The British Army in Home Defense, 1844-1871: Militia and Volunteers in a Liberal Era

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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2011

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Abstract

For almost three decades, politics in mid-Victorian Britain were dominated by a loose but influential cross-class liberal political consensus. Extending beyond the parliamentary Liberal party, liberalism’s influence spread into almost every aspect of public policy. This dissertation examines the impact of liberal politics and thought on the development of British military policy in the 1840s, 50s, and 60s through the lens of home defense. Britain was gripped by major invasion panics in 1848, 1852, and 1859, each of which led to serious reconsiderations of home defense. Among the subsequent reforms and innovations were the fortification of England’s southern coast, the revival of the militia, and the creation of the amateur Volunteer Force. The debate surrounding home defense offers the best path to examining the impact of a vibrant but conflicted political philosophy on military policy. It demonstrates the depth of liberalism’s impact not just on British military policy but also on the assumptions on which that policy was based, as well as highlighting the importance of the relationship between political thought and the development of Britain’s armed forces.
Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family.
Acknowledgments

I have incurred many debts in the research and writing of this dissertation. First and foremost is that to my advisor, Professor Jennifer Siegel, for her advice and support throughout this process. Professors Christopher Otter and Geoffrey Parker have provided insightful comments on many aspects of my work, and this dissertation is greatly improved by them. I am grateful to my classmates in the Dept. of History at Ohio State for tolerating my interests and my idiosyncrasies, especially those in the Military History Reading Group who listed patiently to the many early ideas for this project and provided constant intellectual stimulation. Some of the research for this dissertation was first prepared for Professor Carole Fink’s seminar in international history. I appreciate the comments from Professor Fink and the other members of that class. Professor Stephen Miller of the University of Maine very generously came to Ohio State to the Mershon Center for International Security Studies’ 2011 Military Frontiers conference, where he commented on my presentation. Dr. Nick Mansfield, formerly of the People’s History Museum in Manchester, made several excellent suggestions on how to connect the Volunteers and labor politics.
This dissertation was completed while I was a Smith Richardson Pre-Doctoral Fellow at Yale University’s program in International Security Studies. I am grateful to the Smith Richardson Foundation for funding this program, and to the faculty, staff and students at International Security Studies for accommodating me. My fellow fellows, Jill Bender and Chris Dietrich, offered sympathy and good advice, while Prof. Paul Kennedy and associate director Dr. Ryan Irwin welcomed me into the ISS community. Ryan’s enthusiasm for all our projects was infectious, and his encouragement of all of us went well beyond the call of duty.

My research would have been impossible without the resources of several archives and libraries. I am indebted to the staffs at the National Archives of the United Kingdom; the British Library’s St. Pancras and Colindale branches; the Special Collections of the Hartley Library, University of Southampton; Archives and Local Studies, Manchester Central Library; Chetham’s Library, Manchester; the Labour History and Archives Center, Manchester; the National Army Museum, Chelsea; the Guildhall Library, City of London; and the London Metropolitan Archives, as well as the libraries of Ohio State, Yale, and the University of Toronto.

Financial support came from the Department of History and the Mershon Center for International Security Studies at Ohio State, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, and the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation.

Last, but not least, I am incredibly grateful to my wife, Anne Sealey, for finding the time to help and encourage me even as she outpaced me in completing her own dissertation.
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Fields of Study

Major Field: History
List of Abbreviations

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<tr>
<td>BL</td>
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<tr>
<td>CWS</td>
<td>Cobden Papers, West Sussex Records Office, Chichester, UK</td>
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<tr>
<td>DNB</td>
<td>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</td>
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<td>GSFC</td>
<td>Garibaldi Special Fund Committee, George Holyoake MSS, Bishopsgate Institute Library, London, UK</td>
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<td>JSAHR</td>
<td>Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research</td>
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<td>LMA</td>
<td>London Metropolitan Archives, London, UK</td>
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<td>MCL</td>
<td>Manchester City Library, Manchester, UK</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAM</td>
<td>National Army Museum, London, UK</td>
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<td>PP</td>
<td>House of Commons Parliamentary Papers</td>
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<td>PUS</td>
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<td>RN</td>
<td>Reynolds’ Newspaper</td>
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<td>TNA</td>
<td>The National Archive of the United Kingdom, London, UK</td>
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<td>WUS</td>
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Chapter 1: Introduction

W.S. Gilbert was never shy of writing about the qualities of a good soldier, whether it was having “the pluck of Lord Nelson on board of the Victory / Genius of Bismarck devising a plan” or knowing “the fights historical / from Marathon to Waterloo, in order categorical.” His opinions – always satirical, if sometimes with a serious core – were not purely airy speculation. For almost twenty years from 1859 on, Gilbert was not just a society man and satirist but also a commissioned officer in the Royal Aberdeenshire Militia. His dual career was not an unusual one. Hundreds of thousands of British men of every class and creed served, like Gilbert, in the militia or Volunteers. Among them were the “Cook’s son – Duke’s son – son of a belted Earl” whom Rudyard Kipling immortalized in his poem “The Absent Minded Beggar.” So were artists from the Royal Academy, professors of economics, and the occasional chimney sweep.


2 Gilbert served first with the Civil Service Rifle Volunteers and then with the West Yorkshire Militia before transferring to the Royal Aberdeenshire Militia. He was promoted to captain in 1868 and to major in 1878 upon his retirement. He wrote seriously about the production of military clothing in Temple Bar (“Our War Paint,” Sept. 1866, 251-258) and comically about the militia for Fun. His second unproduced farce, A Colossal Idea (1862) also satirized the Volunteers. Despite this early work, Gilbert is far better known for his satire of the navy in the operetta H.M.S Pinafore (1879) and of General Garnet Wolseley in The Pirates of Penzance (1879). Jane W. Stedman, W.S. Gilbert. A Classic Victorian and His Theatre (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996), 6, 20-22, 31, 58, 140, 157.
In mid-Victorian Britain, the part-time soldiers of the auxiliary forces were an inescapable element of the political landscape. Whether lauded or reviled, they could never be ignored. Though often regarded by later historians as ephemeral outbursts of popular paranoia, between 1844 and the early 1870s the British public was frequently gripped by fears of French invasion. Without a larger professional army, the absence of which was a point of pride in British political discourse, the auxiliaries supposedly constituted the main line of defense against hordes of savage Algerian zouaves. Whether this fact was something to be celebrated or bemoaned depended not just on one’s opinions on international affairs but also on one’s perspective on domestic political issues. In an era of what Philip Harling has called “cross-class Liberal political consensus,” liberal thought pervaded into almost every aspect of public life. That included the military, where the navy’s policies on dockyard accounting and the army’s promotion process were expected to conform not only to professional standards of effectiveness but also to liberal precepts regarding the nature of a fair and just society. That expectation was even more intense for the auxiliary forces, who occupied a liminal position between civil and military society. The responsibility of the Home Office rather than the War Office until 1872, the auxiliaries were a bellwether for liberal attitudes towards the military.

This dissertation is a study of liberalism’s influence on the development of the auxiliaries within the context of home defense. It focuses on the ways in which liberal political thought shaped expectations for the soldiers who served in the militia and

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Volunteer Force, and on the ways those forces were expected to play a part both in the defense of Great Britain and in civil society. The dissertation shows that in twenty-five years of liberal, if not Liberal, consensus, both government policy towards and public expectations of the auxiliaries were dominated by liberal political thought.4

As a political philosophy and cultural attitude, liberalism spread far beyond the parliamentary Liberal party, deep into the popular discourse. As such, the importance that mid-century liberalism put on the individual and his capacity for independent thought and action helped prevent the revival of the local militia in 1848 and 1852, shaped the successful revival of the regular militia in the latter year, and eventually led to the creation of the Volunteer Force in 1859 as a quintessentially liberal institution.

Liberalism’s influence on the military in this era was not limited to the auxiliary forces. The developments mentioned above were bookended by two equally substantial reforms of the regular army, with the third Earl Grey’s introduction of limited enlistment in 1847 and the Cardwell Reforms in 1870-2. Both were, as this dissertation will show, indebted to liberal thought. However, it was the auxiliaries, forced to prominence by the mid-century invasion panics of 1848, 1852 and 1859, which most clearly and extensively show the impact of liberal political thought on the British army.5

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4 Historians disagree on precisely when the Liberal party came into existence, with dates ranging from the early 1830s to the 1859. For two viable approaches, see Jonathan Parry, The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government in Victorian Britain (New Haven: Yale UP, 1993) and John Vincent, The Formation of the Liberal Party, 1857-1868 (London: Constable, 1966). For convenience and consistency, this dissertation considers the Liberal party to begin with the Russell ministry of 1846-52, since the 1847 general election was the first in which there were almost as many successful candidates who called themselves “liberals” as “whigs,” “radicals,” and “reformers” combined.

5 For several reasons, the navy plays only a peripheral role in this dissertation. Firstly, to properly address the Navy’s importance would have doubled or trebled the text. More importantly, liberal thinking in this era saw the navy as less problematic and less controversial than the army. It was “Rule, Britannia!” which served as Britain’s unofficial second anthem, not “The British Grenadiers. Because of this, the dissertation
The extent of that influence has not always been recognized for several reasons. First and foremost, the literature on the post-Napoleonic auxiliary forces is quite limited. The most notable works, including Hugh Cunningham’s *The Volunteer Force* and Ian F.W. Beckett’s *Riflemen Form. A Study of the Rifle Volunteer Movement*, focus on the socio-economic context of the Volunteers rather than their intellectual and political context. The most substantial work on the nineteenth-century militia remains Duncan Anderson’s unpublished 1982 Oxford University dissertation. Moreover, liberalism’s influence on the military remains an understudied topic. The closest to a consensus statement on liberal influence in the army is Hew Strachan’s 1980 “The Early Victorian Army and the Nineteenth-Century Revolution in Government.”

Using the research that would become *Wellington’s Legacy*, Strachan argued that the impetus for army reform in the pre-Crimean era was located not in any stream of political philosophy – Strachan mentions the Benthamites, the Manchester school, Sir Charles Trevelyan, and the Tory paternalists – but in pragmatic responses that came mostly from within the army itself. Other work on the issue, such as Bernard Semmel’s *Liberalism and Naval Strategy* or David Edgerton’s *England and the Aeroplane*, is more concerned with liberalism’s impact on grand strategy than on the narrower aspects of policy, while Michael Howard’s excellent *War and the Liberal Conscience* presents liberalism as an ideology quite distant

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from the realities of the military. In contrast, this dissertation shows that liberalism was not an external factor which affected strategic aims, but a philosophy which addressed the basis of military practice.

Victorian Liberalism

Attempting to address liberalism’s impact on the Victorian military is made particularly complicated by the former’s protean nature. The political philosophy of liberalism was far broader than the parliamentary Liberal party which shared its name, and its eclectic mixture of sources and fascination with polyvalent language meant it was constantly open to reinterpretation. A tradition of “relentless critique and self-critique” meant that even those liberals who shared the same basic interpretation of liberalism’s precepts could disagree strongly on their policy implications. Equally problematically, those who disagreed vehemently could find themselves using the same terminology in

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10 Chris Otter, personal communication, June 23, 2011.
ways which suggested a level of basic consensus that was entirely absent. Mid-Victorian liberalism’s influence was as partial and self-contradictory as it was ubiquitous.

Despite eclecticism, polyvalent language and mutual miscomprehension, it is possible to offer at least a general definition of liberal political thought in this era. At liberalism’s core was its faith in the personal qualities of rationality, independence, and self-fashioning. Though the term “liberal subject” has been overused in the historical and theoretical literature, liberalism showed a special interest in the individual as a free actor who was supposed to consider action in dispassionate, logical terms, what Elaine Hadley has called “liberal cognition.”11 Expectations for the liberal individual were substantial. The ideal man was, in Christopher Otter’s words, to be “rational, sane, self-disciplined, independent, thrifty, sober, and energetic.”12

This premise of individual autonomy is too often simplified into a belief in a *laissez faire* society. In fact, Victorian liberals were keenly concerned with the need for state intervention to support personal autonomy, as well as the existence of goals that went well beyond the mere absence of restraint on the individual. Eugenio Biagini, one of the most prolific writers on this issue, argues that even in its cost-conscious Gladstonian phase, liberalism was not satisfied with the night-watchman state. Instead, it connected preserving liberty with “self-government, high esteem for a life of public service and the related civic virtues, the idealization of ‘independence,’ and an emphasis

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of [sic] self-help and education as moral imperatives.” Using Isaiah Berlin’s terminology, liberalism was as concerned with positive as with negative liberty. The need for state intervention and the nature of civic virtue were interpreted differently depending on origins, class, and interests, but the basic need for both was broadly recognized.

While the principles discussed above are essentially abstract, in mid-Victorian Britain they were deeply embedded in a historical narrative which offered language, examples, and institutions with which to comprehend, communicate, and execute them. This narrative of constitutional development, fabricated by the Foxite Whigs in the late eighteenth century and embraced by various kinds of late Georgian and early Victorian radicals, connected abstract ideas about liberty, freedom and independence within a sequence of deeply symbolic historic events. Beginning with the Anglo-Saxons and their proto-democracy and moving forward through the “Norman Yoke,” the Magna Carta, and the English Civil War, the narrative culminated in the Glorious Revolution of 1688, and with it the signing of the Bill of Rights and the confirmation of the Protestant Succession. For the Whigs the last of these moments was an all-purpose historical

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touchstone which encapsulated the nature of Britishness, the parliamentary system, and the proper relationship between monarchy, parliament, and people.  

The constitutional narrative was easily contested, frequently modified, and constantly open to reinterpretation. However, it provided the basis for liberalism’s own process of self-fashioning and self-evaluation. Comparisons with 1688 were frequent, not just for events in Britain itself but also for those in Continental Europe. Even among those, like the Utilitarians, who sought more abstract language and justifications for their philosophy, Britain’s constitutional narrative was an inescapable element. The same was true of plebeian radicals, who despite dabbling with Jacobin republicanism never abandoned British constitutional language in their campaign for popular sovereignty.

The exact relationship between groups like the Utilitarians (also known as “philosophic radicals”) or plebeian radicals and the *ur*-liberalism above is complex and open to even more incessant debate than that over liberalism’s basic principles. It will hopefully suffice to say that these groups adopted many of the ideas and much of the constitutional language, and that they constituted a vast liberal penumbra which spread over much of British politics in this era. Liberalism’s inspirations were eclectic, including “utilitarianism, political economy, evangelicalism, and romanticism.”

So were its fellow-travelers. Before the coalescence of the parliamentary Liberal party in

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18 Otter, *Victorian Eye*, 11.
1859, many of its most influential members described themselves as “Radicals” rather than liberals, a term almost as protean and problematic as “liberal” itself.\textsuperscript{19}

Many plebeian radicals were adherents of what Patrick Joyce calls “populism,” a political language which embraced the constitutional narrative as the product of a communal identity. In populist circles, political involvement was the birthright of “the People,” an expansive community of freeborn Englishmen who were entitled to their say because of their hard work and respectability. Populism perceived the laboring classes as the heart of British society, and was “extra-economic in character, and inclusive and universalizing in their social remit in contrast to the exclusive categories of class.”\textsuperscript{20} Like so much other para-liberal discourse, it was open to a vast range of interpretations based on class and social context.\textsuperscript{21} According to Eugenio Biagini’s “currents of radicalism” thesis, populist radicalism maintained its influence well into the era of liberal hegemony. There was substantial continuity between the early radicalism of pre-Reform public agitation and late Victorian working-class movements like Labor, trade unionism, and

\textsuperscript{19} Trying to define “Radicalism,” a term used both with specificity for the early nineteenth century and to refer to a broader British political tradition from the Middle Ages onwards, is well beyond the scope of this dissertation. For some insightful attempts, see the essays in Glenn Burgess and Matthew Festenstein, eds., \textit{English Radicalism, 1550-1850} (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007).


\textsuperscript{21} Supporters of older Marxian historiography have criticized Joyce for uncoupling “the People” from a strict class-based interpretation. See, for example, Dorothy Thompson, “Who were ‘the People’ in 1842?,” \textit{Living and Learning. Essays in Honour of J.F.C. Harrison}, eds. Malcolm Chase and Ian Dyck (Brookfield: Scolar Press, 1996), 118-132. While Joyce’s analysis of working-class political language was important in shaking older interpretations of Victorian working-class politics, in the mid-1990s Joyce himself moved away from the concept towards a more Foucauldian approach, eventually rejecting the idea that there was any social reality underpinning the language of populism and the terminology seems to have been mostly abandoned. See Patrick Joyce, \textit{Democratic subjects. The self and the social in nineteenth-century England} (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994).
even republicanism.\textsuperscript{22} In between, popular radicalism’s community-centric nature was an inescapable part of the thinking even of classical liberals like J.S. Mill.\textsuperscript{23}

Sharing common terminology but diametrically opposed on policy issues were the foremost adherents of political economy, what Karl Polyani would call “market” or “economic” liberals.\textsuperscript{24} Coalescing with the middle-class anti-Corn Law agitation of the late 1830s and early 1840s, the most fervent economic liberals became known as the “Manchester School” for the association with the Northern industry. Although Miles Taylor warns us not to overestimate the influence of MP Richard Cobden and the economy-minded men of the “Manchester School,” their importance in liberal discourse is indisputable.\textsuperscript{25} G.R. Searle has called them “entrepreneurial radicals,” and they were particularly interested in maintaining the free market, limiting taxation, and cutting government expenditure.\textsuperscript{26}

On foreign and military affairs, the entire liberal penumbra shared a few basic premises which they inherited from the Whigs and the late Georgian radicals. The first, and simplest, was a belief in the basic applicability of British liberal premises to Europe and the wider world and a tendency to examine and judge foreign developments in comparison to Britain’s own constitutional history. For a foreign event to be compared to 1688 was high praise; to be compared to the Stuarts was a mark of ignominy. Closely

\textsuperscript{23} Biagini, “Liberalism and direct democracy,” 21-44.
connected to this was the belief that the spread of liberalism would also spread international peace. War was a waste of lives and money executed by the Crown, and therefore abhorrent to both economic liberals and their populist counterparts. Free trade, arbitration and (perhaps) democracy were expected to make war unnecessary, except in defense against those who had failed to adopt the liberal creed. Though Victorian liberalism is often caricatured as anti-interventionist, it could be used to argue either for or against “Splendid Isolation.” Both the promotion of liberalism overseas and the repulsion of despotic encroachment were noble causes which Victorian liberals favored as often as they condemned war as immoral and uneconomic. In his *Politics of Patriotism*, Jonathan Parry cogently argues that it was the application of liberalism to foreign policy, whether through comparison to Britain’s constitution, the support of foreign liberals or the protection of liberal ideals like free trade, that helped give the otherwise fractious early Liberal party much of its cohesion.27

Regarding the military itself, liberalism inherited a critique of the standing army that was already centuries old. In the seventeenth century, the struggle for supremacy between the Stuart dynasty and parliament led to the standing army being branded as a tool of royal absolutism and an affront to English constitutional liberties. With the arrival of William of Orange in 1688, the parliamentary distaste for the royal army was enshrined in law with Article Six of the Bill of Rights. This clause made the keeping of the standing army contingent on the annual consent of parliament. Since it was

impossible for a modern state to operate without a professional army, rather than resolving the tension, Article Six merely embedded it in British politics. Each year, parliament gave permission to maintain the army in that year’s Mutiny Act, but arguments about the proper role of the army continued. The debate culminated in the years between 1697 and 1699, when parliament almost eliminated the army. However, despite having signed the Bill of Rights, William needed a strong army to prosecute his wars against France, and the army soon became as entrenched an institution as it had been in Stuart England. In the first few decades of the eighteenth century, pamphlets, verse, and drama— the most important being George Farquhar’s The Recruiting Officer (1706) – changed the image of the army officer from a rascal to a gentlemanly masculine hero. The rest of the eighteenth century saw the reputation of the standing army ebb and flow, with the professional soldier never so unnecessary as to be abandoned but unable to find unambiguous support in the constitutional tradition. In the Commentaries, William Blackstone still called the standing army a threat to liberty and this was a claim that was echoed across the political spectrum. Even in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars and Wellington’s victory at Waterloo, the soldier remained an essentially disreputable and un-English figure.

The Rise of Character

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Developing in parallel with the growing influence of liberalism’s key tenets was the increasing importance of “character” as a requirement for political agency and a guide to political practice. Emphasizing qualities like manliness, strength and fortitude rather than birth, breeding or intellectual attainments, character became an inescapable aspect of mid-Victorian politics. No one epitomized the prominence of “character,” and of the political style which it encouraged, better than Henry Temple, Lord Palmerston. Despite being the most famous Liberal leader of the era, Palmerston’s personal approach was unlike what one would expect from liberal principles. Where canonical liberalism privileged reason and dispassionate thought, Palmerston built his career on emotional rhetoric and emotive imagery. A former Tory but not a free trader, his political trajectory matched neither that of old Whigs like Russell or Peelites like Gladstone, his immediate successors in the Liberal party. Despite his massive popular appeal, he was an aloof aristocrat with a mastery of classical oratory and a deep vindictive streak. Rather than match the tenor of the times and of his party, he rejected them and was celebrated for it. Palmerston’s approach frequently brought him into conflict with his allies as well as his opponents, but it also rewarded him with great power. After an early career as the non-cabinet Secretary at War in a series of Tory ministries, Palmerston spent most of the 1830s and 40s as a Whig Foreign Secretary. Surviving controversy after controversy, he eventually served as Liberal prime minister for more than nine years, in 1855-1858 and 1859-65.31

The transformation that Palmerston’s public persona exemplified was one closely connected to the changing landscape of masculinity at the turn of the century. While the details are contested, historians of gender agree that in the hundred years following the middle of the eighteenth century there was an important shift in the “hegemonic masculinity” against which men and gender relations were measured. One of the most important works to address this shift was Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall’s *Family Fortunes*, which traced the rise of the cults of domesticity and separate spheres out of provincial Nonconformist merchant culture to become a national cross-class ideal.32

*Family Fortunes*’ argument for the predominance of domesticity is reflected in studies of masculinity by John Tosh’s *A Man’s Place*, which argues that early and mid-Victorian men cultivated their reputations as family breadwinners and heads of households rather than libertines or men of polite manners.33 The start of the nineteenth century saw a transformation of masculinity as notions of polite gentility were replaced as the masculine ideal by “physical vigor, energy and resolution, courage, and straightforwardness.”34 The new ideal, which Tosh calls “manly simplicity,” became the “identifying code” for both the middle- and working-classes as well as the ideal against which political action was measured.35 In the early nineteenth century, chivalry provided much of the vocabulary with which this refashioning took place. The Eglinton

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Tournament and Henry Kenelm Digby’s *Broad Stone of Honor* were signs of the new ideal: martial but neither violent nor militarized. By the mid-century, even the gentility of the chivalric code was passé, replaced in most political discourse by the concept of “character.” Character was associated with hard work, straightforwardness and solidity, rather than any complex code of conduct, and it served to make almost all the marks of manliness internal rather than external; not land, nor titles, nor particular manners were required as signs of good character, merely right behavior.

Palmerston’s embodiment of this new ideal gave him much of his political magnetism. In contrast to effete whiggery, whether as Foreign Secretary or prime minister, Palmerston was a man of international action. His speeches were full of emotive, congratulatory, and blatantly masculine rhetoric and his policies made use of British military strength and influence to proclaim Britain’s national economic and political superiority. In consequence, he was praised as having “one of the manliest intellects in England.” Mobilizing popular enthusiasm, “it was Palmerston’s achievement to extract every ounce out of political advantage from this rhetoric” of radical patriotism. Palmerston’s belief in the necessity of force was fixed early in his career. In his opinion, which he was never shy in sharing, “the fact is, that it rarely if ever happens that a foreign Govt. gives up its selfish interests, its passions or its

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37 Palmerston’s impetuosity in foreign affairs is summarized in Gavin Burns Henderson, “The Foreign Policy of Lord Palmerston,” in *Crimean War Diplomacy and Other Historical Essays* (Glasgow: Jackson, Son & Company), 1947), 190-206.
prejudices to the force of argument without persuasion; and the more such a Govt. is in the wrong, the more pig headed it generally is, because its being very much in the wrong is proof that it is deaf and blind to reason & right. Persuasion seldom succeeds unless there is compulsion of some sort, nearer or further off behind it.\footnote{Palmerston to Baring, 3 Sept. 1850, GC/BA/310, Palmerston Papers, MS 62, University of Southampton (hereafter PUS).} Whether it was enforcing anti-slavery patrols off Brazil and West Africa or the rights of a British subject to restitution in Greece, Palmerston saw the navy as the best way to support British principles.\footnote{The abolition of the slave trade was a particular interest of Palmerston’s, to which he brought his usual bellicosity. He was responsible both for the Slave Trade (Portugal) Bill of 1839, which authorized the Royal Navy to go beyond its treaty rights in the capture of Portuguese slavers, and the operations in Brazilian waters in 1850 which forced the latter to enforce its own anti-slavery legislation. See Leslie Bethell, \textit{The Abolition of the Brazilian Slave Trade: Britain, Brazil and the Slave Trade Question, 1807-1869} (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1970), 155-166, 327-363; Andrew Lambert, “Slavery, Free Trade and Naval Strategy, 1840-1860,” \textit{Slavery, Diplomacy and Empire. Britain and the Suppression of the Slave Trade, 1807-1975}, ed. Keith Hamilton and Patrick Salmon (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2009), 65-80.} At the same time, he was equally concerned with the advancement of British interests, whether it was by forcing commercial concessions on the Chinese – over which he fought the Arrow War, and by extension, the general election of 1857 – or encouraging free trade in South America.\footnote{On the former, see J.Y. Wong, \textit{Deadly Dreams: Opium, Imperialism and the Arrow War (1856-60) in China} (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998).}

The crowning moment of Palmerston’s policy of belligerence was in the Don Pacifico affair of 1850, the culmination of a steady decline in Anglo-Greek relations. “Don” Donald Pacifico, a Portuguese Jew resident in Athens but born in Gibraltar, claimed British assistance in seeking compensation for damage done when a Greek mob ransacked his house. When the Greek government demurred, Palmerston ordered the British fleet to blockade the port of Piraeus in January 1850, beginning an international
crisis. Assailed by both sides of the House, Palmerston gave one of his greatest speeches.\textsuperscript{43} It was a defense of an entire career of belligerent intervention. Everywhere, Palmerston had sought only to foster regimes conducive to “the maintenance of peace, to the advancement of civilization, to the welfare and happiness of mankind,” as well as to British commercial and diplomatic interests.\textsuperscript{44} To retreat now would be “totally incompatible with the interests, with the rights, with the honour, and with the dignity of the country.”\textsuperscript{45} Palmerston’s summation compared Britain’s present strength to the glories of the Roman empire, arguing that like a Roman could with pride “say Civis Romanus sum; so also a British subject, in whatever land he may be, shall feel confident that the watchful eye and the strong arm of England, will protect him against injustice and wrong.”\textsuperscript{46}

Character’s new importance affected the basis of political agency. In Georgian political discourse, the primary connotation of “independence” was freedom from obligation or dependency. The symbols of this freedom were landed property and rank, which conferred independence from financial pressures, and the genteel manners which indicated an independent mind and spirit. The idea was fundamentally a gendered one, for which the maleness of the independent man was a necessary prerequisite. In politics, independence conferred the rights and obligations of political involvement – in practice, the franchise. The latter’s exclusivity was already contested by those who insisted that

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{44} 112 Parl. Deb. (3d ser.) (1850) 443.
\item \textsuperscript{45} 112 Parl. Deb. (3d ser.) (1850) 381.
\item \textsuperscript{46} 112 Parl. Deb. (3d ser.) (1850) 444.
\end{itemize}
“independence” was far more connected to manly behavior, in which many men partook, than to the elite gentility to which few could aspire. This transformation was enshrined, at least in part, with the Great Reform Act, which created a far larger electorate whose claim to independence was based not on substantial landed property but on intelligence, education, and self-support through their own labors. This last factor was truly critical. As Matthew McCormack explains, “unlike men of the aristocracy – who claimed to be independent because they did not have to work – they asserted that true masculine honour consisted in achieving independence through work.” Among its consequences was the extinguishment of the last vestiges of female voting, as maleness was included for the first time alongside property as a voting requirement.

The limits of the new claim to independence would be tested throughout the nineteenth century, as those beyond the limits of the franchise pressed for inclusion. In the early nineteenth century, when reformers insisted on the manly independence of middle-class merchants and shopmen, radicals simultaneously argued that as workers, thinkers, and heads of households, there were even independent working men worthy of the vote. From then on, one of the ways that working men sought political rights and the franchise was through appeals to their status as heads of households who reflected the same masculine ideal; this is the origins of the Chartist campaign for the breadwinner.

49 McCormack, Independent Man, 17.
51 McCormack, Independent Man, 162-186.
wage, as well as much of the oft-debated idea of respectability.\textsuperscript{52} By the mid-century, liberals were constantly forced to question exactly how far down the social ladder independent, thinking men could be believed to exist.

