volunteers ‘could not by any stretch of the imagination be called soldiers in a scientific sense’.⁸¹

But the ‘invitation’ to Volunteers to spend more time in camp sparked immediate protest from correspondents to *The Times* who argued that ‘to imagine that men situated as [the majority of Volunteers] are...could afford to leave their civil occupations and go under

77 ‘THE QUESTION OF CONSCRIPTION’, *Morning Post*, 6 March 1900, p. 4.

78 ‘MILITARY DRILL FOR BOYS’, *Morning Post*, 1 March 1900, p. 7.

79 ‘CONSCRIPTION’, *Pall Mall Gazette*, 3 February 1900, p. 3.

80 Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition*, pp. 205–6.

81 ‘In the House of Lords, yesterday’, *The Times*, 16 February 1900, p. 9.

canvas for a month every year, or that their employers could afford to give them the time necessary for the purpose, is absurd'.⁸² The further demand on the time and loyalty of Volunteers – the minority who were already taking the responsibility of home defence upon themselves – appeared to many an irrational response to the dawning recognition of the insufficiency of Britain's military reserve. While the majority continued to neglect their responsibility towards national defence entirely, surely the self-sacrificing few could not be expected to 'give up their only holiday for the grind of steady drill, nor can they be asked to leave their work for nothing'.⁸³ Correspondents lamented the government's decision to wring more out of Volunteers rather than risk putting the question of universal liability to military service before the people, blaming 'the prevailing cult of following the line of least resistance and of letting sleeping dogs lie, the cult of living hand to mouth and of leaving the morrow to take care of itself'.⁸⁴

Even *The Times*' editorials began to explicitly doubt 'whether it may not be found necessary to enforce more stringently than at present the constitutional obligation to defend our shores', and thereby apportion the universal duty of national defence fairly.⁸⁵ *The Times* acknowledged that 'it would be a real source of strength to us if we could pass all our able-bodied citizens as the Swiss do through a true military training and make them liable to service in certain contingencies', noting that while avoiding the harshness of conscription, such compulsory training would nevertheless 'provide us with an immense reserve of fairly-well trained soldiers who would be certain to volunteer in large numbers for active service abroad whenever the exigencies of the Empire so required'.⁸⁶

When government continued to focus on getting more out of the Volunteers, with Lansdowne introducing an even more controversial bill in May 1900 enabling Volunteers

82 'To The Editor Of The Times COMPANY OFFICER', *The Times*, 16 February 1900, p. 13.

83 'The Military Scheme. RAMROD', *The Times*, 16 February 1900, p. 13.

84 'The Militia Ballot. ROBERT YERBURGH', *The Times*, 13 April 1900, p. 9.

85 'LORD ROBERTS is developing his plan of', *The Times*, 17 February 1900, p. 11.

86 'LORD SALISBURY'S address to the Grand Habita-', *The Times*, 10 May 1900, p. 11.

to be called out pre-emptively in cases of imminent national danger, and to serve overseas (albeit consensually) without the need of a prior royal proclamation, *The Times* reacted with frustration at what it saw as continued avoidance of the real question at hand.⁸⁷ While radicals denounced the move to consider overseas Volunteer service as a clear step towards conscription and acted to obstruct its passage in the Commons, *The Times*' objections sprang from the conviction that the Volunteers had become a distraction from the genuine issue of universal liability to service, which offered Britain's only real hope for security.⁸⁸ 'It is only after the Militia has been properly developed – by the aid, if need be, of the ballot – and we have made the most of our citizen soldiers that we can afford to indulge in such superfluous luxuries as the creation of rifle clubs and other fancy soldiering of that kind', wrote *The Times*. 'They are excellent in their way, but they are not business.'⁸⁹ By mid-1900 *The Times*' sporadic interest in compulsory measures (whether youth training schemes or compulsory participation in home defence) had solidified into a firm editorial position.

Though broader press opinion remained conflicted on the desirability of compulsory measures, the first phase of the Boer War had certainly served to drag the issue of civilian military obligation into the centre of public debate for the first time since the 1870s. By the middle of 1900, however, the British had gained the upper hand in South Africa, and after victories at Ladysmith, Bloemfontein, Mafeking and the Transvaal capital Pretoria, most Britons believed the war to be over. Accordingly, the discussion of the duty towards military service lost momentum, as the press moved on to other subjects such as the Boxer rising in China and, later, the death of Queen Victoria.

87 Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition*, p. 206.

88 'UP TO DATE', *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 20 May 1900, p. 1.; 'THE BEGINNING OF CONSCRIPTION', *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 24 December 1899, p. 1.

89 'The result of the South Manchester election is', *The Times*, 26 May 1900, p. 11

But as the British, believing the Boer offensive defeated, relaxed their hold in South Africa, the Boers regrouped for a more scattered, guerrilla-style war.⁹⁰ What they lacked in organisation they made up for in local knowledge, survival skills and experience with horse and gun, and they proved adept at harassing British forces and thwarting British control of the veldt.⁹¹ At the same time, the pro-Boer response of the foreign press (fuelled by the harshness of Britain's scorched earth policy) revealed the depth of hostility felt towards Britain by a great many foreign powers, creating an uneasy sense that 'we shall most certainly have to fight for our existence as a nation, probably against a combination of European Powers, and that at no distant date'.⁹² Unable to afford a voluntary professional army sufficient to face such a threat, and unwilling to conscript one, Britain had no option but to rely on 'an Army actually insufficient, but capable of great expansion'.⁹³ Until now, commentators had mostly concerned themselves with whether Englishmen would come forward voluntarily and enact this expansion in the hour of need, or whether they ought to be subject to compulsory service obligations. The guerilla phase of the Boer War, however, highlighted a second problem in depending on civilians to augment regular forces in time of crisis: the fact that no matter how numerous or enthusiastic, civilian volunteers were unlikely to be of much military use without previous training and experience.

The example of the Boers, with their universal military competence and manly catalogue of outdoor skills, threw the military unpreparedness of British civilians into stark relief. The performance of British civilian volunteers in the field did little to mediate the unfavourable comparison. Most auxiliaries arrived after the main Boer field army had surrendered at Paardeburg on 27 February 1900, although the CIV and a number of Volunteer companies did participate in the advance on Pretoria, where they acquitted themselves well.⁹⁴ In the

90 For detailed description of the phases and battles of the war, see T. Pakenham, *The Boer War*; and D. Judd and K. Surridge, *The Boer War* (London, 2002).

91 P. Knightley, *The First Casualty: From the Crimea to Vietnam—the War Correspondent as Hero, Propagandist and Myth-maker* (London, 1976), pp. 77–78.

92 'The Question Of Conscription. ALEX. WILSON', *The Times*, 26 December 1900, p. 2.

93 'The Army Scheme. DUNRAVEN', *The Times*, 19 March 1901, p. 2.

94 Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition*, p. 204.

guerrilla phase of the war, however, it quickly became obvious that, ‘all honour to the brave men who are volunteering for active service at the present moment, bravery without adequate military training is not enough to make a modern soldier’.⁹⁵ The Imperial Yeomanry, in particular, demonstrated the effects of insufficient training. In May 1900, miscommunication and mismanagement led to the ambush and capture of 530 Yeoman at Lindley.⁹⁶ Further humiliating defeats suffered by the second contingent at Vlakfontein and Gronekop in May and December 1901 sealed the destruction of the force’s reputation.⁹⁷

In the London press, the effect of these sorry episodes was twofold. Firstly, they tended to highlight the professionalism of the regular army, which was increasingly referred to as a corps of skilled professionals rather than as an anti-social rabble. Secondly, they served to reinforce the fact legions of civilians willing to volunteer meant little if they were ineffective militarily. ‘Experience shows’, wrote one correspondent to *The Times*, ‘that in times of stress and strain plenty of men are forthcoming, but that for some time they are useless’.⁹⁸ This applied to an overseas war, but also, more ominously, to home defence. In contrast with the Boers, who seemed universally competent riflemen, horsemen and outdoorsmen, ordinary Englishmen were totally unprepared to resist a hostile force on their own soil, whatever their patriotism. Civilian correspondents reaffirmed that, for lack of previous training, ‘if any urgent necessity arose a rifle in our hands would be almost as useful as a sculptor’s tool to a ploughman’.⁹⁹

Increasingly, therefore, conservative and liberal newspapers alike questioned whether the duty of Englishmen to lend their personal service in the moment of crisis went far enough, or whether, in fact, their true obligation extended to preparing themselves for such service in advance by achieving basic military competency. ‘The nation is beginning to realise’,

95 ‘THE NECESSITY FOR CONSCRIPTION’, *Morning Post*, 29 December 1899, p. 6.

96 Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition*, p. 205.

97 ‘LORD KITCHENER has had to report a further’, *The Times*, 21 September 1901, p. 9.

98 ‘The Army Scheme. DUNRAVEN’, *The Times*, 19 March 1901, p. 2.

99 “Compulsory Volunteering.” BRITISH CITIZEN’, *The Times*, 1 January 1900, p. 13.

wrote the *Spectator*, ‘that when a call to arms comes, as it has come during the Boer War, we are greatly handicapped by the fact that the majority of the population is utterly ignorant of the use of arms. The spirit is willing enough, but the flesh is grievously weak, for it has never had any physical or military training.’¹⁰⁰ ‘The manhood of the nation can be credited with the will to grapple with any national danger, however great; but the will is powerless without the means, and the means are musketry and drill’, insisted Lord Dunraven to *The Times*. ‘The nation will never be safe until it contains a large number of men – not children, but men of a fighting age, knowing enough of a soldier’s duties to be convertible into efficient fighting men in a few weeks, should they voluntarily enlist.’¹⁰¹ The only way to remedy this situation was, of course, by passing large numbers of Englishmen through military training in peacetime.

Not only was the attainment of military competence increasingly depicted as the serious duty of all Englishmen, over the course of 1901 there was a groundswell of support in the London press for the introduction of universal and compulsory military training. The notion of compulsory military *training* proved far more palatable to contemporaries than compulsory military *service* – the latter potentially implying a broader liability to active service at the behest of the Crown. After decades of argument and exertion, advocates had finally more or less succeeded in creating a distinction in mainstream public discourse between Continental-style conscription, as defined by ‘continuous training for long periods and the removal from ordinary occupations’, and the formal liability to provide effective service in emergency that was under discussion in England.¹⁰² A national scheme of compulsory military training was depicted as an even gentler and less disruptive measure than other suggestions such as compulsory Volunteering or the militia ballot, since it would likely take place in youth, when time could best be spared. Advocates argued that military

100 ‘NATIONAL TRAINING, PHYSICAL AND MILITARY: WHY NOT A ROYAL COMMISSION?’, *Spectator*, 12 April 1902, p. 540.

101 ‘The Army Scheme. DUNRAVEN’, *The Times*, 19 March 1901, p. 2.

102 ‘NATIONAL DEFENCE’, *Morning Post*, 16 November 1900, p. 8.

training in schools, or for a fixed period at age 17 or 18, would interfere little with the career prospects or domestic responsibilities of Englishmen.

An increasing number also pointed to the likely social and physical benefits of such training. ‘If the ideal of our legislation is to foster the growth of self-respecting citizens, to produce men mentally and bodily fit, instead of Hooligans,’ wrote one correspondent to *The Times*, ‘what better method than by the discipline and training which might well be acquired during a short period of proper military education?’¹⁰³ While this argument in favour of universal military training had been around for decades, it took on new resonance and potency in a time when theories of Social Darwinism and national degeneration were enjoying unprecedented reach and esteem. Correspondents pointed to the physical superiority of the German urban working classes, and suggested that military training might indeed ‘be necessary in order to counteract the enervating and vitiating effects of life in great cities’.¹⁰⁴ The notion of compulsory military training drew further legitimacy from its identification as an aspect of ‘education’, which the State was entitled – even obliged – to provide compulsorily for its children. ‘Many and, as I think, insuperable objections to compulsory service exist, which do not, however, apply to compulsory military education’,¹⁰⁵ wrote Dunraven in *The Times*. ‘Civil education is made compulsory for the good of the individual and of the State. Military education is, for the same reasons, equally desirable.’¹⁰⁶

The conservative press continued to discuss a system based on not only compulsory military training, but also on compulsory service during war – ‘gradual but effective instruction in the use of arms and ... incorporation as a unit in a general registration of adults’.¹⁰⁷ But although *The Times* had converted to a pro-compulsory service standpoint,

103 ‘The Question Of Conscription. ALEX. WILSON’, *The Times*, 26 December 1900, p. 2.

104 “The Islanders.” C. W. M. MOORSOM’, *The Times*, 27 January 1902, p. 7.

105 ‘The Army Scheme. DUNRAVEN’, *The Times*, 19 March 1901, p. 2.

106 ‘The Army Scheme. DUNRAVEN’, *The Times*, 19 March 1901, p. 2.

107 ‘NATIONAL DEFENCE’, *Morning Post*, 16 November 1900, p. 8.

it recognised that compulsory military *training* was far more reconcilable with the liberal mindset. Indeed, a number of commentators in the liberal press went so far as to posit compulsory military training in youth as the only way to preserve Britain's voluntarist army system. The argument was that 'every physically fit adult male should be compelled to render himself capable of serving his country, *if he should wish to do so*'.¹⁰⁸ Compulsory military training would provide England's patriotic populace with the capability to offer effective voluntary service. Thus, and only thus, could Britain be secure in her 'army actually insufficient, but capable of great expansion', and avert conscription.¹⁰⁹ 'We do not want to make our lads into soldiers', wrote the *Spectator*, 'but merely ... to create a reservoir of men who may in time of need quickly and voluntarily turn themselves into soldiers.'¹¹⁰

The obvious paradox that the duty of military training needed to be formally enforced, but the duty to offer military service in the hour of need did not, was not addressed. But the fact that compulsory military training could be claimed as the saviour of voluntarism reveals the extent to which the notion of a citizenly liability to military service had become acceptable by the liberal mainstream, even to the point of compulsory obligations. Advocates criticised the Government for failing to provide leadership on the issue on a point on which public 'understanding' had so increased. 'Our leaders, instead of seizing the opportunity and adopting a policy which would make us practically invulnerable, are, in plain language, funking', wrote one correspondent to *The Times*. 'They endeavor to satisfy the easy-going public and to salve their consciences by phrases: "the genius of the nation is against conscription" ... what is wanted is a leader who is not afraid to incur a certain amount of unpopularity by advocating a drastic reform, but who, in the future, will almost certainly be looked upon as the saviour of his country.'¹¹¹

108 My italics, 'The Army Scheme. DUNRAVEN', *The Times*, 19 March 1901, p. 2.

109 'The Army Scheme. DUNRAVEN', *The Times*, 19 March 1901, p. 2.

110 'NATIONAL TRAINING, PHYSICAL AND MILITARY: WHY NOT A ROYAL COMMISSION?', *Spectator*, 12 April 1902, p. 540.

111 'The Question Of Conscription. ALEX. WILSON', *The Times*, 26 December 1900, p. 2.

Certainly, the tide was turning in favour of formal military obligations in the London press. But it was also turning against the war itself. Though the “Khaki election” in 1900 had returned a Conservative government on the back of recent British victories in South Africa, the realization the guerilla war would be a long, difficult and unpleasant endeavour soured public support. In the second half of 1901 the war took on a rather squalid ‘counter-insurgency’ feel, particularly after the shocking conditions inside Boer concentration camps came to light.¹¹² This decline in popularity, however, had an effect upon the military duty debate that was, in some ways, counter-intuitive. Because the war ended on a rather dark and ambivalent note, it could not be readily sealed, mythologised and relegated to the history books as yet another gallant victory. The protracted grind of guerilla warfare, the poor performance of auxiliaries, and above all, shame at the ‘methods of barbarism’ employed against Boer civilians all served to ruin the campaign as a happy volunteering story. Conversely, this stopped the debate on military duty from being set aside with relief once the moment of crisis had passed (as it had in 1872 after Prussian ambitions seemed satiated with the unification of Germany). Though the impassioned sense of patriotic righteousness that had accompanied the first surge of volunteering faded along with the popularity of the war, the darker lessons about British military capability were discussed more frankly than ever. If commentators were now less zealous about the moral duty to fight the good fight in South Africa, they were more concerned than ever about the military vulnerability and popular unpreparedness that the war had highlighted.

These concerns were heightened by the rabid expressions of Anglophobia emanating from the Continent, where the war was frequently depicted as ‘a bit of bullying by the big old British Empire.’¹¹³ Anti-British sentiment in the Continental press enabled more open opposition from Continental governments, raising fears in England that it was only a matter of time before rivalry between Britain, France, Russia and Germany spilled over into a war

¹¹² Judd and Surridge. *The Boer War*, p. 194.

¹¹³ P. Gibbs, *The Pageant of the Years* (London, 1946), p. 26.

between Great Powers.¹¹⁴ For the last year of the war, London press debate focused on the need to prepare for this imminent major clash by reforming Britain's military system around universal liability to service. Increasingly, the London press expressed frustration with the lack of official recognition of the duty of all Englishmen to military service. The announcement, in September 1901, of formal requirements for Volunteers to go under camp provoked a wave of anger in the London press. With the liability of all men to service now a fairly well established principle in press discourse, the increased demand on Volunteers was considered both unfair and inevitably destructive to the force. The *Spectator* reminded Government that 'while the Volunteers are a serious military body... they are also armed citizens and not professionals', while Lord Wemyss raged against the War Office's attempt to 'trade on the nation's patriotism – imposing onerous duties on the Volunteers, and treating them as if it was a favour done to them to be allowed to serve'.¹¹⁵ Indeed, the measure was almost universally regarded as unjust, and many correspondents urged that the time had come for England to assert the principle of universal liability in deed as well as word:

It is unreasonable to order the few to give up their only holiday, or the greater part of it, while the many do not lift a finger for the country; ... Let [Secretary for War] Mr. Brodrick take the bull by the horns ... and announce that every man who fails to do his duty, every employer who refuses to allow his men to do their share, will be treated as public enemies...¹¹⁶

In the last months of conflict the call for universal service reached its highest pitch. Kipling's controversial poem 'The Islanders', published in *The Times* on 3 and 4 January 1902, provoked a frenzied response in the London press.¹¹⁷ The poem told, in a tone of vitriolic fury, the tale of a people made idle and complacent by long peace, who neglected their defences and their proud military history and poured their energy into the 'cult of

114 Pakenham, p. 260.

115 'THE VOLUNTEERS', *Spectator*, 21 July 1900, p. 70; 'The New Volunteer Regulations. WEMYSS', *The Times*, 27 December 1901, p. 9.