The Auxiliary Forces and British Politics

In combination, the spread of liberal political thought and the rise of “character” as a measure of the individual would prove to have a significant impact on how the British auxiliary forces developed in the mid-nineteenth century. The auxiliaries could claim to be part of a long and noble British “amateur military tradition,” going all the way back to the Anglo-Saxon \textit{fyrd} and continuing through the Middle Ages to the Elizabethan militia and the trained bands who fought in the English Civil War.\textsuperscript{53} By the early eighteenth-century that militia was mostly defunct.\textsuperscript{54} Although often justified by neo-Harringtonian rhetoric, proposals to revive it were mostly political maneuvers to challenge the balance of power in London, using the militia’s symbolic capital to critique the dominance of the Court faction and the persistence of the standing army.\textsuperscript{55} Events like the Maidstone affair, where the Newcastle ministry forced the release of a Hanoverian soldier who had been arrested for theft, were fodder for charges that the

\textsuperscript{53} Beckett, \textit{Amateur Military Tradition}, 8-29.
\textsuperscript{55} Neo-Harringtonian arguments were derived from James Harrington’s writing in the mid-seventeenth century which claimed that an armed citizenry who took responsibility for protecting their rights and their property was the only sound basis for political freedom. See J.G.A. Pocock, \textit{The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2003), 401-422; James Harrington, \textit{The Commonwealth of Oceana and A System of Politics}, ed. J.G.A. Pocock (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992), 285-6.
regular army represented disregard for the traditional liberties of the English and a further
impetus for its replacement by an effective militia. Matthew McCormack argues that
proposals to revive the militia early in the Seven Years’ War were the product of a gender
panic in which military defeats called into question the patriotism and virility of British
men, which service in the militia was expected to correct. This anxiety made militia
advocacy more than just a convenient way for Pitt the Elder and his supporters to
embarrass the Duke of Newcastle.

However, the militia law which Pitt implemented in 1757 was not a fulfillment of
the neo-Harringtonian dream. Instead, the Act created an institution which supplemented
and supported the regular army. Instead of being composed of worthy property-holders
protecting their nation, it provided a steady supply of working-class manpower and an
alternative source for domestic garrisons. While men for the New Militia were chosen by
ballot, most established men were either exempted or able to avoid service by paying a
£10 fine which the parish leadership used to hire substitutes for them. The burden of
service therefore fell primarily on the lower classes, and rather than a revitalizing
institution the militia became a regressive tax on manpower. Instead of advancing an
anti-executive agenda, the New Militia strengthened the powers of the Crown. Eliga
Gould bluntly calls it “a calculated attempt to use the war on the high seas and in North

56 Matthew McCormack, “Citizenship, Nationhood, and Masculinity in the Affair of the Hanoverian
57 Matthew McCormack, “The New Militia: War, Politics and Gender in 1750s Britain,” Gender & History
58 Eliga H. Gould, “To Strengthen the King’s Hands: Dynastic Legitimacy, Militia Reform and the Idea of
country?’: patriotism and the language of popularity during the English militia reform of 1757,” The
Country and the City Revisited. England and the Politics of Culture, 1550-1850, ed. Gerald Maclean,
Many of those liable for enlistment agreed, and there were anti-militia riots in 13 counties across England.60

In the French Revolutionary and the Napoleonic Wars, embodied militia regiments were an important bulwark against a French invasion, as well as a source of already-trained recruits for the regular army. Although fears of invasion led to a proliferation of similar compulsory obligations, including the supplementary militia (1797), the army of reserve (1803) and the permanent additional force (1804), the militia operated under rules essentially unchanged from the 1757 Act. By 1798 there were 105,000 regular and supplementary militia. The greater innovation of the war was the widespread sanction of Volunteer corps, the first of which had been formed in Britain during the American Revolutionary War.61 Reappearing in Britain in 1794, the Volunteers flourished once the 1798 Defence of the Realm Act encouraged them and a parallel series of armed associations. Unlike the militia, Volunteers were raised without any form of compulsion. They were locally led, self-administered and usually self-financed, often with elected officers and not subject to military discipline except when on active service. For these reasons, they evaded the stigma attached to the militia and attracted a far wider variety of social backgrounds than the latter. Volunteers were far

60 Beckett, *Amateur Military Tradition* 63-64; Gould, “‘What is the country?’,” 124-128.
more likely to be townsmen from the urban middle classes than rural laborers, although
the latter were rarely excluded.

Their boisterous independence and bourgeois origins made the politics of the
Volunteers of great interest both to their contemporaries and to modern historians. To
some extent, Volunteering seems to have been perceived as an alternative to the military
establishment in the same way as the pre-1757 militia. During the American Revolution,
some Opposition members saw the Volunteers as way of challenging Lord North’s
government’s control of militia patronage. In the French Revolutionary Wars, there
were parallel fears that Volunteers were too democratic and unwilling to suppress
disorder. On the other hand, J.R. Western has argued that the Volunteers in the early
years of the French Wars embraced middle-class fears of radical revolution and
associated themselves with the “Party of Order.” In truth, the Napoleonic-era Volunteer
corps were neither hotbeds of radicalism nor bastions of loyalism. They reflected the
increasing self-confidence and self-expression of the middle classes, responding to their
own local political and social concerns. The Volunteers embraced a breadth of political
opinions consistent with the consensus nationality identity whose rise Linda Colley has

62 Conway, “‘Like the Irish’,” 151-152.
63 There are several recorded instances of Volunteers refusing to suppress bread riots, or interfering with
Admiralty press gangs. For the latter, see Nicholas Rogers, “The Sea Fencibles, Loyalism and the Reach of
the State,” Resisting Napoleon. The British Response to the Threat of Invasion, 1797-1815, ed. Mark Philp
(Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 41-2. Several of the chapters in this book address the partial and opportunistic
nature of loyalty among Napoleonic-era volunteers.
64 J.R. Western, “The Volunteer Movement as an Anti-Revolutionary Force, 1793-1801” English Historical
chronicled. J.E. Cookson calls it “King and Country” patriotism, which claimed to be national rather than narrowly partisan. Austin Gee, who wrote one of the most recent studies of the Volunteer force, argues that most of the political activity of the volunteers was non-partisan, and that “the volunteers were more a constitutional than a partisan force, supporting the existing system and working through established institutions.”

Despite being mostly apolitical, the Volunteers were a mass movement with strong local ties who were difficult for the government to control. Unable to do without the manpower as a hedge against invasion, successive ministries were still keen to try and rein in the force. In 1808, while Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, Viscount Castlereagh tried to control the Volunteers by creating the Local Militia. The new force would be a local one, obligated only to serve in their own county and those adjacent, except in case of invasion or insurrection. Men would be balloted only if not enough volunteered, and Volunteers would be encouraged to transfer in by a two guinea bounty. Unlike the regular militia, substitutes were not allowed. Castlereagh hoped that the force, with its limited obligations, would both siphon men from the Volunteers and raise the reputation of the militia. It had some success in doing the former, but suffered serious morale problems in its early years. Although 200,000 men enrolled in the first year, the

66 In addition to Colley, Britons, see Linda Colley, “The Reach of the State, the Appeal of the Nation. Mass arming and political culture in the Napoleonic Wars,” An Imperial State at War. Britain from 1689 to 1815, ed. Lawrence Stone (London: Routledge, 1994)
King’s German Legion had to be brought in to restore order during the drilling of the Cambridgeshire regiments.\textsuperscript{69}

Together with the Yeomanry, a rural volunteer cavalry composed mostly of gentry and their tenant farmers, the militia, local militia, fencibles and volunteers constituted the “auxiliary forces,” which supported the regular army within the British Isles. All were essentially part-time forces in peacetime, and sometimes even in war, when they constituted the majority of the troops available to defend against invasion. The auxiliary forces were not allowed by statute to operate outside the British Isles, with even movement to and from Ireland requiring enabling legislation. The Napoleonic Wars were probably their finest hour in terms of size and importance, but their legacy was limited. Once the war was over, neither the government nor the people had much interest in maintaining them. The ballot for the Local Militia was suspended in mid-1816 and the force totally abolished in 1836.\textsuperscript{70} Balloting and training for the regular militia occurred intermittently through the 1820s, ending in 1831 with “an administrative disaster of the first order.”\textsuperscript{71} Thereafter the force slipped into a genteel decay. The Yeomanry retained an important role in suppressing rural unrest, but their massacre of mostly-peaceful protestors at an assembly in St. Peter’s Field, Manchester – an event known as “Peterloo” – led to their caricature as a bunch of bloodthirsty reactionaries.\textsuperscript{72} By the 1840s, the soporific effect of a long peace meant the auxiliary forces were either defunct or decrepit.

\textsuperscript{69} Beckett, \textit{Amateur military tradition}, 114-122. Cobbett’s reporting on the use of the KGL led to his conviction for seditious libel and imprisonment for two years.

\textsuperscript{70} Beckett, \textit{Amateur military tradition}, 120.


\textsuperscript{72} Beckett, \textit{Amateur Military Tradition} 132-141.
In the years which followed, an era of significant change in many aspects of Britain’s foreign and military policy, liberal ideas became embedded in the theory and practice of the British army. Tensions with liberalism meant this process was not without conflict. It was, however, irreversible. By 1871 it was impossible to consider the auxiliary forces, or even the regular army, without the questions which liberalism had introduced. At the same time, policy was torn between demands that it be thrifty and economical, promote moral qualities and reflect liberalism’s many mutually contradictory principles.

Outline of the Dissertation

The remainder of this dissertation will explore the extensive influence of liberalism’s particular principles on the auxiliary forces and the development of home defense in mid-Victorian Britain. Chapter Two serves to outline the perceived French threat, as well as considering the reasons why the British public were so concerned with the possibility of invasion. Examining the panic surrounding the 1844 Tahiti affair and the military responses of Sir Robert Peel’s Conservative government, it shows the basic constraints within which successive Liberal governments would be forced to operate as

73 A noticeable absence in this dissertation is the British empire. Some readers may consider this a glaring omission. Recent literature on this era has shown that rather than being the “climax of anti-imperialism,” sandwiched between the old and the New Imperialism, the 1850s and 60s were the moment when the ideology of empire shifted from a liberal to a far more conservative approach. This development was catalyzed by the Indian Rebellion of 1857 and Jamaica’s 1865 Morant Bay revolt, with which Britain began to see its colonial subjects as irredeemably foreign and incapable of improvement. Furthermore, much of the recent literature on empire in the nineteenth-century, like Heather Street’s Martial Races and Peter Stanley’s White Mutiny, demonstrates the way in which the army’s image became inseparable from that of the empire. However, it also has certain limitations. Much of it elides the distinction between liberal and conservative politics, erasing the very distinction which is at the heart of my work. Moreover, despite good reasons for the wars of empire to have influenced debates at home, there was little evidence of this in the texts that I examined. The empire therefore remains beyond this work’s scope.
well as the basic military options with which each of them was faced. From 1844 onwards, strengthening the auxiliary forces seemed like an inescapable necessity, but the nature of that strengthening remained open to highly contentious discussion.

When Lord John Russell became prime minister in late 1846, he returned the liberal Whigs to power after five years of Conservative rule and set out to execute an expansive agenda of domestic reform. As part of this, he and his Secretary of State for War, Earl Grey, introduced the most important changes to the regular army since the Napoleonic Wars. Replacing enlistment for life with a ten-year term was an effort to strengthen the home defenses and manage costs, but it was also, as Chapter Three makes clear, an effort to apply liberal principles to the conditions of service in the army. In the process it raised the ire of military traditionalists and showed many of the challenges that liberal approaches to national defense would face in the next twenty-five years.

In Chapter Four, we cover the Russell ministry’s response to the 1848 invasion panic, focusing on Russell’s attempts to revive and reform the militia, developments that failed both because of traditionalist opposition and because of a lack of clarity about the connection between liberal principles and the proposed local militia. Chapter Five follows the Russell ministry in the invasion panic of 1852, when a second attempt to revive the militia leads to the fall of the Russell government and their replacement by a Conservative ministry.

Chapter Six constitutes an interlude from the invasion panics, briefly examining the impact of the Crimean War on attitudes towards the army and liberalism’s influence thereon. Chapter Seven then moves forward to the panic of 1859-60 and to the creation
of the Volunteer Force. The Volunteers constituted probably the purest example of liberal influence on home defense, and their formation and immediate success reflected the widespread resonance of their new role as both guardians against the French and agents for national and self-improvement. Finally, Chapter Eight concludes the dissertation by examining the long aftermath of 1859 and the ways in which both Volunteers and regular army struggled with developments both in military affairs and in liberalism, a dual process that culminated in Edward Cardwell and W.E. Gladstone’s major army reforms in 1870-2.
Chapter 2: French Threat, English Panic, British Response

Apart from the Crimean War, no events had more influence on the development of the mid-Victorian army than the mid-century invasion panics. In 1848, 1852, and 1859, widespread fears of French invasion forced successive Liberal ministries to begin substantial military reform programs. The panics drove the modernization of the Royal Navy, the establishment of new fortifications along England’s south coast, and the revival and expansion of the auxiliary forces – including the creation of the Volunteer Force in 1859. The panics were created by the unsavory combination of technological uncertainty, an unstable diplomatic situation, and a burgeoning popular press. In 1844, a diplomatic incident in Tahiti and the publication of a naval pamphlet by a French prince led to an early invasion panic. The response by Sir Robert Peel’s Conservative government set the parameters within which successive liberal ministries would operate, as well as demonstrating the political and financial constraints on the British response.

Invasion Panic and the Power of Anxiety

When they address the causes of the mid-century panics, most historians suggest that they were due primarily to the development of new military technology which led Britons to fear that they might lose their naval supremacy. First the steamship, then rifled shell-firing artillery and the ironclad warship threatened to revolutionize warfare at
sea. Despite suggestions to the contrary in earlier historiography, the Royal Navy was at the forefront of developments in naval technology in this era. Whether it was innovation in hull structure, dockyard mechanization or ordnance, the Royal Navy was ready to experiment. The most important of these new technologies was the maritime steam engine, of which the British were an early and enthusiastic adopter. The Royal Navy’s Lightning was the first steamer involved in a battle, at the 1816 bombardment of Algiers, and steamers soon established a niche for themselves as tugs, dispatch vessels and auxiliaries.

Although inconsistency, inefficiency and vulnerability meant that no one considered steam engines suitable for ships of the line (a term sometimes shortened to liners), even in these minor roles they soon showed their potential. As well as assisting with maneuvering in harbor, mundane auxiliaries like tugs could be used to tow liners into position in battles or shore bombardments. Mail packets and dispatch vessels sped communications between fleets, as well as operating as commerce raiders. On internal waterways, steamers made good gunboats; in 1824 the East India Company used three

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river steamers against the Burmese. In the late 1830s, full-fledged steam frigates appeared. While their paddle wheels prevented them from mounting full broadsides, they were usually armed with several heavy guns each. Operating independent of the wind they could out-maneuver a becalmed liner and attack from any direction. By the time the first steam warships adopted screw propulsion in the mid-1840s, substantially reducing the vulnerability of their machinery as well as increasing their speed, the naval steamship had developed a substantial niche.

More important than the steamer’s tactical influence was its strategic impact. Steamships operated without regard for wind or tide, and the Channel was narrow enough that it could be crossed by French steamers while an unfavorable wind kept British liners away. This possibility called the entire traditional British strategy of close blockade into question. For more than a century, the Royal Navy had adopted a wartime strategy of maintaining major squadrons outside each French port, forcing the French either to sit in harbor or fight a decisive battle at sea. While the main force of liners cruised offshore,

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5 Andrew Lambert argues that close blockade was replaced plans for attacking the enemy fleet at its bases, which he calls the “the Cherbourg strategy.” See “The Royal Navy, 1856-1914: Deterrence And The Strategy Of World Power,” *Navies and Global Defense. Theories And Strategy*, ed. Keith Neilson and Elizabeth Jane Errington (Westport: Praeger, 1995), 69-92; “The British Naval Strategic Revolution, 1815-1854,” *Shipping, Technology and Imperialism. Papers presented to the Third British-Dutch Maritime History Conference*, ed. Gordon Jackson and David M. Williams (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996), 156-161; *Last Sailing Battlefleet*, 11-12. Lambert’s argument is overstated, although evaluating it is made more complicated by the fact that the Navy in this era had little sense of “policy” as a concept and rarely wrote about planned strategy (see C.I. Hamilton, “British Naval Policy, Policy-Makers and Financial Control, 1860-1945,” *War in History* 12 (2005): 371-6). Much of what Lambert adduces as evidence for a coherent strategy can also be read as independent developments, and some of it seems never to have acquired much traction beyond the original writers. Instead, it seems fair to say that the Royal Navy had a vast reserve of experience in littoral warfare and coast attack which came into use in several campaigns, including the Crimean War. However, none of these ideas were presented to the political leadership nor do they seem to have come together in a coherent strategy even within the Admiralty. Had there been a war with France, it seems likely that the strategy Lambert discusses would have been used, but it is difficult to substantiate the claim that there was a peacetime “Cherbourg strategy.”
frigates watched each harbor entrance to signal any French excursion. The blockading fleet was only unable to close the ports in unfavorable winds and bad weather, when the French were equally unable to set sail. While the wear and tear on ships and men was substantial, the strategy secured command of the sea even when the French were able to maintain a fleet in being. By freeing ships breaking the blockade from the constraints of the wind, even unarmed steamships constituted a major threat to the British strategy. Steam transports might be able leave harbor when the blockaders were becalmed, then cross the Channel before other forces were able to intercept them.

Although it set the military context, it is important not to overstate the impact of steam in causing the panics themselves. The threat was not exactly new. In the 1820s it appeared in the Duke of Wellington’s letters, the parliamentary speeches of Radical MP Joseph Hume, and the poems of Robert Southey. By 1839, according to Bernard Brodie, concern about invasion by steamer was already “conspicuous.” When, in 1845, Lord Palmerston said in parliament that the English Channel was now “nothing more than a river passable by a steam bridge,” he was speaking of common knowledge rather than making a radical new claim.

Nor did the diplomatic situation radically change in the late 1840s. Aside from conflict over spheres of influence in Iberia in the Congress System era, the French were relatively congenial allies compared to the more obstructionist members of the Holy

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8 82 Parl. Deb. (3d ser.) (1845) 1224.
Alliance. After the revolution of 1830 brought Louis Philippe to power, Britain was often able to make common cause with the other liberal Great Power of Europe. Even Palmerston, well-known for his suspicious and vainglorious foreign policy conceded that the alliance was convenient and practical. In the 1830s, he worked closely with French prime minister François Guizot during his time as Foreign Secretary. ⁹ While it was easy to stoke suspicions on both sides of the Channel with memories of the Napoleonic Wars or charges of militarism and perfidy, in this era the governments of both countries were more often trying to repair their relationship than destroy.

What changed in the 1840s, then, was the reach and energy of the press, which had already been growing spectacularly in the early nineteenth century. New technology like steam and rotary printing presses, as well as machine-produced paper, helped cut the price of the printing in half between 1828 and 1853. ¹⁰ Moreover, from 1836 on the taxes on newspapers and periodicals – mostly instituted in 1819 in an attempt to restrict the radical political press – began to decline. Aided by agitation from the Association for the Promotion of the Repeal of the Taxes on Knowledge, an organization connected to economic liberals like Cobden and John Bright, the newspaper tax was abolished in 1855 and the paper duty in 1861. ¹¹ In the meantime, newspapers were cutting prices and expanding circulation. The Daily Telegraph became the first penny paper in 1856, and many others followed suit. In the provinces, thirteen new dailies were established in 1855 alone, and seven of those sold for only a penny. In 1851, there had been only 234

¹¹ Altick, English Common Reader, 327-328, 348-357.
provincial newspapers in England. By 1860 there were 743.\textsuperscript{12} While the new dailies were aimed at a middle-class audience, there was also a substantial expansion among the working-class papers. In 1839, the militant Chartist \textit{Northern Star} already had the second-largest nationwide circulation of any paper.\textsuperscript{13} When one considers that papers were passed from hand to hand or read in groups, giving each copy a readerships of ten or twenty people, they may have reached even further than papers like the \textit{Times} or \textit{Telegraph}.\textsuperscript{14}

Whatever the causal relationship, together these three factors ensured that diplomatic incidents and naval developments had the potential to become massive crises. In each case, mass anxiety forced a governmental response which would have to balance the financial and diplomatic costs of action with the political costs of inaction. Finding decisions to make that were both effective and popular would prove to be a difficult task.

\textbf{The Prince de Joinville and the Crisis of 1844}

All three factors were already at work in the early 1840s, when the Anglo-French alliance first threatened to collapse into war. In his first years in office, the Conservative prime minister Sir Robert Peel sought to bring the French back into close alliance after relations soured during the 1839-40 Syrian crisis. His Foreign Secretary, Lord Aberdeen, cultivated a close relationship with King Louis Philippe and Prime Minister Guizot. This

was the alliance for which the term *entente cordiale* was coined. In 1844, however, it threatened to come apart completely. The crisis began in November 1843 when the French Rear-Admiral Dupetit-Thouars exceeded his instructions and annexed the island of Tahiti. That news, arriving in Europe in February of 1844, was greeted with enthusiasm in Paris and commensurate irritation in London. That irritation was given direction when, in May, an anonymous pamphlet appeared in France entitled *Note sur l’etat des forces navales de la France* [Note on the state of French naval forces]. The *Note*, abstracted in *La Presse* and reprinted in the *Revue des deux mondes*, argued that for the French navy to achieve superiority over the British required an investment in new frigates for overseas stations and steamers for the Channel coast. In its own way, the *Note* was favorable to the British. Its author was impressed with the strength and skill of the British navy, to which he compared the French unfavourably in almost every way. He considered even the Royal Navy’s steamers, which many in Britain thought inferior to the French, to be superior.

The writer was, in fact, the Prince de Joinville, a French admiral and King Louis Philippe’s son. His perceptions of British superiority were the impetus for Joinville’s new strategic thought. Arguing that it would be impossible to beat Britain’s sailors, he argued that embracing steam would take advantage of French skill with engineering and artillery, making warfare at sea a military rather than a naval struggle. Steamships would allow daring raids against the British coasts, in which, “time, wind, and tides, no longer

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give us anxiety. We calculate with certainty on the day and the hour."\textsuperscript{16} Steam raids would allow France to inflict “losses and sufferings unknown to a nation which has never felt all the miseries that war brings with it.”\textsuperscript{17} Under cover of darkness, French steamers could do irreparable damage to the bases of the British fleet, while in the Mediterranean the French steam fleet could operate unhindered. Beyond European waters, Joinville endorsed the construction of large frigates to harass British colonies and shipping overseas. In Joinville’s new conception of the French fleet, ships of the line were reduced to mobile siege batteries to be towed into position by the newly-triumphant war steamers.

The British response to the \textit{Note} was outrage. Despite the fact that the pamphlet acknowledged the present superiority of the British navy, it was treated as a declaration of imminent hostile intent. Matters were only made worse when it was revealed that the author was an admiral and Louis Philippe’s third son. Guizot and Louis Philippe were scandalized by the pamphlet, implicitly critical of Guizot’s pro-English policy and clearly hazardous to the entente, and on 30 May Guizot met with the British ambassador to France, Lord Cowley, to try and placate the ambassador.

Matters, however, took a turn for the worse when in early June, and despite the king’s displeasure over the pamphlet, the prince was appointed naval commander for the French expedition to Morocco, a move that annoyed even Aberdeen. On 26 July, news arrived that a British missionary named George Pritchard had been detained by French


\textsuperscript{17} Joinville, \textit{Remarks} 9.
naval officers at Tahiti, and the resulting Pritchard affair only further harmed relations. The Prince de Joinville’s aggressive operations in the Mediterranean, including the bombardment of Tangiers, only seemed to confirm British impressions of his belligerence. By August, the entente was, in the words of historian C.I. Hamilton, “broken backed.”

Between Tahiti, the Note, and Tangiers, attitudes within the British cabinet had hardened, shifting Peel and his Home Secretary, Sir James Graham, away from Aberdeen and towards a more cautious relationship with France. Queen Victoria was more forgiving, writing to her uncle the king of the Belgians:

> how vexed we are at this most unfortunate and most imprudent brochure of Joinville’s; it has made a very bad effect here, and will rouse all the envy and hatred between the two Navies again, which it was our great effort to subdue – and this all for nothing! … We shall forgive and forget, and feel it was not intended to be published – but the public here will not so easily, and will put the worst construction on it all. Pray, dearest Uncle, tell me what could possess Joinville to write it, and still more to have it printed?

By May, Joinville himself was saying that he wished he had never written the pamphlet.

The anger that the Note provoked was taken as an opportunity by those who felt the government needed to pay more attention to the army and home defenses. In

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September 1844 the Master-General of the Ordnance, Sir George Murray, ordered a committee to report on Britain’s coastal defenses, especially considering the changes in warfare since the last war and the “general application of the power of steam to navigation.” Under the influence of its chair Captain Sir Thomas Hastings, R.N., an innovative naval officer, commander of the naval gunnery school at HMS Excellent and commandant of the Royal Naval College at Portsmouth, the committee issued a report which called for renovated shore batteries and new floating defenses at each major port.21

The Hastings committee suggested armed river lighters chained together across the Thames to obstruct attacking steamers, as well as twenty steam tugs converted into gunboats. At Sheerness, they called for a floating battery made from a liner stripped of its masts, with bow and stern strengthened and altered to carry the greatest number of guns, and supported by a tower on the Isle of Grain. The most substantial floating defenses were suggested for the naval base at Portsmouth, where Hastings recommended “that two line of battleships and six frigates of the old classes, should be fitted with screws, as steam blockships, which would admit of their broadsides, as well as their sterns & bows, being fully armed with heavy guns. Since they would require few provisions, the engines might be below the waterline.” These blockships could protect not just Portsmouth Harbour but also the Isle of Wight and Southampton Water.22

Hastings was convinced that “it will be impossible to guard against these [French raids] by fixed posts on shore, and that England must rely mainly on a floating defense,” but his report would have to vie for attention with that of the Admiralty’s parliamentary

21 Murray, 9 Sept. 1844, ADM 1/5543, TNA.
22 Report of the Committee on Coast Defences, 1844, ADM 1/5543, TNA.
secretary, Sidney Herbert. In late December 1844 he submitted a memorandum to Peel that six key deficiencies in the navy: 1. Lack of forces, 2. Inadequacy of dockyards for maintaining and producing the steam navy, 3. Absence of “efficient defences” for those dockyards, 4. Lack of a reserve squadron at home, which could double as a squadron of exercise, 5. Absence of a vigorous flag list, and 6. “The want of refuge harbours as a security to our commerce both from an enemy in war & from shipwreck in peace.”23

These efforts, Herbert admitted, would not be cheap: £268,000 for new steamers, £200,000 for new steam factories at Portsmouth and Devonport, £227,000 for more sailors and marines, and £51,900 to pay for the retirement of 300 naval captains.24 Regardless, he argued, “the temporary effort will produce permanent results.”25

A few days later, Wellington sent in his own appeal for funds. The Duke was a voice who could not be ignored, and not just because of his authority as the victor at Waterloo. In addition to being commander-in-chief of the army, Wellington was a minister without portfolio in Peel’s cabinet and the party’s leader in the House of Lords.26 His memoranda to the prime minister played on that vast experience and current responsibilities. In this case, while he began by claiming the preeminence of Britain’s fleet Wellington soon converted that strength into an argument in favor of new military fortifications. Since the best use of the fleet is for offensive operations, Wellington said

23 Herbert, 16 Dec. 1844, Add. MSS. 40556, fol.10, British Library (hereafter BL).
24 Herbert, 16 Dec. 1844, Add. MSS. 40556, fol.30, BL. The term “refuge harbour” in Hebert’s memorandum was deceiving. Since the 1830s the navy had been planning forward bases for its steamers from which they could surveil or blockade the French ports. While such harbors would also serve as refuges from bad weather or enemy raiders for civilian ships, their placement was decided by their potential for operations against the French fleet rather than their humanitarian usefulness. See Partridge, “Supplement to the Naval Defences of Great Britain,” 17-24.
25 Herbert, 16 Dec. 1844, Add. MSS. 40556, fol.31, BL.
it was desirable that it not be tied to the defense of its bases.\textsuperscript{27} That freedom of action was even more necessary now, since new technology made the threat to those bases far swifter and more dangerous. As Wellington explained:

\begin{quote}
Since the late War, that is within the last 30 years, the use of Steam in the propelling of Ships has been discovered, and has made great progress, not as yet it is supposed in the great operations and military engagements and actions of Naval Warfare, but undoubtedly in those offensive in their nature of what I call Maritime Warfare, in distinction from those of a higher description called Naval Warfare; such as the attack of Islands & Coasts, of Naval arsenals & Dockyards, and their defences. It is obvious that by the use of Steam the means of access are facilitated, accelerated and rendered certain, whether in the transport of Troops and Stores, or in Vessels towing others carrying Troops and Stores to the point of attack.\textsuperscript{28}
\end{quote}

Now that steam power made a French attack so much easier, the fleet was incapable of ensuring the defense of the coast. Tragically, Wellington explained, the British army was equally unable to protect the coast. It lacked either the troops or the transportation to concentrate its forces upon the coast. If Pembroke dockyard, for example, was attacked, “the Government might in some three or four years hence when the communication by Railroad shall be completed to the Land’s End, send four or five thousand men from

\textsuperscript{27} Wellington, 20 Dec. 1844, WO 55/1548/19, fol.1, TNA.
\textsuperscript{28} Wellington, 20 Dec. 1844, WO 55/1548/19, fol.3, TNA.
London to relieve those attacked, employing upon this Service the whole of the Guards in London and every disposable man to be found everywhere. There is no such Railroad.”

At times Wellington lapsed into paranoia, perceiving threats not just from the French and Americans but from almost every quarter of the globe:

The King of Naples, the King of Sardinia, the Emperor of Brazil, the Maritime Powers of the Second or Third Order, are to have Squadrons of Steam Vessels; – for what – for their Defence against Tyrannical England? No, – Steam Boats are especially unfit for defence excepting as Block Ships! one shot depriving them of the power of movement. They can have no number of men for their Defence, –
But to join in the War of Plunder upon English Commerce. This armament is said to be formed by these Powers at the instigation of the French Government.

Wellington considered the Bonapartist attack on Boulogne from England in 1840 provoked enough to ensure French retaliation, regardless of other matters. He also presumed that, if the French attacked, the Americans would surely follow them.

Wellington explained that it was necessary to establish coastal batteries to prevent an attack on the dockyards by sea, as well as expand the regular army to provide garrisons for the major ports and provide a field force in case of a sudden war. Now, Wellington argued, was the time for the government to create a force “on the principle, if not on the exact plan of the English Militia, formed during the Seven Years War.”

While it could not serve overseas or protect the dockyards against a surprise assault, a

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29 Wellington, 20 Dec. 1844, WO 55/1548/19, fols.3-4, TNA.
30 Wellington, 20 Dec. 1844, WO 55/1548/19, fol.6, TNA.
31 Wellington, 20 Dec. 1844, WO 55/1548/19, fols.7-9, TNA.
militia would relieve the army of many of its other duties, as well as supplement it when it marched to the relief of the southern coast.

Though ostensibly inspired by the recent crisis, Wellington’s letter was little more than a repetition of arguments he had been making since 1824, when Wellington first publicly predicted that steam would allow an enemy to launch their attack without regard for time.\textsuperscript{32} Six years later, he had written to Peel that steam “had made a great alteration in Maritime warfare,” and that the development threatened Britain because their lack of endurance meant steamships “can be applied to attack and not to defence.”\textsuperscript{33} In 1824, he told Sir Herbert Taylor, the Duke of York’s private secretary, that steam made a surprise attack on the naval arsenals more likely and their fortification vital.\textsuperscript{34} To lessen the danger of a surprise attack, and to offer at least some opportunity of intercepting an invading force, Wellington favored the construction of harbors of refuge in the Channel Islands as bases for the British. There, since steam navigation deprived the Channel Islands of their traditional protection by rocks and shoals, troops and fortifications would also be needed.\textsuperscript{35}

To have seen the revolutionary potential of the steamship in the 1820s was prescient, and to have grasped the distinction between “maritime” and “naval” warfare shows a serious subtlety of mind. Hew Strachan suggests, with justice, that home defense was the only issue of the Duke’s post-war military career in which he showed

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\textsuperscript{32} Partridge, “Wellington and the defence of the realm,” 242.
\textsuperscript{33} Qtd. in Partridge, “Wellington and the defence of the realm,” 243.
\textsuperscript{35} Partridge, “Wellington and the defence of the realm,” 247.
\end{flushright}
“the energy and grasp which had distinguished the victor of Waterloo.”36 However, the December memorandum also shows the weaknesses of Wellington’s vision. It presumed the implacable hostility of France, lapsing into paranoia when it considered the threat from the Neapolitan, Sardinian and Brazilian navies. It required an unpopular expansion of the peacetime establishment, as well as the revival of the ballot; signs that Wellington was ignoring the changing political landscape around him. Most important was the fact that Wellington would unflinchingly make the exact same pronouncements for almost the next decade – often using the same examples or even the exact same words.

The problem with all three of the proposals was that they were expensive, capital-intensive programs. Peel was already wary of vast financial commitments and shocked by how little Britain had gotten for its military spending, complaining that “if we had spent nothing on Ordnance services for the last twenty years Portsmouth, at least, could not have been in a much more helpless state than it is.”37 If there were to be expenditures, he explained to Lord Stanley, they would be made on the fleet and dockyard defenses – with £750,000 already earmarked for the latter – and not on the army.38 Increasing the Naval Estimates seemed “unavoidable.”39 Increasing the Army Estimates would just be unpopular. Writing to Herbert, Peel said “I am firstly persuaded that a really efficient naval force is consistent with the economy, and is a security for the continuance of peace.”40

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36 Strachan, Wellington’s Legacy, 14.
37 Peel to Wellington, 30 Nov. 1844, WP/2/125/68, WUS.
39 Peel to Stanley, 26 Dec. 1844, Add. MSS. 40556, fol.34, BL.
40 Peel to Herbert, 20 Dec. 1844, WP/2/126/41-42, WUS.
The cost was steep. A royal commission chaired by Admiral Sir Byam Martin estimated the cost of harbors at Dover, Seaford and Portland at £4.3 million, including an extra £50,000 for improvements at Harwich. The first £100,000 for Hastings’ blockships, now to be seaworthy warships rather than dismasted hulks, was authorized in August 1845. Converted from elderly 72-gun ships of the line, Blenheim, Hogue, Ajax, and Edinburgh, they cost between £44,500 (Ajax) and £74,800 (Blenheim) each. They also proved only slightly less swift than Hastings had expected, with initial speeds of five or six knots under steam, although the next pair, Edinburgh and Hogue managed eight or nine knots.

The combination of coastal fortifications, steam warships, and naval bases would constitute the basic elements of British defensive plans for the next twenty years. As in later panics, though, they produced an angry response from those who felt that they did more to harm relations with the French than help them. Aberdeen, for example, feared that the new British measures might destabilize his precious entente with France. In late December he finally wrote to Peel to complain about Wellington’s belligerent memoranda. Insisting that “it is impossible for me to stultify our whole policy for the last three years” on the basis of mere panic, Aberdeen insisted that the proposed fortifications would not just be ruinously expensive but also create “general distrust” between the two nations. Peel injudiciously forwarded the letter to Wellington, whose reply showed his

41 “Report of the commissioners upon the subject of harbours of refuge,” PP [611] (1845).
42 Brown, Before the Ironclad, 121-124; Lambert, Last Sailing Battlefleet, 45-46. Corry was also one of the drivers behind the Admiralty’s construction of four highly-unsuccessful iron frigates begun in 1845. For commentary on the introduction of iron hulls into the Royal Navy, see Brown, Before the Ironclad. Development, 73-98.
43 Aberdeen to Peel, 31 Dec. 1844, Peel vol. 3, 396.
anger. He announced that he had only provided his opinion because it was requested, and “I will never say or write another word upon the subject” – although he also wrote that “it may be a very foolish opinion, but I think it better to rely upon our own means for our defence than upon the good faith and forbearance of France.”\textsuperscript{44} This reply produced an contrite response from Peel, and a less than sincere apology from Aberdeen, who wrote that his letter “was written hastily, immediately after reading the paper in question, and under the influence of a strong opinion on the subject … My anxious desire now is, that opinions expressed thus hastily and confidentially, should not be considered by you as at variance with that respect and attachment which in one is habitual, and must be invariable.”\textsuperscript{45}

The Militia Ballot

Of course, army officers like Wellington argued, coastal fortifications required not just garrisons but mobile reserves to contain a landing and a field army to repel any attack that penetrated the coastal cordon. In fact, Wellington wrote, the need for these men was greater than that of the navy, since if the French besieged an arsenal with 25,000 men “I defy all the fleets of England to save it without the assistance of an army in the field.” The problem was expense. Wellington admitted that his preferred solution, to keep a regular army of 100,000 men at home, would cost £4 million each year, an impossible sum.\textsuperscript{46} This barely daunted Wellington, who had no compunction about

\textsuperscript{44} Wellington to Peel, 7 Jan. 1845, \textit{Peel} vol. 3, 397.
\textsuperscript{45} Peel to Wellington 10 Jan. 1845, \textit{Peel}, vol.3, 398; Aberdeen to Wellington, 14 Jan. 1845, WP/2/127/27, WUS.
\textsuperscript{46} Wellington to Peel, 7 Aug. 1845, \textit{Peel}, vol. 3, 204-205.
insisting on what he thought was needed, regardless of the cost. As Stanley complained to Peel, discussing the Canadian defenses “whenever I have touched on the question with the Duke he always refers back to a plan laid down by himself in 1826, the expense of which was so enormous that all Governments have deferred acting upon it.”\textsuperscript{47} However, as Peel gently explained, there were limits to what could be afforded. In particular, “there are dangers in an opposite direction which it will be prudent not to disregard” – the debt of £787 million.\textsuperscript{48}

The alternative, then, was the revival of the militia. In the Napoleonic Wars, this force had served both as the first line of defense against invasion and as a reserve of trained manpower for the army. This was important because, as Wellington explained in another of the interminable memoranda with which he deluged Peel:

\begin{quote}
I feel the same reliance that Sir Robert Peel does upon the spirit of the British People, in the defence of their country and particularly in its naval arsenals and dockyards. But it is when they are in a state of organization and subordination; and in some degree in a state of discipline, which takes time and here is the whole question. I have had much experience in Military Operations and warfare of all descriptions, but not particularly in operations attempted to be carried on by the People. The Spirit and efforts of the best intentioned people without organization, subordination, and discipline must be at best those of a Mob, must fail when
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{47} Stanley to Peel, 12 Aug. 1845, \textit{Peel}, vol. 3, 216.
opposed by any regularly levied troops; and prove fatal to those who make the

efforts and those who rely on them.\textsuperscript{49}

The militia which Wellington championed in the 1840s was a mythical beast, nurtured by
a diet of roast beef and John Bull. It took no notice of the vast social changes which
Britain had undergone since the 1790s. Wellington’s view of the world was a simple and
suitably Manichean one. Writing to Peel, he explained that the “democratic Party
throughout the World is inimical to this Country,” since “our System is essentially
conservative, … founded upon Law and Order, which provides at the same time for the
Conservation of Person, Property, Privileges, Honor & Character and the … of the
Country” while “the democracy abroad looks for plunder which cannot exist with our
System.”\textsuperscript{50} Peel was more aware of the realities of the situation. Responding to yet
another of Wellington’s broadsides, he blandly wrote that “many years have elapsed
since you raised a military force by ballot, another name for conscription. There have
been great changes in popular feeling in the interval.”\textsuperscript{51}

Reviving the militia ballot certainly posed vast social difficulties. Working-class
radicalism had a strong distaste for the costs, morals and actions of the regular army. As
the Radical lecturer Henry Vincent put it, “the army and the navy take the clothes off the
people’s back, and the food out of their mouths.”\textsuperscript{52} Chartists argued that in order to
prevent the division of their estates into negligible portions, the aristocracy used the

\textsuperscript{49} Wellington to Stanley, 1 Aug. 1845, WP/2/131/131-6, WUS.
\textsuperscript{50} Wellington to Peel, 2 April 1845, WP/2/129/5-6, WUS.
\textsuperscript{51} Peel to Wellington, 9 Aug. 1845, Peel, vol. 3, 213.
army, church and navy to support their younger sons at state expense. Aristocrats became officers “though destitute of merit and unacquainted with discipline.” The regulars were further tainted by the fact their duties involved their being trained to kill without complaint. The soldier was “a butcher, a hired assassin, a legalized murderer, a destroyer of the peace, property, and lives of his fellow-man,” as well as a “great perverter of morality.” Such practices violated the laws of heaven as well as of earth, as the Reverend B. Parsons of Ebley preached in his sixth Tract for the Fustian Jackets and Smock Frocks. Parsons called on the words of theologians Bishop Warburton, John Jortin and John Wycliffe to confirm that “a soldier is a slaughter-man” and “a common slaughter house is ten thousand times more glorious than the field of battle.”

As an alternative, the Chartists and most other working-class radicals embraced the idea of an armed populace, tracing the right to bear arms all the way back to Alfred the Great. The fact that a standing army was permitted with the consent of Parliament was a “pretext” of the “cunning Whigs” to keep the laboring classes down. From the Chartist perspective, the need for mass arming to secure English liberties had never disappeared, although there were many opinions on whether arming was practical and imminently necessary. Richardson wrote that “there are so many reefs, and shoals, and

\[Vincent\], *Five A Penny Tracts*, 158-159.
\[William Lovett\], *An Address from the National Association for Promoting the Political and Social Improvement of the People. To the Working Classes of the United Kingdom on the Subject of the Militia* [1846], in *CMB*, vol. 4, 68; Peter Bussey, *An Address to the Working Men of England, Especially to those from Eighteen to Thirty Years of Age, Who are Capable of Serving in the Standing Army* [1838], in *CMB*, vol. 1, 153.

B. Parsons, ‘*The Chief of the Slaughter-Men’ and Our National Defences*, in *CMB*, vol. 4, 347. Both the fustian jacket and smock frock were garments commonly work by workers, and were symbols associated with the Chartist movement.

J.R. Stephens, *The Political Pulpit No.12* [1839], in *CMB*, vol. 1, 340.

J.A. Richardson, *The Rights of Englishmen to Have Arms* [1839], in *CMB*, vol. 2, 17.
quicksands amongst modern laws, that it has become dangerous even to move,” while the anonymous author of “The Way to Universal Suffrage, by a Tyne Chartist” argued that arming was an imminent necessity – as well as musing on the ways that impromptu cuirasses could be constructed from wood and sheet-iron. The post-1757 militia, though, was an intolerable burden on the working man. As the editors of the *Northern Star* would write in 1846, “Bad, however, as this violation of the British constitution [the standing army] may be, it is tame, moral, and dangerless, compared with the militia force. The enlistment of the regular army at least supposes the willingness of the recruit to serve” whereas “when an ignorant peasant has been stolen from his family by this total violation of the Constitution, he loses his distinctive character of citizenship” for a life of villainy.

Working-class opposition was compounded by the declining influence of the militia interest in the reformed Parliament. As Secretary at War, the merchant and Whig whip Edward Ellice was able to arrange a thorough inspection of the militia staff that declared almost two-thirds unfit, and while royal opposition prevented his successor Viscount Howick (the future third Earl Grey) from abolishing the permanent staff entirely, he was able to achieve the dismissal of the unfit members of the staff. Thus, by the 1840s the militia as an institution had been moribund for almost twenty years, stripped of many of its staff, reduced in parliamentary interest, and unpopular with most of those who would be obliged to serve if the ballot was reintroduced.

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59 *Northern Star*, January 24, 1846, 4.
Despite the many pitfalls, in August 1845 the government finally began to consider a revival of the militia. The Home Secretary, Sir James Graham, and Sidney Herbert, now Secretary at War, began the revision of the laws. The resulting memorandum by Graham insisted that hostile intentions by France were the only possible explanation for the expansion of the French fleet and that the navy remained Britain’s preeminent line of defense, but that in case of a sudden declaration of war it would be unable to prevent a French landing. Under these circumstances, the regular army, pensioners and yeomanry would be insufficient to meet the challenge. Graham admitted, however, that there were serious obstacles to reviving the militia. Conscription would be unpopular, as “the Conversion of an English Peasant into a Soldier is a far different process – all his habits are opposed to military discipline: and his use of arms and maneuvers in the Field are to him strange occupations, for which he has no taste by nature or aptitude by custom.” Nor would it be without political danger. Graham was “not insensible to the altered spirit of the People, and to the increase of democratic tendencies as well as to the extension of democratic Power, since the Militia was last trained and embodied.” Still, he explained, the benefits outweighed the disadvantages. In time of war, loyalty will overcome the threat of sedition, and while “I cannot say that there is no risk in training and arming large masses of the Manufacturing and Town Population: but when the French Revolution was at its height, the risk was incurred, and the nation was saved.” Furthermore, militia training will “habituate the Youth of the Country to the use of Arms for the national Defence, and to accustom them to obey the

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61 Graham, 7 Aug. 1845, Add. MSS 79748, fol.61, BL.
call, which his Sovereign is entitled make even in Time of Peace year by year for his Training under Martial Law.” Regardless, Graham argued that administrative matters like the revision of quotas made an early ballot expedient.

All of this was too much for Aberdeen, who offered his resignation. That left Peel in the difficult position of having to try and reconcile both his commander-in-chief and his Foreign Secretary to a middle path. Although Peel hoped for “some course of proceeding, which may be adopted without the compromise of honest opinion – or danger to the Country,” both Wellington and Aberdeen were intransigent. The former used the opportunity to repeat his views on the implacable hatred of the French for Britain, and to insist that Aberdeen had failed to understand the changed military situation created by steam. Peel was unmoved by Wellington’s more histrionic statements but remained committed to continued military preparations. As he explained to Aberdeen, while it was unwise in peacetime to waste money on warlike preparations, it was important to maintain at least the basis of a credible defense. After a few days at Peel’s country estate in September, Aberdeen agreed to remain in the cabinet. Wellington, of course, continued his planning and agitation, undertaking in late September a tour of the coast from North Foreland to Beachy Head to establish the necessary fortifications, and

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62 Graham, 26 Aug. 1845, Add. MSS 79748, fols.64-85, BL. For his comments to Wellington, see Graham to Wellington, 6 Sept. 1845, WP/2/132/47-49, WUS.
discussing with Murray the possibility of fortifying London as an alternative to keeping a large force of regulars permanently on hand. ⁶⁸

Peel’s December 1845 announcement to parliament that he proposed to repeal the Corn Laws meant the resignation of Lord Stanley and the Duke of Buccleuch from cabinet, as well as Peel’s potential replacement by a Whig government led by Russell. When that failed to occur, Peel brought Lord Ellenborough into the cabinet. Peel’s former Governor-General of India was an industrious politician with a keen interest in defense. Aberdeen worried that with his assistance Wellington’s alarms would be impossible to suppress. ⁶⁹ Although his energy endeared him to both Cockburn and Wellington, Ellenborough found it difficult to press his policies forward. He argued that it was necessary to overmatch not just the French but also the Americans, sending Admiral Napier out to the Great Lakes to build war steamers at Kingston. Peel, however, was skeptical. He refused to believe that America constituted such a threat, or that it was necessary to spend so much in excess of the £1 million already added to the Naval and Ordnance Estimates. After Peel refused to send Napier to North America, or to send a more powerful flagship than the Americans to the Pacific station, Ellenborough saw the writing on the wall. ⁷⁰ By May, he was complaining that “I have been unable to obtain the concurrence of Sir Robert Peel in any one of the measures I have suggested for the good of the Service and the efficiency of the Navy and I care not how soon I am relieved from

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⁶⁸ Wellington, memorandum, 5 Oct. 1845, WO 80/8, TNA; WP/2/133/23-35, WUS. For the discussion with Murray, see WP/2/133/42-48, WUS.
⁶⁹ Aberdeen to Peel, 29 Dec. 1845, Peel, vol. 3, 411-12.
⁷⁰ Lambert, Last Sailing Battlefleet, 47-49. For Ellenborough’s views on the imminence of a war with the USA over Oregon, see Ellenborough to Peel, 29 May 1846, WP/2/143/31, WUS.
an Office in which I find that I have not influence enough to do the things I consider right.”

The implementation of Graham’s proposal to revive the militia was as fraught as his memorandum suggested. During the ballot of 1830, the National Union of the Working Classes (NUWC) had urged workers to resist the ballot because no one without political rights should be required to provide military service. One of the leaders of the NUWC, William Lovett was balloted and then fined £20 for non-compliance with the militia law, although the ballot was suspended before his second court appearance. In early 1846, Lovett was again at the forefront of the popular movement against the militia. Along with the Irish Chartist Feargus O’Connor and the Northern Star he led the movement under the slogan of “No Vote! No Musket!” The argument was that without the vote there could be no just obligation to serve, as O’Connor’s first statement in January made clear: “I hold it as an unerring principle, that allegiance is not due where protection is not rendered, and I hold it to be an undeniable fact, that there is no protection for the working classes of this country, and I prove it by the insolent and imperious manner in which the petition of a majority of the adults of England was treated by the House of Commons.”

Further opposition was justified by the hazards of militia service for the moral young worker. Service in the militia would render the militiaman vulnerable to the same

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71 Ellenborough to Wellington, 29 May 1846, WP/2/143/30, WUS.
72 Beckett, *Amateur Military Tradition*, 131. For more on Lovett and his attitudes to the militia, see Joel Weiner, *William Lovett* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1989), esp. 27-28, 111-113. Beckett says Lovett “contrived – at the second attempt” to be balloted, while Weiner says the balloting was “in retaliation for his outspokenness.”
73 *Northern Star*, January 17, 1846, 1.
mixture of subservience and debauchery as in the regulars. The recruit was “captivating bait for lewdness and dissipation” who would be seduced into transferring to regulars, and becoming “a life-long bondsman.” Furthermore, the Chartists charged that the true reason for preparing the militia was not to protect the British Isles but to free troops engaged in the subjugation of Ireland for operations overseas, likely against America in the Oregon crisis. Soon there was a National Anti-Militia Association, with public meetings in London, Manchester, Newcastle-on-Tyne, and many other key industrial cities. A pamphlet by Lovett “To the Working Classes of America” condemned the militia for stealing workers away from the work and their families and incarcerating them in “military barracks, doubtless lest sympathy and interchange of thought should disqualify them from their brutal profession.” A further address condemned the militia in the usual Chartist fashion, as a burden on the people and a perverter of morality.

In June, Ellenborough complained to Wellington that Peel had rejected all his major initiatives, including the organization of the dockyard laborers into a military reserve, the expansion of the marines, the retirement of elderly captains, on financial grounds, even as he reduced taxes unnecessarily and added incurred needless expenses. The only measures that Ellenborough had succeeded in arranging were the addition of a quartermaster to each division of marines and the removal of one battalion of marines from Ireland. Peel, Ellenborough wrote, preferred the opinions of Herbert and Corry

74 Northern Star, January 24, 1846, 4.
75 [William Lovett], An Address from the National Association for Promoting the Political and Social Improvement of the People. To the Working Classes of America, on the War Spirit that is Sought to be Excited Between the Two Countries [1846], in CMB, vol. 4, 62.
76 [Lovett], Address to the Working Classes of the United Kingdom. See also William Lovett, Enrolment of the Militia for Immediate Service!! [1846], in CMB, vol. 4.
when it came to the Estimates, and their “faction” dominated naval matters in the cabinet. Since he lacked the authority appropriate to his position, Ellenborough explained that he merely awaited the appropriate moment to resign. In fact, Ellenborough would lack such an opportunity before Peel’s government fell at the end of the month, shattered by the repeal of the Corn Laws and defeated on its Irish coercion bill.

Peel’s defense plans established the framework from which future ministries would work. Fortified harbors along the south coast and in the Channel Islands offered bases from which to observe and to harass invasion forces in the French harbors at Cherbourg and elsewhere. Steam warships, including the new blockships, could challenge an attacking fleet or enemy transports, even if steam made their interception uncertain. The proposed revival of the militia provided a reserve force to fill garrisons and meet any actual landing in the field. The plans also showed the problems inherent in the government’s situation. Financial constraints meant that no plan acceptable to Peel or parliament would be nearly as extensive as that demanded by proponents of readiness such as Wellington or Ellenborough. Nor would such an extensive array of new commitments endear Peel either to diplomats like Aberdeen or to fiscal critics like the economic liberals. In addition to being financially betwixt and between, Peel’s plans faced a social challenge. Even Wellington acknowledged that the British public was unwilling to see an increase in the regular army, which would seem both expensive and unduly militaristic. Yet much of the public also saw the militia as an unfortunate institution that beggared and debauched its soldiers. A Conservative administration

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77 Ellenborough to Wellington, 7 June 1846, WP/2/140/50-52, WUS.
lacked any alternatives to these forces. It would take a liberal ministry to take the first steps towards shaping both into modern, and liberal, institutions.
Chapter 3: The Introduction of Limited Enlistment

When they replaced Peel and the Tories, Lord John Russell and the Whigs inherited their diplomatic and military problems. Though Russell continued Peel’s short-term policy of fortifications and naval expansion, his Secretary of State for War and the Colonies was formulating a comprehensive new military program. The centerpiece of Grey’s plan was the adoption of a ten-year “limited” term for enlistment, an idea which provoked an angry response from the Duke of Wellington and much of the Tory party. Limited enlistment challenged the paternalistic approach to discipline espoused in Britain’s military tradition. In the spirit of liberalism, it was a policy shaped by the desire to make soldiering as respectable a trade as any other working-class profession. The resulting 1847 Army Enlistment Act reflected the first triumph of the liberal approach to military service.

Last of the Whigs, First of the Liberals

Lord John Russell was the leader of the Whig party in the House of Commons, but his was more than just the “last Whig government.”¹ He combined the grand aristocratic tradition of the Foxite whigs with an interest in expanding the franchise

beyond the limits established in 1832 and reaching out to administrative talent amongst
the Peelites and laissez-faire economic Radicals. 2 The new coalition was both viable and
increasingly defined by the moniker of “Liberal.” In the general election of 1847, there
were almost as many successful candidates who identified themselves as “liberals” as
there were “whigs” and “reformers” together. 3

On military matters, the new cabinet was overflowing with experience in military
administration in its three former First Lords of the Admiralty and four former
Secretaries at War, while Russell himself had been both Paymaster of the Forces and
Secretary of State for War and the Colonies. 4 The likely force behind any military reform
was the third Earl Grey, a liberal Whig and the new Secretary of State for War and the
Colonies. As Secretary at War in the 1830s, he introduced good-conduct pay, regimental
savings banks, barrack libraries and day-rooms, as well as forming a royal commission
on military punishments. 5 Though not in the cabinet, Grey would be assisted by Fox
Maule, the future second Baron Panmure. The son of a great Foxite whig, Maule was
named for the great parliamentary orator Charles James Fox. He had joined the 79th Foot
as an ensign in 1819, advancing to the rank of captain and serving overseas in Canada
before retiring and entering parliament in 1835 as MP for Perthshire.

Grey’s other key military adviser, the new Master-General of Ordnance, was
likely to be needed as mediator between Grey and the army’s Commander-in-Chief.

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3 There were 41 whigs, 5 moderate reformers, 26 reformers, and 13 radical reformers (85 total) and 70 liberals. Parry, Rise and Fall, 167.
4 The former First Lords were Auckland, Minto and Wood, and the former Secretaries at War were Grey, Hobhouse, Macaulay, and Palmerston.
5 “Grey, Henry George,” DNB.
Henry William Paget, first marquess of Anglesey, had commanded the allied cavalry at Waterloo and was a lifelong personal friend of the Duke of Wellington, as well as being an ardent supporter of both parliamentary Reform and Catholic Emancipation.

Wellington approached the new ministry with skepticism. When a Russell administration first seemed possible in late 1845, Wellington rejected a personal request from the Queen to remain commander-in-chief, claiming that the position required “constant confidential relations with all your Majesty’s Ministers” incompatible with his likely position in the parliamentary opposition. Only when Russell’s prime ministership was assured in July 1846 did Wellington agree to remain as commander-in-chief, now arguing that the post required political impartiality and he could have no “political connection” with Russell.

When Grey returned to office in 1846, he brought with him an axe to grind. As Lord Melbourne’s Secretary at War, Grey (then Lord Howick) was the third Whig cabinet minister to try reforming the War Office to strengthen parliamentary control and centralize authority in a single minister. The proposal foundered on the opposition of the army, including Wellington, and of the king himself, who wrote to Melbourne of “the impropriety, the inexpediency & the impolicy of the proposed arrangement.” Rather than fight, Melbourne let the proposal die. Howick, enraged, resigned in 1839.

In 1846, Earl Grey offered a comprehensive reform program that seemed to offer a simultaneous reduction in cost and increase in effectiveness for the army at home. In

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7 Wellington, memorandum, 7 July 1846, WP/2/144/78, WUS.
8 Report of the Commissioners appointed to Inquire into the Practicability and Expediency of Consolidating the Different Departments Connected with the Civil Administration of the Army,” PP [78] (1837).
9 William IV to Melbourne, 6 March 1837, qtd. in Partridge, Military Planning 51.
10 Strachan, Wellington’s legacy, 246-54.
November, Grey circulated an ambitious memorandum to the cabinet that recommended “the employment of pensioned soldiers in colonial forces, the introduction of limited enlistment, and promotion examinations for officers.”¹¹

The most successful part of Grey’s plan was to cut costs by bringing troops home from the colonies. As the responsible cabinet minister for the colonies, Grey could accelerate the spread of self-government in the settler colonies and promulgate the principle that “self-government begets self-defence.”¹² As the colonies provided men and money for their own defenses, the British government could bring those imperial troops home. The needs of colonial defense also intersected with those of the army at home through limited enlistment. By reducing a soldier’s enlistment from twenty-one years (notionally “life”) to ten years, limited enlistment would create a substantial pool of ex-regulars in need of employment. Many would join his proposed army reserve and provide trained manpower to expand the army in case of war. Others would emigrate to the colonies where in exchange for land and limited cash incentives they would provide a similar reserve for the colonial governments. Grey had already experimented with military settlers in the 1830s, when as Secretary at War he had overseen the creation of a force of pensioners for British North America who were paid 13d. a day and received land upon their discharge. Grey would now replicate this force, the Royal Canadian Rifles, in the form of corps of pensioners in Australia, New Zealand, and Gambia.¹³

¹¹ Qtd. in Strachan, Wellington’s legacy, 16.
Grey’s grand plans did nothing to stop an imminent threat to Great Britain, since the first men enlisted for a ten-year term would only be discharged in a decade’s time. In the meantime, Russell had inherited Peel’s military problems. Although he doubted the threat of sudden invasion, pressure to build and arm still came from Palmerston, who remained suspicious of Prince Joinville’s French fleet’s continued operations in the Mediterranean.  