116 'The Volunteers. ARCADES AMBO', *The Times*, 5 September 1901, p. 2.

117 'The ringing and passionate verses in which', *The Times*, 4 January 1902, p. 9.

sport'. Even once their weakness had been exposed, Kipling raged, the English people failed to see their duty, remaining 'Idle – except for your boasting – and what is your boasting worth / If ye grudge a year of service to the lordliest life on earth?' The poem concluded with a vision of conquered nation, 'your remnant, under the yoke'. *The Times* editorial appearing alongside the poem was generally approving of its message. It agreed that the prominence of sport while national defence lay neglected was unseemly, and noted that 'to bring up the youth of the United Kingdom "soberly and by custom taken and trained" for the work they would have to encounter in the event of war is a conclusion to which the cruel lessons of the South African campaign have brought many unwilling minds'.¹¹⁸ It stopped short, however, of endorsing Kipling's implicit call for compulsory national service. This was left to correspondents, many of whom took Kipling's poem as a rallying cry for the recognition of 'the undoubted common law liability of every citizen of fit age and capacity to bear arms' in the form of universal Militia service.¹¹⁹

On the whole, the poem was not as well received in the wider London press: its criticism of a society obsessed 'with the flannelled fools at the wicket or the muddied oafs at the goals' was considered an affront to values that were widely shared. Many pointed out that the so-called 'cult of sports' was closely allied with the volunteer impulse; not only did sports promote the same ideals of physical strength, resilience, courage and team spirit, but sportsmen had been heavily represented in volunteer ranks for South Africa.¹²⁰ But the remarkable thing about the public response was the extent to which even those most offended by Kipling's vitriolic tone were willing to concede his point where neglect of military duty was concerned. 'The English people, bemused by the near perfect security of half a century, have neglected the sign of the times, have failed to see that all other white nations have trained themselves to arms, have been careless of the great fact that the science of war has made terrible advances, so that the unskilled in the presence of the

118 'The ringing and passionate verses in which', *The Times*, 4 January 1902, p. 9.

119 "'The Islanders." A VOLUNTEER OFFICER', *The Times*, 7 January 1902, p. 10.

120 "'The Islanders." H. H. ALMOND', *The Times*, 9 January 1902, p. 10.

skilled are but food for cannon’, wrote the *Spectator*. ‘However Rudyard Kipling may irritate them – and some of his lines are irritating – his biting satire conveys a vital truth. Untrained men cannot defend or keep safe a mighty Empire.’¹²¹

The response of both conservative and liberal correspondents across the London press to the poem indicated growing support for compulsory military training. ‘What is the use of our liability to fight for our country in time of need if we have no training?’ wrote one ‘Old Liberal’, concluding that ‘every good citizen should be trained to arms, just as every good citizen should be taught to read and write and earn his living’.¹²² *The Times* went further, declaring its open support for compulsory military training in leaders and editorials. Its correspondents professed their conviction that the long-vaunted freedom of Britons from military service, the belief that ‘that Englishmen alone amongst Europeans must not be called upon to serve their duty and shuffling it off [sic] upon a minute portion of the community in the shape of the auxiliary forces’ was, ‘in truth, a freedom from the performance of a duty’, and an unsustainable one at that.¹²³ Growing interest in compulsory obligations was underscored by the emergence of a number of pro-compulsion associations, the most prominent of which was the National Service League (founded in April 1902). The organised pro-compulsion lobby would prove instrumental in keeping the debate on compulsory military obligations before the public eye throughout the next decade.

Throughout press debate in the closing months of the war, the inherent principle of a citizenly duty towards military service was taken very much for granted; the argument was rather over the practical application of that inherent duty. The nature of the obligation itself was likewise seldom explicitly discussed, but close reading of London press discourse reveals a conception of duty in flux. There is evidence of a shift towards a more state–

121 ‘MR. RUDYARD KIPLING’S IDEA’, *Spectator*, 11 January 1902, p. 40.

122 ‘OLD LIBERAL, CONSCRIPTION’, *Spectator*, 25 January 1902, p. 139.

123 “‘The Islanders.’ NEWTON’, *The Times*, 10 January 1902, p. 10; “‘The Islanders.’ A VOLUNTEER OFFICER’, *The Times*, 7 January 1902, p. 10.

focused, self-consciously ‘national’ conception of duty that was conformist and socio-political rather than personal and conscience-driven, though it drew more on broad allegiances to English culture, tradition and honour (most often symbolised by the politically neutral figure of the monarch) rather on narrow allegiance to any particular government. This was in line with a number of the ongoing developments in the latter nineteenth century: the strengthening of national identity and values through mass readership of the popular press, the shift towards a more official and conformist patriotism, the growing legitimacy of the State, and the development of liberal theories of the ‘contract’ of citizenship, of which military service was a crucial part.

On the one hand, the universality of the duty towards military service was stressed. Commentators cited it as a fundamental obligation of Imperial citizenship, which ought to be carried out with perfect equality by all able-bodied men. Arguments for compulsion increasingly drew on the injustice of a universal responsibility devolving onto a volunteer minority, and the agreed-upon prerequisite for any proposed scheme of compulsory participation was that ‘it should be based on absolute justice to all, and that every element of chance or favouritism should be sternly eliminated’.¹²⁴ On the other hand, censure for non-participants in the Boer War remained limited, suggesting that the duty towards *overseas* service, at least, was still essentially supererogatory. Pressure instead centred on the citizen’s duty to attain military competence, so as to be ready to be of use voluntarily in the hour of need. There was a sense that more work was still needed to overcome governmental inertia and entrenched popular ignorance, but by the end of the war there was significant press support for some form of compulsory military training, and even opponents accepted the pro-compulsion position as a major and influential school of thought amongst opinion leaders.

¹²⁴ ‘KETTLEWELL, W. W., UNIVERSAL MILITARY SERVICE’, *Spectator*, 10 February 1900, p. 205.

This press and popular acceptance of large-scale civilian participation in an overseas war reflected many of the trends we have observed – the growth of militaristic and imperialistic imagery and modes of thought in education and popular culture, the ongoing moral rehabilitation of the army’s image, a shift towards more State-centric official patriotism, pride in the Volunteers, and the prevalence of prior military experience in the population (just over 22% of males aged 17–40 had some military experience prior to the outbreak of the war).¹²⁵ But it was nonetheless a crucial and dramatic development. We ought not to underestimate the profound impact of Black Week on the national psyche, coming as it did as an astonishing and deeply disturbing shock to a public only gradually awakening from complacency. Much of the strength of the passionate, active popular patriotism of the Boer War can be traced to the late 1899 ‘mood’ of reflexive rallying in response to a profound shock. The sense of urgent duty towards participation that prevailed in public discourse during this ‘mood’ then served to reinforce the broader notion of citizenly obligation towards military participation in wartime. In this way the events of the Boer War not only expressed, but actively *progressed* notions of citizenly obligation towards military participation.

The Boer War therefore represented a crucial stage in the evolution of the citizenly duty towards personal military service. Coming after a long period of peace and stagnation, it provided a practical test for the tangled rhetoric and ideas of previous decades. In the event, it revealed that concepts of mass civilian participation and citizenly duty had taken a deeper hold in the popular imagination than might have been supposed from the continued refusal to face up to possible emergencies since 1871. It also pointed to the importance not only of the cumulative effect of discourse on conceptions of citizenly duty, but also the specific ‘mood’ and meaning of the crisis or conflict at hand – particularly the effect of serious setbacks and an atmosphere of national emergency. Before Black Week, the effect of the developing discourse on the citizen’s duty towards military participation was evident

125 K.T. Surridge, *Managing the South African War, 1899–1902* (Woodbridge, 1998), pp. 62–63.

in the press' prescription of mass participation in national defence whilst the regular army was occupied overseas. After Black Week, however, the intense mood of national shame fuelled an extension of duty to include overseas service.

This seems to indicate that many volunteers perceived a duty not to fight the nation's overseas wars *per se*, but to step up as required in the real hour of need, when national interests – or honour – were demonstrably in peril. It prefigured the spirit of 1914, when an established concept of the citizen's duty was further worked upon and intensified by the urgent and rallying 'mood' after the defeat at Mons. Furthermore, respectable volunteering for overseas service in the Boer War established an important precedent for civilian military participation and popular conceptions of citizenly duty. The difficulties of the war also offered a resounding shock to British complacency, posing the obvious question: 'if such a contest as this has imposed upon us the strain of which we are now painfully sensible, what would be the effect of a war with a Great Power or Powers?'¹²⁶ With the essential principle of citizenly duty towards military participation both established in discourse and manifested – on a modest scale – in flesh, it would now be the task of the opinion-makers of the London press to grapple with how to turn this principle to serious account in the increasingly foreboding international atmosphere of the Edwardian age.

126 'CLARKE, G S, NATIONAL DEFENCE', *Speaker*, 13 January 1900, p. 403.

The Duty of National Service, 1903–1914

“The time has come to abandon makeshifts and to face the duty of national defence seriously, manfully, and honestly, and for that we must exchange patriotism by proxy for personal service.”

– Lord Wellington in *The Times*, 5 April 1902¹

The experiences of the Boer War inspired a deep-seated anxiety about British unreadiness for war. London press discourse reflected an almost universal sense that the Boer War had uncovered deep flaws in the British military system, and that it was only good fortune that had averted a much greater catastrophe. This ‘close shave’ and the anxiety it provoked gave tremendous impetus to discussion of all things military. Post Boer–War interest in military affairs manifested itself in many ways, including popular literature, theatre, and pseudo–military organisations such as the Boy Scouts, which forsook their previous ties to the churches and chapels for a broader nationalist identity. But underlying it all was the palpable sense of military vulnerability that, intensified by the international tensions of the Edwardian era, would preoccupy the press and political class for more than a decade. In this environment, the issue of civilian military participation assumed greater importance and a higher profile in London press debate than at any time of peace since the citizen–armies of Prussia had redefined military practice in the 1860s.

The years between the Boer and Great Wars saw military participation widely acknowledged as a fundamental obligation of all Englishmen, which could also be legitimately compelled by the State (though the necessity of compulsion remained hotly debated). Invasion scares and post–Boer War concerns about so-called ‘national efficiency’ provided

¹ ‘The National Service League. WELLINGTON’, *The Times*, 5 April 1902, p. 9.

the initial fuel for the debate. As the decade wore on, the worsening international situation proved a major factor, working on existing insecurities to intensify Britain's sense of military vulnerability. Popular discussion of the suffrage, particularly in respect of women, produced a further spillover effect on conceptions of military participation as one of the bases of citizenship. Throughout, the pro-compulsion lobby worked intently to drive debate over compulsory military obligations in the London press, where its subliminal effect on public opinion could be most pronounced. This chapter deals with the influence of these various factors on press conceptions on the citizen's duty towards military service, culminating in an examination of the principal assumptions in place by the eve of the Great War.

If romantic enthusiasm for Empire met its climax in the reliefs of Ladysmith and Mafeking, it could not survive unscathed the farm-burning and concentration camps that followed. The close of the Boer War saw a shift from the confidence, romanticism and idealism of late Victorian Imperialism to a more anxious, prudent attitude.² From now on, there was a pervasive sense that the military issue of the day was defence, not expansion. The latter part of the Boer War had underscored the need for a large civilian reserve and highlighted the necessity of prior military training in even the healthiest voluntarist system, and in the immediate post-war period it was the military unpreparedness of the British population at large that most preoccupied the military pundits of the London press. The post-war revelation, in January 1903, that some 3 out of 5 volunteers had been rejected for failing to meet the army's already pitifully low physical standards poured fuel onto the fire of this anxiety.³ Already stung by the stark contrast between the hardy, battle-ready Boers and their own poorly-trained auxiliaries, British observers were shocked by this further evidence of physical malaise. Concerns about the deterioration of the national stock

2 This change was also reflected in the differences between the 'assertive and confident' tone of late Victorian adventure stories and the 'insular and xenophobic' tone of their Edwardian counterparts. P. Dunae, 'Boys' Literature and the Idea of Empire, 1870-1914', *Victorian Studies*, 24.1 (Autumn, 1980), p. 121.

3 G. R. Searle, *A New England: Peace and War 1886-1918* (Oxford, 2004), p. 305.

dominated public debate in the period of inquest and introspection 1903–1905, setting into motion the obsession with ‘national degeneration’ that Searle has termed the National Efficiency movement.⁴ This loosely structured campaign for physical regeneration had cross-party appeal, bringing together the twin visions of modernization and nostalgia for the rural past.⁵ Backed up by the Government’s 1903 Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration, it identified the debilitating effects of urbanization – appalling living and working conditions, poor health and hygiene, and sheer malnutrition – on the industrial working classes as the source of decay. Some, including Lord Rosebery, presented the problem in social-Darwinist terms, and others looked to the fledgling eugenics movement for possible solutions, but most commentators prescribed a more practical strategy: social reform coupled with physical training.

There was a sense in some quarters, however, that the symptoms of national degeneracy went beyond the physical. The Russo-Japanese War in 1904 invited comparison between the British people and the victorious Japanese, another ‘island race’ who displayed a collective discipline, courage and ferocious patriotism that, in the view of many, put Britain to shame.⁶ A spate of correspondence on the subject of ‘National Bravery’ appeared in *The Times*, bemoaning the loss of the truly martial spirit required for military victory in an excess of liberality and prudence. One commentator cited the ‘surrenders in South Africa, surrenders out of all proportion to the circumstances’ as evidence of a culture ‘so clogged with prudence as to be apparently afraid’.⁷ Once again, it was modern urban life – ‘the cheap luxury and unwholesome amusements of the cities’ – that was judged to have ‘ruined the backbone of the masses’.⁸

4 G. R. Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency: A Study in British Politics and Political Thought, 1899–1914* (Berkeley CA., 1971).

5 K. T. Surridge, ‘All you soldiers are what we call pro-Boer: The Military Critique of the South African War, 1899–1902’, *History*, 82.268 (Oct. 1997), pp.582–600.

6 Searle, *The Quest for National Efficiency*, pp. 57–9. See also ‘Nothing in. recent information about the war’ [sic], *The Times*, 4 October 1904, p. 7.

7 ‘National Bravery. R. E. V.’, *The Times*, 19 July 1904, p. 2.

8 ‘National Bravery. A SAILOR’, *The Times*, 2 September 1904, p. 12.

Happily, according to a constant stream of letters appearing in the London press in 1903 and 1904, the remedies for both physical degeneration and spiritual enervation were one and the same. The virtue of military participation was preached extensively as a means of strengthening the national stock both physically and spiritually.⁹ In the rhetoric of National Efficiency, military participation was depicted as a boon to the people rather than a burden to be borne. Some recommended little more than physical training ‘of a pseudo–military character’ in schools; the more extreme advocated compulsory Volunteering or universal military training. In practice, such ideas remained highly controversial. But while, in its privileging of military values, this glorification of military drill as socially and spiritually beneficial was highly ‘militaristic’ by our own understanding of the term, by claiming their motivations as social rather than military, advocates managed to side–step the spectre of militarism to a surprising degree. For this reason, it was on the redemptive social benefits of compulsory military training, far more than its military advantages, that the National Service League primarily focussed during its first phase of campaigning between 1902 and 1905.

And indeed, the ‘social argument’ in favour of military drill did achieve significant traction in the period. Even those liberal periodicals that remained staunchly opposed to the introduction of any scheme of youth military training on ideological grounds had, by 1905, mostly conceded its potential physical and disciplinary benefits. As Glenn Wilkinson has shown, newspapers tended, almost regardless of their political orientation or of whether they were discussing British or foreign wars, to emphasise the positive, attractive and regenerating aspects of military participation while using metaphor and euphemism to distance the reader from the uglier realities of war.¹⁰ This represented an important reversal of Victorian attitudes to the armed forces. As Anne Summers has noted, the nineteenth century impulse towards army reform was underpinned by a persistent drive to bring the

⁹ See for example ‘Physical Deterioration. ARTHUR G MEARS.; J. H. WILLIAMS.; GEO. M. OHLSON’, *The Times*, 18 January 1904, p. 2.

¹⁰ G. R. Wilkinson, *Depictions and Images of War in Edwardian Newspapers, 1899–1914* (New York, 2003).

army into line with civilian standards and values. Between the Boer War and the Great War, however, it was civil society that required regeneration, and the military, together with its values and practices, was to be the medium of salvation.¹¹

The quest for National Efficiency helped to reposition military service as a kind of social and physical panacea, offering inherent social and physical benefits to the individual. But in the context of national degeneration, it was also a duty. Britons had an obligation to render themselves fit to perform the duties that the nation required of them: foremost among them, military service. And far from dissipating along with the South African crisis, the need to make a truly fit manpower reserve of Britain's population continued to increase steadily in the years after the Boer War. Germanophobia continued to rise both in popular culture and in certain quarters of the political elite, most strikingly manifested in a revival of invasion literature and a hysterical 'spy mania'.¹² The message, however, had subtly changed: it was not Germany perfidy, but British weakness and complacency that were highlighted. Conversely, as Zara Steiner has pointed out, Edwardian works of invasion literature 'shared a common assumption that war was a splendid thing', implicitly endorsing the redemptive qualities of war and urging greater attention to the duty of national defence.¹³

Complicating the issue of civilian obligation towards military participation, however, was the fact that there were two competing schools of thought about the best approach to national defence, which rated the role of civilian participation in very different ways. The

11 A. Summers, 'Militarism in Britain before the Great War,' *History Workshop Journal*, 2 (1976), p. 112.

12 Examples of invasion literature include A. C. Curtis, *A New Trafalgar* (1902) and Erskine Childers, *The Riddle of the Sands* (1903), the latter of which went through ten print runs before 1914. W. J. Reader, *At Duty's Call: A Study in Obsolete Patriotism* (Manchester, 1988), p. 59. For spy mania see I. F. Clarke, *Voices Prophesying War 1763–1984* (London, 1966); S. Hynes, *The Edwardian Turn of Mind* (Princeton, 1968); A. J. A. Morris, *The Scaremongers* (London, 1984); D. French, 'Spy Fever in Britain, 1900-1915', *Historical Journal*, 21.2 (1978), pp. 355-70; and D. A. T. Stafford, 'Conspiracy and Xenophobia: The Popular Spy Novels of William Le Queux, 1893-1914', *Europa [Canada]*, 4.2 (1981), pp. 163-86.