His concerns about the movements of the Prince’s fleet were rooted in a deep-seated belief that Peel and Aberdeen’s foreign policy had been based on “an essentially faulty Principle” that France could be anything more than temporary allies, and that in fact they would never forgive the humiliations of the Napoleonic Wars. His anxiety was echoed by Auckland, who urged that, despite the cost, if Joinville moved towards the Channel the British should either commission new ships or return some from the Mediterranean.  

Russell responded to their entreaties, and by 28 Sept. 1846 Anglesey was able to report to Wellington that Russell was willing to spend £200,000 or even 250,000 more annually on defense.

Wellington and his Inspector-General of Fortifications and crony, Sir John Fox Burgoyne, continued to helpfully insist on massive new military spending. In November Burgoyne helpfully provided a memorandum on the issue. He explained that the £50,000 already provided Russell had begun to pay for the renovation of the sea batteries necessary to protect the ports from direct attack, while money in the present Ordnance

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15 Palmerston to Russell, 13 Oct. 1846, PRO 30/22/5D, fols.83-83, TNA.  
16 Auckland to Russell, 28 Sept. 1846, PRO 30/22/5C, fols. 351-2, TNA; see also Auckland to Russell, 10 Oct. 1846, PRO 30/22/5D, fols.145, TNA.  
17 Anglesey to Wellington, 28 Sept. 1846, WP/2/149/8-9. WUS.
Estimates would begin the repair of the landward defenses necessary to hold off a coup-de-main by a few thousand men for a fortnight. Burgoyne’s estimates of the cost of these works, however, were staggering. For only these five ports, these defenses would cost £211,000. If the detached forts that Burgoyne recommended were included, the cost ballooned to £760,000. Such costs meant Burgoyne’s imprecation that the work should be done “without hesitation or delay” was unlikely to be honored.\textsuperscript{18} This was even more true once one recognized that Russell had to fund naval as well as army expansion. Each battleship beyond the twenty-one in commission in the Mediterranean and the Channel cost an extra £4,000, putting naval expansion well “beyond our means.”\textsuperscript{19}

Secondly, no force of regulars existed either to garrison the proposed fortifications or to take the field against a French army. In his memoranda, Wellington was fond of proclaiming that even after stripping the palace of its guards there still would not be enough troops for a field force.\textsuperscript{20} While Burgoyne estimated that Britain could collect a field force of 5 or 10,000 regulars, this was still far too few.\textsuperscript{21} The need, therefore, was for more troops to make both garrisons and a field force a reality. Yet the British people were unlikely to comfortably accept any such expansion of the regular forces. They would never permit the maintenance of “so many apparently useless

\textsuperscript{19} Auckland to Russell, 8 Sept. 1846, PRO 30/22/5C, fols. 55-57, TNA; Russell to Auckland, 23 Sept. 1846, PRO 30/22/5C, fols.255-28, TNA.
\textsuperscript{20} Wellington to Russell, 12 August 1846, WP/2/147/25-28, WUS.
\textsuperscript{21} Burgoyne, memorandum, 7 Nov. 1846, PRO 30/22/5F, fol.214, TNA.
soldiers. & a constant Pressure would be made upon the Govt. to reduce them.”

Wellington and the others recognized this reality, no matter how much they bemoaned it.

The 1840s were a bad time to seek public sanction for an increase in the strength of the army. With its long tradition of military critique, early Victorian Britain was proud to be “a martial nation without being a militaristic one.”

Despite the victories of the Napoleonic wars there was no grand tradition of battle painting in Great Britain. Military genre paintings outnumbered battle paintings more than two to one in the early nineteenth century and the most popular of them was David Wilkie’s *Chelsea Pensioners* (1822), a colorful picture of retired soldiers. The military novel was a popular but isolated genre which featured humorous episodes of camp life as much a battlefield heroics – it was a close cousin of the Irish sporting novel – and in which bachelor officers were more like libertines than respectable leaders. This was especially true in the novels of Charles Lever, whose *Charles O’Malley, The Irish Dragoon* features a cast of Irish and Anglo-Irish stock characters and fills the Peninsular campaign with more romance and humor than actual duty.

Mainstream novels like Thackeray’s *Vanity Fair*, which took an ironic view of Waterloo, were ambivalent about the army. John Tosh has observed that military masculinity rapidly lost its influence in post-1815 Britain, and arms-bearing was less and

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Thomas Carlyle’s famous *On Heroes* spent almost no time on military men, focusing instead on men of politics, religion, and literature. In his other works, Carlyle was even more skeptical about the army. In his first major work, the satirical *Sartor Resartus*, Professor Teufelsdröckh tells the story of the little British village of Dumdruge, which gives the flower of its manhood to face a similar number of French artisans from a French Dumdrudge and at command “they blow the souls out of one another; and in place of sixty brisk useful craftsmen, the world has sixty dead carcasses.” *Past and Present*, Carlyle’s grand political prophesy, argues that while “man is created to fight” it is better to struggle against “Barrenness, Scarcity, with Puddles, Bogs, tangles Forests, unkempt Cotton” than to fight as a soldier. It is amazing – and by extension, horrible – “that a body of men could be got together to kill other men when you bade them,” and sad that it is far easier to raise £120 million to kill foreigners than to feed, cure or teach those who need help. Under the circumstances, Wellington and Palmerston thought reviving the militia would be less controversial. In a November memorandum, Palmerston recommended the recruitment of 100,000 militiamen. Costing as only much as 10,000 more regular troops, Palmerston claimed that such a force would be politically acceptable, financially sustainable, and militarily

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effective. Burgoyne and Wellington made similar recommendations. The problem was that, as Peel had realized, reviving the militia carried its own political costs of alienating voters and raising the specter of national unrest.

The Introduction of Limited Enlistment

All of this formed the context for Grey’s plan, which he claimed would solve Russell’s financial and military dilemma. Once the proposal was on the table, things moved swiftly. Only six months separated Grey’s first letter to Wellington in December 1846 from the third reading in the Lords in May 1847. The interim, however, saw a fierce struggle first within the administration and then in Parliament between those who endorsed Grey’s vision and those who found it ill-founded or even repulsive. Wellington argued that the measure would lead to an exodus of experienced soldiers and a loss of focus among those who remained, with a catastrophic effect on discipline. Russell was more convinced by the statistics Grey and Maule produced in response, but it took until April for Wellington to agree to publicly support the measure.

Grey’s ten-year term would replace the traditional “unlimited” enlistment for the rank and file – in practice, twenty-one years in the infantry or twenty-four in the cavalry. Although the option of a limited, seven-year enlistment had been introduced in 1806, it proved unpopular and was abandoned in 1829. Discharge from the army was only possible either by the payment of “smart money” or through a number of royal warrants

33 Palmerston to Russell, 5 Nov. 1846, PRO 30/22/5E, fol. 38-43, TNA.
34 Burgoyne, memorandum, 7 Nov. 1846, PRO 30/22/5F, fol. 226, TNA; Wellington to Russell, 12 August 1846, WP/2/147/25-28, WUS.
35 Spiers, Army and Society, 52.
that allowed a soldier with a good conduct stripe a free discharge after approximately twelve years. The idea of limited-term enlistment had never disappeared after 1829 and it found occasional support among reform-minded officers like Sir Hussey Vivian, former MP, Master-General of the Ordnance and privy councilor, and Captain Brownlow Villiers Layard, MP for Carlow.36

In July 1845 and again in August 1846, Layard raised the issue in Parliament.37 The debate, while inconclusive, showed the future of the idea. Layard argued that shifting to a shorter term would encourage a better class of recruits, reduce desertion and suicides, and cut overall costs by decreasing the number of old soldiers claiming pensions. Improving the terms of enlistment were necessary because “few persons were so idiotic as to barter their liberty for a shilling a day, with the prospect of sixpence a day to retire on after twenty-five years' service, provided they could keep from getting drunk, trial by court martial, or their name in the defaulters' book.” More importantly, to condemn impulsive young men to a life of servitude was wrong. Preempting the charges of his opponents that this was a technical issue for the army, Layard insisted that to make this decision “it was not necessary to possess military knowledge; the knowledge that was necessary was that of justice and right.” Among those who spoke in support were George De Lacy Evans, MP and service reformer, and Radical MPs such as Joseph Hume and Bernal Osborne.38

36 Strachan, Wellington’s Legacy, 71.
Opposing them was Colonel Charles Sibthorp, the ultra-Tory member for Lincoln who would prove one of the most vituperative opponents of limited service, and who announced that “the word ‘reform’ was a phrase he did not like.” As Secretary at War, Maule was noncommittal. His cautious approval of the idea was followed by the observation that it would not be a panacea, and that regimental schools, libraries, and canteen, had already done much “to make the soldier fit, when he resumed the life of a citizen, to fill the position he would naturally hold in civil society, and return to it a useful member, as well as a well-instructed man.”

In fact, the idea of limited enlistment was already under consideration in the government. In September 1846, Grey wrote to Maule that:

I have always been for limited enlistment; and what is more for practically short service from our soldiers. Limited enlistment wd. make the service most popular, & if the men served but a short time, say 10 years, you wd. have these gt. Advantages – 1st. An army always young and vigorous. – 2d. great relief from the heavy burthen of our pension list. – 3d. the maintenance of a reserve force both at home & in the colonies of a very cheap & most effectual kind.

What Grey actually proposed, in December, was similar but more extensive. On 14 December 1846 he wrote to Wellington to inform him of the plan to discontinue unlimited enlistment. Men would now enlist for ten years, although they could be retained an extra year if serving overseas, or two years in time of war. After their

41 Qtd. in Strachan, Wellington’s Legacy, 72.
discharge, they would be offered the opportunity to enlist in new Local Companies to be governed by the same laws as the pensioners, where they would drill annually. At the age of fifty-five the men would then receive a pension, governed by the same regulations as Chelsea out-pensioners. Until this could be enshrined in legislation, Grey informed Wellington, men would be enlisted for fourteen years under the old limited service provisions of the Mutiny Act. Furthermore, the new terms were also to be “extended to Soldiers now serving, so far as it can be so without inconvenience to the Publick Service,” allowing men at home who had served for ten years to apply for discharge as long as this did not reduce their regiment more than 25 or ten men below Establishment, for the infantry and cavalry respectively. Soldiers overseas would not be offered their discharge until their regiment was to return home, but could take the discharge either in the colonies before embarkation or on arrival in Britain.42

Grey had clearly erred both with his peremptory tone and the radical nature of the changes he was proposing. The Duke of Wellington was used to being consulted on almost every matter of importance to the army, and he was certainly not used to being dictated to. His response was a furious letter to Russell. Wellington complained that the proposal was unlikely to improve recruiting because experience showed that limited enlistment had always been unpopular, and because the terms offered by Grey were very unfavorable, requiring service for most of the man’s life before he received his paltry pension of a shilling a week. Furthermore, the impact of the proposed discharges for current soldiers would be ruinous. More than 1,000 men could instantly take their

42 Grey to Wellington, 14 Dec. 1846, WP/2/190/46-48, WUS.
discharges, and the rest would now consider themselves effectively “at liberty. No longer bound to perform his regular duty painful on account of its invariable regularity; no longer bound to expatriate himself to distant and unhealthy climates. These are not the feelings of a good Soldier, which render such a man an example in his Regiment, and of which the number in the Regiments of the British Army renders it what it is, the Honour and the protecting force of the Country.”  Furthermore, Grey’s proposal would have serious consequences for the efficiency of the army. It was the old soldiers who were the best soldiers, and each regiment would not only lose twenty-five of those immediately but see all their others distracted.

Russell’s response indicated his concern for fairness in the management of the men: “It is quite true they enlisted for life, but they will nonetheless find it to be a hardship if they were to derive no benefit from the new terms which the Queen has authorized for the Army.” Despite this, he agreed at least temporarily to restrict limited enlistment to future recruits. Still, the exchange made Wellington’s opinion of his soldiers clear. He believed that “there can be no doubt that every British Soldier in the British Army would be too happy to have his discharge, excepting probably those serving in the Life Guards.” Grey and Maule responded that only 2-3% of men eligible for good conduct discharges took them, with less than 1% on foreign stations – except at the Cape and in North America, and only a further 7,000 men would now be eligible for

43 Wellington to Russell, 15 Dec. 1846, WP/2/190/49-52. WUS.
44 Russell to Wellington, 17 Dec. 1846, PRO 30/22/5F, fols.205-6, TNA
45 Wellington to Russell, 18 Dec. 1846, WP/2/190/54, WUS.
discharges.\textsuperscript{46} Wellington struck back with further claims that the new enlistment rules would hurt recruiting for a force already lacking manpower and “destroy the efficiency of the small Army which Her Majesty’s Government has at its disposition.”\textsuperscript{47} Russell promised to consider the matter further, and while he agreed with Grey that the discharges were unlikely to have much effect on the army, he continued the suspension of the proposed immediate discharges.\textsuperscript{48}

Once the question of immediate discharges had been resolved, attention turned to the issue of re-enlistment. Though Wellington clearly thought little of Grey’s proposed reserves, he now argued that service in the reserve companies should be a mandatory part of the enlistment. He wrote that, faced with the prospect of only a deferred pension, more men would choose to re-enlist than if they could avoid any further service: “the views of some are that he should select the last; my wish is, and my opinion is, that he will at the end of the first period of Service re-enlist in his Regiment.” The alternative, he proclaimed, was that men would be lost both to the regular army and the reserves by joining the railroads.\textsuperscript{49}

Russell was dismissive, citing Maule’s observations that to make enlistment in the reserve mandatory would require significantly more complex legislation to enforce attendance and service.\textsuperscript{50}

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\item \textsuperscript{46} War Office, “Estimate of the probable Effect of extending the principle of free discharges with deferred Pensions to all Soldiers of 10 Years’ Service,” 12 Jan. 1847, WP/2/190/57-62, WUS.
\item \textsuperscript{47} Wellington, 22 Jan. 1847, WP/2/190/64-69, WUS; Wellington to Russell, 23 Jan. 1847, WP/2/190/70, WUS.
\item \textsuperscript{48} Russell to Wellington, 26 Jan. 1847, WP/2/190/71, WUS; Russell to Wellington, 27 Jan. 1847, WP/2/190/72, WUS.
\item \textsuperscript{49} Wellington to Russell, 5 April 1847, WP/2/190/78-79, WUS.
\item \textsuperscript{50} Russell to Wellington, 8 April 1847, WP/2/190/80, WUS.
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punishment for disobedience could be dismissal and loss of the deferred pension. If enrollment was compulsory, then there would have to be some sort of punishment for non-attendance. Since military law does not extent to the pensioners, “we should have to make entirely new laws to govern this new force, which you, wd. [would] find to be most complicated.”

The discussion continued even while the bill was being debated in parliament. Introduced on 1 March, it had its second reading in the Commons on the 22nd and its third on 15 April 1847. Press coverage was widely favorable, with encouraging editorials in the Times, Daily News, Examiner, and Morning Chronicle. In the Commons, opponents argued that the proposed bill would lead to a mass exodus of soldiers from the army, impair discipline, and make it impossible to maintain sufficient strength in the colonies. Many maintained that the British army at present was an almost perfect instrument, which the government’s plans would badly mangle by reducing the number of experienced men in the ranks. Others acknowledged the unsatisfactory treatment of recruits and even the dissatisfaction of the soldiers, but argued that a shorter term of service was not the solution. They argued that a soldier enlisted in the army exactly because he sought a life commitment, and that the prospect of discharge without a pension after a decade, with the prospect of years of quasi-militia service ahead, would be profoundly unattractive. Instead, led by General Sir Howard Douglas, they encouraged the government to increase the recruiting bounty, stop charging recruits for their kit, and

51 Fox Maule to Russell, 10 Apr. 1847, PRO 30/22/6C, fol.50, TNA.
52 Times (London) January 21, 1847, 5; March 24, 1847, 4; April 1, 1847, 4; April 12, 1846, 4; Daily News, April 3, 1847, 2; Examiner, May 1,1847, 1; Morning Chronicle, March 3, 1847, 5; March 27, 1847, 4.
increase pay and pensions, in order to improve morale and encourage recruitment. The government avoided those measures, they claimed, because Earl Grey’s plan was really a concealed attempt to reduce the pension rolls and thus reduce overall spending on the army.\(^{53}\) Opponents also bemoaned the lack of military rank on the government’s front benches, pointedly asking about the Duke of Wellington’s opinion on the proposed bill.\(^{54}\)

In fact, for several months it was unclear exactly how Wellington would take the introduction of Grey’s bill. At one point he seems to have drafted his resignation to the Queen over the issue.\(^{55}\) He ensured, however, that his opposition never became public. When the Tory peer Lord Londonderry wrote to Wellington criticizing Fox Maule and the “imbecile Gov[ernmen]t.” for their proposal, Wellington judiciously wrote back that he could not disclose his advice to the cabinet without Her Majesty’s permission.\(^{56}\) The cabinet was happy to leave Wellington’s opinion obscure. When Lord Londonderry followed his private letter with a more pointed question in the House of Lords, Earl Grey insisted that as a matter of principle he could not disclose the contents of any communications between Her Majesty’s ministers and the commander-in-chief.\(^{57}\) In the Commons, Russell responded to a similar question from Douglas by answering that there had been several communications with the Commander-in-Chief, and certainly there had

\(^{55}\) Wellington to Queen Victoria, draft, n.d., WP/2/151/101-102, WUS.
\(^{56}\) Londonderry to Wellington, 23 March 1847, WP/2/152/92, WUS; Wellington to Londonderry, 24 March 1847, WP/2/152/94, WUS.
\(^{57}\) 91 Parl. Deb., H.L. (3d ser.) 546-7
been no direct opposition to the plan adopted by the Government. Further than this he declined to answer.”

In the end, however, Wellington capitulated. Before the bill’s third reading in the Commons he agreed to support the measure, as long as the enlistment clauses were separated from the others. As Maule explained, “in short he will take in two doses what if younger & left more to himself he wd. [would] have swallowed in one with half the hassle.” As an interim measure, the Mutiny Bill for that year would allow for both limited and unlimited enlistment. A week later, on 22 April 1847, Wellington wrote to Grey to say that “I intend on Monday to support the Bill which stands for discussion in the House of Lords; and to state my reason for thinking that its adoption will not be injurious to the Service.”

Wellington’s actual speech in the Lords, however, was unsurprisingly half-hearted. As he had promised, he said that “having well considered the measure ever since it first came under the deliberation of Her Majesty's servants, it is my opinion that it will not lead to any diminution of the number of the old soldiers in the service.” This did not stop him, however, from hinting at his continued fears about an exodus from the army by saying “I will once more entreat your Lordships never to consent to any measure which would deprive Her Majesty's service of old and experienced men, and thus pave the way for disasters which would assuredly follow when the Army should come to be

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58 91 Parl. Deb. (3d ser.) 489. That same day he sought Wellington’s permission for such an evasion. See Russell to Wellington, 26 March 1847, WP/2/152/103, WUS.
59 This was the cause of the significant changes Maule introduced to the bill during its third reading, involving the removal of five clauses and the addition of several more, and leading to Colonel Sibthorp’s exclamation “Good Lord, defend us from such legislation for the future!” 91 Parl. Deb. (3d ser.) 866-7.
60 Fox Maule to Russell, 13 April 1847, PRO 30/22/6C, fols.79-80, TNA.
61 Wellington to Grey, 22 April 1847, WP/2/190/85, WUS.
employed in war. It is my opinion, however, that the present measure is not calculated to have such an effect.” Nor did it prevent him from making a complaint about Parliament’s parsimony, saying “I am aware that it is unpalatable to a British House of Parliament to consider in time of peace what is necessary in a period of warfare.”62 This ambivalence did not go unobserved, although the mere fact of the Duke’s public support had its influence on the debate in the Lords.63

Otherwise, the discussion in the House of Lords recapitulated much of what had gone on in the Commons. Earl Grey presented the bill as only the latest in a series of measures for “raising the character of the Army” and improving the conditions of its soldiers, including improvements to barracks and provisions, the creation of libraries and savings banks, and reductions in the use of corporal punishment.64 Some opponents were resisting not just limited enlistment but any form of reform. Douglas began his first speech on the bill saying that he “lamented to see that restless spirit of change abroad, going about seeking what it could destroy,” which had already mutilated the Navigation Acts.65 Sibthorp, who had responded to Layard’s earlier proposal by saying that he disliked even the word “reform,” complained that “they [the Whigs] had attacked the Church, they had attacked the law, they had attacked physic. All professions were undergoing a change; and even that assembly had changed,” an unsubtle reference to the reformed House of Commons.66

64 91 Parl. Deb., H.L. (3d ser.) 1317.
Most of the bill’s opponents were also concerned that limited enlistment would threaten the social order by creating a body of disaffected and unemployed ex-soldiers who might lead disturbances or a revolution.\(^67\) As Lord Cardigan explained, “at some future time, when the people of this country were turned by means of this Bill into a military population, the greatest difficulty would be experienced in cases of disturbance to suppress the riotous, and maintain internal peace with that skeleton.”\(^68\) Dark allusions were made to failure of the French army to prevent the overthrow of Charles X. Such concerns reflected anxieties about the loyalties of the masses only compounded by ongoing Chartist agitation. Such fears were particularly acute for Tories like Colonel George Alexander Reid, who explained that “in his opinion, as the Reform Bill added to the political power of the people, so this measure was likely to add to their physical power.”\(^69\)

Supporters of the bill argued that such a threat was illusory. Having suggested that a short stint in the army would inculcate valuable discipline useful in civilian life, Maule said that soldiers would set an example of good order when they mixed with their “fellow-citizens.” He also noted the continued loyalty of ex-soldiers in Canada during the Rebellions of 1837.\(^70\) Evans went further, saying that the people of Great Britain would favor mass military training and the creation of a national guard.\(^71\) They also argued that a body of trained ex-soldiers would prove useful in case of invasion. The creation of such a reserve was one of Grey’s stated aims, and in the Lords he explained

\(^{67}\) 91 Parl. Deb. (3d ser.) 284; 91 Parl. Deb. (3d ser.) 660.  
\(^{68}\) 91 Parl. Deb., H.L. (3d ser.) 553.  
\(^{69}\) 91 Parl. Deb. (3d ser.) 670-671. 
\(^{70}\) 91 Parl. Deb. (3d ser.) 665. 
\(^{71}\) 91 Parl. Deb. (3d ser.) 295.
that even those men who chose not to join the such a force would likely serve in case of an invasion – since such men would flock to the colors whether compelled by law or not. Layard similarly explained that the French threat demanded limited enlistment: “the possession of our sea-girt isle had, by the introduction of steam, become very much altered, and it would be necessary to have our people skilled in the use of arms.”

Perhaps the most fundamental opposition to the bill came from those who were satisfied with the nature of the current recruits. They argued either that higher-class recruits would make inferior soldiers, or that the question of the recruit’s class was irrelevant. Marshalling his statistics, Douglas noted that the majority of current recruits were agricultural laborers and servants, who he claimed made the best soldiers. Artisans and mechanics were in general “not so able-bodied nor so well conducted,” shopmen and clerks made worse even soldiers, and the few “gentlemen's sons, professional gentlemen, licentiates of medicine, divinity, and even law” were “the worst soldiers of all.” Lord Stanley agreed, stating that if they could be recruited “lawyers' clerks, bankers' clerks, and that class of persons … would be the worst of soldiers and the most turbulent men in the Army.” In the Commons, Colonel Lindsay explained that to recruit “half-gentlemen or broken-down tradesmen” would be a disaster. Major General William Napier, despite his radical politics, represented the mainstream of army opinion when he explained the superior military qualities of the laborer to even the younger son of a tradesman. The poor working man is “quite as moral, generally more docile and

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73 91 Parl. Deb. (3d ser.) 694.  
74 91 Parl. Deb. (3d ser.) 650.  
75 91 Parl. Deb., H.L. (3d ser.) 1351.  
76 91 Parl. Deb. (3d ser.) 297.
obedient, far hardier to endure, and even, in all nations, patriotic devotion, and the
instinct of national honour, have been fixed more firmly with the poor than with the
middle classes: the national spirit, the vital energy of patriotism, have always been with
the poor of every nation, not always with the great and middle classes.‖

If any improvement was wanted it was, as Sidney Herbert clarified, superior men of the same
class, not men of superior classes. If any inducement was needed to recruit those
superior laborers, it was better pay and pensions, rather than the freedom of limited
enlistment.

The Soldier and His Liberties

Limited enlistment’s impact on the British army’s recruiting problems was
important, but there was something further at stake in the conversation. As Hew Strachan
explains, limited enlistment’s motive “was to equate military service with other working-
class occupations, to remove the implications of loss of liberty implicit in an indefinite
period of service, and it was thus a manifestation of the desire to attract a better class of
recruit.”

The idea that underpinned limited enlistment was that offering not merely
better conditions but more liberty and respectability would attract better men, who would
make better soldiers. It was a chance to replace the old system in which soldiers were
degraded and debauched by removing their liberty, their independence, and their self-
respect, and in which they were inculcated with a sense of inferiority. Instead, soldiers

77 William Napier, memorandum on corporal punishment in the army, 8 Aug. 1846 (copy), WP/2/148/61-
66, WUS.
78 91 Parl. Deb. (3d ser.) 662.
79 Strachan, Wellington’s Legacy, 70; see also WP/2/190/57-62, WUS.
could now be independent, respectable men who had embraced a duty and a trade, without the savage discipline or the subordination.

Unlimited enlistment accorded well with the prejudices of the army’s senior commanders. It presumed that a soldier was, at heart, malleable scum. It took years of drill and discipline to make a recruit into a passable soldier, and years more to inculcate the kind of loyalty and esprit de corps that made a soldier great. Otherwise, one was left with an untrustworthy and mercenary rabble. It was understandable that few men would be willing to undergo the privations and the indignities of the average soldier. As Wellington himself explained in 1836, “the objection to entering into the army, in my opinion, is the severity and regularity of the discipline, and the life which the soldier is obliged to lead, and which you must oblige him to lead.”

Political conservatives were not the only ones who believed in harsh discipline. Napier argued that “no Army was ever yet useful to its Country, or formidable to its enemies, permanently, without discipline. Discipline is preserved by fear, or hope, rewards, or punishments, or by both combined.” Such discipline was particularly necessary for the British army because of the virtues of the British people, they:

- are the strongest, the hardiest, the bravest, the most headstrong people of the world – and much given to intoxication. They have been taught to consider surly independence as a virtue, and, of late years, to look upon men of higher station as their unfriends. They are required, upon entering the Army, to abandon all such thoughts, to yield to implicit obedience to orders, to restrain their natural feelings,

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80 Qtd. in Spiers, *Army and Society*, 52
to abandon their customs, to lead a monotonous, uneasy, life at home, one of hardship, privations and danger abroad.  

The lash is thus the only way, Napier argues, to create the discipline necessary for a victorious army, because Britons are strong, unruly, and independent.

Douglas, Stanley and Napier argued that laborers made the best soldiers because success in soldiering was rooted in discipline, and discipline was rooted in subordination.  

It took years of drill to inculcate in a man the combination of instant obedience and martial pride that was the hallmark of a British soldier, and was the cause of victory on the battlefield. The Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars may have shattered the world in which great captains like Frederick the Great sought to make their men into automata on the battlefield, but the change had touched but lightly on the British army.  

As Scott H. Myerly explains, the “paradigm of the [soldier as] machine” was a practical response to the complexities of moving large bodies of men both on and off the battlefield, as well as a way of ensuring control over a potential source of revolution or resistance. The machine paradigm was therefore “both a disciplinary and a tactical

81 William Napier, memorandum on corporal punishment in the army, 8 Aug. 1846 (copy), WP/2/148/61-66, WUS.
82 The two terms often serve as synonyms in the Duke of Wellington’s correspondence.
83 The origins of the discipline that made soldiers into automata in the eighteenth century are described by Foucault in Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 135-169. Although the details of the transformation of military discipline Foucault described are infinitely contestable in the details, the overall development is clear. For an alternative perspective, see that of David Hackett Fisher, Washington’s Crossing (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2004), 40-46, 494. Contrary to Foucault’s suggestions, the system of discipline he associates with the “classical age” changed many of its mechanisms if not its aims in the nineteenth-century, in the face of changes in technology and ideology. For the implications of Foucault’s analysis in the late nineteenth century, see French, Military Identities, 62-75.
Control of the soldier’s body was precise, affecting every aspect of his outward appearance – uniform, hair, posture and motions – as well as his actions. Obedience was required not only on the parade ground but in every other aspect of the soldier’s life. Wellington was of the opinion that soldiers should be constantly watched, and “should never be exempt from observation and free from controul [sic].” In combination, the control of uniform, posture and drill was more effective at inculcating obedience than harsh punishments.