13 Z. Steiner, *Britain and the Origins of the First World War* (London, 1977), p. 156.

Blue Water school maintained the tradition orthodoxy that a strong navy would be sufficient to protect Britain from all but minor raids. Britain's land forces, without hope of sizing up against their continental rivals, were also therefore practically irrelevant to home defence, and ought not to be permitted to divert resources from the all-important navy. This point of view dramatically downplayed the importance of civilian military participation, since the navy neither required mass manpower nor had any use for temporary civilian sailors. Meanwhile, the General Staff of the army unsurprisingly endorsed the Bolt from the Blue school of strategy, which asserted that the German navy could temporarily gain local superiority and land an army that could effortlessly crush Britain's puny land-based defences. Against such an eventuality, Britain needed a strong and well-organised army – and trained civilian reserve – for national defence. Proponents of this school could often be found in the correspondence columns of the London press, bemoaning how the public's disproportionate faith in the inviolability of the 'silver streak' continued to retard apprehension of their urgent duty towards military training and participation in national defence.

In 1903 the Committee on Imperial Defence (CID) affirmed the Navy's ability to protect Britain against significant invasion. The Navalists claimed a triumph, but advocates of army expansion countered that even if the Royal Navy could defend Britain, it would be 'manacled' by these defensive duties and therefore useless as an instrument of war. There were also other reasons for urging the expansion and reform of Britain's land forces and reserve. Some cited the vital importance of an efficient army, capable of immediate expansion with civilian volunteers, to the safety of the wider Empire, reminding opponents that 'the British Empire is no longer a sea-girt state which can trust for its defence to an all-powerful Navy, but that it now possesses the most extensive land frontiers of any power in the world'.¹⁴ Others, irked at the suggestion that the army's only role was to combat 'minor raids' on the British coast, began to plot a so-called 'Continental Strategy'

¹⁴ 'Imperial Defence. MEATH', *The Times*, 2 January 1904, p. 4.

– a system of alliances which would give British troops the chance of striking a decisive blow in a Continental war. Britain had formally abandoned her policy of ‘splendid isolation’ in 1902 by concluding an alliance with Japan, and though that particular agreement was aimed predominantly at combating Russia’s imperial threat, it was followed in 1904 and 1907 by ententes with France and Russia, signaling the beginning of a diplomatic system that appeased imperial rivals and focused on the threat of German power within Europe. The question of whether Britain could continue to get away with maintaining only a small professional army was far from settled, and proponents of both schools clashed in a variety of forums including CID subcommittees in 1903, 1907–8 and 1913 as well as the 1904 Royal Commission on the Militia and Volunteers.¹⁵ While the more liberal London newspapers, such as the *Speaker*, continued to regard both schools as ‘panic mongers’ and urge further cuts to military expenditure in the period 1903–1905, insecurity with regards to Britain’s home defences was never far from the surface in London press discourse.¹⁶

Worse, the humiliations of the Boer War had left a pervasive sense that the British military system was fundamentally broken. A stream of letters in the London press asserted the cardinal lessons of the late war: (1) that nations engaged in modern war must have a large civilian reserve from which to draw reinforcements; (2) that volunteer spirit is useless without military training; (3) that once war has broken out it is too late to commence training men; and, more controversially, (4) that no matter what the inducement, there is always a limit to voluntary enlistment.¹⁷ Commentators, whatever their recommendations, were increasingly willing to admit that the voluntary response to the Boer War had not been sufficient. As Lord Meath pointed out, ‘with the greatest possible exertion, and in a time of dire distress, 230,000 was the highest number of white men which the Empire

15 There is a well-developed historiography on the debate between the ‘Blue Water’ and the ‘Bolt From The Blue’ schools over the best strategy for British defence. See A. Marder, *From Dreadnought to Scapa Flow: The Royal Navy in the Fisher Era 1904–1919* (London, 1961); and R.J.Q. Adams and P. Poirier, *The Conscription Controversy in Great Britain 1900–1918* (London, 1987).

16 ‘THE WEEK’, *Speaker*, 13 May 1905, p. 153.

17 ‘Imperial Defence. MEATH’, *The Times*, 2 January 1904, p. 4.

under the old system, or rather want of system, was able to place at one time in the field during the South African campaign'.¹⁸ The obvious implication was that if Britain or her possessions were 'attacked by one of the gigantic armies of modern days drawn by conscription from populations often greatly outnumbering our own ... we have nothing adequate for such a contest'.¹⁹

Increasingly, military experts asserted that the whole principle upon which Britain's military system was based – voluntarism – was no longer sustainable. The Elgin Commission, appointed to investigate Britain's failures in the Boer War, concluded that the British military system was crippled by the lack of statutory 'powers of expansion outside the limit of the Regular Forces of the Crown, whatever that limit may be'.²⁰ The commission therefore suggested, without enunciating outright, the necessity for compulsory service. This was a distressing implication. The last months of the Boer War had seen growing support for compulsory measures in the London press, much of which continued into the post-war debate. But the subject remained deeply controversial – all the more so when it was seen to emanate from an official body rather than from public opinion – and the Elgin Commission's implications proved unpopular in the Liberal press. Discomforted, Prime Minister Arthur Balfour attempted to redirect attention along more familiar lines with the appointment of a second commission under the Chairmanship of Lord Norfolk to examine the condition of the militia and Volunteers.

Unfortunately, the Norfolk Commission was even more explicit in its assertion, in May 1904, that the practical and philosophical underpinnings of voluntary army recruitment were hopelessly unsustainable in Britain's modern circumstances. In a revelation of just how far expert military opinion had moved in favour of compulsory service, not one of the

18 'Imperial Defence. MEATH', *The Times*, 2 January 1904, p. 4.

19 'To the many and eminent services which LORD', *The Times*, 2 August 1905, p. 9.

20 Parliamentary Papers 1904, XL (1789), 'Report of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the Military preparations and other matters connected with the War in South Africa', p. 89. See also D. Hayes, *Conscription Conflict*, (London, 1949) p. 29.

commissioners recommended the continuation of a completely voluntarist system. The majority report recommended compulsory one-year continuous military service (as distinct from a part-time scheme of military training) for all able-bodied youths at age twenty. One commissioner submitted that compulsion should only be applied to meet deficiencies in the voluntary system, and two would excuse those who had taken some other course of military training in their earlier years, but all endorsed the principle of compulsion as the only way to safeguard Britain against the threat of invasion.²¹

This was an astonishingly bold pronouncement in support of the legitimacy of the citizen's legal liability towards military service. Once again, Balfour's Government forbade mention of the very idea, dismissing the Norfolk Commission as having far exceeded its terms of reference. Liberal Party leader Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman described the Royal Commissioners 'as having been driven to the verge of lunacy, or, perhaps, beyond it', and added that 'their advice has been received with ridicule by the whole country'.²² A number of the more liberal newspapers chimed in on the 'farcical character', of the Commission and its recommendation.²³ The *Speaker* declared it unwarranted, unsolicited and outdated. 'Three years ago the issue of a report by a Royal Commission in favour of conscription ... would have found an echo in our fears and an excuse in our ambitions', it asserted. 'But now the publication of this alarmist recommendation ... is felt to be an anachronism and an impertinence. ... The climate of opinion is changed. We are no longer a predatory empire in a moral quarantine.'²⁴ Its rival the *Spectator* agreed that the Commission's proposals 'died at birth. Not only has the country shown itself unwilling to consider compulsory military service seriously, but it has made it clear that, in its view, the Commission was expressing an opinion on a matter where its opinion was not asked.'²⁵ Furthermore, while

21 Parliamentary Papers 1904, XXX (2061–3), 'The Report of the Royal Commission on the Militia and Volunteers', p. 175. For further on the minority reports, see Hayes, *Conscription Conflict*, p. 31. and H. Cunningham, *The Volunteer Force: A Social and Political History, 1859–1908* (London, 1975) p. 132.

22 'MR. ARNOLD-FORSTER stated last night, in', *The Times*, 3 June 1904, p. 9.

23 'THE WEEK', *Speaker*, 2 July 1904, p. 303.

24 'THE AUXILIARY FORCES', *Speaker*, 4 June 1904, p. 219.

25 'THE CONSCRIPTION PROPOSALS', *Spectator*, 4 June 1904, p. 870.

supportive of compulsory physical education ‘of a semi–military character’ in schools, it remained ‘strongly opposed to compulsory military service in any form, believing that ‘there will always be plenty of men willing to answer to the nation’s call, and that armies diluted with unwilling combatants are injured, not improved, in their fighting capacity’.²⁶

Even *The Times* agreed that the Commission had gone too far in its recommendations, though the nature of its objections was more strategic than ideological. Editorials chided the Commissioners for prematurity: for overlooking the need to diffuse the sense of duty towards military participation – in peacetime as in war – among the nation before making such a large demand upon it. *The Times* cited the benefits of universal participation in national defence, but asserted that ‘before it is adopted in this country it must be realized to be a natural and inseparable part of our national life, and not an unpleasant burden’.²⁷ First, Englishmen had to get used to the lesser measure of compulsory military training in schools. ‘When children and their parents are familiarized with military training and its physical and moral benefits’, *The Times* opined, ‘it will be much easier than at present to proceed with such further measures as the needs of the nation may demand.’²⁸

Ultimately, the Norfolk Commission was less significant for its actual proposals, which were widely dismissed, than for the impetus to debate that it provided. *The Times* believed ‘most people who have given any thought to the matter will feel rather grateful that the Commission have brought forward this important question’, on the ground that ‘we still need educating in considerations of Imperial defence, and above all we need educating in the sense of personal responsibility for the safe keeping of the Empire’.²⁹ Baden–Powell, writing in *The Spectator*, concurred, welcoming ‘any proposal from any quarter which will tend to teach true patriotism, ... and bring home to all classes, high and low, rich and poor, that they are citizens of a great country, and should be willing to defend it if called upon to

26 ‘THE CONSCRIPTION PROPOSALS’, *Spectator*, 4 June 1904, p. 870.

27 ‘The report of the Royal Commission on the’, *The Times*, 28 May 1904, p. 11.

28 ‘MR. ARNOLD–FORSTER stated last night, in’, *The Times*, 3 June 1904, p. 9.

29 ‘There was a discursive conversation in the’, *The Times*, 28 June 1904, p. 9.

do so'.³⁰ For the time being, the Commission's suggestion of year-long continuous service was too much for all but the most die-hard pro-conscription advocates to countenance. And yet, as *The Times* correctly identified, 'the acceptance of compulsion in principle, however, by both the majority and the minority of the Commissioners must be regarded as an important step in the formation of opinion on this great national question'.³¹ Norfolk's proposals pushed the principle of compulsion closer to the realm of practical politics, while also serving to make part-time military training schemes appear more moderate by comparison. Above all, they drew attention to British vulnerability, and to the need for far greater civilian involvement in the military system.

Reactions to the Norfolk Commission revealed the depth of residual aversion to compulsory measures. The idea of inherent civilian liability to military service, however, was asserted with increasing conviction in the London press. The basis of Britain's military system, that citizens 'pay others to perform a duty which should be acknowledged as the first obligation of citizenship', was now widely regarded with disdain in London press discourse.³² Throughout 1905, editorial and correspondence across the London press repeatedly stressed that 'it is useless to waste time chopping logic over details until we get the principle recognized and admitted – the principle that it is the bounded duty of every man in a free country – not a cripple or an idiot – to be ready to fight for his country'.³³ In line with the general shift towards 'social' rather than 'moral' duty, this obligation was frequently articulated as part of the citizenly contract between subject and State, as '*quid pro quo*... due to the State from those who receive benefits from it'.³⁴ A flood of correspondents offered suggestions of how to promote awareness of this citizenly

30 'BOWDEN-SMITH, N., THE CONSCRIPTION PROPOSALS', *Spectator*, July 2 1904, p. 14.

31 'The report of the Royal Commission on the', *The Times*, 28 May 1904, p. 11.

32 'The Militia And The Volunteers. ROBERT YERBURGH', *The Times*, 12 July 1904, p. 2.

33 'Imperial Defence. Admiral C. C. PENROSE FITZGERALD', *The Times*, 29 September 1905, p. 5.

34 'State Aid. BURLEIGH D. KILBURN', *The Times*, 20 January 1905, p. 13.

obligation. The clergy was encouraged to preach it to their flocks, teachers to instill it in their pupils, and employers to demand practice of it from their workers.³⁵

The year after the Norfolk Commission, 1905, even saw the pro-compulsion lobby make real inroads in London press discourse. Since its foundation in 1902, the National Service League had grown fairly slowly, only attracting an average of 555 new members per year between 1903 and 1905.³⁶ To begin with, the League was hindered by confusion over whether it advocated outright conscription for the regular army, a strictly defensive national militia, or simply compulsory military training.³⁷ In 1905, such influential and articulate figures as Rudyard Kipling, Field Marshal Sir Garnet Wolseley, and Admiral Lord Charles Beresford became key spokespeople for the League.³⁸ But it was Lord Roberts who proved to have the most potent influence on London press opinion. Roberts did not initially join the League, but lobbied actively for compulsory military training in his capacity as Commander-in-Chief. Throughout 1904–5 his speeches and correspondence appeared frequently in the national press. His very public resignation from his post and assumption of the presidency of the NSL in November 1905, after the Committee on Imperial Defence rejected his demand for compulsory military training, further boosted the profile of his endorsement of compulsory measures.

As well as imparting a hefty dose of prestige, charisma and credibility, Roberts brought new clarity to the NSL by explicitly declaring compulsory part-time military training – rather than Continental-style conscription for ‘general service’ or service in time of war – as the goal of its agitation. This gave the NSL’s campaign far greater palatability and broad appeal. The Liberal press remained firmly against compulsory military *service*, which it called conscription. Compulsory military *training*, on the other hand, was not necessarily

35 ‘Employers Of Labour And Military Training. E. A. CLAREMONT’, *The Times*, 2 November 1904, p. 7.

36 Lord Newton, *Retrospection* (London, 1941), p. 116.

37 Hayes, *Conscription Conflict*, p. 40.

38 Adams and Poirier, *The Conscription Controversy*, p. 11.

incompatible with a voluntary army and reserve – indeed, as it had been during the Boer War, it was often presented as the only salvation of the voluntary system. As the *Illustrated London News* put it, ‘conscription, as it is understood on the Continent, is scarcely conceivable in this island. We should resort to it only in some desperate emergency; and it is to save us from such emergency that Lord Roberts proposes the compulsory military training which would give every young man the elements of soldiership without making him a conscript.’³⁹ *The Observer* also endorsed ‘training the young manhood of the nation in the use of arms’ on the grounds that only such universal training could ensure that ‘when occasion arose, a sufficient number of trained men would answer the call for Volunteers’.⁴⁰ The campaign for compulsory military training was therefore reconciled with faith in the willingness of Britons to rally to the flag that had characterised the anti-compulsion camp. ‘If we have compulsory training’, wrote an ‘Old Liberal’ to *The Times*, ‘we may safely leave service as it is, voluntary.’⁴¹ This positing of compulsory training teamed with voluntary enlistment (fuelled by a pervasive popular ideology of patriotic duty) as the liberal alternative to conscription for active service in wartime was an important step in the reconciliation of the idea of civilian liability to military service with contemporary liberal values. Hard-core conscriptionists, of course, considered compulsory training a half-measure, but were largely satisfied that it was the best they could get in the contemporary climate of public opinion.

By mid 1905, almost all the major London newspapers had converted to the compulsory military training camp. They agreed with the *Spectator* that ‘educationally it needs no defence; socially it is a crying need; and in its military aspect it is the only alternative to conscription’.⁴² Correspondents went further, even suggesting that Parliament recognize by disenfranchisement that ‘the young man of the future who is not qualified to take his place

39 ‘Our Note Book. L. F. Austin’, *Illustrated London News*, 12 August 1905, p. 218.

40 ‘THE PROBABILITY OF PEACE’, *Observer*, 27 August 1905, p. 4.

41 ‘OLD LIBERAL, CONSCRIPTION’, *Spectator*, 4 June 1904, p. 878.

42 ‘THE BASIS OF CITIZENSHIP’, *Spectator*, 11 February 1905, p. 207.

in the defence of the empire is an incomplete citizen and has no vote'.⁴³ The level of press consensus in favour of compulsory military training was unprecedented. It was with considerable satisfaction that the like-minded *Times* noted that 'since LORD ROBERTS took the field himself, and followed up his appeal by steady spade-work in every part of the country, there can be no doubt that the movement has made very substantive progress'.⁴⁴

Alone amongst the major Liberal papers, the *Speaker* refused to support compulsory military training. But its opposition was nothing like the passionate and self-righteous opposition of earlier decades. It did not rail against the tyranny of compulsion; rather, it responded to the charge of the *Saturday Review* that Englishmen 'are no worthy countrymen for Nelson because we shrink from conscription' with the less-than-confident rebuttal that 'the charge would be just if modern England shrank from conscription because of its hardships, but if England refuses conscription because she thinks that her special position makes it unnecessary and unwise the charge is irrelevant'.⁴⁵ Other naysayers argued on similar lines, rejecting compulsion not on principle, but because it was 'unnecessary' in a country which had yet to grant 'the voluntary system of enlistment ... a fair trial' by making voluntary military training sufficiently attractive.⁴⁶ In the post Boer-War period, the argument was no longer over whether Englishmen were inherently liable to serve the State militarily in the hour of its need; this principle was now essentially acknowledged. Debate centred instead upon the circumstances that justified calling on this inherent liability, and whether Englishmen ought to be compelled to render themselves fit for such service in peacetime.

43 'National Military Training. A COLONEL OF THE BORDER REGIMENT', *The Times*, 27 December 1905, p. 12.

44 'Nearly six months have passed since LORD' [sic], *The Times*, 23 November 1905, p. 9.

45 'THE WEEK', *Speaker*, 28 October 1905, p. 73.

46 'The Future Of The Army From A Commercial Man's Point Of View. WM. C. ELTON SERJEANT', *The Times*, 18 August 1905, p. 6.

By the 1906 electoral defeat of the Unionist government, whose handling of military matters under Arthur Balfour had proved deeply unpopular, the London press was almost unanimously preaching not only the inherent citizenly duty of military participation, but also the duty towards military training in preparation for that participation – and the wisdom of legislating its observance.⁴⁷ But the landslide electoral victory to the Liberal Party, confirming the prime ministership of the Radical-leaning Campbell-Bannerman, did not bode well for advocates of compulsory military obligations. Ideologically, Campbell Bannerman's government was committed to the reduction of armament expenditure and cited its desire for Britain 'to place itself at the head of a league of peace'.⁴⁸ Sensing the political mood, opponents of universal military training stepped up their attack. The *Speaker* railed against the 'conspiracy' of 'the terrorists of our Jingo Press' for 'endeavouring to drive the country into conscription in small doses by imaginary fears of invasion'.⁴⁹ The campaign to introduce rifle-shooting or military drill into schools, it asserted, was the thin end of the wedge, and 'should be vigorously resented and resisted by all Liberals as a reactionary step which might lead in the future to very serious consequences'.⁵⁰ Noting that 'with the exception of the *Tribune* all the penny morning papers of London are advocates of compulsory service', the *Speaker* urged all Liberals to 'strenuously combat ... the conscriptionist agitation'.⁵¹ More extreme opponents, such as C.H. Norman, who would later become a leading conscientious objector, even warned that those who wished to deprive Englishmen of their 'fetish' of liberty risked 'raising a

47 Very little in the way of actual reform was achieved by Balfour's successive Secretaries for War, Brodrick and Arnold-Forster (although the Royal Navy did undergo a series of improvements under First Sea Lord Fisher) and in the 1906 electoral campaign, 2/3 of Unionist candidates steered clear of defence issues altogether. See R Williams, *Defending the Empire: The Conservative Party and British Defence Policy 1899–1915* (London, 1991), p.46; and A. K. Russell, *Liberal Landslide: The General Election of 1906* (Hamden CT, 1973) p. 92.

48 A. J. A. Morris, *Radicalism Against War 1906–1914: The Advocacy of Peace and Retrenchment* (London, 1972) p. 23.

49 'THE BLUE FUNK SCHOOL', *Speaker*, 15 September 1906, p. 550.

50 'A NATION IN ARMS', *Speaker*, 22 September 1906, p. 575. In practice, the introduction of rifle training into elementary schools was dropped after Labour and radical protest, but public schools continued to indoctrinate middle class boys with ideas of martial duty and sacrifice. Adams and Poirier, p. 47.

51 'THE WEEK', *Speaker*, 27 October 1906, p. 93.

clamour against them which would result in civil war'.⁵² While conceding 'that the idea of a national army is more attractive than that of a professional army', the *Speaker* denied outright that the benefit was worth the 'overwhelming evils' of compulsory service.⁵³

Nor were press advocates of compulsory military training immune to the anti-militaristic air of the Campbell-Bannerman government. Despite the rising profile of the NSL under the presidency of Lord Roberts, the pace of the campaign slowed and tended towards pessimism during the first year of Liberal government in 1906. 'The nation is, we fear, too inherently optimistic to ... recognise the necessity of the reforms advocated', concluded the *Observer*. 'The word conscription is so distasteful to our ears, ... and we have come to impose such implicit trust in the Navy as the first and final arm of defence, that it may be doubted whether ... [any argument] will have the slightest effect in rousing public opinion from the dead palsy of indifference regarding the urgent need of Army reform.'⁵⁴ The *Spectator* agreed that while 'in time to come it is possible that events may compel us to abandon, or partially abandon, voluntaryism in military questions; ... that time is not yet, and till it arrives it is impossible to ignore the strong prepossessions of our people against any form of compulsory service'. It continued to maintain, however, that universal physical training in schools was NOT compulsory service, but in fact 'the basis for voluntary service'.⁵⁵

Ultimately, however, it was not Campbell-Bannerman's radicalism that would come to define Liberal Government before the Great War. The period 1906-1914 saw a decided drift in Liberal politics and public debate towards a more centrist, collectivist and Liberal Imperialist approach. This accelerated after business recession and high unemployment in late 1907, together with his own rapidly deteriorating health, forced the resignation of Campbell-Bannerman in April 1908, and the centrist Liberal Imperialist Henry Herbert

52 'NORMAN, C H, THE CONSCRIPTION CONSPIRACY', *Speaker*, 6 October 1906, p. 12.

53 'THE WEEK', *Speaker*, 14 July 1906, p. 325.

54 'A SOLDIER'S APPEAL', *Observer*, 18 February 1906, p. 4.

55 'LORD ROBERTS'S MANIFESTO', *Spectator*, 17 February 1906, p. 246.

Asquith took the reins of power. But the beginning of this drift was evident even during the period of Campbell–Bannerman’s government. Germanophobia continued to rise, especially as the naval arms race began in earnest with the launch of HMS Dreadnought in 1906. By now, Germany was considered Britain’s only likely naval enemy, and warships were steadily withdrawn from overseas stations and concentrated in home waters in response to this new strategic orientation.⁵⁶ Germany further alienated Liberal observers with her sabotage of the second Hague Peace Conference in 1907, in which Campbell–Bannerman had invested great hope.⁵⁷

In this atmosphere of rising Germanophobia, the influence of centrist Liberal Imperialists within Campbell–Bannerman’s own cabinet was strongly felt on both policy and public opinion. A believer in ‘continuity of policy’, Foreign Secretary Edward Grey continued to negotiate the strengthening of Britain’s security in much the same way as he had under Balfour’s Unionist government. Desperate to balance Germany’s power on the Continent (as well as secure India’s borders – another source of anxiety), he defied Radical and Labour moral outrage to conclude a ‘deal with devil’ in the Anglo–Russian entente in August 1907 – the agreement that, together with the Entente Cordiale of 1904, forged the Triple Entente.⁵⁸ Even more significant was Secretary for War, R. B. Haldane, a Liberal Imperialist who had previously been involved in the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) under the Unionist government and was also a strong political exponent of the ‘National Efficiency’ movement.⁵⁹

Shortly after assuming office in January 1906, Haldane was persuaded by Grey that that Britain might be obliged to assist France in a coming Franco–German conflict, and began

56 H. H. Herwig, *Luxury Fleet: The Imperial German Navy 1888–1918* (London, 1980), pp. 48–50.

57 Searle, *A New England*, p. 486. See also P. Kennedy, *The Rise of Anglo–German Antagonism* (London, 1980).

58 Searle, *A New England*, pp. 484–5.

59 K. M. Wilson, *The Politics of the Entente: Essays on the Determinants of British Foreign Policy, 1904–1914* (Cambridge, 1985) p. 17.; and G. W. Monger, *The End of Isolation: British Foreign Policy 1900–1907* (London, 1963) p. 260.

to consider how best to facilitate this kind of Continental commitment.⁶⁰ With public concern about Imperial defence on the rise, Haldane succeeded in putting together a package of military reforms that won the support of the General Staff and passed without significant drama through both Houses over the course of 1907. Haldane's system changed the existing tripartite division of Regular Army, Volunteers/Yeomanry and Militia into a two-part structure, with an Expeditionary Force and a home-based Territorial Force based on County Associations.⁶¹ The British Expeditionary Force (BEF) would serve as a mobile striking force of 150,000 men that could, in theory, be affixed to the army of an ally and thereby play a decisive strategic role in a Continental War.⁶² This aspect of Haldane's reforms would prove highly significant in the opening stages of the First World War, although Edward Spiers has convincingly argued that the shape of Haldane's reforms owed as much to Imperial requirements and considerations of economy as to foresight or the concerns of Continental Strategy.⁶³

Meanwhile, the Territorial and Reserve Forces Act 1907 overhauled Britain's system of civilian military participation. The Volunteer Force and remaining Yeomanry corps were amalgamated in a new 'Territorial Army' for home defence, based on a Cardwellian system of local linked battalions raised, organised and financed by local organisations but liable for service under War Office command. The Militia became a Special Reserve of men who agreed to be liable for service with the regular forces in wartime.⁶⁴ The whole system remained completely voluntary, but, significantly, participation was officially pronounced the patriotic duty of all Englishmen. This represented Haldane's attempt to 'create by persuasion an efficient citizen army', with all the benefits of mass and

60 J. K. Dunlop, *The Development of the British Army 1899–1914* (London, 1938), pp. 236–41.

61 Dunlop, p. 266.

62 Indeed, there were many staff talks, conducted over years without the knowledge of parliament, aimed at achieving such a commitment. See J. E. Tyler, *The British Army and the Continent, 1904–1914* (London, 1938), ch 2; and S. Williamson, *The Politics of Grand Strategy: Britain and France Prepare for War* (Cambridge MA, 1969).

63 E. M. Spiers, 'Haldane's reform of the regular army: scope for revision', *British Journal of International Studies* 6 (1980), pp. 69–81; and *Haldane: an Army Reformer* (Edinburgh, 1980).

64 E. Sheppard, *A short history of the British Army* (London, 1950), p. 293.

cheapness, but without the political bugbear of compulsion, to which Haldane himself remained firmly opposed.⁶⁵

The scheme won moderate approval, if not enthusiastic praise, in the London press. Liberals could not object to its strict voluntarism, while advocates of compulsory measures at least appreciated Haldane's explicit endorsement of the citizen's duty toward military service. 'MR. HALDANE has repeatedly insisted that a "nation in arms" is the only basis upon which we can hope for security in Imperial defence', noted *The Times* with approval.⁶⁶ This official assertion of the individual's patriotic duty towards service in the Territorials shifted the terms of military participation debate decisively. The compulsionist campaign, which to date had taken pains to stress that it sought only a short period of compulsory military training for all British youths, now adopted the more ambitious framework of Haldane's scheme. From 1908 on, compulsionist arguments focussed on the Territorials as the natural outlet for compulsory participation, thereby adding the citizenly duty 'to provide for home defence' to the more inoffensive duty of military training in preparation for the hour of need.⁶⁷

In practice, the demarcation between 'training' and 'service' was far from clear, and membership of the Territorial Force was depicted fairly indiscriminately in both terms. Conscription for Continental fighting, on the other hand, remained utterly politically untenable and wholly renounced by the London press, (though in reality most senior military figures were by now convinced that it was necessary in order to maintain the balance of Europe).⁶⁸ The effort to disassociate the term 'conscription' from compulsory participation in home defence continued; ongoing quibbling about degrees of compulsion

65 'Employers And The Territorial Force. J. H. HOWELL', *The Times*, 28 July 1908, p. 5.

66 'To future historians of the British Empire the', *The Times*, 20 September 1906, p. 7.

67 'Untitled item', *Spectator*, 17 January 1909, p. 79.

68 Sir Ian Hamilton, a close friend of Lord Roberts though an opponent of conscription, wrote to Lady Roberts in 1910 that the entire General Staff had secretly come round to favouring continental style conscription. Hamilton Papers (December 1910), cited in R.J.Q. Adams, 'The National Service League And Mandatory Service In Edwardian Britain', *Armed Forces & Society*, 12.53 (1985), p. 66.

shows the extent to which it was no longer considered an unequivocal and straightforward evil.⁶⁹ But the pro-compulsion campaign no longer clung to the inoffensive half-measure of compulsory training in service of a voluntarist military system with the same ostentatious care, instead extending its conception of citizenly liability to include participation in home defence in peacetime.

Haldane's scheme therefore served to broaden the concept of the civilian's military duty beyond that which even the NSL had dared to suggest. True, it did not formalise that duty or legislate its observance, relying rather upon the people apprehending it and undertaking it voluntarily. 'It is true that he [Haldane] looks to voluntary effort, inspired by local interest, to create that armed nation free of cost; whether his means are adequate to achieve his object yet remains to be seen', noted *The Times* in a skeptical tone.⁷⁰ But in the current political climate, the pro-compulsion press largely accepted it as a step in the right direction, with a potentially educative effect. *The Times* expressed the hope that it might encourage 'the voluntary spirit of emulation, which makes shirking a disgrace' and felt sure that 'the greater the number who give a considerable portion of their time voluntarily, the stronger will become the public opinion in favour of exacting some service to the State from all'.⁷¹

Nonetheless, the pro-compulsion majority of the London press was quick to jump on any faltering as evidence that Haldane's reliance on voluntary enthusiasm had failed. The Territorial Force was formally established on 1 April 1908, but after the conversion of willing Volunteers and Yeomanry, the total enlistment was only 28% of the establishment Haldane had called for. By the end of 1908, it still remained 31% short of establishment.⁷² The London press seized upon this as proof that voluntarism could no longer be depended

69 'The Word "Conscription." F. MADDISON', *The Times*, 7 April 1913, p. 10.

70 'To future historians of the British Empire the', *The Times*, 20 September 1906, p. 7.

71 'The New Swiss Military Law', *The Times*, 12 November 1907, p. 9; and 'We publish to-day a statement by LORD', *The Times*, 17 February 1906, p. 9.

72 J. K. Dunlop, *The Development of the British Army 1899-1914* (London, 1938) pp. 286-7.

on for home defence: that it ‘proved beyond doubt that the young men of the nation do not come forward for “general training” of their own free will’, and that, therefore, ‘the voluntary system in its non–professional aspect has failed’.⁷³ Cognisant of the need to court public support, however, it had to explain the failure of voluntarism in terms which would not offend or alienate the public. The pre–1908 campaign for military training in youth had stressed the patriotic volunteer spirit of the people, but argued that prior training was required to turn it to good military effect. The post–1908 campaign for compulsory universal service in the Territorials, on the other hand, had to both insist on, on the one hand, and justify, on the other, the failure of the people to come forward in fulfillment of what had been officially named a citizenly duty.

The pro–compulsion press began by stressing that the failure of voluntarism in home defence was not the result of any meanness or shortage of patriotism on the part of the public. On the contrary, the press roundly reinforced the idea that Englishmen could be depended upon to volunteer in a wartime emergency. ‘We go on the assumption they will volunteer (for service abroad)’, affirmed the *Spectator*, adding that ‘if we did not believe that, we should not believe in the continuance of the Empire at all’.⁷⁴ The pro–compulsion press even expressed the belief that the people did actually apprehend their duty towards participation in the Territorial scheme of home defence. ‘The fact that the Force is 50,000 men short ... may seem to show that the military ardour of the young men of the nation is not as great as we imagine to be the case’, noted *The Times* in 1913, but insisted that ‘in reality it proves no such thing; ... the sense of the obligation of such training is probably far deeper than is commonly supposed’.⁷⁵

Why, then, did Englishmen fail to answer the call of the Territorials? The problem with Haldane’s scheme, agreed *The Times*, the *Observer* and the *Spectator*, was that it was

73 ‘Compulsory Service. C. C. PENROSE FITZGERALD’, *The Times*, 9 May 1908, p. 8; and ‘The Army Organization Debate’, *The Times*, 5 April 1911, p. 9.

74 ‘THE LIMITS OF PATRIOTIC OBLIGATION’, *Spectator*, 5 October 1907, p. 474.

75 ‘Universal Training’, *The Times*, 26 September 1913, p. 5.

fundamentally unjust. Englishmen were as patriotic as any race, but they rebelled against a system in which men were asked to shoulder an unfair share of a burden that rightly belonged to all. This was entirely in line with the emphasis upon fairness and equal application that had characterised the military participation debate since the 1890s. ‘What [Englishmen] cannot tolerate is not the service itself, but the feeling that they should be expected to serve, while others stand by and do nothing;’ asserted *The Times*, ‘and as a result of this feeling they stand by and do nothing themselves.’⁷⁶ ‘Common sense recognizes’, the *Observer* explained, that in military affairs as in financial matters, ‘the evasion of his share of taxation by any man means necessarily the unfair taxation of another.’⁷⁷

Service in the Territorials necessitated a sacrifice of time and effort – a sacrifice that would be happily made if fairly claimed of all, but which turned to bitter personal disadvantage in a voluntary system. While rivals and competitors in the rat-race of trade and industry were permitted to shirk their duty to military service, *The Spectator* insisted, you could not expect any man ‘to take on obligations which imperil ... his chances of doing well in civil life’ by comparison.⁷⁸ Patriotic employers, too, declared it unfair that they should be asked ‘to make sacrifices in favour of competing employers’ by letting their employees join the Territorials, an increasing number declaring their support for ‘a universal compulsory system which the unpatriotic employers could not evade’.⁷⁹ The pro-compulsion press thus co-opted public reluctance to join the Territorials for their argument, interpreting it as a manifestation of inherent dissatisfaction with a system wherein ‘the individual Volunteer ... is handicapped for his patriotism’.⁸⁰ For this injustice, concluded *The Times*, ‘there is no remedy except a change in human nature, or the adoption of a system under which the selfish shall not fatten at the expense of the patriotic’.⁸¹

76 ‘Universal Training’, *The Times*, 26 September 1913, p. 5.

77 ‘CLEARED OF CANT’, *Observer*, 7 March 1909, p. 6.

78 ‘THE UNGUARDED DOOR’, *Spectator*, 15 February 1913, p. 260.

79 ‘Employers And The Territorial Force. J. H. HOWELL’, *The Times*, 28 July 1908, p. 5.

80 ‘In a speech remarkable alike for the width of’, *The Times*, 11 July 1906, p. 9.

81 ‘The Army Organization Debate’, *The Times*, 5 April 1911, p. 9.

Underlying this thinking was an even more fundamental logic. If it was now assumed, in principle at least, that participation in national defence was an acknowledged public duty (rather than simply a noble act of personal charity, as it had implicitly been regarded in the early days of the Victorian Volunteer revival), then the only fair and logical system was one of universal compulsory obligation. The *Spectator* explained the deduction at length:

Mr. Haldane ... tells us again and again that we cannot be without a second-line citizen army, and that it is the duty of the citizens to provide that army. Now if this is true, it is the duty, not of a part of the citizens, but *all* of the citizens. But once acknowledge that a certain duty is incumbent upon *all* men ... then it surely follows that those who attempt to evade their duty must be made to carry it out. You cannot, either in logic or in justice, declare that a duty is necessary and obligatory, and in the next breath say that no one need take it up who does not want to do so.⁸²

For the pro-compulsion camp, acknowledgment of a universal duty formed the whole justification for compulsion of that duty. On the other hand, as one young man wrote to *The Times*, 'a member of the Government has no valid ground for appeal to the patriotism of the people, whom he asks to come forward and undergo military training, while he is all the time insisting that military training should not be made a normal duty for a normal man'.⁸³ If participation in national defence was a duty, which no one any longer denied, it should be treated in the same way as the other duties of modern citizens, and 'the same compulsion should be used as is now found necessary to compel people to pay their taxes and educate their children; and, in short, do a good many other things necessary for the safety and welfare of a civilized State, which they would not do without compulsion'.⁸⁴

This argument was by no means new, but it enjoyed especial resonance in the contemporary political climate after 1908, which had begun to alter in favour of a more interventionist approach to the obligations of citizenship. Campbell-Bannerman's successor as Prime Minister, H. H. Asquith, was a believer in the mandate of Government

82 "'THE LIBERTY NOT TO FIGHT FOR ONE'S COUNTRY'", *Spectator*, 6 February 1909, p. 208.