The gradual and cumulative effect of these disciplinary techniques explains why officers like Wellington attached so much importance to the retaining of old soldiers who could be presumed to have imbibed such discipline most deeply, and to serve as an example to their younger comrades. It also explains why they believed it was impossible for any improvements in morale, in training or in motivation to compensate for the loss of that experience. Disciplining was a gradual and a fundamentally external process. The soldier’s own intentions were incapable of accelerating or improving his acculturation. In fact, Wellington seemed to think of the soldier’s mind as a delicate thing, disrupted by the mere possibility of a change in situation. As his secretary Fitzroy Somerset explained, even if only a few current soldiers took Grey’s offer of an immediate discharge it would enter the mind of every soldier and hinder him “in the performance of

87 Wellington to Russell, 27 Jan. 1847, WP/2/190/73-74, WUS.
his duty, and constantly thinking he might better himself if released from the army.”

According to Wellington, any man liable for a discharge would feel “no longer bound to perform his regular duty.”

It was an approach to military discipline consistent with an ideal of benevolent paternalism. Historian David Roberts explains that Victorian paternalists believed that society should be authoritarian, hierarchic, organic, and pluralistic. In a world of changing economic and social relations, the practices of the past seemed to offer safety and security. Nostalgia for the predictability of feudal society inspired the Eglinton tournament of 1839 as well as the Young England movement. In the early 1840s, Carlyle wrote his passionate plea to revert to medieval principles of responsibility in Past and Present, Benjamin Disraeli completed two novels on gentlemanly benevolence, Coningsby and Sybil, and lesser writers like William Sewell and Arthur Helps published their own works on the paternalist system. In parliament, paternalism marshaled support for the privileges of the Established Church and for the regulation of labor conditions in manufacturing, but also for the continuation of the Corn Laws. It was a philosophy that had an appeal beyond the Conservative party, and it was an alliance of Young England with more liberal reformers which enabled the Mines Act of 1842, the

88 Somerset to Wellington, 19 Dec. 1846, WP/2/150/137-8, WUS.
89 Wellington to Russell, 15 Dec. 1846, WP/2/190/49-52, WUS.
Railway Act of 1844, and the Lunacy Act of 1845. Paternalism spoke to Peelites like Gladstone and Herbert, as well as to romantics like Disraeli. Even the great Whig magnates, with their *noblesse oblige*, were not immune to its charms.

In the army, paternalism assumed the incapacity of the soldier to make his own independent decisions, including the decision to recognize the military necessity of obedience and to embrace the necessary self-abnegation. Self-subordination for a cause was, despite the putative patriotism of the average Briton, believed impossible. Instead, only those who by temperament could endure the external disciplining and subordination necessary to create military obedience could become truly great soldiers. That temperament was not a matter of volition or intent, but of social origins. Wellington himself acknowledged that military service offered harsh discipline and poor rewards. Laborers expected hard work, limited rewards, and the required denigration of the self; clerks and tradesmen did not, and – this was critical to the traditionalist perspective – no measure of patriotism or understanding of the situation could make them comfortable with such a lot. The traditionalists considered the superior classes to be unsuitable soldiers because they were superior, and therefore would necessarily rebel against the imposition of strict discipline. Furthermore, improved conditions would never be able to conciliate recruits of a superior class to service, because the maintenance of discipline required subordination against which their souls, and minds, would revolt.

While liberals who advocated individualism in other spheres of life were perfectly comfortable accepting that soldiering required total subordination, Grey, Maule, and

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Russell all insisted on the soldier’s potential to become a respectable individual. That required soldiers to be less like prisoners sentenced for life and more like proper employees. In this context, the freedom of action conferred by limited service was far more important than any of the practical implications, favorable or not. As Maule explained in his January memorandum, even if only a few men ever enrolled in the reserves “a blot will be removed from our military legislation.”

Russell himself sharply criticized the idea of the permanent subordination of soldiers in a letter to Wellington where he noted that “I can easily imagine that Officers do not like to part with the power over a man’s whole life which they now possess, but it is that very power which deters men from Enlisting.”

Limited enlistment introduced moral choice into military service. It sanctified the decision with the aura of deliberation with which liberals imbued all free choices. This did not mean that liberals were unaware of the many constraints that continued to operate on working-class recruits, but that it was possible to ignore these mere material pressures in favor of recognizing the rational decision involved. As an alternative to the idea of permanent subordination, Russell and his allies presented military service as a contractual relationship. The soldier relinquished freedom of movement, of body, and of thought in exchange for pay and sustenance in the service of the nation. Such a contract could only be temporary, rather than permanent. It would have to allow the soldier the possibility of a return to civilian life, if only to ensure that he was not entirely crushed by military

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94 War Office, “Estimate of the probable Effect of extending the principle of free discharges with deferred Pensions to all Soldiers of 10 Years’ Service,” 12 Jan. 1847, WP/2/190/57-62, WUS.
95 Russell to Wellington, 8 April 1847, WP/2/190/80, WUS.
service. In fact, a successful military career with access to the proper mix of discipline and education could be an asset in civilian life. This was a challenge not just to the traditional view, but also to the radical critique of the army which presumed that there was no form of military discipline which did not morally cripple the respectable individual.

As long as introducing the contractual approach into military service was Grey and Maule’s primary aim, it was difficult to find a compromise with Wellington. As Maule concisely observed in April, Wellington’s proposal to make service in the reserves mandatory abandoned “the main object of the measure, which is that the man shd. be at full liberty to return to private life after a period of 10 or 12 years good service to the crown.”96 That aim also meant that improvements in material conditions, while desirable, could never be a substitute for the offer of free choice. Proposed inducements like improved pay and pensions might ameliorate the situation of a man trapped in the army, but they could not make him independent again. Nor, the leaders of the movement for limited service believed, could they have nearly the same attraction as free choice itself. As Layard explained in the Commons, “a thinking and well-educated man would have no objection to enter the service when he knew that at the end of ten years he could retire from it if he did not like it.” Furthermore, such men would be superior soldiers to those who “were rash and careless men, who entered thoughtlessly, and were bound for life.”97

96 Fox Maule to Russell, 10 Apr. 1847, PRO 30/22/6C, fol.49, TNA.
In contrast, the idea of soldiering as a contract did not sit well with officers who considered “modern economy” a dirty phrase. Fitzroy Somerset was one who saw the hints of an unhealthy mercantile mindset in the creation of the reserves, reporting to Wellington that he thought the ministers would prefer a force organized along commercial lines, in which there were only a few officers “to fire them [the troops] when they might be irregular.”

Belief in the importance of free choice was also at the heart of the belief that it would be the most efficacious way to improve the quality of recruits. Grey was sure that the lack of a way to leave the service was the fundamental source of an aversion to enlistment. Since the material conditions of the soldier were superior to those of the average laborer in Dorsetshire or Wiltshire, “he could only account for the unpopularity of the service by the dislike the poorer classes naturally had to be separated from their relations for life, as unlimited service might be considered to be.” Such a belief was based not on empirical evidence, but on faith in their liberal creed. When Russell spoke in favor of the limited enlistment bill he said:

I think it is quite clear, even without having any particular data or calculation on the subject, that the circumstance of a man seeing there is a limited period at the end of which he will obtain relief from military service, and he able to devote himself to other pursuits while health and strength are still left to him to go on with those other pursuits, it a continuance in the Army is disagreeable to him, would obviously be a reason for a man enlisting in the Army on sober and steady

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98 Somerset to Wellington, 19 Dec. 1846, WP/2/150/137-8, WUS.
calculation, instead of taking up the decision in a moment of haste and despair, and afterwards becoming discontented. It likewise appears to me to be obvious that if men enlist with a more sober calculation of the state to which they are about to belong, they will be, I think, more contented with their position than they now are.\textsuperscript{99}

What mattered, more than anything else, was that soldiers be, at least in the matter of enlistment, independent. But supporters of limited enlistment expected as an added advantage that effectiveness would actually be enhanced. As Maule explained for the reserves, “if it does not exist upon the voluntary principle and is not based on the ‘Esprit de Corps’ contracted by the man while in service, it will be a worthless force.”\textsuperscript{100}

Grey and Maule were not insensible to the traditionalist argument that the best soldiers came from the lower classes. They were certainly not advocates of an army in which lawyers or gentry would proliferate among the rank-and-file. When they argued for an improved class of recruit, they merely meant that rather than the dregs of the working classes the army should attract the better, more moral and more motivated laborers who would shy away from signing on for life. What was important was that they believed that intent matter in the making a good soldier. Just as the independent individual was superior to the dependent in business, government, and domestic life, a soldier who freely chose to become one was superior to a soldier who did not make the choice. This challenged the traditionalist view that the subordination required for soldiering could only be achieved by external force. Instead, Grey and Maule believed

\textsuperscript{99} 91 Parl. Deb. (3d ser.) 864.  
\textsuperscript{100} Fox Maule to Russell, 10 Apr. 1847, PRO 30/22/6C, fol.50, TNA.
that an independent man could choose self-abnegation in the service of his nation. Love of country made self-subordination possible. Yet such self-subordination was a difficult choice. It was difficult to countenance, and a failure to achieve it meant an unsatisfied soldier whose real urges were towards freedom or villainy rather than the defense of the realm. Thus there needed to be opportunities for the soldier to reconsider his choice, since a soldier denied any opportunity to leave the service was no better than one conscripted or entrapped.

That limited enlistment challenged the fundamental axioms of the military tradition reflected the extent to which military practice and the army establishment belonged to what was now a bygone era. The Duke of Wellington commanded great personal authority, but his opinions on military matters were firmly entrenched in an older era whether the issue was enlistment, medals, or even rifled small arms. His most vocal supporters in parliament were not Conservative leaders like Peel but backbenchers like Sibthorp. Once Wellington acquiesced, the necessary legislation passed with ease. Many Radicals accepted the premise that being a good soldier required subordination to discipline that could be achieved only by the erasure individualism. This made limited enlistment a questionable reform, since these Radicals rejected the claim that a free man could still make a good soldier. Still, a shortened period of enlistment was an improvement on the current situation. Furthermore, Grey’s plans were also attractive to them for their impact on the burden of taxation and the growth of military expenditure. While they continued to proclaim the pernicious influence of military service, most of

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101 91 Parl. Deb. (3d ser.) 690.
them voted in favor of limited enlistment favor – even Joseph Hume. The debate about limited enlistment was thus only a prelude to the bitter fights that were to come. Endorsing an approach to army enlistment that cut costs at the same time as it continued the ameliorative policies of the past decade was nothing compared to the more radical issues parliament would face in the next twenty years.

Chapter 4: The Militia and the First Invasion Panic, 1846-9

The introduction of limited enlistment was intimately connected with the problem of home defense, but its introduction was little help in dealing with the more fundamental question of securing sufficient manpower. Even if Earl Grey’s proposed Army of Reserve was a success – and this was hardly certain – it would take years to recruit enough ex-soldiers, since the first men enlisted under limited enlistment would not be discharged for a further ten years. In the interim, it was necessary to look for an alternative auxiliary force. The Russell administration was therefore forced to consider, like its predecessor, a revival of the militia.

Though it had nostalgic advocates across the political spectrum, most liberals saw the militia as unpopular, intrusive, and socially regressive. The challenge in reviving the militia was to create a force that would supply enough trained manpower without being either an undue burden on the working classes or a bastion of Tory privilege. Within the Whig cabinet, Palmerston continued to advocate a regular militia with close ties to the country gentry. In contrast, Russell encouraged his colleagues adopt a plan that was less burdensome to the potential recruits. The deadlock between them was only broken by the arrival of the first of the mid-century invasion panics, which began with the leak of one of the Duke of Wellington’s alarmist letters to the *Morning Chronicle* in late 1847.
Public anxiety forced the Russell government to include a request for funds for 150,000 militiamen in its February 1848 budget. That proposal, along with the increased income tax needed to pay for increases in the army and navy, met widespread – and ultimately successful – parliamentary opposition. The defeat invigorated Cobden and the entrepreneurial Radicals in their moral and economic criticism of the British army, but their popular support proved more tenuous than they suspected.

The Revival of the Militia

The militia’s most important champion in the Russell administration was Palmerston, who emphasized not only the need for an auxiliary force but also the political necessity of proposing a force acceptable to the country gentry. Though he made sure that the matter was constantly before the cabinet, Palmerston was unable to revive the militia before the general election of 1847. While most of the opposition within the cabinet was motivated by financial and electoral considerations, there were also hints of the philosophical issues that would make finding a consensus on the militia so difficult.

Though he had raised the issue before, Palmerston outlined his thinking on the militia in a memorandum to Russell in early December. Although the French are individually “kind, civil and hospitable,” as a nation they have “a feeling of deep hatred to England as a Power,” inspired by memories of Trafalgar, Waterloo, and St. Helena.¹ Should they succeed in achieving naval superiority in the Channel, there would be

insufficient troops to oppose their invasion fleet. The inevitable French occupation of London would be catastrophic: “the Court and the Government put to flight, the Public Departments in the hands of the enemy, the Bank plundered, the merchants under contribution, the Public Stores destroyed, all the business of the Country paralyzed, Woolwich and Deptford and probably Sheerness burnt.” Palmerston thought 30,000 more regulars could prevent this tragedy, but he recognized that “the feelings and habits of the nation” made such an increase impossible. The alternative would be a reserve, 100,000 in Britain and 40,000 in Ireland, organized and trained in peacetime and embodied in war.2

This opinion was supported by both Wellington and Burgoyne. Although neither was particularly optimistic about the capabilities of auxiliary troops, they recognized the inevitability of relying on them for at least some duties. Burgoyne expected them to be used “in fortifications and posts, and for a variety of escorts, guards, and numerous duties requiring armed force,” or on the battlefield if brigaded with twice their number of regulars.3 On 17 December Palmerston sent both his and Burgoyne’s memoranda to Russell.4 He followed them five days later with a further letter, explaining that “my firm & final opinion is that the Government will not have done its duty by the Crown & the Country, till it has organized and to a certain degree trained to the use of arms a Reserve Force of 100,000 men, capable of being called out at a week or ten days notice in support

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2 Palmerston, memorandum, December 1846, PRO 30/22/5F, fol.17, 20, TNA
3 Burgoyne, memorandum, 7 Nov. 1846, PRO 30/22/5F, fol. 215, TNA; also Wellington to Russell, 12 August 1846, WP/2/147/25-28, WUS.
4 Palmerston to Russell, 17 Dec. 1846, PRO 30/22/5F, fols.211-12, TNA. Repr. in Later Correspondence, vol. 1, 242-3. On 29 Nov. 1846, Anglesey had asked Burgoyne to send his report on the “the wants of our Dock Yards” and “our weaknesses in the Downs and along our Coast and at Liverpool and at Edinburgh &c. &c. &c.” to Palmerston, GC/AN/14, PUS.
of and to cooperate with the Regular army.”⁵ Wellington wrote in support, affirming Palmerston and Burgoyne’s view of the French threat and insisting on a militia of 150,000 men.⁶

What all three wanted was a revival of the militia which had existed during the Napoleonic Wars, and in particular the maintenance of the traditional relationship between the militia and the country gentry. As Palmerston explained, “it must become a question worth mature consideration whether it would be wise to cut off the connection which the peculiar Constitution of the Militia Establishes between the owners of the land the defenders of the land.” This was not a question of military efficiency, since “it would be very easy to devise an army of Reserve which should be more like a regular army than the Militia can be,” such as Earl Grey’s proposed force of ex-soldiers. Instead, reviving the structure of the old militia was a political necessity, since:

- a great army of Reserve unconnected with the gentry of the Country would meet with no Constitutional sympathy, and would have no natural Parliamentary support; it would be run at by the money making classes whose workmen it would take away for a portion of the year, and even if it was not attacked by the gentry & landowners out of jealousy it would find among them no defenders, except among those few who might be capable of understanding the value of such a force when no immediate necessity for using it was staring them in the face; and the

⁵ Palmerston to Russell, 22 Dec. 1846, PRO 30/22/5G, fols.16-17, TNA.
⁶ Wellington to Burgoyne, 9 Jan. 1847, WP/2/151/53-56, WUS.
chances would be, that such a force though perhaps intrinsically the best, would be the most difficult to maintain.\textsuperscript{7}

The main obstacle was financial, with between £5 and £6 million already committed to dockyard fortifications and harbors of refuge. Palmerston’s suggestion was to resort to a kind of loan, terminable annuities, since – using a metaphor from estates management – such works would be “in the nature of permanent improvements of the Freehold, the change of which may justly be thrown upon the inheritance, instead of being wholly defrayed by the Tenant for Life.”\textsuperscript{8}

Despite Wellington’s vocal support, there was substantial opposition to Palmerston’s proposal. Among the opponents were Lord Minto and Charles Wood. Minto, a former First Lord of the Admiralty and Russell’s Lord Privy Seal, felt that Palmerston focused too much on fighting an enemy who had already landed and too little on keeping the enemy away.\textsuperscript{9} His memorandum claimed that the fleet was the only possible defense against a full-scale invasion and that the best protection against a smaller raid was the fortification of the likely targets, the dockyards.\textsuperscript{10}

As Chancellor of the Exchequer, Wood’s opposition was financial. Although he similarly felt that the “militia should be, a national, landed force,” he was already worried about the costs of the ships and forts approved by the last Parliament, and found the cost

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\textsuperscript{7} Palmerston to Russell, 22 Dec. 1846, PRO 30/22/5G, fols.18-19, TNA.
\textsuperscript{8} Palmerston, memorandum, December 1846, PRO 30/22/5F, fols.25-26, TNA.
\textsuperscript{9} Minto to Russell, 12 Dec. 1846, PRO 30/22/5F, fol.161, TNA. NB: Minto’s letters precede the formal transmission of Palmerston’s memorandum to Russell.
\textsuperscript{10} Minto to Russell, 12 Dec. 1846, PRO 30/22/5F, fols.165-6, TNA
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of Palmerston’s proposed measure was “alarming.”11 In a subsequent letter, he insisted that he was hardly insensible to British insecurity, having served as Melbourne’s first secretary of the Admiralty, and having supported the planned harbors of refuge, but that the differences between them “arises a good deal from my being paymaster.”12 In his own response to Palmerston, Russell was concerned about entrusting so much to country gentlemen, but similarly emphasized the financial issue, noting that if £200,000 were still spare in April he would propose the measure. Until then, all that could be afforded was a local militia which would not be embodied, even for training, until the outbreak of war.13

Russell was not a neophyte when it came to the militia, having overseen the force and several reform proposals as Home Secretary in the 1830s. Despite his involvement with Ellice and Howick’s reforms of the militia’s permanent staff, Russell’s notes from that era indicate no desire to radically change the militia.14 The draft abstract for a new Militia Bill printed in January 1847 was quite traditional. It retained the usual clauses keeping the militia independent of the regular army, including restrictions on enlistment from the militia into the regulars, and those favoring the gentry, such as landed property requirements for officers. The abstract required colonels to hold a freehold or copyhold of at least £1000 per annum, lieutenant-colonels of £600, and other officers of £100 or a

11 Wood to Palmerston, 26 Dec. 1846, GC/WO/20, PUS; Wood to Russell, 7 Dec. 1846, PRO 30/22/5F, fols.84-85, TNA; Wood to Palmerston, 19 Dec. 1846, GC/WO/18, PUS.
12 Wood to Palmerston, Dec. 1846, GC/WO/19, PUS; Wood to Palmerston, 26 Dec. 1846, GC/WO/20, PUS.
13 Russell to Palmerston, 27 Dec. 1846, GC/RU/130, PUS.
14 For the royal counter-proposal to use regular army officers as inspectors in place of the permanent staff, which would have reduced the barrier between the regulars and militia, see King William to Russell, 14 June 1835, Early Correspondence, vol. 2, 117-120. Russell’s own opinion on the permanent staff matched that of Howick. See Russell to Melbourne, 30 Sept. 1835, Early Correspondence, vol. 2, 126-127. For Russell’s 1830s proposals, see Early Correspondence, vol. 2, 180-182.
lease of £300. Voluntary recruitment was to be encouraged by bounties paid for by the Poor Law Guardians which would allow the Secretary at War to hire substitutes.\(^\text{15}\)

When combined with the ongoing Irish famine, the financial difficulties were insurmountable, as Palmerston himself admitted in early February.\(^\text{16}\) Only Wellington seemed to be undeterred, insisting on more fortifications and a militia of 150,000 men, and writing privately to Anglesey to explain that he would be “satisfied” with a militia of 150,000 men in the three Kingdoms, further militia in the Channel Islands, North America and the West Indies, and well as 20,000 more regulars.\(^\text{17}\) By March, political problems were as influential as financial matters. Wood was surprisingly candid in a cabinet letter on the 9th. The Chancellor laid out the measures already underway: sea defenses at Plymouth, Portsmouth and Sheerness to be complete by the end of the year, harbors of refuge either begun or to be begun at Harwich, Dover, Portland, and on all three Channel Islands, 1200 more artillerymen, and 1500 marines. There was simply no money for further measures.\(^\text{18}\)

The real reason, though, that Wood thought it better to postpone the militia until after the general election was the Whigs’ education policy.\(^\text{19}\) Since the Whigs had restricted state grants for elementary education to Anglican schools in 1839, most Nonconformists had become firm Voluntaryists, insisting on leaving education to voluntary organizations without state inference. Nonconformist opposition had defeated

\(^{15}\) Militia Bill (England), January 1847, PRO 30/22/6A, fol. 1, TNA.
\(^{16}\) Palmerston to Anglesey, 2 Feb. 1847, WP/2/152/2, WUS.
\(^{17}\) Wellington, memorandum, 8 Feb. 1847, WP/2/152/41-44, WUS; Wellington to Anglesey, 9 March 1847, WP/2/152/55, WUS.
\(^{18}\) Wood to Russell, 21 March 1847, PRO 30/22/6B, fols.279-80, TNA. Repr. *Later Correspondence*, vol.1, 243-45.
\(^{19}\) Wood to Russell, 21 March 1847, PRO 30/22/6B, fol.280, TNA.
the compulsory education provisions of Peel’s Factory Bill in 1843, and Wood feared their opposition to Russell’s proposal for a new Education Bill that would expand the system of grants. Nonconformist liberals were also likely to oppose increased state spending on the military, and Wood worried that with the militia “we shall be opposed by the greater number of our own old friends, & be driven to rely for support on our habitual opponents.”

Furthermore, even if the militia bill was introduced only in the next session, it would still be in time for training for the summer, “& by this postponement we avoid the additional difficulty of the Elections.”

Auckland and Sir George Grey agreed. As his name suggests, Sir George was a very well-connected Whig politician who had already served as under-secretary for the Colonies and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. As Home Secretary, he worried about the “formidable opposition” the militia would provoke, as well as the fact there was not enough time to properly prepare such an important proposal. Nor, he observed, had the principles underlying the proposed bill been sufficiently considered. Such internal debate, he suggested, required time unavailable during the busy session.

Despite stressing the importance of the militia, First Lord Auckland similarly considered the “financial and parliamentary difficulties of the measure” conclusively against it.

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20 Wood to Russell, 21 March 1847, PRO 30/22/6B, fol.281, TNA. For the Whigs and education, see T.A. Jenkins, *The Liberal Ascendancy, 1830-1886* (London: Macmillan, 1994), 33, 58-60. In the end, Russell was only able to pass the bill with concessions that gained the support of the Wesleyan Methodists.

21 Wood to Russell, 21 March 1847, PRO 30/22/6B, fol.282, TNA.


23 Auckland to Russell, 2 April 1847, PRO 30/22/6C, fols.9-12, TNA. Repr. *Later Correspondence*, vol. 1, 247-8.
In contrast, Earl Grey argued that “the changes which have taken place in the state of society” demanded far greater alterations than those in the draft bill, and that “I am persuaded that at much less cost a far more valuable addition to our means of defence might be made by adopting a plan of a different kind.”

Grey was referring to his own plans for an Army of Reserve, but his claim had a broader validity. Would either workers or their employers be satisfied with a “constitutional force” that seemed to serve the interests of the gentry?

Only Palmerston seemed to consider an immediate militia bill both of vital importance and politically viable. Responding to Auckland, Minto and Wood, Palmerston’s letter included many of the proposals that he would continue to support over the next fifteen years, such as the removal of the arsenal at Woolwich to a less vulnerable site in central England. Unlike Wood, Sir George and Earl Grey, Palmerston wrote “I can apprehend no great difficulty in carrying it through Parliament upon an understanding with the members of the late Government who, I believe, are very anxious for the measure.” Furthermore, “I can not fear its unpopularity in the country, especially if it is supported by leading men on both sides.”

His faith in the strength of the gentry was surprisingly boundless.

Palmerston’s isolation within the cabinet would not have surprised Wellington, who as early as 30 March was bemoaning to Anglesey that “there is not a leading man in either House of Parliament who will venture to pronounce the opinion that the Country

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ought in time of peace to incur one shilling of expense to provide for the defence of the Country in one of war; even to raise the Defensive Force provided by the Law and Constitution of the Country, and which has always existed in time of Peace, ‘till Modern Economy, and neglect of common precaution, have destroyed it.”

Russell’s intent, he wrote to the Duke of Wellington, was still to propose a militia to the cabinet. He hoped, however, that there would be no public agitation for the militia before the proposal could be made in the Commons. In fact, two cabinet meetings on 14 and 24 April decided nothing. Russell’s proposal to revive the militia was supported by Palmerston and the Earl of Clarendon, but opposed by Wood, Sir George, and Earl Grey. Grey proposed some alternative schemes, but Hobhouse, Sir George and T.B. Macauley all considered these liable to alarm and worry the people. Russell maintained the hope, he told Charles Greville, that he could act gradually and without great publicity. Secrecy, however, was by now impossible. Both the Duke of Bedford and Charles Arbuthnot pestered Greville to ask him to have Russell meet with Wellington. Also, the Earl of Ellenborough wrote a thinly veiled threat to Earl Grey in which he declared that he would publicly complain of the deficiencies of the national defenses unless “the Govt. would declare their intentions of proposing at the Commencement of the next Session measures for placing the Naval and Military Force of the Country in a

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26 Wellington to Anglesey, 30 March 1847, WP/2/152/111-112, WUS. See also Wellington to Anglesey, 3 April 1847, WP/2/152/123-4, WUS.
27 Russell to Wellington, 10 April 1847, WP/2/152/133, WUS.
state of compleat [sic] efficiency with a view to our national security.”\textsuperscript{30} Despite the threat, there was nothing for Grey to do but suspend the militia ballot for a further year, a measure that passed the House of Lords on 13 July 1847.\textsuperscript{31}

Despite his achievement with limited enlistment, Grey had clearly failed to supplant the militia as the preferred auxiliary force. Yet this did not mean an easy consensus on the revival of that institution. Wellington was right, in his own way, when he blamed “Modern Economy” for resistance to reviving the militia. Whether it was political opposition from Nonconformist merchants or the likely reticence of urban laborers, support for the militia was questionable. With only Palmerston willing to rely on Tory votes to pass a bill, the rest of the cabinet was aware of the need for a proposal tolerable to their liberal constituencies. It was up to Russell to develop one.

The suspension of the ballot for a further year had meant only a temporary suspension of debate about the militia. In August, Palmerston sent a military report on to Russell, while remarking off-hand that “I take for settled that we are to have a militia of 100,000 men next year for this Island.”\textsuperscript{32} In fact, nothing was settled. Palmerston was asking Russell to adopt the Act of 1802 as its basis, and encouraging Russell to look for officers among the country gentry: “I have no doubt that you could find sons of country gentlemen and of wealthy farmers most desirous of becoming ensigns & lieutenants, & you could not have better men for those commissions, and I should not be surprised to see the Militia become a very popular service both with officers and men.”\textsuperscript{33}

\textsuperscript{30} Ellenborough to Grey, 9 July 1847, WP/2/154/74, WUS.
\textsuperscript{32} Palmerston to Russell, 14 Aug. 1847, PRO 30/22/6E, fols.99-101, TNA.
\textsuperscript{33} Palmerston to Russell, 20 Aug. 1847, GC/RU/1023, PUS.
Russell wrote to Wellington, asking his opinion on the best form of reserve.\textsuperscript{34} Wellington responded enthusiastically, arguing for two 50,000-man Armies of Observation as well as 72,000 further men for garrisons; a total of 172,000 regulars. Recognizing, however, that Russell was unlikely to endorse such a force, he offered instead an increase of only 20,000 regulars and a militia revival. He seriously condemned Grey’s Army of Reserve, arguing that discharged regulars would be more of a threat than an advantage to national security. Raising the specter of revolution he wrote “we have lived in times of Revolution – I have seen the course of democratic thousands and constitutional factions acting in communication and concert with Foreign Powers and Governments overturned by these by the aid of the disciplined discharged Soldiers in the large Towns principally but likewise throughout the Country.”\textsuperscript{35}

Despite their entreaties, what Russell presented in late September had little to do with either Palmerston’s or Wellington’s suggestions. Instead Russell proposed a revival of the Napoleonic-era Local Militia. To be called out only in case of invasion or insurrection, if it was embodied at any other time then it was only required to serve in its own country or adjacent ones. No substitutes were permitted, but since it trained so infrequently, enrollment was only a limited imposition. The limited training time also meant the local militia was cheap. With a sixth of the proposed total of 72,000 men embodied for training each year, as well as a permanent force of 5,000 in Ireland, the

\textsuperscript{34} Russell to Wellington, 3 Sept. 1847, WP/2/155/14-15, WUS.
\textsuperscript{35} Wellington to Russell, 6 Sept. 1847, WP/2/155/29-37, WUS.
annual cost would be only £680,000, which could funded by an increase of a penny on the pound in the income tax.  

By turning to the local militia, Russell was presenting a less burdensome and more equitable proposal than the regular militia. Those enrolled might come from any social class, and none would suffer undue hardship. When a cabinet meeting in mid-October settled nothing, Maule became responsible for the proposal. In response to criticisms that the local militia would be too ill-trained and too slow to form to respond to a surprise attack, he added a small regular militia to the plan.

Within the cabinet, the leading opponent to the local militia was Palmerston, who continued to advocate an exclusive focus on the regular militia. He challenged the potential breadth of social origins, arguing that the recruitment of agricultural laborers was necessary to ensure that “the habits and constitutions of the men who compose it, [are] fit to endure the hardships and exposure to which, if it had to act, it would necessarily be liable.” Any other source of men would be disastrous, since “attornies [sic], Shopkeepers, Gentlemen’s servants, and the like … would be derided by Troops accustomed to the kabyles and arabs of the desert.”

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37 The absence of substitutes posed a particular problem for Quakers, whose pacifism made it impossible for them to serve, but who had previously simply hired substitutes when balloted.
39 Maule to Palmerston, 11 Dec. 1847, GC/PA/96, PUS.
military experience, Wellington similarly condemned the local militia as unreliable, and argued the money would be better spent on more regulars. ⁴¹

Palmerston’s comments to Russell, equally scathing, were more sophisticated, insisting that Maule’s proposal left the army betwixt and between. The proposed regular militia, of 80-90,000 men, was too few to realistically oppose a surprise landing, while local militia, which Maule’s proposal increased to 300,000, would be too untrained. Beyond this, volunteers for the local militia were unlikely to come from the classes conducive to this service. These “inhabitants of Towns, Shopkeepers, Tradesmen, Merchants, Attornies, small Gentlemen, with the servants and dependents of these” would be “unfit by their habit of life to change at once a warm bed for a cold Bivouack.” ⁴²

His counter-proposal indicated the extent to which the entire debate had become petrified. Palmerston recommended a return to the old militia system as a simpler and more efficient solution, although he conceded that some modification of details might be required. As a sop to Maule and Russell he allowed that Volunteer corps might form in cities like London, Bristol, Edinburgh, and Glasgow, as long as the volunteers were not required to serve too far from home. ⁴³ The stultified nature of the debate was now

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⁴¹ Wellington, 27 Dec. 1847, WP/2/156/78-84, WUS; Wellington to Maule, 29 Dec. 1847, WP/2/156/71, WUS.
⁴² Palmerston, 31 Dec. 1847, ND/A/7, PUS; see also Palmerston to Russell, 21 Dec. 1847, Later Correspondence, vol. 1, 256-7.
⁴³ Palmerston, 31 Dec. 1847, ND/A/7, PUS.
readily apparent; Maule complained to Russell that Wellington’s memoranda were simply repeating old arguments rather than responding to the new proposals.⁴⁴

Wellington’s and Palmerston’s opposition to the local militia reflected their opinion that its recruits would lack the prerequisites for soldiering in terms of both social origins and training. In contrast, Maule and Russell made the liberal argument that such frequent and extensive training was both unwelcome and pernicious. As Russell explained to Wellington, “men will be very unwilling to enroll in a Militia service which may separate them from their homes & trades for five or six years.”⁴⁵ Removing 100,000 men from their “homes & occupations” would be “felt as a great hardship, & the resistance would be formidable.”⁴⁶

Furthermore, removing these men from their homes and families threatened to infect them with the lazy habits and moral weakness of regular soldiers. On this issue they had the support of Wood, who argued that the threat of embodiment meant that, while not receiving the pay of a soldier, the militiaman was “precluded from settling to any other employment or profession. He could not embark on any trade, take a house or shop, marry, … He is debarred from any permanent employment of his own providing, and none other is provided for him.”⁴⁷ The lack of such a liability was an important advantage of the local militia. As for the military consequences of the reduced time in service, Maule and Russell denied its importance, as they had with limited enlistment.

Russell pointed to the Prussian reserve, or Landwehr, as proof that local militiaman could

⁴⁴ Maule to Russell, 3 Jan. 1848, PRO 30/22/7A, fols.25-6, TNA. Excerpt repr. in Later Correspondence, vol. 1, 257-8.
⁴⁵ Russell to Wellington, 31 Dec. 1847, WP/2/156/87, WUS.
⁴⁶ Russell to Palmerston, 4 Jan. 1848, GC/RU/171, PUS.
be trained quite swiftly: “The Prussian recruit for the regular army serves about 2 ½ years & afterwards belongs to a Local Militia. So that if a Prussian soldier is made in 6 months, I cannot think of requiring 6 years to make an Englishman a soldier. He is fully as military by nature, & stronger.”

Russell reiterated his arguments in a new cabinet memorandum on January 10. Both the regular and local militia had disadvantages. The former would be unpopular in the extreme, while the latter would be unable to form in time to oppose a sudden invasion. The compromise was a combination of the two. 40,000 men would be balloted each year, serving three years with a liability to serve as regular militia and a further two serving only within their county. Thus, once the system was in full operation there would be 120,000 regular militia and a further 80,000 liable only in case of invasion.

Palmerston’s response represented the full extent of the traditionalist counter-argument. In his letter of January 14, Palmerston went beyond a condemnation of the class of the potential recruits to explain the many ways in which Russell’s liberal approach undermined the effectiveness of the potential force. Firstly, looking to the service as a disciplining experience, in the Foucauldian sense, he argued that the division between a regular and a local militia undermined the uniformity of experience which was essential for morale, for “unity of Feeling is a great Element in that Regimental spirit which is essential for making good Troop; and unity of feeling is of course much assisted

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48 Russell to Palmerston, 6 Jan. 1848, GC/RU/176, PUS. This was, however, a claim that Palmerston easily demolished. He observed that the Prussian Landwehr was embodied for two or three years of continuous service, while the English militiaman has only a month of training each year. Palmerston to Russell, 18 Jan. 1848, GC/RU/1035, PUS.
50 Russell to Palmerston, 10 Jan. 1848, GC/RU/173, PUS.
by identity of condition.” Such disciplining was only possible with extended, continuous service. Its absence would have a catastrophic effect on the effectiveness of the troops. Palmerston wrote that “we must not conceal from ourselves that after all any Militia Force is a makeshift and we are not to suppose that Twenty-eight days training will at once make a Regiment as good as the Line; in Fact it is only after the second year’s training that the generality of Regiments could be reckoned upon us fit to take the Field (and this consideration shews the great importance of not longer delaying to begin).” Since under Russell’s plan the men would only be enrolled in the regular militia for three years, only a third of the force would ever be remotely effective in battle. He therefore urged the extension of the term of service from five to seven years, to give an adequate supply of trained men.

Furthermore, Palmerston urged that the new militia force must maintain its traditional connections to the aristocracy and gentry: “I think it would be for many reasons most important to keep up the closest connection between the militia & the landed Property of the country. This connection gives facilities in raising the Force, in infusing into it when raised a corporate & country feeling & spirit, and in maintaining the System in public opinion, & in Parliamentary discussion.”

Russell presented his memorandum at the January 19 cabinet meeting, assisted by Fox Maule. Palmerston was implacably opposed; according to Hobhouse he “made very light of the scheme, but more especially of the local militia,” saying “what we should
want in case of attack was exactly what we should not get in this project." Palmerston’s letter to Russell the next day indicated that his opinion was unchanged, concluding that “on the whole I am quite certain that the old and the simple plan is the best and the most efficient arrangement would be that which is now the Law, namely, to have a Militia which being trained in time of Peace should be liable to be called out & embodied at the approach of war, the men to be raised by Ballot with a power of substitution, and to be enrolled to serve a specified number of years.”

Two weeks later, Russell was proposing a compromise where there would be a regular militia in peacetime with the option of creating a local militia in case of war. If that proposal failed, he would be willing to accept amending the Act of 1804, declaring the government’s intention to reintroduce the ballot, and asking Parliament for £300,000 to pay for this. He had already asked Wellington to come to London to discuss the final shape of the proposed militia bills. Palmerston was still against any resort to a local militia, and the matter was postponed into early February. With Palmerston and Grey each threatening resignation, it took two cabinet meetings, on February 9 and 12, for Russell to cajole the cabinet into a grudging consensus on reviving the regular militia. The final plan was to ask for money for 150,000 regular militiamen, if necessary. To

55 Diary entry, 19 Jan. 1848, Add. MSS 43751, fol.71, *The Papers of John Cam Hobhouse, 1786 – 1869* (Brighton: Harvester Microform, 1987), microfilm reel 13. The day before, Russell had written to Palmerston that “I think we must have two militias, if Maule is at all right.” Russell to Palmerston, 18 Jan. 1848, GC/RU/177, PUS. The issue had already been postponed, following the cabinet meeting of Jan. 12. See Russell to Queen Victoria, 12 Jan. 1848, *Cabinet Reports by Prime Ministers to the Crown, 1837-1867* (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1978), microfilm reel 1.
56 Palmerston to Russell, 20 Jan. 1848, GC/RU/1037, PUS.
57 Russell to Palmerston, 31 Jan. 1848, GC/RU/178, PUS.
58 Russell to Wellington, 29 Jan. 1848, WP/2/157/32, WUS.
59 Palmerston to Russell, 30 Jan. 1848, PRO 30/22/7A, fols.223-228, TNA.
avoid criticism from Earl Grey, who remained wedded to his army reserve, Russell would not outline any details to parliament. He would merely say that the money would be spent on improving the present militia system.  

The First Invasion Panic

Events had given the issue a new sense of urgency since, on November 29, the *Morning Chronicle* printed “The Opinion of a Great Commander on the Defenceless State of the Country.” A letter to the editor signed only “P.,” it paraphrased a letter from Wellington to Burgoyne on the French threat and the weakness of the British defenses, including a call for 12,000 more regulars and 150,000 militiamen. The original letter had been written on 9 January 1847, in connection with Wellington’s inspection tour of the south coast. It was an entirely predictable account of the limitations of a purely naval defense, the impossibility of relying on untrained volunteers, and the need therefore for an extensive peacetime militia force. Despite this, by publicizing the question of an imminent French threat – and associating it with Wellington’s name and reputation – the letter made the reevaluation of the national defenses a very public issue. It was the beginning of what Cobden, with the benefit of polemical hindsight, would call the “First Panic.” Now charting a new course for national defense meant not only contending with forces within the cabinet and army, or even with Parliament, but also with an engaged and opinionated public.

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62 *Morning Chronicle*, Nov. 29, 1847, 3.  
63 Cobden, *Three Panics*, 545-554.
The previous year had not been kind to Anglo-French relations. Guizot’s relationship with Palmerston was not as warm as it had been with Aberdeen, and the new Foreign Secretary was convinced that the French secretly harbored hopes of revenging themselves for Trafalgar and Waterloo. While this did not prevent Palmerston from appreciating the advantages of cultivating good relations with France, it meant he saw such relationships as built on realpolitik rather than affection. The fact that Palmerston was convinced that the only proper diplomatic course was firmness meant his diplomacy drove a wedge between Britain and France. The primary issue was that of the Spanish marriages, which A.B. Cunningham has called the “the ulcer of the entente.”

The affair circled around the two countries’s respective spheres of influence in Spain, and the potential marriage of Queen Isabella II. As foreign secretary, Aberdeen had arranged an understanding with Guizot that Isabella would marry a Spanish or Neapolitan Bourbon, rather than a member of the French royal house of Orléans or the house of Coburg, while the Queen’s younger sister Luisa Fernanda would marry a son of King Louis Philippe only once Isabella had produced an heir. Palmerston’s arrival at the Foreign Office in 1846, with his more pugnacious attitude, worried the French. When Palmerston began working to undermine French influence in Spain, Guizot responded by arranging the simultaneous marriage of Isabella and Luisa Fernanda according to the previous agreement: Isabella to her cousin Francis the Duke of Cadiz and Luisa to Antoine d’Orléans, Duke of Montpensier. The resulting strife meant the end to any

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64 Cunningham, “Peel, Aberdeen, and the Entente Cordiale,” 204.
appearance of concert between the two nations. Palmerston cannot be blamed for the collapse of the entente, since it had always been on shaky ground. Even Aberdeen had never been able to find an entirely satisfactory solution to the problem of the Spanish marriages, or for the many other points of contention between the two nations. Yet its collapse made a potential French threat appear more credible.

In this environment, many suspected that the Duke himself had leaked the letter to provoke exactly this response. In fact, Wellington was mortified by its publication. Regardless of his complaints about public ignorance of the French threat, he had never intended for such a statement to become public. Instead, the letter had been copied by Burgoyne’s wife and shown within their circle of friends, including to Lady Shelley, an old friend of both men, who circulated the letter even further. Eventually, it seems to have reached the gunpowder manufacturer Charles Pigou, who sent it to the Chronicle.

Though he failed to decry the publication itself, Burgoyne made it clear that he had not been involved with the leak, since it had embarrassed him and angered Wellington. Lady Shelley, after an ambiguous letter to Burgoyne referring to her “co-operation” in the publication, steadfastly refused any responsibility. Her denials meant

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69 Shelley to Burgoyne, 5 Jan. 1848, Burgoyne, vol. 1, 472.
that the argument between Wellington and Shelley became increasingly rancorous. Relations between the two would not return to normal for another two years.\textsuperscript{70}

There was a substantial and immediate public response to P.’s letter. After its debut in the \textit{Morning Chronicle}, it was widely reprinted in the metropolitan and provincial press.\textsuperscript{71} Many newspapers accompanied or followed the letter with expressions of approval for increased military expenditures.\textsuperscript{72} Favorable letters to the editor also appeared, decrying Britain’s defenseless state.\textsuperscript{73} The chief promoter of this attitude was the \textit{Morning Chronicle} itself. This was unsurprising. Established in 1770 as the organ of the Foxite Whigs, it remained in the 1840s a Whig-liberal paper. More than that, though, it was an instrument of Palmerston. Though he never penned articles for it directly, unlike for the \textit{Globe}, Palmerston maintained a close relationship and it could be relied upon to reflect his opinions – especially in foreign policy.\textsuperscript{74} Thus the \textit{Chronicle} followed P.’s letter with a supportive editorial the next day, followed by another on Dec. 2 that blamed “pacific and philanthropic crochets” for ignoring the French threat.\textsuperscript{75} For the next month, it maintained a regular series of letters and editorials supporting the impression that Britain was in imminent danger.\textsuperscript{76} For the \textit{Chronicle}, Wellington’s

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\textsuperscript{70} For an extensive selection of the correspondence see \textit{Burgoyne}, vol. 1, 470-481; Richard Edgcumbe, \textit{The Diary of Frances Lady Shelley, 1818-1873}, vol. 2 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1913) 272-289.

\textsuperscript{71} See \textit{Times} (London), Dec. 1, 1847, 8; \textit{Ipswich Journal}, Dec. 4, 1847, 1; \textit{Daily News}, Dec. 6, 1847, 3; \textit{Aberdeen Journal}, Dec. 8, 1847, 2; \textit{Derby Mercury}, Dec. 8, 1847, 1; \textit{Bristol Mercury}, Dec. 11, 1847, 3.


\textsuperscript{73} See, for example, \textit{Times}, Dec. 2, 1847, 5, 8; \textit{Morning Chronicle}, Dec. 7, 1847, 6; Dec. 9, 1847, 3.


\textsuperscript{75} \textit{Morning Chronicle}, Nov. 30, 1847, 5-6; Dec. 2, 1847, 2.

\textsuperscript{76} \textit{Morning Chronicle}, Dec. 6, 1847, 2; Dec. 7, 1847, 6; Dec. 9, 1847, 3; Dec. 14, 1847, 7; Dec. 28, 1847, 3.
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warning was of “transcendent importance.” When interest began to flag at the beginning of 1848, it printed Wellington’s letter in full, which was soon also widely reprinted.

Despite the initial surge of anxiety, panic was soon replaced by skepticism. Though few were willing to criticize the Duke of Wellington personally, many of the more liberal papers were predisposed to be wary of claims that made military increases necessary. Some worried that the costs of the Duke’s proposals were excessive compared to the threat or feared that arming would itself increase tensions and bring Britain closer to war. Despite a public letter by Lord Ellesmere in support of Wellington’s claims, the *Manchester Times* concluded that there was “about as little reason to apprehend the appearance of a French army at the one end of London, as there is to expect a visit from the inhabitants of the moon.”

Some papers even echoed the Radical critique that the panic was a conspiracy for the benefit of the aristocracy, increasing the employment of younger sons as officers. The *Manchester Times* wrote:

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77 *Morning Chronicle*, Jan. 5, 1848, 2.
78 See *Morning Chronicle*, Jan. 4, 1848; *Daily News*, Jan. 5 1848, 5; *Times*, Jan. 5, 1848, 5; *Caledonian Mercury*, Jan. 6, 1848, 2; *Freeman’s Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser* (Dublin), Jan. 6, 1848, 1; *Glasgow Herald*, Jan. 7, 1848, 1; *Newcastle Courant*, Jan. 7, 1848, 3; *Examiner*, Jan. 8, 1848, 25; *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle*, Jan. 8, 1848, 6; *Ipswich Journal*, Jan. 8, 1848, 3.
79 *Manchester Times*, Jan. 4, 1848, 6; *Caledonian Mercury*, Jan. 6, 1848, 2; *Leeds Mercury*, Jan. 8, 1848, 4; *Hampshire Telegraph*, Jan. 8, 1848, 2. See also a letter in the *Times*, Dec. 30, 1847, 6.
80 *Hampshire Telegraph*, Dec. 4, 1847, 8; *Leeds Mercury*, Dec. 24, 1847, 4; *Caledonian Mercury*, Jan. 6, 1848, 2.
82 *Manchester Times*, Jan. 1, 1848, 4; *Hampshire Telegraph*, Jan. 8, 1848, 2.
Does not this constant apprehension on the part of the aristocracy reveal the secret source of their policy? They feel instinctively the growing power and intelligence of public opinion; aristocratic supremacy and privilege are every day becoming more insecure. They seek to fortify their position by multiplying patronage and public emoluments, which fall into the hands of their families or dependents. Every addition to the military force of the country is not only a gain to them, by the outlets provided for younger sons, but it fortifies their political position; it strengthens them against the people. The pretence of invasion is but the apology for fortifying their own privileges.\textsuperscript{83}

The peace movement also sprung into action, with fraternal addresses to the French from Birmingham, Bristol, York and Manchester. Both the League of Universal Brotherhood and the Peace Society opposed any increase in military spending and condemned the belligerence of the panic, but their efforts were hampered by confusion and disunity. The Society and the Brotherhood organized separate campaigns against the invasion panic, the former’s complicated by the resignation of the Society’s secretary, John Jefferson, in early January. Although his replacement, the Congregationalist minister Henry Richard, would prove a great asset to the movement in the future, the transition came at a bad moment. A joint effort between the two organizations, the National Defences Committee, received little or no publicity from the Society’s \textit{Herald of Peace}.\textsuperscript{84}

\textsuperscript{83} \textit{Manchester Times}, Jan. 8, 1848, 4.
\textsuperscript{84} Martin Ceadel, \textit{Origins of War Prevention: The British Peace Movement and International Relations, 1730-1854} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 389-402. Interestingly, Ceadel suggests that it was the events of 1847-48 that brought the term “national defences” into general use (p.390).
Interestingly, the *Times* was among the newspapers that proved skeptical of P.’s claims. Two editorials in early January suggested that the threat had been overblown, that steam aided the British navy as much as it assisted the French, and that therefore the appropriate measures were those of wariness rather than panic.\(^8^5\) Eventually, even papers that had stoked the panic began to downplay the threat. Although as late as December 25 the *Examiner* was arguing that critics like Cobden were naïve to think that “wealth, and industry, and pacific demeanour” could provide security, January 1 saw it publish “Irrational Defences,” an essay which lambasted the French navy: “If the channel has dwindled to a ditch, this much is certain, that the French swim their boats very badly in it.” – and declared new expenditures unnecessary.\(^8^6\) This was followed by an editorial arguing that “The Duke of Wellington’s epistle is but another version of the opinion of the tanner in the fable, that for the defence of a city there was nothing like leather,” and that he drastically underestimated the capabilities of the Royal Navy.\(^8^7\) A similar transition occurred in the *Liverpool Mercury*, which went from warning how the “brigand spirit of Napoleon” continued to motivate the French to reprinting letters on the extent and efficacy of the existing defenses.\(^8^8\)

The Budget of 1848

Despite the speed with which the papers retracted their claims of imminent crisis, parliamentary pressure meant that Russell and his cabinet still had to present some sort of

\(^8^5\) *Times*, Jan. 5, 1848, 4; Jan. 7, 1848, 4.
\(^8^6\) *Examiner*, Dec. 25, 1847, 818; Jan. 1, 1848, 1. “Irrational Defences” was reprinted by several other papers: *Times*, Jan. 3, 1848, 7; *Daily News*, Jan. 4, 1848, 3; *Hampshire Telegraph*, Jan. 8, 1848, 6.
\(^8^7\) *Examiner*, Jan. 8, 1848, 1.
\(^8^8\) *Liverpool Mercury*, Dec. 7, 1847, 6; Dec. 28, 1847, 6; Jan. 7, 1848, 10.
plan for the national defenses in their 1848 budget. In introducing the new budget on February 18, Russell treaded a fine line between justified concern and unnecessary panic. He noted that the national defenses were a topic that had attracted a great deal of attention “out of doors,” both among those who saw Britain’s military expenditures as woefully inadequate, and among those who considered them “extravagantly high.” He admitted the possibility of becoming embroiled in war even in a time of apparent tranquility, the impact on steam on the nature of naval warfare, and the existence of worrying increases of French naval strength. However, he denied that either his or previous governments had ignored the national defenses. Rather than attempt a great increase or reduction in Britain’s forces, Russell promised the middle path of “adding from time to time to such parts of that force as may seem to the Government and the country to require increase, and be satisfied with the additions and alterations suited to the circumstances.”

In 1848, that middle way meant £70,000 of new spending on the navy, £43,000 on the army, £150,000 to begin enlisting volunteer militiamen, and £245,000 for the Ordnance to pay for more sappers, artillermen and engineers and new stocks of small arms and gunpowder. There were three serious obstacles to getting approval for the proposed military spending. The first was the lack of a strong support within the cabinet. Spending £150,000 on bounties, pay and equipment for new militiamen sidestepped the question of what changes needed to be made to the militia regulation, a decision which Russell said he would put into the hands of the Commons. That abdication of

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90 96 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 908-914.
responsibility merely highlighted how tenuous the agreement within the cabinet was. Closely connected to this lack of consensus was the second obstacle, that the government’s plan was lacking much of a supporting argument. The only positive claim that Russell made about the militia, aside from the aging rhetorical flourish of calling it the “constitutional force,” was an ameliorative one – saying that the alternative to paying for militiamen was paying for regular soldiers. Similarly, the money to be spent on the other services would mostly go to small increases in manpower rather than substantial changes to policy.

Third, and most importantly, Britain was only just coming out of a substantial financial crisis. The same poor harvests in 1845-6 that were helping to foment discontent across Europe had struck Great Britain.\textsuperscript{92} In Ireland, they led to mass famine and crisis. While the British response was woefully insufficient, it still made a substantial dent in the Treasury’s estimates.\textsuperscript{93} Poor harvests affected the American cotton crop alongside the wheat, and so while the repeal of the Corn Laws helped cushion grain prices in mainland Britain, unemployment was rife in Lancashire alongside the general distress. When harvests improved in 1848 the price of corn fell, forcing the corn dealers of London and Liverpool into bankruptcy. This led to the failure of the banks which had given them


\textsuperscript{93} Hoppen, \textit{Mid-Victorian Generation}, 142-3.
credit, and led to a credit crisis. By October 1847, it looked like it would be necessary for the Treasury to pump liquidity back into the market.\textsuperscript{94}

Russell and Wood unveiled their new budget to a nation still in recovery and worried about its financial stability, and to pay for their new spending they asked for an increase in the income tax from 7d. to 1s. on the pound.\textsuperscript{95} This was an even more substantial imposition that it appears, because when Peel reintroduced it in 1842 he claimed it would only be a temporary measure. Even in 1848 there was no official consensus that the tax would be permanent, even if it was unclear how any government could manage without it. These factors together meant that it would be a struggle to get the budget passed.

The situation constituted a vast opportunity for the Radicals in parliament who had spent the past few years casting about for an issue over which to mobilize the nation.\textsuperscript{96} Wellington, the “Iron Duke,” represented odious ultra-conservatism and the circumstances in which his letter was leaked seemed to combine hysteria with cynicism. The panic represented the most manipulative tendencies of aristocratic government, since increased military spending bolstered the privileges of the Crown and the careers of aristocratic officers. The Radical campaign was strengthened by Richard Cobden’s return from a fourteen-month European tour, which had only strengthened his conviction

\textsuperscript{95} 96 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 921.
\textsuperscript{96} Searle, \textit{Entrepreneurial Politics,} 17-50.
that armaments were amongst the most pernicious and unnecessary government expenditures. 97

The son of small farmers who rose to become a successful calico merchant, Cobden was one of the leaders of the “Manchester School” of political economy. After initial forays in local Manchester politics, in the late 1830s he became one of the leaders of the Anti-Corn Law League. Free trade advocacy brought notoriety, and Cobden became one of the most recognizable advocates of political economy and the superiority of commercial principles. Elected to parliament in 1841, he and the Quaker MP John Bright were the public face of entrepreneurial radicalism, as well as constant critics of military spending.

In mid-December, Cobden wrote that the Duke of Wellington’s letter was the “production of a man in his dotage,” and that the man who leaked Wellington’s letter to the Morning Chronicle was a “gunpowder maker” who would have a financial interest in the panic. 98 Five days later, writing to the pacifist leader Joseph Sturge, he reiterated that the Duke “has fallen into his dotage, & does nothing but rave about an invasion of the French.” 99 Another letter to Sturge explained that the panic was “the work of some gossiping idlers at our clubs in London, or of military men, impatient at the neglect into which their profession has fallen after 30 years of peace.” 100

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97 Ceadel, Origins of War Prevention 393. For more information on Cobden’s European journey, see European Diaries.
99 Cobden to Sturge, 16 Dec. 1847, Add. MSS 43656, fols.17-20, BL.
100 Sturge sent the letter on to the Times, 22 Jan. 1848, 5.
Cobden’s speeches urged Britain to restrain itself and avoid unnecessary military expenditures inspired by malicious or senile gossip. Although one late December speech at Stockport had a poor reception, a speech in Manchester in late January reaffirmed his belief in the necessity of reducing Britain’s army and navy. The question of military expenditures, said Cobden, was one that every gentleman was competent to judge as a taxpayer. It was their choice “whether you will run the risk of war, and keep your money in your pockets, or allow an additional number of men in red coats and blue jackets to live in idleness under the pretence of protecting you.” He was not confident that public opinion would accept a reduction in armaments, but he hoped at least that they would eschew an increase of them.

Mobilizing opposition to armaments became, according to Whig MP John Dixon, the “the second chapter of Free trade & the best chapter.” Cobden himself wrote “I consider this struggle against armaments to be the real free trade battle.” Some saw the armaments issue as merely the first phase in a broader movement to take the free traders to the peak of political power. In early February 1848, one correspondent wrote to Wilson:

I do think the time is coming – and now is – when a fresh movement may start up, and give a finishing blow to the political power of the aristocracy. Cut down the

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103 Cobden to Sturge, 28 Jan. 1848, Add. MSS 43656, fols.28-29, BL.
army & navy expenses 5 or 6 millions, and you do much more than save the money! I have no doubt the Whigs are committed to some increased expenses on these heads, & that they will persist in incurring them; if Cobden and the rest persevere in opposing the, the Whigs will be unpopular soon. Who then will be our ministers, 4, 5 or 6 years hence? If the free traders will work it out, the game is in their own hands, & the time not distant when they will be the real rulers in this country. A glorious career is open to Cobden, if he have the powerfulness & the physique to take an active lead in this great peace movement. He would be followed warmly in Lancashire, and I think in all England, but he would again raise up a host of foes. I think from what Mr. C says, he is prepared for an active movement, are you therefore thinking of “aiding and abetting” in it?  

Still, Cobden feared that the movement was out of step with British opinion. In his correspondence with Sturge he called Britons “by nature an arrogant, dictatorial, bullying, fighting race. If it were not for the money it costs, we should be incessantly at war.” Newspaper coverage of the panic made him worry that too few middle-class readers shared his opinions and that even papers favorable to the Radicals were supporting further expenditures.

Cobden’s philosophical objects to the proposed spending were economic rather than moral, although to him and many other economic liberals the former were an essentially moral issue. Fiscal probity was, like cleanliness, next to godliness, and since

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105 Scoville to Wilson, 7 Feb. 1848, M20/14, MCL.
106 Cobden to Sturge, 3 Jan. 1848, Add. MSS 43656, fols.21-22, BL.
107 Cobden to Sturge, 6 Jan. 1848, Add. MSS 43656, fols.23-24, BL.
Russell’s plans were in Cobden’s eyes fiscally unsound that made them tantamount to immoral. While minimal peacetime expenditure on national defense was prudent, to conscript able-bodied workers and make them into inefficient soldiers was wrongheaded. Although he was happy to make common cause with Christian pacifists and any others who were opposing Russell’s plans, those were not his reasons and he took the time to try and sway them to his way of thinking. In his correspondence with Sturge he urged the latter to drop his critique of war itself, writing: “This is not really a state of peace – it is an armed truce only, & I see no limit to the evil unless we change our tone out of doors, & instead of merely denouncing war, we attack the peace armaments.” In the parlance of A.J.P. Taylor and Martin Ceadel, Cobden was a pacifist, one who believes that while war is morally permissible in self-defense, the development of international society could make war obsolete.