83 'The Territorial Force. E. H. BETHELL', *The Times*, 22 August 1908, p. 6.

84 'Compulsory Service. C. C. PENROSE FITZGERALD', *The Times*, 9 May 1908, p. 8.

to take action to improve the social welfare of the people and maintain Britain's economic and military competitiveness. He and his cabinet, supported by an assortment of 'Social Radicals' on the backbench, felt that the old, classical Liberalism must give way to new ideas of collectivist welfare, "National Efficiency" and 'the new Imperial spirit'.⁸⁵ 1908 ushered in a new era of social welfare politics. Motivated by the need to fend off the Labour challenge, commitment to a modernised version of welfare capitalism, genuine humanitarianism, and considerations of National Efficiency in the context of growing rivalry with Germany, Asquith's government introduced the Old Age Pension Act (1908), the National Insurance Act (1911) and a range of reforms to living and working conditions.⁸⁶ This brought the State into a new relationship with the people, intruding on their lives in unprecedented ways. It represented a seismic shift from the old Gladstonian liberalism of absolute freedom and non-intervention to a new social-democratic vision of liberalism, which did not renounce 'liberty' or 'individuality', but extended their meaning by highlighting the fundamental interdependence of citizens and society.⁸⁷ Nor was this trend observable only among the 'social radicals' in government. Rather, it appeared to reflect a general shift in public opinion towards acceptance of the principle of social legislation – that is, the right of governments to 'interfere' in the best interests of the people. Only a few stern ideologues contested social legislation on principle; the overwhelming majority simply quibbled about the practicalities of implementing it.⁸⁸

This new way of thinking about the relationship between the individual and the state, which emphasised interdependence and reciprocal rights and obligations, had important implications for the military participation debate. From 1908 onwards, London press

85 H. C. G. Matthew, *The Liberal Imperialists. The Ideas and Politics of a Post-Gladstonian Élite* (Oxford, 1973) p. 134.

86 Searle, *A New England*, p 369; E. P. Hennock, *British Social Reform and German Precedents: the case of Social Insurance 1880–1914* (Oxford, 1987).

87 Theoretical underpinning was provided by intellectuals like J.A. Hobson, L.T. Hobhouse and H.V. Massingham (editor of *The Nation*) in the form of New Liberalism. See P. Clarke, *Liberals and Social Democrats* (Cambridge, 1978) and M. Freedman, *The New Liberalism: An Ideology of Social Reform* (Oxford, 1978).

88 Searle, *A New England*, p. 393.

discussion of the citizen's duty toward military service was increasingly infused with the concepts and rhetoric of New Liberalism. This took two main forms: (1) a new emphasis on military service as part of the citizenly contract of rights and obligations, and (2) the assertion that universal service was an expression of modernity, democracy and social progress.

As we have seen in previous chapters, a vague sense that military participation was linked to political enfranchisement, in particular, had floated around for decades, first in the form of the Chartist 'no vote, no musket' hostility to the militia ballot, and more latterly employed to argue the 'natural' immunity of women from military service disqualified them from full citizenship. After 1908, however, this identification became much more specific, explicit and hard-line. New theories of citizenship emphasised not individual freedom from interference, but reciprocal rights and obligations in a democratic contract between citizen and state.⁸⁹ In exchange for privileges such as political representation, legal rights, the preservation of order and security, and the provision of welfare measures by the State, every citizen had a reciprocal duty 'to bear his share of the burden of national existence, and the primary necessity of that existence is the ability to defend itself and its interests against all comers'.⁹⁰

The press continued to rebuff the female suffrage campaign with the insistence that military service, unthinkable for women, was 'the natural duty of every able-bodied man and the recognized corollary of the full citizenship which the suffragists demand'.⁹¹ Suffragettes had sensibly countered by pointing out that 'when we are told "Women must not vote, because they don't fight," we think the natural corollary would be, "Men who

89 G. Finlayson, *Citizen, State, and Social Welfare in Britain, 1830–1990*; and 'A Moving Frontier: Voluntarism and the State in British Social Welfare 1911–1949,' *Twentieth Century British History*, 1.2 (1990), pp. 183–206; A. Clark, 'Changing Concepts of Citizenship: Gender, Empire, and Class,' *Journal of British Studies*, 42.2 (2003), pp. 263–71; J. Garrard, *Democratization in Britain: Elites, Civil Society and Reform since 1800* (London, 2002); and L. Barrow and I. Bullock, *Democratic Ideas and the British Labour Movement, 1880–1914* (New York, 1996).

90 'Army Organization', *The Times*, 4 April 1911, p. 9.

91 'Women and the Vote', *The Times*, 27 March 1909, p. 13.

don't fight must not vote.”⁹² Latterly, however, correspondents increasingly declared themselves in agreement with the suffragettes' logic, if not their conclusions. A growing number urged that the privilege of vote should indeed be dependent on satisfactory fulfilment of the duty of military service.⁹³ ‘He who would exercise the full privileges of citizenship must also be willing to undertake its duties and responsibilities’, wrote one of many like-minded correspondents to *The Times*, and the citizen who refuses to submit to military training and participation in national defence ‘should suffer some limited curtailment of his rights of citizenship’ in the form of electoral disenfranchisement.⁹⁴

The apparent willingness of the people to accept extended rights and privileges without fulfilling their corresponding obligations was bemoaned at length in the London press. Staff writers and correspondents alike cited ‘the attitude of many at the present moment ... that they possess an inalienable right to receive education and maintenance from the State and yet can be called upon to make no return’.⁹⁵ The sense that the people lagged behind the State in adopting the closer relationship that characterised New Liberalism was a common theme of mainstream press discourse. ‘The old tenets of Liberalism are fading fast as regards the relation of the State to the individual; they may perhaps live longer in the relation of the individual to the State’, noted *The Times* in 1909.⁹⁶ The State could no longer ignore its duty of care, but the people continued, by and large, to ignore their reciprocal duty of defence. ‘The fitting of men and women to realise and accept the duties of citizenship in a spirit of grave idealism’, the *Spectator* wrote, ‘seems to us one of the foremost needs of the modern world.’⁹⁷ Otherwise, as *The Times* warned, ‘it is difficult to understand who will defend a nation regardless of obligations and surfeited with rights’.⁹⁸

92 ‘Woman Suffrage. CLARA E. MORDAN’, *The Times*, 24 August 1908, p. 2.

93 ‘The Territorial Force. CHAS. D. H. McMILLAN’, *The Times*, 28 February 1913, p. 10.

94 ‘National Defence. ALFRED AUSTIN’, *The Times*, 25 March 1909, p. 9.

95 ‘State Aid. BURLEIGH D. KILBURN’, *The Times*, 20 January 1905, p. 13.

96 ‘Liberalism and its Allies’, *The Times*, 10 September 1909, p. 9.

97 ‘MORAL TRAINING AND THE MAKING OF PATRIOTS’, *Spectator*, 27 October 1906, p. 610

98 ‘Liberalism and its Allies’, *The Times*, 10 September 1909, p. 9.

In particular, the mainstream press objected to the hostility of the Labour movement to military service. When, in Sept 1907 the Trade Unions Congress forbade unionists from joining the Territorial Force lest they be called out against striking fellow-workers,⁹⁹ *The Times* railed against this rejection of a plain duty of citizenship:

‘No corresponding obligation is, it seems, to be admitted by the working-class, even though the State must feed it or find it work. This appears to be the only legacy of the old Liberal tradition to the new school of thought. ... In other countries ... Labour recognizes that the individual who claims everything from the State must be ready in return to defend the State. It is not to be so in England anticipated by the Trade Union Congress. ... Although the State maintain the individual, it shall not ask the individual to defend the State.’¹⁰⁰

Even orthodox Liberalism, *The Times* noted, ‘which asked little enough from the individual, asked for more than this’. It reminded readers that Mill’s treatise ‘On Liberty’ had claimed participation in national defence as one of those ‘positive acts for the benefit of others which the individual may rightly be compelled to perform’.¹⁰¹ In theory, the New Liberalism called for a far greater interdependence and inter-reliance between citizen and State, and yet in practice it seemed to have retained ‘the rigid individualism of the older faith while abandoning all the corresponding virtues which made for dignity and self-respect’.¹⁰²

Compounding press frustration with the non-cooperation of the Labour movement was the belief that Socialists ought to be natural allies of the ‘citizen army’ ideal. Countless letters refuted the apparently widespread public opinion that ‘none but the Tories’ supported universal military service.¹⁰³ *The Times* dedicated several editorials to the subjects of ‘the relationship of Socialism to the principle of the universal military service’, noting that the

99 D. J. Newton, *British Labour, European Socialism and the Struggle for Peace 1889–1914* (New York, 1985), p. 163.

100 ‘Liberalism and its Allies’, *The Times*, 10 September 1909, p. 9.

101 ‘Liberalism and its Allies’, *The Times*, 10 September 1909, p. 9.

102 ‘Liberalism and its Allies’, *The Times*, 10 September 1909, p. 9.

103 ‘National Service. THOMAS WHITWICK HAYES’, *The Times*, 7 March 1913, p. 4.

German Social Democrats, the British Social Democratic Federation, and the majority of other national socialist organizations had expressed support for the notion.¹⁰⁴ ‘Broadly,’ wrote *The Times*, ‘Socialism tends to exalt the claims of the community upon the individual, as against the unregulated assertion of the individual interest.’ Surely, it continued, ‘no claim on the part of the State can ... be more Socialistic than that which calls upon every individual citizen to surrender his time and, it may be, even his life to ensure the public safety’, while conversely, ‘no claim on the part of the individual is more typically anti-Socialist than of the right to decide for himself whether he will take any part in the defence of his country or not’.¹⁰⁵ The *Observer*, indeed, suggested that, by rights, the campaign for universal service ought to be emanating from the Radical camp. ‘The ideal of a nation in arms is not only patriotic, but democratic’, it asserted, regretting that ‘it is a pity that we have not a Radical of genius to propose it’.¹⁰⁶

Indeed, the notion that universal military service was fundamentally progressive, democratic, egalitarian, collectivist and modern, was central to the pro-compulsion argument after 1908. While Victorian advocates of civilian military participation had drawn legitimacy from an amateur military tradition rooted in Anglo-Saxon times, Edwardian proponents sought progress and modernity rather than continuity. This was one reason Lord Wemyss’ continued campaign for the repurposing of the militia ballot for the Territorials failed to resonate (the other was that the prevailing emphasis on universality of obligation made the ballot look unacceptably ‘capricious’).¹⁰⁷ Disillusioned with the ideas of the past, Edwardian compulsionists looked instead to contemporary models, like the much-vaunted Swiss National Guard, as examples of modern, liberal citizen armies. *The Times* declared universal service ‘a thoroughly democratic institution, which is more than can be said for fighting by proxy in any form’.¹⁰⁸ Indeed, since it ‘puts all citizens on an

104 ‘The denunciation of the growing movement in’, *The Times*, 29 September 1906, p. 9.

105 ‘The denunciation of the growing movement in’, *The Times*, 29 September 1906, p. 9.

106 ‘THE MACHINE AND THE MEN’, *Observer*, 16 August 1908, p. 6.

107 ‘National Service. Lord Wemyss And The Militia Ballot. WEMYSS’, *The Times*, 12 April 1913, p. 13.

108 ‘Army Organization’, *The Times*, 4 April 1911, p. 9.

equality ... it is, in fact, the most democratic institution in the world'.¹⁰⁹ The *Observer* concurred that 'to pay certain people to defend the honour of the country ... is in idea feudal. Yet we are the last country to preserve it – which shows how wonderfully Conservative an island race is.'¹¹⁰ Introduction of universal military obligations was therefore demanded not only on purely military grounds, but also as a means of bringing the people, in conditions of perfect equality, into their proper relationship with the State. Britain could not ascend to the rank of truly modern democracy while her people clung to the entrenched inequality and individualism that underlay 'patriotism by proxy'. 'Democracy in these islands has yet to learn the need of personal sacrifice for the national good', wrote *The Times*. 'Compulsory and universal training ... [is] an educative force which nothing can replace. ... It is the same for all, and to one and all it brings home by daily experience the common duty as fellow-subjects to one Sovereign and one State.'¹¹¹

In the years before the Great War, therefore, the pro-compulsion campaign dominated London press discourse with its formulation of universal compulsory participation as the only truly democratic, fair and equal principle of national defence. Underlying the whole campaign, of course, was the trump card of invasion rhetoric, which grew ever more powerful in the increasingly fraught international atmosphere between 1908 and 1914. In particular, by there was a strong feeling evident in the London press that the naval arms race with Germany, which had only intensified since 1907, was itself becoming a likely cause of war. In 1909, Chancellor von Bethman-Hollweg attempted to negotiate a mutual slow-down in naval building with Britain, but his strategy was scuttled by the Agadir Affair in 1911, which not only fuelled British suspicions over Germany's expansionist aims, but also encouraged a closer relationship between Britain and France (which included naval cooperation). Tirpitz seized the opportunity to continue his trajectory of naval buildup, aided by the support of the Social Democrats – who favoured the navy over the

109 'The denunciation of the growing movement in', *The Times*, 29 September 1906, p. 9.

110 'A STEP FORWARD', *Observer*, 28 July 1907, p. 6.

111 'The Nation and Its Heritage', *The Times*, 10 December 1912, p. 9.

army – in the Reichstag after the 1912 elections.¹¹² In February 1912, Haldane led a mission to Berlin to discuss possible bilateral limits to naval expansion, but his campaign only served to escalate tensions, for Kaiser Wilhelm II had announced an ambitious new programme of naval expansion to the Reichstag the day before Haldane arrived.

Even though both Germany and Britain would ultimately abandon the naval arms race before the outbreak of war (reflecting both its excessive expense and a shift in military planning towards a land war), the escalating naval rivalry rendered the possibility of both war and invasion very real – even probable – in the eyes of the London press. Even those Liberal papers that had originally resisted the ‘alarmism’ that saturated the mainstream press were changing their tune by 1913.¹¹³ And yet the press treatment of the imperative towards universal military service did not labour the invasion threat (or the potential need for an expanded Continental force) in the manner one might expect. On the whole, it let the undeniable public anxiety about Anglo–German antagonism serve as a grim backdrop to the debate. The greater part of press energy went towards reconciling – painstakingly, conscientiously and persistently – the principle of universal compulsory military service with the Liberal values and prejudices of contemporary English society.

In contrast, opposition to compulsory military service recognised public inertia as its greatest ally. There was little attempt to counter the arguments of the pro–compulsion lobby either in correspondence or in those few periodicals remaining aloof from the campaign.¹¹⁴ An occasional letter cited the military importance of the ‘willing spirit’, and offered rather tentatively that ‘surely it would be wiser to try and educate our fellow–countrymen to submit to training and accept service not only as a duty but as a privilege, rather than to try and induce Parliament to pass an Act setting forth a scale of punishments

112 Herwig, pp. 72–75.

113 Kennedy, *The Rise of Anglo–German Antagonism*, pp. 441–63.

114 The possibility that anti–compulsion correspondence was suppressed by the mainstream press ought to be considered, but treatment of other topics indicates that newspapers usually attempted to include token counter–opinions, if only for the stimulus they provided to debate.

for men who neglected to do it'.¹¹⁵ But on the whole, opposition to the introduction of compulsory measures did not take the form of a counter-campaign in the London press; rather, it relied on its entrenched position as the *status quo*. It was 'an accepted political maxim that universal military training would be unpopular'.¹¹⁶ Even if this maxim was untrue, as the pro-compulsion press believed it to be, the fact remained that 'at present Ministers assure us that there is no cause for anxiety, and no adequate reason for change'.¹¹⁷ 'Therefore, no matter how urgently the press stressed British military vulnerability, in the absence of absolutely imminent and material danger the tendency to 'drift on indefinitely' prevailed.¹¹⁸

Those opposed to formal military obligations were further served by the broader atmosphere of social disunity in the pre-war years. The troubles in Ireland weakened patriotic unity, and episodes like the Curragh Incident highlighted the problematic nature of military duty.¹¹⁹ If professional soldiers found themselves so conflicted in doing their duty, how much more thorny would be the position of the conscripted civilian in the moment of personal ethical dilemma? On the other hand, the passionate conviction of Irishmen on both sides of the Home Rule issue gave rise to plenty of examples of voluntary military participation in para-military groups, further normalising the notion that support for a conflict or cause might naturally involve personal military service. In addition to the issues in Ireland, the pre-war years saw the State's besieging by women's suffrage campaigners, scandals over government corruption, and a full-blown constitutional crisis over the Lord's rejection of the provocative Liberal 'people's budget' in 1909.

115 'National Service. T. STURMY CAVE', *The Times*, 8 April 1913, p. 5.

116 'Lord Roberts in Leeds', *The Times*, 19 April 1913, p. 9.

117 'Lord Roberts in Leeds', *The Times*, 19 April 1913, p. 9.

118 'THE MACHINE AND THE ME', *Observer*, 16 August 1908; p. 6.

119 For discussion of the Curragh Incident and its implications, see I. F. W. Beckett, *The Army and the Curragh Incident 1914* (London, 1986); J. Fergusson, *The Curragh Incident* (London, 1964); and E. A. Muenger, *The British Military Dilemma in Ireland: Occupation Politics, 1886-1914* (Lawrence, KA, 1991).

All the while, industrial relations were also deteriorating at a rapid pace, crystallising in 1909–12 in the the Great Labour Unrest. Fuelled by increased foreign competition, employers demanded ever higher efficiency and productivity from their workers. Prices, meanwhile, had been rising faster than wages since 1900, and a sharp recession in 1908–09, causing unemployment rates greater than 9%, strained industrial relations to breaking point.¹²⁰ Even after trade prosperity and employment rates improved in 1910, working class frustration boiled over into a series of high-profile and bitter strikes between 1910 and 1913.¹²¹ As the unions radicalised, the Liberal party's attempt to stay neutral pleased no one. In this tense and antagonistic atmosphere, the people were all the more suspicious of being 'liable' to the State, and appeals to the patriotic unity of the people were rendered untimely and rather naïve.