When Russell introduced his budget in early February, Cobden, Hume, Bright, and Osborne all took their turns condemning Russell’s budget and especially his military plans. Each announced his doubts about the French threat, which they claimed was “imaginary” and contradicted by the Queen and Russell’s own statements that a state of peace and amity existed between Britain and France. They insisted that there was no

108 For the mixed impact of this approach on the fortunes of the Peace Society, see Taylor, Decline of British Radicalism, 175-179.
109 Cobden to Sturge, 16 Dec.1847, Add. MSS 43656, fols.17-20, BL. Anthony Howe concludes that “Cobden was clear that acting with the peace party was simply an adjunct to his evolving ‘economical’ line, and that peace was the auxiliary to financial reform.” Anthony Howe, “Introduction,” The Letters of Richard Cobden, ed. Anthony Howe, vol. 2, 1848-1855 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010), xxv.
110 In Ceadel’s schema, pacifism sits between pacifism – the belief that all war is immoral – and defencism – the belief that war is permissible in self-defense and that war will continue to be part of international politics for the foreseeable future. Ceadel, Origins of War Prevention, 33-57. The term’s modern usage originates with A.J.P. Taylor, The Trouble Makers. Dissent over Foreign Policy, 1792-1939 (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1957). Taylor’s usage is far simpler than Ceadel’s, merely “the advocacy of a peaceful policy” (p.51).
need to expand the military in the face of such a phantom threat. The proposal to increase the income tax was merely further fuel for the fire, as they insisted that a “reforming and liberal Government” should have been seeking to reduce its expenditures rather than increasing its receipts.\textsuperscript{111}

Protectionist Tories like George Bankes, Col. Sibthorp and the Marquess of Granby also eagerly took the opportunity to criticize the Whigs for military mismanagement.\textsuperscript{112} Bankes, for example, attacked the Whigs for weakening the navy with unnecessary squadrons off the African coast and the Tagus estuary.\textsuperscript{113} Sibthorp gleefully indicted Russell for hypocrisy, as Whig complaints of military extravagance were now converted into an admission that the forces were in fact insufficient. Disraeli waxed eloquent on this Liberal volte face: “You have all the armaments of the country in the highest possible state of efficiency; and fifteen years after the reform era, you, the apostles of economy—you, who preached reform—you, who got returned for metropolitan districts by vaunting that you had cut down the estimates—you have the satisfaction of finding, not only that there are more soldiers, more sailors, more artillerymen than when you began your economical labours, but that the country is actually in a state of alarm lest it be not sufficiently protected and defended.”\textsuperscript{114}

More cutting than the Tory opposition was the criticism which came from within Russell’s own party. Two moderate Liberals, Sir Benjamin Hall and Richard Monckton Miles, spoke critically of Russell’s speech, calling the threat of a French attack illusory

\textsuperscript{111} 96 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 926-9, 933-35, 960-68; 975-8.
\textsuperscript{112} Charles Manners, marquess of Granby and future 6\textsuperscript{th} Duke of Rutland, became the protectionist leader in the Commons later in 1848. 96 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 929-933, 935-7, 941-2.
\textsuperscript{113} 96 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 929.
\textsuperscript{114} 96 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 952.
and condemning the use of that threat to justify military expenditures.”115 Even some of those like F.T. Baring, Melbourne’s former Chancellor of the Exchequer, who considered the threat real, still opposed any increase in the income tax.116

To mollify the parliamentary opposition, the cabinet proposed creating a select committee to examine the military expenditures, but rather than placate their critics this only led to further acrimony. The original proposal was not merely for a select committee but for a “secret” one, which many MPs complained would deny them the right to examine the evidence. Such a measure was, if not unprecedented, at the very least irregular. The idea of secrecy was hurriedly retracted, and the next day Wood announced two select committees, the first to consider the army, navy, and Ordnance Estimates, and the second to consider the Miscellaneous Services.117 The most Wood could do was frame the issue in a favorable a light, suggesting that much of the recent increased expenditure had been to improve the living conditions of soldiers and sailors, on increased pay for petty officers and other sailors, as well as an effective increase in pensions, rather than on increased numbers of troops.118

The select committee was yet another example of the Russell ministry’s unwillingness to take a stand, and its weakness laid it open to attack from both sides. The Protectionist leader in the Commons, Lord George Bentinck, protested the committees as an encroachment on the functions of the Executive and the prerogatives of the Crown.119 At the same time, Radicals and Peelites complained that the committee would not be

117 96 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 1057.
118 96 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 1060.
119 96 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 1065.
independent enough to honestly criticize the government. Some Radicals even scented an opportunity to make retrenchment the dominant approach to military matters. One correspondent wrote to Wilson that “Cobden and Bright are the two olive branches standing night and day between the people and the throne. … Toryism is paralysed: Whiggism is at a discount: the Heroes of the League will give rise to a new race to perpetuate peace & to promote good will among all men.” Cobden observed that the threat of an income tax increase might prove a valuable impetus for the change.

On February 25, Joseph Hume made a motion to reduce expenditures enough to make an income tax increase unnecessary. His speech was a classic Radical attack on the military. He insisted that the national finances must be managed in the same way as those of a prudent individual who finds himself spending beyond his means. Rather than make further extravagant expenditures, the government, like a person, must “revise and curtail his expenditure, and so maintain his honour.” Instead, Russell’s government was trying to convert a peaceful nation into a nation of arms, going against Queen Elizabeth’s statement that the best defense for the nation was the hearts and sinews of its people, not the battalions of its army. He was supported by Osborne, who said that while many respectable gentlemen had been frightened by the Duke of Wellington’s letter, and many elderly ladies alarmed by the Earl of Ellesmere’s letter, “the best

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120 96 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 1076.
121 W. Johns to Wilson, 23 Feb. 1848, M20/14, MCL.
123 96 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 1336. By now, the Whigs were anticipating “much ill-humour, & very long debates” on the Income Tax, but little chance of a real reverse. See Russell to Queen Victoria, 22 Feb. 1848, *Cabinet Reports*, microfilm reel 1.
national defence was to be found in the hearts and affections of the working and middle classes, and that they were not likely to conciliate the one or the other by putting on a war-tax in a time of peace.\textsuperscript{125} Although Hume’s motion was handily defeated, 157 to 59, this was hardly a vote in support of the new budget.\textsuperscript{126}

Only three days later, on February 28, Wood abandoned the idea of increasing the income tax altogether. Instead, he proposed only the extension of the tax at the current rate for the next three years, by which time he hoped to be able to bring expenditure in line with income.\textsuperscript{127} The matter was debated at length for the next two weeks. There was still enough opposition to the budget for Bright to write to Wilson that “I don’t see how the Govt. can carry on,” but unlike in the first days of February this was a financial debate rather than a military one.\textsuperscript{128} While Cobden and Hume continued their attack on the panic and the costs of peacetime armaments, the debate had moved on. Now it was on the fairness of taxation of terminable annuities compared to perpetual ones, the impact of the income tax on commerce, and even a retrospective debate of the merits of free trade – in which the protectionists attempted to indict Peel and the Whigs for the current economic depression. Although philosophic Radical Sir William Molesworth gave a stirring speech on the foolishness of the invasion panic, the excessive strength of the navy, and the iniquity of interference in foreign politics and of colonialism, this was a

\textsuperscript{125} 96 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 1355.
\textsuperscript{126} 96 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 1373-5.
\textsuperscript{127} 96 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 1414-15. Russell tried to minimize the loss in his letter to the Queen, writing that “we have all felt the inconvenience of the defeat of a tax by a majority of the House of Commons,” but the fact remained that this was an embarrassment. Russell to Queen Victoria, 28 Feb. 1848, Cabinet Reports, microfilm reel 1.
\textsuperscript{128} Bright to Wilson, 7 Mar. 1848, M20/14, MCL.
rarity. Far more common were speeches like that of Captain John Townshend, who called the income tax “the most odious and the least palatable” tax in existence but insisted that there was no possibility of military reductions in this European climate, nor were the forces in existence excessive for Britain’s needs. Similar speeches, insisting on the impossibility of a reduction in military spending, came both from conservatives like George Sansars and liberals like T.E. Headlam and E.R. Rice.

By then, the threat of invasion had already passed. Louis Philippe’s overthrow in late February, culminating in his abdication on February 24, made an invasion seem unlikely, if not farcical. The replacement of the Orléanist monarchy by the Second Republic made many Radicals even more firmly convinced that France posed no threat, but was instead at the forefront of European freedom. Working- and middle-class Radicals were united in this early enthusiasm for the new republic, even if the chaos of the July Days soon made the English middle class more skeptical of its politics. The public urge for expensive defenses waned, and revival of the militia ballot was abandoned. In the fall, Wood was able to breathe a sigh of relief and announce more than £800,000 of savings.

The Radical Challenge

Russell’s militia proposal had attracted a far greater share of the budget debate than its cost merited. To some extent, this reflected the weakness of the arguments in its

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129 97 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 388-402.
130 97 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 258-263.
favor. Though he invoked the claim that the militia “has always been held to be the constitutional force of this country,” and that it had been the favorite force of Pitt the Elder, Lord Chatham, Russell could really only rely on the grave warning that without it, parliament would be forced to increase the regular army instead. 134 Neither of these arguments had much impact. Hume complained that it took men from their homes and unfitted them for any other occupation, while George Bankes went further and declared any militia without substitutes as a form of conscription as onerous as that of Napoleon. 135 Bankes also claimed that Chatham had supported the militia as an alternative to the regular army, not a supplement to it. 136 Cobden went further, saying that Pitt had been entrapped into war by an obstinate king and his aristocracy, and that if Pitt had “what the noble Lord has now—an intelligent middle class in the kingdom, governing the kingdom—and a more instructed working class, averse to war,” he would never have gone to war. 137 The mixed reputation of amateur soldiers was even the subject of laughter on the London stage, as in J. Stirling Coyne’s *Our National Defences*, a one-act farce which opened at the Adelphi on Jan. 28, Britain’s loyal defenders—the men of the Cockshot Yeomanry—are bested by a cadre of school-children. 138

Mutual dislike of the militia, whether for the impositions it made on the common man or for the costs it incurred without much efficiency, was something which united plebeian and entrepreneurial Radicals. Both wings advanced their own alternative

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137 96 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 963.
proposals for the national defenses, many of which made use of the resonant if somewhat impractical idea of the mass arming of the population. It was an idea which had some support among more serious military critics as well, with proposals to arm the entire population within ten miles of the coast to harass French stragglers and supply-lines.\textsuperscript{139} The men, armed with fowling pieces and marshaled by district and trade, would fight alongside those whose character and identity they already knew.\textsuperscript{140} Mass arming raised the thorny political issue of arming the laboring classes, which was eagerly embraced by Radicals as a way to agitate for more rights. As the \textit{Daily News} explained, “one necessary concomitant of such military dependence on the population is, certainly, the caring for that population, governing it on liberal and popular principles, looking to its material and welfare and content, as well as to its national education, since we must look how the heads are stored, and the feelings affected, of those into whose hands we put arms. But we are brought perforce to this, being no longer able to pay for an army more mechanical and blind.”\textsuperscript{141} Since, as Sir William Molesworth said, “a moral and instructed people are the best security for order at home, the best safeguard against aggression from abroad,” relying on the people made education and moral improvement a military as well as a civilian project.\textsuperscript{142}

Radicalism mixed condemnation of the soldier as a royal servant with praise for him as a member of the community. In the words of “Helyx,” one of the more radical

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\textsuperscript{139} William Bowles, \textit{Thoughts on National Defence} (London: James Ridgway, 1848), 9-10.
\textsuperscript{140} A Retired Officer, \textit{A Few Remarks on Our Present Inefficient Means of Defence Against an Invasion} (London: Effingham Wilson, 1847), 18-22. The author suggested a similar system among the gentry to provide volunteer cavalry (p. 22-29).
\textsuperscript{141} \textit{Daily News}, Dec. 28, 1847, 1.
\textsuperscript{142} 97 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 399.
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letter-writers during the panic, “A patriot soldier is a magnificent spectacle; but you
cannot deny that the soldiers of our regular army are not greeted with general approbation
… My Lord, the system degrades them into a kind of animal machine; and instead of
being, as they should be, the *elite* of the nation, they are composed only of its broken
men.”¹⁴³ Yet, the very principles of military service were also viewed with suspicion.
Though the “orderly habits” of the populace make Britons trainable as excellent soldiers,
such training must work “without mulcting the youth of the country of their time,
peaceful habits, and professions,” the perennial threat of any but the most limited forms
of training.¹⁴⁴

Even among those who rejected the Radical critique of military service, moral
quality of the auxiliary force was an important question. Robert Stuart MacGregor,
former officer in the East India Company’s army and a captain in the Stirlingshire militia,
suggested in his *Plan for Raising a Defensive Force* that enlisting reservists from those
on parish relief would raise them from misery to quality and make them into “loyal
citizens and good soldiers.” A fringe benefit would be to reduce the cost of poor relief
for the ratepayers.¹⁴⁵ On a more liberal note, prison reformer Frederic Hill suggested
making service entirely voluntary. Hill’s pamphlet acknowledged the potential moral

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¹⁴³ *Morning Chronicle*, Jan. 5, 1848, 3. In his letter, Helyx provided the usual series of proposals to reform
the regular army. They included the abolition of the purchase of commissions, a simplified uniform,
freedom to marry, a day’s leave each week, punishment under civilian law, and a seven-year enlistment.
British soldiers, Helyx concludes, “are slaves, and act like slaves. Make them freemen, and they will do
freemen’s work.”


¹⁴⁵ Robert Stuart MacGregor, *A Plan for Raising a Defensive Force Remodelled from the Disembodied
Militia* (Edinburgh: Alexander Redpath, 1849), iii.
hazard of military service and of compulsion. His alternative was to recruit a “National Reserved Force” [sic] of volunteers, with the preference for men of good moral character and, tellingly, with some property whether it be a house, land or shares, so that they also have a personal stake in public order. The men in Hill’s force would have the moral qualities and the propertied stability to resist the immoral blandishments of army life.

While mass arming had always been a fantasy rather than a practicable option, that no other alternative acquired traction in the late 1840s was because of the fact that there was neither money nor agreement on how to proceed: a quick survey of newspapers shows that while the Examiner wanted National Guards like those France, the Daily News thought that option combined “utter inefficiency and extreme annoyance.” In turn the News preferred a Swiss-style system, while the Era favored mandatory drill for school-age children instead of either.

Despite this disunity, the defeat of the military aspects of Russell’s budget energized Cobden and his supporters. Their triumph with the budget coincided with intense Radical attacks on Whig policy towards Ireland and the colonies, as well as finance and defense. In April, more than fifty Cobdenite MPs formed a separate caucus devoted to financial and parliamentary reform. Many concluded that their success in challenging and embarrassing the government’s plans reflected a watershed in

148 Examiner, Jan. 1, 1848, 1; Daily News, Dec. 4, 1847, 3; Era, Jan. 2, 1848, 8.
public attitudes to defense spending, and hoped that the campaign against peacetime armaments would be the catalyst for a new movement for financial reform.

The next few years were, according to Martin Ceadel, the golden age of Britain’s peace movement.\textsuperscript{151} Despite the difficulties in bringing pacifists and pacificists together, in late 1848 the American Elihu Burritt organized the first international peace congress. Originally planned for Paris, opposition from the French government meant a change of venue to Brussels. Endorsements for the conference came from Hume, Bowring and Cobden, although the only British MP in attendance was William Ewart. Three further congresses were held, in Paris (1849), Frankfurt (1850), and London (1851). An October 1848 meeting in London elected a Peace Congress Committee, which quickly eclipsed the League of Universal Brotherhood to become a pacificist appendage of the Peace Society.\textsuperscript{152} Although the Peace Society itself remained firmly pacifist, through a coalition of other organizations the peace movement was able to unite religious and secular pacifists with those whose opposition to war or military spending was more limited. This included middle-class economic pacificists who opposed the waste of the military, former Chartists who critiqued it for spilling the blood of so many working men, and those who considered the armed services as bastion of aristocratic privilege.

This peace movement activism overlapped with other attempts to establish a broad Radical alliance. To some extent this was an attempt to recapture the energy of the

\textsuperscript{151} Martin Ceadel, Semi-Detached Idealists: The British Peace Movement and International Relations, 1854-1945 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000), 27. Edsall concurs, saying “the summer of 1849 was the high-water mark of the peace movement” (Richard Cobden, 234).
movement which had existed to oppose the Corn Laws, but the Little Charter was far more than something to fill the vacuum of agitation left by the dissolution of the Anti-Corn Law League in July 1846. Created at a London meeting in April 1848, it included four basic demands: household suffrage, the ballot, triennial parliaments and equal electoral districts. These were issues which engaged with the plebeian radicals whom the Anti-Corn Law activists had never quite been able to capture for their movement. Its officers, Hume, Cobden and Sir Joshua Walmsley, were veterans of the Anti-Corn Law League, and the new Charter’s demands were embraced by several organizations including the Metropolitan (later “National”) Parliamentary and Financial Reform Association.\footnote{Nicholas C. Edsall, “A Failed National Movement: the Parliamentary and Financial Reform Association, 1848-54,” \textit{Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research} 49 (1976): 110.}

Despite the promising start, only a small segment of the old Anti-Corn Law League alliance was interested in electoral reform. The middle-class businessmen and professionals who had been the core of the old movement were not enthused about extending the franchise to their social inferiors, who they considered unlikely to be able to use the vote in a rational and respectable manner. Instead, the great domestic success of post-1848 Radical agitation was for financial reform and government retrenchment. The first and most important organization advocating this was the Liverpool Financial Reform Association (LFRA), led by William Gladstone’s eldest brother Robertson. Its objectives, announced in April 1848, were “1. Economical Government. 2. Abolition of Customs and Excise Duties, and Substitution of Direct, i.e. Honest, Taxation. 3. Perfect

\footnote{Edsall, “A Failed National Movement,” 113-117.}
Freedom of Trade.”¹⁵⁵ The LFRA attracted national attention and inspired imitators in most urban centers, including London, Edinburgh and Manchester. Its chief contribution to the national discussion was through a series of tracts, and it was here that its attacks on the armed services appeared. Their fourth Tract, in November 1848, cataloged the costs of the services, paying particular attention to the so-called “clothing colonels,” officers who received the profits from the clothing of the men under their command. While the tract called these officers nothing more than “dealers in clothes,” it reserved its greatest ire for the officer corps as a whole.¹⁵⁶ For such a controversial topic the Association insisted that it was very careful with its facts. It therefore strenuously denied every saying that “the true reason of the estimates being kept up is to furnish comfortable, gentlemanly, and lucrative situations for our deserving aristocracy; that our standing army is officered by 5,734 gentlemen, men who spurn an honest trade, or the profession of a merchant, but who nevertheless, dabble in the commission market for their own aggrandizement,” but that this is “amply borne out by the experience of the most distinguished military commanders.”¹⁵⁷

Tract No.5 continued this attack, complaining about the Marquis of Anglesey’s employment as both Master-General of the Ordnance and “tailor Colonel” of the Royal Horse Guards. The apparatus for securing forage for cavalry horses is described as “a staff of clerks, with sinecurist secretaries above them, selected from the disinherited younger branches of landed families,” while the staff who sell those horses’ dung is costs

¹⁵⁵ Qtd. in Searle, Entrepreneurial Radicals, 59.
¹⁵⁷ “Financial Reform Tracts No.4,” Tracts of the LFRA, 11.
more than the £12,350 earned by its sale. Similar complaints were launched at the colonial staff, whose positions were described as both lucrative and undemanding.

The tracts, and in particular their criticism of the clothing system, attracted the attention of General William Napier. Though Napier was sympathetic to the overall thrust of the LFRA, he defended the honor of his fellow officers and the efficiency of the system, arguing that there were numerous safeguards for the well-being of the soldiers. The resulting debate between Napier and Gladstone was unproductive for both, descending to the level of minutiae over issues like the trousers of the 11th Hussars, horse-dealing, and hospital stoppages. Napier soon descended to insinuations of corruption himself, first arguing that the LFRA was a “slanderous Association” trying to shift the blame for poor clothing away from the manufacturers, and then that they were making a business out of this “profitable Agitation.” Although he had certain criticisms of the administration of the army, Napier’s letters to the Times were filled with praise for the stolid soldier of traditionalist myth, who had a “stern, indomitable sense of his rights according to the conditions of his servitude; [and] a pride that discipline neither ought to attempt, nor can subdue or lower.”

The LFRA responded in Tract No.7, mixing allegations of personal corruption – saying the motto of Napier and his many military relatives is “‘Ready, aye ready,’ all of them being ready to take what they can get” – and systemic critique – that “it is shameful to see men who claim to be respectable scramble

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159 “Financial Reform Tracts No.5,” Tracts of the LFRA, 1-5.
for posts whose pay for real services is so low, but which are the route to vast, and
lucrative, emoluments which are entirely unnecessary to the taxpayer.”\textsuperscript{162}

In February 1849 the Association issued a further two tracts, one on “The Dead
Weight of the Army,” and the other on the Royal Navy. The first continued the criticism
of aristocratic influence within the army, and of the consequent expense. Staff positions
at home are created for “the multitude of military officers for whom there is no legitimate
employment must be provided for; younger sons, disinherited by primogeniture, must be
provided for; the connections of corrupt politicians must be provided for; and this is part
of the provision that a ‘refuge for the destitute’ shall be formed at Manchester, under a
lieutenant-general, and another at York, under a major-general.”\textsuperscript{163} The other condemned
naval construction as inefficient, unscientific, and inferior to the work of the private
yards.\textsuperscript{164}

Despite the controversy surrounding its criticism of the “clothing colonels,” the
overall Cobdenite campaign seemed a stunning success. Between 1847 and 1851, British
spending on armaments fell from £18 million to £14 million.\textsuperscript{165} This success obscured
the fragility of the coalition that was demanding it. As early as 1847 Cobden was arguing
that attacking peacetime armaments would be far more popular than attacking the mere
practice of war, yet a necessary corollary to this was that opposition to current spending
on peacetime armaments did not indicate an opposition to all war, or even to future

\textsuperscript{162} “Financial Reform Tracts No.7: The Army, Ordnance, Commissariat, Navy, Colonies. The Army
Clothing; together with Major-Gen. Sir Wm. Napier’s Attack on the Association, and Their Reply,” \textit{Tracts
of the LFRA} 2, 8.
\textsuperscript{163} Financial Reform Tracts No.7: The Dead Weight of the Army,” \textit{Tracts of the LFRA}, 2.
of the LFRA}.
\textsuperscript{165} Searle, \textit{Entrepreneurial Politics}, 65.
peacetime military spending. Cobden might argue, while trying to entice Edwin Chadwick into his camp, that “I have long viewed our standing armaments as the main obstacle to social reforms, by absorbing money which might be devoted to purposes of education & science,” but this was clearly a relative argument rather than an absolute one. As such, it was vulnerable to circumstance. Condemning military expenditure in a time of economic weakness and international quiescence was far easier than doing so when the economy was strong and the world uncertain.\(^{166}\)

The panic of 1848 had been an inauspicious moment for Russell to try and advance his agenda. His government was hamstrung by the financial situation, but it was also hampered by the extent to which it failed to successfully frame the issue. The traditional militia was still supported by the senior leaders of the army, who saw it as a useful adjunct to the regulars. It also had the approval of many conservatives, even among those who had opposed Russell’s budget. In contrast, Maule and Russell’s proposed local militia only offered slight advantages from a liberal perspective. While free choice and volunteering was superior to the ballot, and cross-class enlistment to a burden that fell solely on the working classes, in 1848 they looked more like mitigating factors than positive virtues. Whatever its constitutional status, the regular army was an absolute necessity for the protection of the nation. The militia had no such importance. Under the circumstances, it is unsurprising that Russell failed to collect enough support for his plans.

\(^{166}\) It was on this basis of comparative costs that Cobden tried to lead Edwin Chadwick to oppose peacetime military spending, saying Cobden to Chadwick, 15 May 1848, *Letters of Richard Cobden*, vol. 2, 40.
Chapter 5: The Second Panic, 1851-2

Louis Napoleon captivated London when his coup overthrew the Second Republic in late December 1851. Radicals bemoaned the collapse of the great liberal regime on the Continent while conservatives saw a potential restoration of order. Both parties were uneasy with the lineage of the new dictator, since Louis Napoleon was not just the former President of the Republic but also Napoleon Bonaparte’s nephew. Chaos in France and a new Napoleon created a new invasion panic in Britain. The panic meant serious consideration of reviving the militia, an idea abandoned since the ignominious defeat of Russell’s militia bill in 1848. While Russell remained interested in creating a local militia it was only Palmerston’s ejection from cabinet that made it possible to get the motion accepted by the rest of the government. Before the bill was even presented, the Tories and Palmerston had forced an amendment to the bill to strip it of its local features. Russell took the opportunity to resign, and it was a conservative ministry led by Lord Derby which revived the regular militia – but with bounties to encourage voluntary enlistment and avoid the use of conscription – in mid-1852.

Although Russell’s Local Militia Bill was the culmination of his attempts to make national defense more equitable, economical, and effective, it was too much betwixt and between. It alienated military traditionalists by abandoning faith in the necessity of drill as the incubator of discipline and obedience, but it offered little if anything to inspire
liberals who thought military service stripped away independence and encouraged immorality. By focusing on reducing the burden of militia service, the local militia only highlighted the existence of that burden. In contrast, Derby’s Militia Bill represented the continued if somewhat aimless strength of traditionalism. More promising than either was support for the nascent Volunteer movement. The appeal of the Volunteers was complex, but it was rooted in their independence, flexibility, and voluntary nature. Without the compulsion of the ballot, the corporal punishment of martial law, or the martinets of the regular officer corps, the Volunteers seemed to offer a military opportunity without burdens, or even costs – arms and accoutrements would be provided by the men themselves – as well as a path that was invigorating rather than enervating, a source of moral stability rather than a threat to it.

The Coup

On 2 December, Louis Napoleon used the army to dissolve France’s National Assembly. As well as raising the spectre of a new Bonaparte, the coup led to the removal of Palmerston from the cabinet. The Foreign Secretary had made the political misstep of privately expressing his satisfaction with the coup to the French ambassador, Count Walewski. After all their earlier clashes, Russell was happy to take the opportunity to dismiss him, on the pretext that he had communicated an opinion that was not the cabinet’s with a foreign diplomat.¹ Even this claim was questionable since many in the cabinet – Russell among them – expected Napoleon’s newly-strengthened regime to

¹ Russell to Palmerston, 19 Dec. 1851, GC/RU/450, PUS. 136
provide a more secure Anglo-French relationship. It was the communication without written approval of the cabinet that thus provided the final pretext. The dismissal soured Palmerston’s already antagonistic relationship with Russell. He complained to his brother, the diplomat Sir William Temple, that the reason for his dismissal was Russell’s “petty narrowminded jealousy” about Palmerston’s popularity.

Palmerston was correct that his opinion on the coup was not a rare one. Even Cobden was not entirely unhappy with the coup. His first reaction was, like most Radicals, one of outrage. The recent events in Paris illustrated how even in a constitutional state a standing army “can be used by even a mountebank or adventurer, to imprison its own generals, lock up a legislature, & shoot broad-cloth citizens in four story mansions!” Yet he was soon claiming that Louis Napoleon was the people’s chosen leader, and that his rise represented an ardent desire for peace. At the very least, “Louis Napoleon may be a villain, but at all counts the French elected him with their eyes open, & it is their affair & not ours.”

Whatever the private expectations among Whig and Protectionist leaders that Napoleon would be an ally in realpolitik, his rule meant substantial public anxiety.

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2 For a recent summary of the controversy, see Brown, Palmerston and the Politics of Foreign Policy, 119-129.
3 Palmerston to Temple, 28 Jan. 1852, GC/TE/341, PUS.
5 Cobden to Richard, 20 Dec. 1852, Add. MSS. 43657, fols.117-8, BL.
6 Writing to Henry Richard, “So far from the late election of Louis Napoleon being a warlike demonstration on the part of the French people – it exhibits there, in my opinion, in the very opposite & degrading attitude of giving up every right opinion of free citizens to the President, on condition that he protect them from disorder, & leave them in peace & quiet so to follow their avocations.” Cobden to Richard, 13 Jan. 1852, Add. MSS. 43657, fols.119-23, BL. Repr. in Letters of Richard Cobden, vol. 2, 369.
Britons feared the ambitions of Napoleon Bonaparte’s kin, the French need to seek revenge for Trafalgar and Waterloo, and the urges of an army which had recently overthrown its own erstwhile rulers. These fears sparked a wave of patriotic poetry. The most important came from the poet laureate, Lord Tennyson. In his verses, the new Napoleon is a trickster, a cheat, and a killer of women and children, in league with Frenchmen who matched the worst anti-Catholic stereotypes: “The Pope has blessed him; / The Church caressed him; / … His ruthless host is bought with plundered gold, / By lying priests the peasant’s vote controlled.” In one draft poem the French were “Bearded monkeys of lust and blood / Coming to violate woman and child!” Because of the sensitive political situation, Tennyson’s poems were all published anonymously or pseudonymously. Many believed they were the work of Martin Tupper, a didactic poet whose own work in 1852 shared the same themes. In Tupper’s poems “Jesuit priests and praetorian legions / Clamour like hounds to be loosed on the prey, / Eager to devastate Protestant regions, / And to take vengeance for Waterloo day!” while Britons must

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9 “Britons, Guard Your Own,” *The Poems of Tennyson*, ed. Christopher Ricks, 2nd ed., vol. 2 (Harlow: Longman, 1987), 470-1. Later in the same poem, Tennyson wrote that the Jesuits “would unrelenting / Kill all dissenting, / Till we were left to fight for truth alone” (p.471). Also, “‘Children and women – their wounds are red’” in “Rifle Clubs!!!,” *Poems of Tennyson*, vol. 2, 470.