Nonetheless, by the eve of the Great War the 'national service' message had gained a firmer foothold in London press discourse and the popular imagination than many historians have acknowledged.¹²² The London press had almost unanimously converted to the belief that 'after five years of fair and sympathetic trial the system of voluntary enlistment for our home defence army has hopelessly broken down'.¹²³ The National Service League had grown from 10,000 members in 1907 to almost 100,000 by the eve of the Great War, and *The Times* was able to flatter itself in February 1914 that its advocacy had secured a more thoughtful reception for the League's message in Parliament.¹²⁴ But in practice, the forces of inertia, complacency, and latent discomfort with universal military obligations were stronger than the persuasive powers of the pro-compulsion press. All

120 Searle, *A New England*, p. 449.

121 See H. A. Clegg, *A History of British Trade Unions Since 1889: Vol II, 1901–13* (Oxford, 1985).

122 See for example Hayes, *Conscription Conflict*; C. Playne, *The Pre-War Mind in Britain* (London, 1928); G.R. Searle, 'The Critics of Edwardian Society: The Case of the Radical Right' in A. O'Day (ed.), *The Edwardian Age: Conflict and Stability* (London, 1979) pp. 79–96; F. Coetzee, *For Party or Country: Nationalism and the Dilemmas of Popular Conservatism in Edwardian England* (New York, 1990), and J.A. Mangan, 'The Grit of Our Forefathers': Invented Traditions, Propaganda and Imperialism' in J. M. MacKenzie (ed.), *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (London, 1986), pp. 113–39.

123 'Lord Roberts and the Territorials', *The Times*, 28 November 1912, p. 7.

124 Adams and Poirier, pp. 23, 17; see also 'Mr. Asquith on National Service', *The Times*, 28 February 1914, p. 9.

attempts to introduce compulsory obligations of any kind before World War I, including several bills brought before Parliament (two with NSL backing) failed completely. Despite enjoying the support of a good many highly powerful and well-placed men, the National Service lobby failed to gain significant influence over Britain's political parties, which rightly feared the hostility of an electorate brought up to distrust standing armies, accustomed to a blue water view of defence, and already shouldering the financial burden of social reform measures and the Dreadnought building programme.

But even if the national service lobby – and the largely pro-compulsionist London press – failed to either gain control of the parties or convince the majority of the electorate, they nonetheless had an immense effect on broader conceptions of the individual's obligation towards military service. In the longer term, the conflict between compulsionists and voluntarists was less important than the vast conceptual common ground they shared. Indeed, the fervour of the conscription debate has tended to obscure the fundamental *agreement* between the two sides: the shared assumption, scored deeply into the psyche of the London press by the outbreak of the Great War, of an inherent citizenly obligation towards military participation.

This was the key paradox of the compulsion debate. Strict voluntarists and conscriptionists alike shared the same starting point – the inherent socio-moral duty of Englishmen to fight in defence of their country and its interests. As the *Spectator* noted, 'the most curious point ... is that in the abstract every Briton, whatever his politics or class or trade, admits the whole case of the National Service League', *i.e.* that defence of the State and its interests is ultimately the duty of its citizens.¹²⁵ Both sides of the debate maintained this principle with equal intensity, and yet brought it to two very different conclusions. True, compulsionists and voluntarists had very different outlooks on the likelihood of invasion, the need for prior military training and/or mass participation in home defence, and the circumstances that

¹²⁵ "THE LIBERTY NOT TO FIGHT FOR ONE'S COUNTRY", *Spectator*, 25 July 1908, p. 116.

could justify compulsion. But at barest bones, both agreed that Englishmen were obliged to fight for their country when required. Compulsionists felt that universal acknowledgment of this duty constituted, in itself, justification for compulsion. To their eyes, either military service was a universal obligation or it wasn't, and if it was, all men were universally obligated to fulfil it. Voluntarists, on the other hand, believed that universal public acknowledgement of this clear duty – the pervasive popular ideology of patriotic duty towards military service – transcended the need for compulsion.

This underlying agreement that the citizen was inherently obligated to offer personal service led to much confusion. Policies and positions aimed at promoting the citizenly duty towards military service – such as Haldane's Territorial Scheme – could be variously interpreted as supporting the voluntarist cause, the compulsionist cause, or both causes. One memorable demonstration of this fundamental ambiguity was the popular reception of the play *An Englishman's Home* in 1909. The patriotic melodrama, written by ardent compulsionist Major Du Maurier, was intended as 'a plea for national service – for the training of every man to defend his country in a crisis', but was, as the *Observer* bemoaned, ultimately 'exploited for the purpose of defeating its own moral'.¹²⁶ The Territorial Force traded on the patriotic force of the play by operating recruiting booths in theatre foyers, the great success of which was claimed by Haldane as 'another bulwark against conscription'. 'Mr. Haldane perverts the purpose of "An Englishman's Home,"' the *Observer* raged impotently, 'and uses all the help given to him as an additional argument against national military service.'¹²⁷ This kind of ambiguity suffused much of the debate, leading to a fair amount of tangled rhetoric and argument at cross-purposes. The pro-compulsion press trod a fine balance, welcoming official affirmation of the duty of military service, but wishing to present the government's dependence on voluntarism as misguided and inadequate.

126 'CLEARED OF CANT', *Observer*, 7 March 1909, p. 6.

127 'CLEARED OF CANT', *Observer*, 7 March 1909, p. 6.

Both the compulsionist and voluntarist points of view, however, served to reinforce over and over the fundamental notion of citizenly obligation towards military participation. Indeed, the conflict over compulsion only strengthened consensus on this principle, as both sides vied for the higher moral ground on the subject of military duty. Both strove to prove the greater patriotism and dutifulness of their position, the compulsionists with the claim that the citizenly obligation towards military service must be taken ‘seriously’, and the voluntarists with their insistence that that obligation was so sacred, inalienable and ingrained in the people that it need never be compelled. Commentators competed to demonstrate their superior apprehension of, and allegiance to, the idea of patriotic duty. While the recommendations of compulsionists and voluntarists were very different, their fundamental point of agreement served to shift the goalposts of the broader civilian military participation debate, firmly entrenching the notion of inherent citizenly duty towards military participation as a shared assumption of public discourse by the outbreak of the First World War.

The cumulative effect of six decades of discussion, panics, popular moods, crises and pervasive cultural influences had brought London press discourse by 1914 to a very different conception of the duty towards civilian military participation than that which it had promulgated during the Crimean War. Twelve years after the publication of Kipling’s call to arms, “The Islanders,” *The Times* reflected on the changes that had taken place in the public sphere. ‘The poem was not popular’, it remembered, noting that ‘people do not like stinging rebukes especially when they strike home’.¹²⁸ But in the estimation of *The Times* it did ‘unquestionably produce an effect on the conscience of the nation, or perhaps it is more correct to say that it was the expression of the dawning spirit of the national consciousness in respect to an imperative duty’. This consciousness of a citizenly duty

¹²⁸ ‘Universal Training’, *The Times*, 26 September 1913, p. 5.

towards military participation had then continued to rise, until ‘for several years past never a month has gone by without the publication of articles in the reviews’ on the subject.¹²⁹

By the eve of the Great War, therefore, London press conceptions of the citizen’s responsibility towards military service had come to be characterised by a number of shared assumptions. By now, it had been taken for granted for decades that the wars of the nation ought to be fought by the nation, *i.e.* by armies composed of Englishmen and broadly representative of national values and character. It had also become obvious to contemporaries that any future war with another Great Power would inevitably be a war waged not by small professional forces, but by mass citizen armies. With acceptance of this reality, the old chasm between civilians and soldiers had greatly lessened. The civilian and military spheres were further integrated thanks to popular participation in quasi-military organizations from the boy scouts to the Territorials, and the great strides that had been made in the improvement of the public image of the regular army. Thanks to the growth of Imperialist and militarist modes of thinking in the last decades, military service was no longer a status-lowering disgrace, but, when undertaken in the sober spirit of patriotic duty and self-sacrifice, a fundamentally ennobling activity. Most significantly, London press discourse revealed a powerful consensus on the inherent duty of all able-bodied Englishmen towards personal military service in the hour of national need. This obligation was understood to be a universal and classless imperative, standing above other allegiances and springing from the essential facts of manhood and membership of the English nation. Increasingly, it was also expressed as part of the political contract of citizenship, as a duty correlative to the privilege of the franchise and the many public benefits provided by the State.

By 1914, public discourse had even accepted the compulsion of this citizenly duty as essentially legitimate in principle, though there was still a general sense that such an

¹²⁹ ‘Universal Training’, *The Times*, 26 September 1913, p. 5.

expedient should be the very last resort. In general, there was an assumption that the expression of the citizen's fundamental duty to military service ought to correspond to the degree of national need. On the one hand, if the nation found itself in a truly life-or-death bind, the Englishman's duty might extend to service anywhere in the world, for however long was required, in whatever capacity required of him. On the other hand, if the nation was deemed adequately guarded in peace, and existing professional forces sufficient in war, civilians were not obliged to enlist out of principle. Underlying the discussion was an implicit hierarchy of duty, which ranged from unarguable and fundamental obligations to more supererogatory duties.

The most crucial and obvious duty of all Englishmen – and for that matter, should it be required, Englishwomen – was participation in the repelling of any invasion of hearth and home. The next most pressing duty of able-bodied men was service in overseas war at the point when the nation's interests or honour were thought to be in real peril (such as after the reverses of Black Week, or upon entering a war against an opponent as fearsome as Germany). The greater the peril, the stronger the obligation to offer personal service, hence the intensification of the rhetoric of duty after setbacks and outrages. If large-scale civilian enlistment was not felt necessary for any given war, the citizen's duty was to take over home defence duties and thus relieve all available professional soldiers for overseas service. After that, participation in the auxiliaries during peacetime – both as a means of bolstering home defences and of training men to arms in preparation for any future conflagration – was increasingly regarded as a duty. Last and therefore most supererogatory was voluntary overseas service in the nation's less critical wars (for example, the Indian Mutiny, the Sudan, or the Boer War before the reverses of Black Week), which was regarded as a matter of individual patriotic enthusiasm or conviction rather than clear-cut citizenly obligation.

In addition to the degree of the nation's need, the force of the duty towards military participation was further linked to the ease with which it could be undertaken. Those who would lose least by enlisting were considered most obliged to do so. Idle young men, without dependents or extensive responsibilities, ought to offer personal service before husbands and fathers, teachers and employers of men, the very old and very young. The tacit assumption that the citizen's duty was lesser or greater according to specific circumstances obviously left room for debate on the precise degree of national necessity at any given moment, and the service obligation that corresponded to it. As we have seen, the duty of Englishmen towards military service in peacetime was particularly contentious, with pressure-groups lobbying for universal military training in peacetime to be recognised as a formal citizenly duty and compelled by the State (though ultimately unsuccessful, the National Service lobby certainly had a subliminal effect in promoting the idea of the citizen's military obligations more broadly). But by the start of the fateful summer of 1914, the defining feature of London press discourse on military participation was the broad consensus on the citizenly obligation thesis: the principle of a universal duty towards personal military service, should the nation find her interests – or her honour – in genuine peril.

This press consensus on the citizenly duty towards military service in the hour of national need would, of course, prove of vital importance after Britain's entry into the Great War in August 1914. But it was by no means clear to informed contemporaries that attitudes to military service had changed so much by 1914 as to facilitate such mass volunteering for an overseas war. Britain's leaders, in particular, were not convinced of the depth of public conversion to the notion of citizenly liability to military service. Believing the introduction of compulsory service still to equate to political suicide, Parliament remained firmly committed to voluntarism, and few among Britain's ruling circle recognised just how potent and pervasive the ideology of citizenly military obligation preached by the London press would prove. As every inquiry, commission and crisis, from Agadir and the Morocco

affair to the endless Balkan squabbles, increased doubts in British military readiness, so too did they serve to further entrench the notion of citizenly duty towards participation, and even bring public opinion a little closer to acceptance of the idea of compulsion. Ultimately, it would be the notion of duty envisioned by the London press and its cultural allies in the schools, churches, and popular associations, and not the governmental expectations upon which policy had been based, that would prove most predictive of popular behaviour in the summer of 1914.

Conclusion

This study set out to shed light on the very different socio–moral attitudes toward military participation espoused during the Crimean and Great Wars by documenting and explaining press representations of the civilian’s responsibility towards military service in the six decades between the two conflicts. Such a longitudinal study of press discourse has only recently become possible, thanks to the digitisation of full text–searchable runs of historical newspapers. The present study took advantage of this new facility to exhaustively review the whole body of relevant press debate – tens of thousands of articles, letters and reports referring both directly and indirectly to the issue of civilian military obligation – in thirteen newspapers over a sixty year period. This dissertation is therefore able to provide the first synthesis of attitudes toward civilian military obligation concealed within this immense body of discussion. By taking in the whole sweep of press discourse, it is able to identify and analyse broad shifts and trends in the way the citizen’s duty towards military service was conceived of and articulated.

Naturally, notions of civilian military obligation were fluid and contested throughout, with liberals generally more resistant to the formal recognition of civilian liability, and conservatives generally more in favour. Even where commentators agreed upon the inherent notion of citizenly obligation, furthermore, deciding upon the precise action to which it corresponded was much more complicated. And yet throughout this tangle of often conflicting advice and opinion, we can observe a broad shift in the underlying assumptions of the debate – its language, its parameters, its preoccupations, and its points

of agreement – towards a coherent conception of citizenly duty towards military service. This dissertation has traced this shift in assumptions, offering an original interpretation of the influence of specific experiences and events upon the overall trajectory of press conceptions of civilian military obligation. It further suggests the importance of broader cultural and ideological trends in facilitating a reconciliation between the conception of civilian liability essentially demanded by military expediency, and the prejudices, values and inclinations of the English public. The story is a subtle one, featuring innumerable paradoxes, backslides and complications, but the golden thread of an evolving conception of duty is clearly discernible throughout.

This synthesis of London press discourse indicates that the England that entered the Crimean War in 1854 was a society that overwhelmingly assumed the fighting of war to be the business of a professional minority drawn from the lowliest classes of men. In optimistic, pacific, liberal mid-century England, nothing obligated ordinary people to take up arms in defence of their nation short of imminent and catastrophic invasion. Indeed, so sharp was the division between the civilian and military spheres that ‘turning soldier’ was near inconceivable for respectable Englishmen. These assumptions were manifested during the Crimean War, when despite immense public support for ‘moral intervention’, the people proved stubbornly unwilling to countenance actual military service. Faced with the paradox of poor recruiting for a popular war, the London press overwhelmingly reaffirmed a morally neutral ‘market’ view of military participation, blaming the insufficient appeal of military service on a competitive economy and thereby exonerating the public of any culpability for the recruiting crisis. But while the Crimean War revealed the absence of any real conception of citizenly duty towards military service, the undeniable failure of popular recruiting did serve to prompt a new interrogation of Britain’s complacent reliance on an unseen, abstract soldier-class. The Crimean War saw a new emphasis on ‘national’ responsibility for war, a new sense of the moral virtues of soldiering, and a new degree of middle-class identification with and ‘ownership’ of military affairs (fuelled in part by the

broader backlash against the aristocratic military monopoly). Thus, while mid-century understandings of soldiering as 'a trade like any other' prevailed during the conflict, the experience of the Crimean War set in motion the slow evolution of a new conception of personal responsibility for the waging of war.

Still, the Crimea's implications might have been soon forgotten, had not the Indian Mutiny arrived to give undeniable emotive force to the idea of civilian military participation. The emotional intensity of the Mutiny inspired a spontaneous moral imperative towards participation and a vision of military participation that was chivalrous, manly and morally virtuous. Though a matter of individual conscience and personal empathy rather than an obligation *per se*, the emotional impulse toward participation proved instrumental to the evolution of a sense of duty towards military service in London press discourse, opening the door to the idea of military service as the most manly and honourable extension of personal support for war. New middle-class enthusiasm for military service, thwarted by the lack of a class-appropriate outlet during the Indian Mutiny, then spilled over during the subsequent invasion crisis of 1858–9 into the Victorian Volunteer Revival, another crucial development in acceptance of a citizenly duty towards military participation. Though participation was not morally or socially obligatory, and indeed was more to do with asserting middle-class values than with meeting the serious defensive needs of the State, the Volunteer Revival nonetheless succeeded in establishing a conception of military service as a laudable act of personal patriotism and public spirit. Broadening in its social composition after 1862, the Volunteer movement would go on to be the primary point of contact between civilians and the military for the rest of the century. As well as engendering an ever-increasing public familiarity with military values and practices, it took on an important symbolic role as the very embodiment of a patriotic civilian 'volunteer spirit'.

The rapid rise of a conception of respectable, ennobling, patriotic civilian military participation between 1857 and 1860 and its subsequent entrenchment over the course of the nineteenth century represented a significant turn-around from the strict division of the civilian and military spheres, and disdain for the latter, that had prevailed before the Crimean War. The re-imagining of civilian military service as a patriotic act worthy of respectable men as a crucial pre-condition to the evolution of a sense of citizenly obligation towards military participation. Obviously, civilian military participation itself had to be accepted as respectable and appropriate before the notion of an *obligation* towards it could be countenanced. The rapidity with which this re-imagining took place is testament to the impact of the successive crises between 1857 and 1860, and to the new level of identification with soldiering fostered by war reportage. By 1860, participation in the national military system had become respectable, even laudable. It remained, however, essentially supererogatory: a matter for the conscience and inclinations of the individual, rather than a citizenly obligation *per se*.

Ultimately, this dissertation suggests, it was the thorny idea of inherent citizenly *liability* towards military service that would prove most difficult to reconcile with English values and culture. Voluntary civilian military participation may have acquired a new moral glow by 1860, but an insistence upon perfect liberty of action – and, indeed, of conscience – where military service was concerned remained at the heart of popular liberalism. The idea of inherent citizenly liability to military service (which in turn might be used to justify hated compulsory measures) was an extremely difficult fit with a popular liberalism that had no coherent theory of the place of military service in subject–state relations, that revered personal liberty above all, and that remained deeply ambivalent about war. But in her aversion to clear-cut civilian military obligations, Britain was falling increasingly out of step with the rest of the Western world.

The decade 1862–1871 gave Englishmen two potent examples of the citizenly obligation thesis in practice, sparking the first real press recognition of the growing divide between Britain’s small professional army and the mass conscript armies of her rivals. The American Civil War and the wars of Prussian expansionism powerfully signalled that the wars of the future would be fought not by small bodies of career soldiers, but by the whole manhood of nations, drilled and organised into citizen armies on the basis of an inherent universal liability to military service. While the wanton destructiveness of the former tended to lessen rather than increase press enthusiasm for civilian military participation, the stunning rise of Prussia could not help but inspire awe and admiration for the citizen–soldier ideal.

Press responses to the Prussian wars of expansion reveal a new acceptance of the fundamental *principle* of citizenly liability towards military service. Whereas the mass ‘conscript armies’ of the Continent had traditionally been represented as products of militarist authoritarianism, representing the illegitimate infringement by the state of the sacred liberty of the individual, the 1860s saw the first real attempt to reconcile the idea of universal liability to military service with existing liberal values. The London press began to theorise that since citizen armies divided military power and responsibility equally amongst the whole of the people, they could in fact be conceptualised as the truest expression of democracy. Paradoxically, they could even constitute a potential force for peace, since a people that had to fight the nation’s wars itself would be less likely to tolerate militarist ambition on the part of its leaders.

But while the London press expressed new enthusiasm for the idea of a ‘national’ or citizen army, the strong–state, conscriptionist Prussian model conflicted with the traditional English aversion to compulsion that still pervaded press discussion. It is testament to the profound – and terrifying – impact of Prussian military might that by 1870 the London press had begun to openly endorse not only an inherent citizenly obligation towards

military service, but also the prospect of actual compulsion (albeit in the lesser native form of the militia ballot). In the event, the unification of Germany in 1871 convinced most that Prussia's aims had been achieved, and that the moment of imminent danger had therefore passed. Within months, the usual counter-currents of military complacency, cultural inertia and deeply-rooted suspicion of military obligations had reasserted themselves, sapping political will for significant reform. But although the decade 1862–1871 had not significantly advanced the citizenly obligation thesis in practice, it certainly had advanced it in theory. By 1871 the fundamental principle of citizenly liability to military service had been essentially recognised in London press discourse, and the London press had even gone some way in reconciling this universal liability with popular liberalism, though the issue of compulsion remained a sticking point. Most significantly, spectatorship of Prussia's phenomenal successes had drawn attention to Britain's undeniable military weakness when compared with the mammoth conscript armies of her Continental rivals.

By 1871, therefore, almost all of the key ingredients of the future citizenly obligation thesis were more or less in place. But the debate hinted at drastic and unpopular measures – either huge expenditure or the introduction of compulsory service – against the relatively remote contingency of invasion. Furthermore, the very idea that subjects were *obliged* to participate did not yet sit comfortably with the English fetish for absolute liberty of conscience where military participation was concerned. In the following decades, therefore, the absence of serious threat or major strain on recruiting meant a certain degree of inertia prevailed. Between 1872 and 1899, the notion of civilian military obligation was not central to Britain's military priorities, which were predominantly naval and Imperial. Pressing domestic issues and the entrenchment of parliamentary Liberalism served to further retard interest in civilian military participation.

And yet while the international and military context of 1872–1899 allowed the issue of civilian obligation to drift from public debate, this study suggests that that these decades

still made an important contribution to the development of a sense of citizenly obligation towards military service. Patterns in London press discourse correspond in both content and timing to a range of broader cultural developments in the period. It is only from the standpoint of this thesis and its long-term view of discourse that we can see just how influential these developments may have been on the attitudes of the London press towards civilian military obligation. In the 1870s, the absence of pressing military threat forestalled changes that would have been considered extremely drastic and unpleasant in the context of their contemporary socio-cultural environment. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, the same type of changes were beginning to appear slightly less extreme, thanks to the contemporaneous rise of militarist Imperialism and its ethic of service, growing pride in the Volunteers, the stirrings of a more collectivist social liberalism, the growing legitimacy of the State and the emergence of a more contractual theory of citizenship. When combined with a returning sense of military vulnerability after 1890, these developments made for a public sphere newly conducive to the idea of citizenly obligation towards military service.

The litmus test of the Boer War (1899–1902) showed that the swirling debate of the last half century had, in fact, done much to promote acceptance of a citizenly duty towards military service. Even before Black Week, the London press exhorted the people to take their share in national defence so as to free up the Regulars for overseas service. The profound shock of Black Week then intensified the moral imperative towards participation tenfold, and correspondents led the London press in extending that imperative to include active overseas service. Though this discourse suggests that the duty towards overseas service was still considered less fundamental and more supererogatory (and therefore more extravagantly patriotic) than the duty towards home defence, the volunteering of more than a hundred thousand Britons for service in South Africa established a crucial precedent for civilian participation in an overseas war. The war also saw the idea of compulsory military obligations regain legitimacy, as the London press considered first the reintroduction of the

militia ballot for the course of the war, and then, when the emphasis switched from quantity to quality in the guerilla phase of the war, almost unanimously urged compulsory military training of all Englishmen in peacetime. Conceptions of the duty towards participation also reflected the growing legitimacy of the State: while the London press resisted the appearance of ‘official’ patriotism, the sense of duty it articulated focussed increasingly upon allegiance to the Crown and Empire. Most significantly of all, the idea that there was some inherent citizenly duty towards personal military service in the hour of national need was, for the first time, largely taken for granted by the London press for the duration of the war.

The same broad cultural trends that had lessened the perceived incompatibility between liberal values and the notion of citizenly military liability in the late Victorian period continued to intensify in the Edwardian age,. At the same time, the anxious, insecure international atmosphere of the post-Boer War period drove further interest in civilian military participation as a means of redeeming civil society, securing the Empire, and preparing for the war between Great Powers that commentators seemed more and more sure was coming. Press debate in London focussed increasingly on compulsory military training as a potential compromise between strict voluntarism and conscription for active service. Military participation was now essentially acknowledged as a fundamental citizenly obligation that could, in theory at least, be legitimately compelled by the State. The collectivist atmosphere of Asquith’s government after 1908 gave further resonance and legitimacy to the idea of State-compelled military participation.

Of course, the ‘fit’ between liberal values and the citizenly obligation thesis was not without its imperfections, especially where the morality of compulsion was concerned. Compulsionists themselves co-opted the language of liberalism with growing fluency, arguing that since military participation was an acknowledged universal duty, the only *truly* just system was one that ensured that this universal duty was indeed carried out universally.

Voluntarists, meanwhile, found themselves having to assert the sacredness and seriousness of a duty while insisting that Englishmen should be free to neglect it. Confusion over the ‘liberalism’ of compulsion resulted in plentiful paradoxes and contradictions, including the mentality prevalent in the London press that advocated universal compulsory military training, but insisted that active service in the moment of national need – preparation for which was the primary purpose of military training – must remain voluntary. But while the desirability and necessity of compulsion remained contentious, both compulsionist and voluntarist perspectives in press discourse shared a basic assumption that military participation in the hour of need was a clear and acknowledged citizenly duty. The morally neutral ‘marketplace’ view of volunteering in wartime espoused in 1854 had by 1914 been superseded by a conviction that military service in defence of Britain, her interests and her righteous causes was the patriotic duty of all able-bodied Englishmen. This broad and powerful press consensus on the socio-moral duty towards military service would assume momentous importance upon the outbreak of the Great War, paving the way not only for the mass enlistments of August–September 1914, but also for the eventual acceptance of conscription in 1916.

This account of the evolution of a conception of citizenly duty towards military service in press discourse suggests a number of broad observations and implications. Most of all, the trajectory of the citizenly obligation thesis in London press discourse highlights the vital importance of specific events in driving debate and prompting attitudinal change. Perhaps the most powerful drivers of the civilian military obligation thesis were those moments of crisis or insecurity that hinted British military weakness. Invasion panics, war scares and military reverses (such as the setbacks of the Crimean War, the invasion panic of 1858–9, the Eastern Crisis, and the defeats of Black Week in December 1899) proved the most consistently potent stimuli to press consideration of civilian military obligation. The salutary example of wars between other Powers (such as the American Civil War, the wars of Prussian expansion, and the Japanese–Russian War) also did a great deal to highlight the

numerical weakness of Britain's land forces, and to direct attention to the concept of citizenly liability to military service as a means by which to address the imbalance. But fear, foreboding and insecurity were not the only factors that promoted a sense of duty towards military participation. Intense moral outrage, such as that provoked by the Indian Mutiny in 1857 and the 'murder of Gordon' in 1885, could also be a powerful spur to notions of civilian military obligation.

The importance of specific events and experiences is further underlined by the consistent tendency of the military obligation debate to grind to a halt – or even backslide – once the moment of excitement had passed.¹ British military complacency and social inertia constituted a formidable obstacle to the development of the citizenly obligation thesis. The supremacy of the Royal Navy, in particular, remained a powerful counter-argument to military expansion, and therefore civilian military obligation, throughout the period. Over a period of decades, however, the events and episodes of debate outlined in this dissertation did have a cumulative effect. This was aided by the fact that, once any given degree of civilian military participation had been asserted as an inherent moral duty, it was difficult to disavow or tone down the truth of that assertion after the moment of excitement had passed. It could be, and usually was, forgotten until the next episode of outrage or crisis, but on some unseen level it constituted a new base assumption of London press discourse. Just so, the ideas of citizenly obligation widely circulated during the period of Prussian excitement in the late 1860s were largely forgotten during the long peace of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, only to be revived almost verbatim upon the outbreak of the Boer War in 1899.

The cumulative effect of debate is also revealed by the way in which 'public moods' – themselves inherently temporary, spontaneous and not strictly rational – can be seen to

¹ The tone in which a war concluded seems to have been key to this process: wars ended on a sour note (like the Boer War with its 'methods of barbarism') resisted closure and mythologisation, increasing the chances that the debates they inspired would be carried on in peacetime.

have resulted in dramatic and lasting attitudinal change. The ferocious ‘public moods’ ignited by the Indian Mutiny and Black Week, for example, significantly extended the limits of civilian military obligation and established new precedents (middle-class volunteering in peacetime and overseas volunteering in war, respectively). Though the response to each new stimulus was unique in its way, each event, experience or debate had the effect of subtly shifting the base assumptions and expectations of the London press. In this way, the specific events and debates of the Victorian and Edwardian ages built upon each other to shape the irregular but cumulative evolution of a coherent conception of citizenly duty towards military service.

But how should we conceptualise this gradual acceptance of the idea of citizenly liability to military service in the wider context of England’s experience of the period? In the introduction to this dissertation, it was noted that the broader European shift towards mass conscript armies effectively mandated the similar expansion of Britain’s own military capability. Since such expansion of the professional standing army would be far too expensive to be tolerated by the public, Britain had no choice but to develop some system or imperative by which the civilian population could be mobilised in time of national need. Such mobilisation depended on acceptance of a sense of universal citizenly liability to military service, either as a motivator of mass voluntary enlistment, or as the justifying foundation of conscription. In this way, the adoption of some notion of citizenly liability to military service was a practical necessity. But the complexity of Britain’s advance towards the conception of duty embraced by 1914 makes it hard for us to dismiss that advance as a mere *inevitability*, or as a straightforward functionalist response to military necessity. Certainly, military expediency was a powerful driver of the development of a conception of citizenly duty towards military service in press discourse.

This study demonstrates that the trajectory of press interest in the citizenly obligation thesis strongly correlated to England’s dawning awareness of the mismatch between her own

military power and that of her Continental and imperial rivals, and responded especially to episodes of panic and urgency when the demands of military expediency were most stark. But intellectual apprehension of the military imperative towards mass civilian participation was clearly not enough, in the absence of immediate, overwhelming and unmistakable threat, to overcome both latent social and political inertia, *and* entrenched liberal prejudice against civilian military obligation. After all, commentators had a fair idea by 1871 of the mismatch between the British military system and the resources of the other Great Powers. Yet it took several more decades of continued refusal to face up to potential emergencies before real press conviction crystallised around the citizenly obligation thesis.

The present study suggests that the conception of inherent citizenly duty towards military service in place by the eve of the Great War was the product not only of dawning awareness of the military imperative towards mass civilian participation, but of gradual reconciliation between the notion of civilian military obligation and England's own popular values, prejudices and ideologies. London press discourse suggests that this reconciliation was facilitated both by events and by a number of broader social and cultural currents. The Crimean War, Indian Mutiny and Volunteer revival awakened public interest and investment in the nation's military fate, and repositioned civilian military service as a patriotic act worthy of respectable men. The example of Prussian military might added not only a tenor of urgency, but also a potentially 'democratic' interpretation of citizen soldiery.

Thereafter, a number of key cultural trends in the late Victorian and Edwardian eras lessened the perceived incompatibility between English liberalism and the notion of civilian military obligation. The rise of a militarist Imperialism after 1875 further elevated the moral standing of military participation and welded it to patriotism, duty, masculinity and the Imperial mission, while ongoing exposure to the military over the course of the nineteenth century weakened the civilian/military divide. The shift from Victorian

individualism to Edwardian collectivism, and from classic liberalism toward a more ‘social democratic’ approach, encouraged a more collective perspective on military matters as the responsibility of the whole manhood of the nation. Meanwhile, the growing legitimacy of the State and the emergence of a more ‘contractual’ notion of citizenship rendered the idea of citizenly liability to military service – and even compulsory measures – far more palatable to the London press. It was not so much that the press found a way to resolve the incompatibility between mid-Victorian liberalism and the citizenly obligation thesis, but that popular liberalism itself had, by the Edwardian era, subtly modified into a form more easily reconcilable with the idea of an inherent citizenly obligation towards military service. The military imperative did not triumph over popular liberalism, nor did developments in popular liberalism lead inevitably towards a conception of military service as a citizenly duty. Rather, the two combined to shape the outcome: a pervasive popular ideology of citizenly duty towards military service that was a compromise solution to the problem of the military inferiority of a liberal state in an age of conscript armies.

This reconciliation of popular values, prejudices and ideologies with the military imperative towards mass civilian participation was a crucial prerequisite to the mass voluntary enlistments of 1914. In the absence of such a reconciliation, Britain could only have resorted to the grim-faced imposition of hated compulsory measures in blatant contradiction to the liberal principles she espoused. Instead, Englishmen on the eve of the Great War were the heirs of a powerful public consensus on the socio-moral duty to voluntarily enlist. It is in the context of this view of citizenly obligation, so greatly extended from that which had been entertained six decades previous, that the ideological dimensions of the ‘rush to the colours’ of August – November 1914 should be understood.

This thesis does not mean to imply, however, that the events of 1914 represented the simple playing out of a previously developed conception of civilian military obligation. Nor indeed does it suggest that that previously developed conception is sufficient, in and of

itself, to explain either the strength of press articulations of duty in 1914, or the ‘rush to the colours’ itself. Every experience of war comes with its own unique set of circumstances and pressures, and certainly in 1914 the stakes were higher, and the threat closer to home, than at any time since the Napoleonic Wars. Ian Beckett has argued that ‘rush to the colours’ in 1914 did not define British attitudes to war, but was a public ‘mood’ that can be dated from 25 August to 9 September, intimately related to the perception of urgency prevalent in public discourse.² Beckett’s interpretation has resonances within this study, which has itself suggested the way in which specific events, and public moods of urgency, panic or outrage, can prompt a spontaneous or heightened impulse towards participation (as seen most memorably in the Indian Mutiny and the Boer War). The effect of such ‘trigger’ events and public moods can be clearly seen in press and recruiting responses to the defeat of the BEF at Mons (military setback), the destruction of Louvain (moral outrage) and the bombing of Hartlepool (invasion scare) in 1914. Undoubtedly, the specific circumstances of the war, the degree of perceived urgency, and the manner in which events unfolded in the summer of 1914 will have impacted and built upon the conceptions of duty inherited on the eve of war in important ways.

It is surely significant, however, that unlike in previous wars press discourse *began* the Great War with an assumption of a universal duty towards military service in the hour of need – extending even to overseas conflict – already in place. Indeed, scholarship suggests that in some ways the circumstances that attended the outbreak of war were *not* primed to promote, in and of themselves, a spontaneous sense of duty towards participation. The suppression of war correspondents deprived the popular press of much of the dramatic, emotive reports that had fuelled public empathy and investment in previous wars.³ Even more fundamentally, as one correspondent to the *Observer* noted, ‘the war came upon us suddenly, there was none of that gradual irritation of the nation’s temper and of its sense of

2 I. F. W. Beckett and K. Simpson (eds.), *A Nation in Arms: a Social Study of the British Army in the First World War* (Manchester, 1985) pp. 7–8.

3 ‘The War Correspondent And The Nation. HENRY NORMAN’, *The Times*, 28 August 1914, p. 5.

nationality which nearly always precedes such a struggle ... the blow came in our faces before the blood was warmed'.⁴ Due partly to British preoccupation with Ireland, and partly to the nature of the July Crisis itself, the war lacked a slow and engaging narrative buildup in English public discourse. There was little time, then, for a moral duty towards participation to be worked up emotively in the press. With the enormity of the war coming as a shock to most commentators, it is surely significant that the London press had a ready-made, fully formed and deeply rooted citizenly obligation thesis on which to draw. Furthermore, support for British intervention in the lead-up to war had not been of the unanimous sort that one might expect to provoke an impassioned volunteer impulse.⁵ The disappearance of anti-war sentiment in the national press once war had actually been declared is testament to the importance placed upon national unity in the hour of need, and tends to suggest that the 'duty to serve' expressed thereafter was not solely dependent on specific enthusiasm for the war, but was, to a significant extent, a sober and deeply-rooted socio-moral norm.

The sheer scale of volunteerism took many by surprise, including ex-Prime Minister Arthur Balfour, who confessed in 1916 that the pre-war political establishment would never have believed so many men could have been voluntarily raised for a cause 'which did not involve invasion, or even serious danger of invasion of our hearths and homes'.⁶ Indeed, it remains a striking fact that popular behavior in 1914 corresponded less to the expectations of Britain's rulers, upon which policy had been based, than to the ideologies and expectations espoused in the national press. My intention in stating this is not to suggest that the 'rush to the colours' of 1914 was an inevitable manifestation of the ideology of duty articulated in the London press, or indeed that notions of citizenly duty were primary factors in individual enlistment decisions. Though the correlation between

4 'HOW TO OBTAIN RECRUITS', *Observer*, 6 September 1914, p. 4.

5 A. Gregory, 'British "War Enthusiasm" in 1914: A Reassessment' in G. Braybon (ed.), *Evidence, History, and the Great War: Historians and the Impact of 1914-18* (Oxford, 2003), p. 77.

6 Cited in R. Douglas, 'Voluntary Enlistment in the First World War and the Work of the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee,' *Journal of Modern History*, 42.4 (1970), p. 564.

press assumptions about citizenly duty and enlistment does tend to lend credibility to the conclusion that the notion of patriotic duty espoused by the London press formed an important normative context for the mass enlistment phenomenon, such speculations are beyond the scope of this dissertation. It is certainly reasonable to conclude, however, that the notion of an inherent citizenly duty towards participation overwhelmingly endorsed and propagated by the national press in 1914 could not have been so natural, cohesive and persuasive had it not already been firmly entrenched in public discourse. The scale of recruiting might have come as a surprise to some contemporaries, but the strength of press consensus on the duty towards enlistment in the summer of 1914 was quite in keeping with the shared assumptions about military participation already in place on the eve of the war. These assumptions, in turn, represented the culmination of the six decades of cumulative crises, public ‘moods’ and press debates documented in this study.

This dissertation represents the first historical investigation of an important aspect of the relationship between war and society in the English modern era: the development of a coherent conception of citizenly duty towards military service in London press discourse from 1854, when civilian military participation was all but unthought-of, to the eve of war in 1914, when the inherent and universal duty of Englishmen to lay down their lives ‘for King and Country’ had become a shared assumption of national press discourse. Prompted by patterns in the discourse itself, this study also reflects upon the process by which this conception of civilian military obligation emerged. It highlights the effect of specific events and experiences, and suggests that wider social and political developments played a key role in facilitating the reconciliation of existing values and the newfound imperative towards civilian military participation. In its synthesis of London press discourse on military obligation, its identification of the patterns and shifts therein, and its interpretation of the process by which a coherent conception of citizenly duty towards military service emerged, this dissertation offers vital context to the ‘rush to the colours’ of 1914, and

represents an important contribution to our understanding of an almost wholly neglected topic.

It also makes an important contribution towards the development of a more accurate long-term view of the relationship between war and society in the modern era. The notion of the 'obsolete patriotism' of 1914 has often been taken by historians as emblematic of a vaguely defined 'heroic' age of warfare, dissipated by the slaughter of Great War and thereafter made redundant by the affluence and plenty of the latter twentieth century. As this study reveals, however, this interpretation is not wholly helpful. It may well be that nineteenth century English society had a more 'heroic' – or pragmatic – tolerance for casualties than we have in the casualty-averse, so-called 'post-heroic age'. But it is patently not the case that nineteenth century England was characterised by a 'heroic' willingness to fight and die for King and Country. Not only was the idea of citizenly obligation towards military service a dynamic, contested and often controversial one throughout the Victorian age, but it only became the object of significant conviction in the London press around the end of the nineteenth century, less than two decades before its supposed 'last hurrah' in 1914. Before 1857, England's attitude to military manpower was even more pragmatic, with mercenaries routinely taking up where popular will to fight stopped. If we insist upon the idea of a heroic age of civilian patriotic self-sacrifice, therefore, we must concede its startling brevity.

The findings of this research also have other important implications for the broader study of the relationship between war and society. The role played by so-called 'war enthusiasm' in motivating enlistment has long captured the attention of historians, but their assessments have been hindered by the lack of differentiation between 'war enthusiasm' and an actual moral imperative towards participation. The present study demonstrates the fact that enthusiasm for war and a sense of duty towards participation in war are two very different things, and, indeed, not always correlated. Similarly, while recent historiography on the

Great War has focussed increasingly on the complexity of individual responses to the imperative of ‘patriotic duty’, this study highlights the fact that ‘patriotic duty’ itself cannot be taken for granted as a fixed or ahistorical idea. Like all ideological and cultural phenomena, the idea of citizenly obligation towards military service is a dynamic, complex and intrinsically ‘historical’ notion that must be understood with reference to its specific historical context. Although this study does not itself go into the relationship between press discourse, public ideology and individual behaviour, it provides crucial context to those that do. The contextualisation of conceptions of citizenly duty towards military service offered by this dissertation cannot help but place future enquiries into the role of ‘duty’ in motivating enlistment on surer ground. This synthesis of London press discourse also supports Patricia Morton’s argument that integration of society and the military in the Victorian era was less a militarisation of the civilian sphere than a civilianisation of the military⁷ – at least until after the Boer War, when the balance shifted and civilian society looked increasingly to the military sphere for regeneration and revitalisation. By underscoring the distinction between enthusiasm for military imagery, values and themes on the one hand, and perceptions of citizenly duty towards military service on the other (and by reflecting upon the connections between the two), this study can also impart much-needed nuance and precision to a scholarly vision of late-nineteenth-century popular militarism, imperialism and jingoism that has sometimes tended towards oversimplification.

It also tends to reaffirm the shift, identified by Hugh Cunningham, in the language of patriotism towards a more State-focussed, conformist and conservative allegiance by the end of the nineteenth century.⁸ It further suggests the ongoing consolidation of a self-conscious ‘national’ identity, as revealed by the emphasis upon national honour, cultural allegiance and collective responsibility in press configurations of the duty towards military

7 P. Morton, ‘A Military Irony: the Victorian Volunteer Movement,’ *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies*, 131.3 (1986), pp.63–70.

8 H Cunningham, ‘The Language of Patriotism 1750–1914’, *History Workshop J*, 12.1 (1981) pp. 8–33.

service. This study also enhances our understanding of the changing landscape of Victorian and Edwardian morality. In the moral imagination of the London press, military service changed from a morally dubious act of state-sanctioned violence to a matter of individual conscience and integrity, and thence to a socio-political duty grounded in allegiance to the nation itself. It is reasonable to assume that these changes in the moral standing of military service will have corresponded to other changes in popular morality, and therefore the observations of this study may benefit discussions of changing popular attitudes to related topics such as violence and killing, discipline and obedience, Christian masculinity, and the concept of moral duty itself.

Our understanding of Victorian and Edwardian popular liberalism, and of the relationship between the subject and the State in particular, is also enhanced by the findings of this research. April Carter has noted the failure of liberal political theory to address the question of citizenly obligation to military service, pointing to this as symptomatic of its wider failure to develop a satisfactory concept of citizenship.⁹ This synthesis of London press discourse supports such observations of the absence of any place for military service within the classical liberal framework of the mid-Victorian period. Significantly, however, it also opens a window on the shift in popular liberalism from Victorian individualism to Edwardian collectivism at the end of the nineteenth century. The development of a conception of civilian military obligation can be seen to play out against the backdrop of the wider conflict between individual liberty and collective social responsibility, and the looming social and military imperatives of modernity.

This study reveals the attempts of contemporaries to fashion a new place for civilian military obligation within popular liberalism, first by theorising that the sharing of military power amongst the people was the most 'democratic' and 'egalitarian' military system and would tend to offset the militarist ambitions of the ruling class, and latterly by the logic that

9 A. Carter, 'Liberalism and the Obligation to Military Service,' *Political Studies*, 46 (1998), pp. 68–81.

since military participation was the responsibility of all, any system whereby it devolved onto a voluntary minority was fundamentally unjust. The trajectory of the military obligation debate suggests that the advent of a collectivist, welfare-oriented State was crucial to the re-imagining of the relationship between the subject and the State, facilitating a more contractual understanding of citizenship and a place for military service therein.

Furthermore, scholars have long posited a link between willingness to offer military service and citizenship/enfranchisement.¹⁰ This research does indeed suggest that evolving understandings of citizenship – themselves grounded in the political developments of the extension of democracy and the shift towards social liberalism – played an important role in facilitating the acceptance of the idea of civilian military liability. It also implies that the advent of welfare politics not only legitimised state intervention in the lives of individuals, but may have created a greater sense of reciprocal allegiance and obligation. But this research also highlights the prolonged failure of the emerging rhetoric of reform, citizenship and the franchise to connect meaningfully with the issue of civilian military obligation. The issue of the franchise, indeed, was more closely tied to military service in the Chartist era than in the late Victorian age when it was most meaningfully extended. The implication is that the more decisive factor was not the granting of the franchise itself, but the subtle shifts in state–subject relations that grew from this democratic development. These observations raise further questions about the general link between collectivist democracy and universal military service obligations that would be eminently worthy of further investigation.

This research also reaffirms the importance of the national popular press itself as a facilitator of national consciousness and key reflector and driver of dominant discourses,

¹⁰ See for example A. Clark, 'Changing Concepts of Citizenship: Gender, Empire, and Class,' *Journal of British Studies*, 42.2 (2003); J. Garrard, *Democratization in Britain: Elites, Civil Society and Reform since 1800* (London, 2002); and N. F. Gullace, *The Blood of Our Sons: Men, Women, and the Renegotiation of British Citizenship during the Great War* (London, 2002).

values and attitudes. It seems reasonable to theorise that the emergence of mass literacy, the rise of the national popular press and the advent of war reportage were instrumental to the forging of a conception of citizenly obligation towards military service. By creating a mass audience for the shared imagining of national identities, values and experiences, the London press had formidable power to set the terms of public debate, influence the national socio-moral agenda, and both reflect and shape the attitudes and conceptions of the broader public. Significantly, this study tends to suggest that ultimately it was newspapermen, not politicians, who were most 'in touch' with the popular mood. With the exception of the first months of the Crimean War, trends of military participation correlated to a high degree with the conceptions of citizenly military duty expressed in the London press.

Political circles may have professed themselves astonished by the extent of popular enlistment in the summer of 1914, but from the perspective of press representations of citizenly duty the 'rush to the colours' came like a great prophecy fulfilled. Whether this was mere reflection or active shaping of public opinion on the part of the press is difficult to say, and elucidation of the problematic relationship between press discourse, public opinion and individual behavior is necessarily beyond the scope of this dissertation. Nonetheless, the consistent correlation between press conceptions of citizenly duty and real-world acceptance of civilian military participation does tend to suggest some causative or contributory relationship. The implication that popular behaviour corresponded not to the expectations of Britain's leaders, but to those of the London press, suggests the immense power of mass media both to reflect the prevailing winds of public opinion, and to actively shape it.

The importance of the press in shaping national values and identity obviously also makes it an extraordinarily rich and valuable source for future researchers wishing to investigate or trace the formation of other ideas or socio-moral norms. As mentioned in the introduction

to this thesis, the recent shift toward digitisation of historical newspapers represents an enormous boon to historians. As yet, however, a lack of methodological guidance or precedent for dealing innovatively with the immense quantity of data unlocked by digitisation has obscured its potential for long-run study. This research, therefore, provides an example of how digitised newspaper archives can be utilised to carry out a large-scale longitudinal enquiry into shifting discourse on a given topic. Digitisation allows us to move beyond the old ‘frequency of usage’ statistical regression of latter-day discourse analysis, facilitating instead the exhaustive examination of relevant material. The broad sweep of press discourse over the longer term becomes the subject of investigation itself in a way that could never have been possible in the pre-digitisation age. The methodology developed for this study – a methodology incorporating searching by both fixed ‘universal’ keywords and flexible, era-specific keywords suggested by the discourse itself – has allowed for the qualitative synthesis of huge quantities of data and the identification of broad patterns and trends in the language, preoccupations and implications of London press debate on military obligation over sixty years. This simple but innovative approach could, of course, be applied to any number of topics, and will be of interest to future scholars interested in tracing the long-term development of specific ideas within press discourse. By pointing to the great potential of digitised newspaper archives to enable a new kind of cultural inquiry, and by offering a coherent model for the use of such sources, this study constitutes a timely methodological contribution.

Of course the methodology, as indeed the scope, of this study have been necessarily limited. Most fundamentally of all, it focussed exclusively on press discourse, declining to examine either the broader sphere of public discourse, or the private sphere of individual beliefs, attitudes and values. It makes no explicit claims on the connection between discourse and behaviour, though it reflects where appropriate on the apparent correlation between the two. In order to give exhaustive attention to the whole sweep of press discourse within the periodicals examined, I further confined my investigation to thirteen

London-based newspapers. While these newspapers did reflect diversity in their political orientation and journalistic approach, they were all essentially addressed to the engaged middle-class and respectable working class audience that we refer to as the 'attentive public'. These limitations are mandated by the massive scope of a longitudinal study: both the large period of time under investigation and the sheer quantity of press material available.

This first foray into the history of the development of a conception of citizenly duty towards military service in London press discourse, however, provides a contextual and a methodological basis for further inquiries into the topic. Obviously, our understanding of developing conceptions of civilian military obligation would benefit greatly from exploration of local and regional variations in press discourse, including the experience of Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and the British communities of the Empire. Examination of representations of civilian military obligation in the broader sphere of popular culture (taking in mediums other than the press) would also further develop the implications of this dissertation. The changing place of military service within religious discourse, for example, seems to me particularly worthy of investigation. Future research might also chase up the connection between democracy/collectivism and conceptions of military duty implied by this study, perhaps with a comparative investigation of the experience of other nations. And of course, the extent to which public discourse on citizenly duty actually influenced enlistment decisions remains an underlying question that demands further and fuller attention. My hope is that by strengthening our understanding of public assumptions about civilian military obligation, this dissertation will provide vital context for future exploration of the crucial relationship between public discourse, private attitudes, and behaviour.

This study leaves us with the realisation that the sense of earnest duty towards military service expressed in 1914 – a belief we have tended to take for granted as the last gasp of

an antiquated heroic age of honour and duty – had, in reality, evolved almost from nothing over the course of the sixty years previous. It reminds us that no assumption or belief is ahistorical; every idea is a dynamic, living thing shaped by the complex interplay of pragmatic circumstances, cultural and political currents and the refractive processes of public discourse itself. But more than that, it suggests how relatively quickly socio–moral norms can be created, shaped and transformed. This study shows how, in only two generations, England developed a pervasive popular ideology of civilian military duty that, whether it *caused* the mass enlistments of 1914 or not, certainly encouraged and facilitated them. This in a culture that had, in 1854, been almost as liberal, anti–militarist and committed to separation of civilian and military spheres as one can imagine.

The findings of this research suggest a comparison with our own society that is both striking and, in some ways, potentially unsettling. Though the principle of civilian liability to military service still underpins the military systems of many Western nations, since the advent of nuclear, biological and other hi–tech weaponry the contemporary trend has been overwhelmingly towards military professionalisation and specialisation. We have even seen a breakdown in the ‘national’ nature of armies, with the State increasingly delegating military tasks to private security firms (the modern equivalent, perhaps, of ‘mercenary aid’). Our attitude towards military participation, indeed, mirrors that of mid–century Victorians in important ways. Like them, we tend to assume the waging of war to be the business of a professional minority, and further, that this division of labour is the natural product of a progressive, sophisticated, modern society. Like them, we have no first hand experience of total war, and can look only to the stories of our grandparents to get any sense of its awful impact. Prosperous, peaceful and progressive, mid–century Victorians had absolutely no idea of the massive changes that lay ahead. How secure, then, is our own complacent aloofness from military participation?

The findings of this study beg the question: if modern Britain found itself in urgent need of military manpower, would the public response mirror the spirit of 1914, or the failure of popular recruiting occasioned by the Crimean War? Should the need arise, would modern Englishmen and women rally to the flag? The present study speaks to these very contemporary concerns. An understanding of how the citizenly obligation thesis developed between 1854 and 1914, in a society not so dissimilar to our own, can help us to conceptualise, historicise and theorise our present and future attitudes to military participation. It also suggests the capacity of culture for significant and far-reaching adaptation. If mid-Victorians could reconcile the demands of military expediency with their own (ostensibly incompatible) values and ideologies, could not modern Britons do the same? Perhaps even our own 'post-heroic' society, should circumstances demand it, is capable of greater 'heroism' than we imagine.

Appendix: List of Search Terms

UNIVERSAL KEYWORDS AND PHRASES:

ARMED NATION	NATIONAL DEFENCE(S)
ARMY	NO VOTE NO MUSKET
CITIZEN SOLDIER(S)	OUR RESERVES
CIVILIAN(S)	RECRUITING
CONSCRIPT(S)	RECRUITS
CONSCRIPTION	SOLDIERS
DRAFT/DRAUGHT	SHIRKER
ENLIST	UNIVERSAL SERVICE
IMPERIAL DEFENCE	VOLUNTARISM
INVASION	VOLUNTARIST
LEVY	VOLUNTEER CORPS
MANNING THE ARMY	VOLUNTEER FORCE
MERCENARIES	VOLUNTEER MOVEMENT
MILITARISM	VOLUNTEERS
MILITARY SERVICE	WAR
MILITARY TRAINING	WHITE FEATHER
MILITIA	YEOMANRY

ADDITIONAL KEYWORDS AND PHRASES (BY PERIOD):

1854–1857:

FOREIGN ENLISTMENT	REINFORCEMENTS
FOREIGN LEGION	RUSSIA
FRANCE	TURKEY
LIBERTIES OF EUROPE	

1857–61:

COUP
INDIA
MUTINY
NAPOLEON

RIFLE CLUBS
RIFLE CORPS
RIFLEMEN
YOUNG ENGLISHMAN/MEN

1862–1871:

AMERICA
AUSTRIA
BULGARIAN
CIVIL WAR
DRAFT

FRANCE
POLISH
PRUSSIA
PRUSSIAN
PRUSSIANISM

1872–1898:

AFGHAN
BULGARIAN HORRORS
CARDWELL REFORMS
EASTERN CRISIS

LINKED BATTALIONS
LOCALISATION
PATRIOTIC FUND
SUDAN

1899–1903:

BLACK WEEK
BOER(S)
CIV

GUERRILLA
SOUTH AFRICA
THE ISLANDER

1903 – June 1914:

DEGENERATION
HALDANE SCHEME
JAPANESE
LIBERAL IMPERIALISM
LIBERAL IMPERIALIST
NATIONAL BRAVERY

NATIONAL EFFICIENCY
NATIONAL SERVICE
NSL
ROYAL COMMISSION
TERRITORIAL(S)

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