“think, if you dare, of your wife and your daughter, / Think of your little ones choked in their blood.”11  This anxiety demanded a military response.

Both Britain and France had expanded their steam navies since 1848. In Britain, favorable reports on the steam blockships had led to the first full-fledged steam ships of the line – the converted Sans Pareil and the purpose-built James Watt – to be launched in March 1852 and April 1853 respectively, as well as substantial investment in the dockyard infrastructure to support more steamships12  The French, while slower to adopt screw propulsion, had not only begun converting sail liners into steamers but also laid down a high-speed steam battleship. The Napoléon’s engines were expected to generate 900hp, rather than the approx. 450-600hp of Britain’s steam liners. Launched in 1850, Napoléon was the first in a series of French designs with substantially more powerful engines than their British equivalents.13

Aside from these technical developments, the discussion of national defense seemed hardly to have evolved between 1848 and 1852. Men like Palmerston were convinced that despite “medals, fine speeches and great dinners, mutual visits & reciprocal complements & embraces,” the French still wished to revenge themselves on the British for “the Nile, Trafalgar, the Peninsula, Waterloo & St. Helena.”14  As before, emphasis was split between the need for fortifications for the navy’s bases and on the

12 Hamilton, Anglo-French Naval Rivalry, 46-54. David Evans, Building the steam navy: dockyards, technology and the creation of the Victorian battle fleet, 1830-1906 (London: Conway Maritime, 2004), 65-75. As a sign of its importance, the new steam factory at Plymouth was to have decorative elevations by architect Charles Barry, designer of the Houses of Parliament. Note, however, estimate by Captain Henry James, R.E., designer of the Portsmouth factory, that even with both factories completed their annual repair capacity would be ¼ of that required by the navy in wartime. Evans, Building the steam navy, 92. For more technical details on the early screw-liners, see Brown, Before the ironclad, 127-134.
13 Hamilton, Anglo-French Naval Rivalry, 43-62.
14 Palmerston to Russell, 18 Aug. 1851, GC/RU/1085, PUS.
manpower to garrison them and operate in the field. Increasingly, the attention was on the French base at Cherbourg. The creation of such a substantial naval arsenal so close to the English coast seemed ample proof of French hostility, and the monies expended there also provided a model for British responses. Burgoyne, observing the planned expenditure of £537,000 on that port’s fortifications, argued that this was the least that could be done to protect Britain’s own – far more important – arsenals. The French naval review at Cherbourg offered a further opportunity to make the case for fortifications. Cherbourg’s proximity to Portsmouth and Plymouth, Palmerston argued, made the watch-stations of the Channel Islands useless since Cherbourg was closer than them to Portsmouth. The need, therefore, was for local defenses at each port.

A rare sign of new flexibility appeared in one Burgoyne’s memoranda. In it he made many of the usual arguments: that even with naval superiority, it was impossible to assure there would be no French invasion; that unprepared auxiliaries would be useless against experienced Frenchmen, regardless of their enthusiasm; and that it was essential that any militiamen be brigaded with more than their number of regulars to stiffen their ranks. However, Burgoyne also acknowledged that many militia regulations would need to be changed, “chiefly with the view of diminishing and more easily equalizing the expense.” Training should be done as much as possible within a mile of the individual’s home. In a more unusual gesture, he also suggested adding militia cavalry and artillery,

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15 Evans, Building the Steam Navy, 72.
17 Palmerston to Russell, 14 Sept. 1850, GC/RU/1074, PUS.
which he hoped would attract noblemen and men of fortune who would promote them with as much energy as they put into yachting and the sports of the field.\textsuperscript{19}

Finances remained a problem. Select committees continued to watch military expenditures, as did the LFRA, and as late as 1852 Hume was still trying to keep renewals of the income tax to a year-by-year basis.\textsuperscript{20} Military spending declined in 1849, 1850 and 1851. The pressure made Russell cautious. Writing to Palmerston about an £800,000 request to fortify Portsmouth, Russell said “for my part I should not grudge the money. But perhaps it is better this year to take the proposed vote for smaller works.”\textsuperscript{21} Charles Wood was blunter. Writing to Palmerston in January 1851 he explained that an alliance between the country gentlemen, now “on the economical tack,” and the Cobdenites made further votes for defense spending unlikely. The best hope was a gradual approach, to proceed quietly and to avoid overreaching: “let us get the income tax, & a beginning at Portsmouth this year, & we shall have much easier work next year with Plymouth.”\textsuperscript{22}

In October 1851, Russell wrote to Maule to suggest reopening the question of the militia.\textsuperscript{23} That work was barely begun when Louis Napoleon’s coup threw Britain into a panic again. A cabinet meeting that same day concluded that further reductions in the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{19} Burgoyne, “Remarks,” 29 May 1850, ND/A/9, PUS. None of these sections were included in the printed version of the essay.
\item \textsuperscript{20} Searle, \textit{Entrepreneurial Politics}, 63-74; Taylor, \textit{Decline of British Radicalism}, 127-143, 183-189.
\item \textsuperscript{21} Russell to Palmerston, 4 Feb. 1850, GC/RU/316, PUS. Russell retained, however, a persistent skepticism, as can be seen in his observations on Sir Francis Bond Head’s \textit{The Defenceless State of Great Britain} that “It is very clearly put together, but implies that a war & an invasion may be planned like the Finley burglary & murder.” Russell to Palmerston, 24 Dec. 1850, GC/RU/389, PUS.
\item \textsuperscript{22} Wood to Palmerston, 23 Jan. 1851, GC/WO/26, PUS.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Partridge, “Russell Cabinet,” 248.
\end{itemize}
army and navy were now impossible. The next day, Palmerston sent a rough estimate of the costs for an 80,000-man reserve, enlisted for seven years and trained seven days a year. A cabinet meeting on 8 December was supposed to consider the issue, but settled nothing. Palmerston’s removal broke the deadlock, and made it relatively easy for Russell to advance his plans. The basics of the proposed bill were printed in early January, along with Russell’s explanation. The twin foci were economy and limited liability. Both were served by limiting service to men aged 20 and 21, which made “militia service press more lightly” by limiting it to those not yet in stable situations as well as massively reducing the number of names it was required to maintain. By the end of the month, a more substantial proposal was approved by the cabinet. Colonel Tulloch, the commander of the pensioners, provided a favorable estimate of the costs on 12 February.

Russell presented a modified version of this to the House of Commons in mid-February. The proposed local militia would consist of men between the ages of twenty and twenty-three, selected by ballot with use of the census rolls. The men thus enrolled would train for 28 days each year. Volunteers would be accepted, in an effort to avoid the ballot, and as an inducement they would serve only three years to the balloted man’s four. In a substantial divergence from previous practice, not only would the officers would be selected without regard for property qualifications, but one-third would be half-

25 Palmerston to Russell, 3 Dec. 1852, PRO 30/22/9J(1), fols.31-2, 37-8, TNA.
27 Heads of a proposed Bill for the Organization of the Militia, with Observations thereon, PRO 30/22/10A(1), fols.74-6, TNA.
29 Tulloch to Russell, 12 Feb. 1852, PRO 30/22/10B, fols.115-6, TNA.
pay regular officers chosen by the Crown rather than the Lord Lieutenant. These changes might weaken the connection between the landed gentry and the militia, but they would secure a more effective and experienced officer corps. Approximately 120,000 to 150,000 men would be enrolled by the end of the first four years. Several aspects of the proposal were supposed to make it more palatable to those likely to serve. Firstly, the fact that it was a local rather than a regular militia meant a less substantial commitment by those enrolled. Secondly, the restriction of the enlistment age meant far fewer men were liable, and they were less likely to already have careers and families. Finally, the abandonment of property qualifications was intended to open the officer corps to merit.

None of this conciliated the Radicals, who continued to insist that the French threat was illusory and the spending was excessive. As Cobden explained, an ample army and navy already provided security, to which the militia would merely be a further supplement. Both he and Hume attacked the militia as antiquated and pernicious. Hume called it an “an old and worn-out expedient” and a relic of an older era of conflict between Crown and Parliament which had become a “social evil” visited on the poorer classes. His speech embraced the idea of the soldier as a separate and morally questionable status into which honest men should not be unnecessarily introduced:

To take one of the industrious community forcibly and make him temporarily a soldier was mischievous; in the first place, as removing him from a labour that could not probably do without him; and in the next place, as unfitting him, by the

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new habits he would acquire, for resuming an orderly citizenship. They had seen the effects of what he might call militia forces on national characters among the nations on the Continent: and he wanted to know if they were to overlook all the lessons thus taught them.\textsuperscript{33}

The claim that militia service was both onerous and hazardous to a man’s character was reiterated by Cobden, who said that “to take a man from his work who can earn his 4s. a day, or from his small shop, where he is with difficulty supporting his family, and to put him into a soldier’s jacket and drill him, subject him to martial law, and pay him 1s. a day, is a most flagrant hardship and injustice.”\textsuperscript{34}

Though some supported Russell, most Tories criticized the bill because it was not for a regular militia. Colonel Sibthorp and Sidney Herbert were among those who said that if there was to be a militia, and they considered the need urgent, it should be a regular militia. That force was more efficient and more effective, and perhaps even less expensive.\textsuperscript{35} They were joined by Lord Palmerston, who called it “the old and constitutional force of this country … simpler and more effective force in the regular and well-known militia, raised with less personal inconvenience, and more available for national defence.”\textsuperscript{36} Though Palmerston’s opposition to the Russell ministry shocked some, he was merely expressing the same opinion he had advanced year after year in cabinet meetings and letters. Even before a militia bill had been formally introduced, Palmerston made a motion to strip the word “local” from its title. When the House

\textsuperscript{33} 119 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 561.
\textsuperscript{34} 119 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 573.
\textsuperscript{35} 119 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 565, 587-589.
\textsuperscript{36} 119 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 579.
divided, he had a majority of 11. Russell announced that without the confidence of parliament he was unable to bring in a bill, and, at the next meeting of the Commons, the government resigned.  

Palmerston was elated. Writing to his brother a few days later he famously wrote “I have had my Tit for Tat with John Russell and I turned him out on Friday last.” The “tit for tat” has therefore entered the historiography as an act of pique, a punishment for Russell having forced him from the cabinet. Yet, as Palmerston went on to say in his letter, he had never expected to force the resignation of the government. In fact, he suspected that Russell had preferred to go out over this than the Commons vote on affairs at the Cape Colony. He wrote the same thing in his diary on the 20th itself.  

Furthermore, Palmerston had been advocating a regular militia since the beginning of the Russell administration. Though the “tit for tat” was no doubt satisfying, Palmerston’s vote represented a deeply-held belief when it came to the militia. Russell’s resignation meant that the premiership passed to Lord Derby, chief of the Protectionists, from whom Palmerston declined a cabinet post. Rather than dissolve parliament immediately, they proposed their own new Militia Bill. Its passage was a far more prolonged and complicated process than the defeat of Russell’s bill, but its success was never really in doubt. It even had the support of Palmerston, who gave an effusive endorsement of the

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38 Palmerston to Temple, 24 Feb. 1852, GC/TE/342, PUS.
39 Palmerston to Temple, 24 Feb. 1852, GC/TE/342, PUS.
41 Palmerston to Temple, 24 Feb. 1852, GC/TE/342; 22 Feb. 1852, D/13, PUS.
government proposal.\textsuperscript{42} Introduced on March 29 by the new Home Secretary, Spencer Walpole, it passed its third reading until June 7.

The New Militia

Walpole’s bill was a more conventional measure than Russell’s. Men between the ages of eighteen and 35 were liable to serve, and to do so anywhere in Great Britain. At the same time, the bill included several changes to the old laws that would hopefully make the service more palatable: the abolition of property requirements for officers below the rank of major, and at all ranks for half-pay army officers; the reduction in the annual training from 28 to 21 days; the restriction of the embodiment to time of invasion or imminent danger of it; and the provision of bounties for volunteers, to hopefully render the ballot unnecessary.\textsuperscript{43}

None of these changes were likely to change the basic unpopularity of the militia, a fact that even Walpole admitted.\textsuperscript{44} Many feared that conscription into the militia would lead to civil unrest and moral degeneracy. MP Henry Berkeley argued that having taken a man from his usual occupation and putting him only temporarily under military discipline, the militia “returned him with a distaste for his former avocations, and most probably not only totally unfitted him for the situation which he before held, but they made him a very bad character.”\textsuperscript{45} Each militiaman might then spread this

\textsuperscript{42} 120 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 292-5.\textsuperscript{43} 120 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 277-278.\textsuperscript{44} 120 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 274.\textsuperscript{45} 120 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 1169.
“contamination,” another liberal MP explained, to others in their communities.  

46 Henry Rich, who had been one of Russell’s junior Lords of the Treasury, similarly argued that militia service meant that England’s “industrious poor” would be deprived of their regular employment and “degraded to the condition and habits of the reckless class.”  

47 The Leeds Mercury agreed, writing that Derby’s plan would disturb “the industrial habits both of our agricultural and manufacturing workmen” and cultivate an un-Christian warlike spirit.  

48 Men who volunteered, rather than be balloted, would probably have worse characters, since they were willing to forgo their freedom for the cash. Rich explained that they were likely to be “unsettled, half-educated, and discontented persons, … who having received little from society, conceived they owed it still less.”  

49 The Star agreed, calling the men likely to seek the bounty “a cheap and nasty substitute for a real army.”  

Anxieties about the debauching effects of the militia were particularly important because of fears of labor unrest ever since Chartism had unexpectedly revived in 1848, assembling about 150,000 men and women to present a new petition to Parliament.  

51 In the end, that petition was the last gasp of the mass platform not its apotheosis, and Britain avoided the popular unrest which gripped the continent.  

52 However, one of the lessons of the revolutions of 1848 seemed to be that to simultaneously arm the population and make it discontent was a very poor idea.

46 120 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 1143.  
47 120 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 1044.  
48 Leeds Mercury, April 3, 1852, 4.  
49 120 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 1043.  
50 The Star, April 3, 1852, 5.  
52 Chase, Chartism, 324-7.
Admittedly, there were supporters of the bill who though militia service would have a salutary effect. Monckton Miles thought that “raising in some degree a military spirit among young men, especially in manufacturing towns, would be anything rather than injurious to them in a bodily or mental point of view.”\(^53\) So did Captain Henry Boldero and others.\(^54\) Still, many Tories admitted that the militiamen would make poor substitutes for regular soldiers, both militarily and morally. Bernal thought it “impossible for any man in that short time [21 days] to do more than learn to shoulder his arms and acquire the goose step.”\(^55\) So did General George Alexander Reid, who said it was impossible for a few days training each year to impart the habits “of steady and implicit obedience, submission, and subordination to their superiors, so as to ensure that moral control without which an army was useless.”\(^56\) The *Daily News* argued that for “irregular men” like poachers or paupers, for whom time in the regular army would tame their “superabundant spirits” and “truant energies,” militia service would just provide them with money for mischief from the bounty and three weeks of debauchery during training.\(^57\) Though Sidney Herbert tried to argue that it was impossible for militia service to both debauch the men and be militarily useless, the *Examiner* explained that it is quite possible to spoil a clown without making a soldier, and to turn out both a bad soldier and

\(^{53}\) 120 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 1141.
\(^{55}\) 120 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 1122-3.
\(^{56}\) 120 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 1122.
\(^{57}\) *Daily News* (London), April 1, 1852, 4.
a bad subject.\textsuperscript{58} Regardless, it seemed likely that the potential quality of the militiamen would repel any more genteel volunteers, and attract only idle or indifferent workmen.\textsuperscript{59}

With nearly 800 petitions presented against the militia, John Bright made the extreme claim against the militia that “military establishments beyond a demonstrated necessity were quite contrary to the Constitution of the country.”\textsuperscript{60} The compulsory nature of the ballot was criticized, although the government was keen to assure its critics that their desire was for a force composed exclusively of volunteers, with resort to the ballot only in case of a substantial shortfall. There were also several attempts in the parliamentary debate to exclude militiamen from flogging, as a degrading practice that no civilian could countenance.\textsuperscript{61}

For many liberals, then, the unfortunate but inescapable alternative was the regular army. This was an irony that Derby’s Solicitor General, Sir Fitzroy Kelly was keen to point out, noting that it saw the army’s usual opponents now its greatest supporters. Since 1688, the nation had opposed any increase in the standing army, but now it was those “who boasted that they represented the Whigs of 1688” who favored such an increase.\textsuperscript{62}

There were also those, however, who saw Derby’s innovations as undermining the social cohesion of the force. Waiving property qualifications for the most junior officers and for those with regular commissions was intended to make the officer corps more efficient and intelligent, but it meant a retreat from the idea that the militia was a

\textsuperscript{58} 120 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 1166; \textit{Examiner}, May 1, 1852, 1. 
\textsuperscript{59} \textit{Liverpool Mercury}, April 13, 1852, 4. 
\textsuperscript{60} 120 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 1116; 121 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 174. 
\textsuperscript{61} 121 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 393-413. 
\textsuperscript{62} 122 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 180.
personification of rural society. The *Mercury* worried that regular officers would be far harsher than familiar landlords, writing that “it was highly improbable that a court-martial, composed of country squires and farmers, would order out a contumacious militiaman to be cat-o’-nine-tailed to his inevitable ruin and the disgrace of his family, what guarantee have we that a martinet on half-pay, and anxious to exhibit a little military despotism, would be equally scrupulous and considerate?” Colonel Sibthorp similarly opposed removing the property qualification for junior officers, arguing that the men would serve more willingly under a local landowner.

With a few exceptions, like relaxed property qualifications, Derby’s bill appealed to Tory backbenchers who saw nothing unsavory about requiring rural laborers to adopt unswerving obedience to their local gentry. The emphasis on seeking volunteers meant that Derby and Walpole could sincerely claim that they would not be required to use the ballot. Aside from this, the main attraction of Derby’s plan was that it adopted the time-tested patterns of the old militia. Yet it offered little or nothing to those who were concerned about the consequences of such service, either for the individuals or the country.

Cobden and the Peace Society worked hard to create opposition to the Militia Bill, but it required very little effort to induce a public outcry. Although Cobden was unhappy with the initial quantity of petitions, by the end of May more than 1400 had been presented to Parliament. He expected that, with an election near, MPs were likely to be

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63 *Liverpool Mercury*, May 14, 1852, 382.
64 121 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 300.
65 Cobden to Sturge, 23 March 1852, Add. MSS. 43656, fols.263-6, BL. Repr. in *Letters of Richard Cobden*, vol. 2, 392-3; Cobden to Sturge, 31 March 1852, Add. MSS. 43656, fols.267-8, BL. Repr. in
sensitive to any appeal from their constituents.\textsuperscript{66} In May, he was writing to Henry Richard of the Peace Society about creating an anti-militia committee or league to be headquartered in London and with branches throughout Britain.\textsuperscript{67} Yet no such committee was ever formed, and on June 7 the bill passed its third reading with a majority of almost 100 votes. Two days later, Cobden wrote that he was “disgusted & almost dismayed at the proceedings on the Militia Bill.”\textsuperscript{68} Its supporters were “Country members (chiefly protectionists) & the representatives of small pocket boroughs. This shows that if we had a fair representation, you could hold the military party in check.”\textsuperscript{69}

Even after the bill became law, Cobden and the peace movement continued their opposition. After all, as Cobden explained, the militia existed because of public sentiment that the army and navy were insufficient, and any reductions there must be preceded by the abolition of the militia.\textsuperscript{70} The easiest attack would be on the ballot, but it was clear that “having set up the machinery & therefore found the excuse for the patronage & expenditure, they would rather let the regiments be in skeleton than provoke resistance to the whole thing by a ballot.”\textsuperscript{71} The real aim, then, must be to prevent volunteering.\textsuperscript{72} Early signs were encouraging. Cobden gleefully wrote to Bright in

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\textsuperscript{66} Cobden to Richard, 23 March 1852, Add. MSS. 43657, fol.130, BL. Repr. in \textit{Letters of Richard Cobden}, vol. 2, 391-2. Bright shared his opinion, writing to George Wilson that “I suspect we shall be able to prevent its going on this Session.” Bright to Wilson, 17 April 1852, M20/18, MCL.
\textsuperscript{68} Cobden to Sturge, 9 June 1852, Add. MSS. 43656, fols.281-4, BL.
\textsuperscript{69} Cobden to Sturge, 9 June 1852, Add. MSS. 43656, fols.281-4, BL.
\textsuperscript{70} Cobden to Sturge, 14 Sept. 1852, Add. MSS. 43656, fols.295-8, BL.
\textsuperscript{71} Cobden to Sturge, 20 Sept. 1852, Add. MSS. 43656, fols.299-302, BL.
\textsuperscript{72} Cobden to Bright, 30 Aug. 1852, Add. MSS. 43649, fols.269-274, BL. Repr. in \textit{Letters of Richard Cobden}, vol. 2, 419.
September that “The militia didn’t take, even in this rural village, where wages are only 9/ a week. … Depend on it we shall be right to the letter in predicting that the volunteers will be a precious set of vagabonds & I doubt if they will get half as many as they want.”

Opponents of the militia also tried to discourage volunteering by publicizing the possibility of being flogged, hoping for revulsion against that particular punishment. Their chief effort was a series of placards, like those which had been used by the Anti-Corn Law League. They were presumably effective enough for the Home Office to encourage local magistrates to prosecute the bills as “seditious libels.” Because of this the Peace Society abandoned their posting, although when Palmerston became Home Secretary he abandoned the prosecutions.

Cobden and his allies saw the entire sorry episode as proof that there was a military spirit “rampant” in the country, fostered by the officers of both services whose “clamorous advocacy … made a most indecent exhibition of themselves.” By the middle of April he was complaining that it was impossible to oppose defense expenditures with so many military men in the House. It was Hume who said it clearest in the Commons, when he claimed that “our present panics were not due, as in times past, to the old women, but to our having too many clubs about London, with so many half-pay

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74 Martin Ceadel, Origins of War Prevention, 488; Cockburn to Palmerston, 4 Feb. 1853, GC/CO/13, PUS.
75 Cobden to Sturge, 11 March 1852, Add. MSS. 43649, fols.257-60, BL; Cobden to Sturge, 21 Jan. 1852, Add. MSS. 43649, fols.241-2, BL.
officers about, who had nothing to do but to look about for employment for themselves and their friends.”

Cobden feared that the whole affair was only intended to provide new patronage and political power for the aristocracy. He wrote to the pacifist Joseph Sturge:

have you observed the lists of appointments & promotions as officers of the militia? There is quite a flood of flunkeyism & patronage in the Counties. Lords-Lieutenant are looking patronizingly upon the squire; & the Squires son is snobbishly lookup up to his lordship for a grade in the county militia. Then there is all the small patronage for printers, surgeons, lawyers, &c. with its necessary consequence of servility & demoralization on the part of all interested. The whole of the workings of the militia is calculated to foster & strengthen an aristocratic system, & to degrade the mass of the people.

Bright even claimed that “Lord John & the Tory leaders, & the Court have cooked the whole thing.” The Examiner was convinced it was preparation to reintroduce the Corn Laws, as “the militia is essentially a landlords’ force, commanded by landlords, officered by landlords or the nominees of landlords, the ranks filled by clowns; and therefore a more apt force to carry up the price of corn at the point of the bayonet could not be devised.”

If anything, on this the radical plebeian newspapers were more virulent than Cobden and Bright. G.W.M. Reynolds claimed in his paper that the militia was intended

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77 120 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 285.  
78 Cobden to Sturge, 14 Sept. 1852, Add. MSS. 43649, fols.295-8, BL  
79 Bright to Wilson, 7 Feb. 1852, M20/18, MCL.  
80 Examiner, May 8, 1852, 1.
not for protection against a foreign threat but to suppress the unenfranchised workers.\footnote{Reynolds’s Newspaper, April 4, 1852, 1; May 2, 1852, 1.} The \textit{Star of Freedom} wrote that the militia was an attempt to militarize Britain.\footnote{Star of Freedom, May 8, 1852, 4.} The \textit{Star} settled for saying the militia was a nursery of soldiers for European wars.\footnote{Star, April 3, 1852, 5.}

What seemed to mortify Cobden most was that so many liberals and radicals seemed to accept the need for some sort of military increase. This was, in the eyes of historian Martin Taylor, “one of the major watersheds of mid-nineteenth-century liberal and radical politics,” with the reform party moving away from pacifism and non-intervention.\footnote{Miles Taylor, \textit{Decline of British Radicalism}, 216.} Napoleon’s coup led men like George Grote to reconsider their opposition to the military. He wrote to Cobden that “I am as much averse to multiplication of soldiers & sailors as you can be: but after all French soldiers & sailors are more terrible still.”\footnote{Grote to Cobden, 26 Dec. 1851, Add. MSS. 43668, fols.148-51, BL.} Similar fears agitated Sir Joshua Walmsley, who urged Cobden not to assist the “Peace men.”\footnote{Walmsley to Cobden, 6 Oct. 1852, A74, COBDEN/3, Cobden Papers, West Sussex Records Office (hereafter CWS), MF 1313 (microfilm), MCL.} Colonel T.P. Thompson spoke for them, and others, when he stated in parliament “the country will be grateful to the noble Lord's Government for all and everything it shall do in the way of precaution” against invasion.\footnote{119 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 564.}

Cobden was furious. He complained to Richard that he had received numerous letters like Grote’s urging an increase in armaments to protect Britain from Louis Napoleon.\footnote{Cobden to Richard, 13 Jan. 1852, Add. MSS. 43657, fols.119-123, BL. Repr. in \textit{Letters of Richard Cobden}, Vol. 2, 368.} Another letter, to Bright, complained of Walmsley’s lack of judgment, while a third, to Joseph Sturge, announced “when we find men like Colonel Thompson &
Captain [Ralph Bernal] Osborne treating with derision any opposition to the scheme it is impossible to acquit the electoral body of all complicity in the matter.”

Evans was condemned as a “sham radical,” but the most acrimonious clash was with Alexander Somerville.

As a common soldier in the Scots Greys in 1832, Somerville had been improperly punished for writing pro-Reform letters that were published in a Birmingham newspaper. Questions were raised in Parliament, a committee of inquiry was formed, and after a short time as a liberal cause célèbre a subscription gave Somerville the money to buy himself out of the army. In 1836 he joined the British Auxiliary Legion, led by De Lacy Evans, which Melbourne’s ministry sent to Spain to help Queen Isabella in her civil war against the conservative Carlists. When he returned, he joined the anti-Corn Law agitation as a writer and pamphleteer. In 1848 he condemned the invasion panic, but now he was denouncing Cobden for his opposition to the militia. In several letters Cobden denounced him as a bully, a miscreant, and a drunk.

Considering the circumstances, the recruitment of the new militia went relatively smoothly. The offer of a £6 bounty meant that there was no need to resort to the ballot, although there was a substantial problem with non-appearance for the first militia musters

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90 Cobden to Richard, 23 April 1852, Add. MSS 43657, fols.132-33, BL.
93 Cobden to Wilson, 19 April 1852, M20/18, MCL. Repr. in Letters of Richard Cobden, vol. 2, 401-2; Cobden to Acland, 12 Jan. 1853, Add. MSS. 43668, fols.197-8, BL. For Somerville’s opinions on the 1848 panic, see Manchester Times, Jan. 1, 1848, 5. For his later views, see Cobdenic Policy. The Internal Enemy of England (London: Robert Hardwicke, 1854).
in 1853. Nor was the force filled solely with Irish vagrants, as so many MPs had warned. Instead the regiments seem to have mostly been composed of agricultural laborers.

While Hew Strachan observes that “the better class of the militiamen brought with it greater intelligence and self-reliance than was found in the regular army,” there was no sense at the time that, aside from being all volunteers, the new militia was different from the old. Commissions similarly remained in the hands of the local gentry, despite efforts by professional men such as merchants and solicitors to obtain appointments. Nor, despite the hopes of the government, were many former army officers commissioned; only 225 throughout England in 1852. The militia remained a vehicle for country paternalism. Lord Carrington, commander of the Buckinghamshire militia, personally interviewed each of his recruits and provided a 3s. bounty personally.

The new militia tried to recover the martial and constitutional stature which it had supposedly had from the Elizabethan era to the eighteenth century. This effort was reflected in the new force’s most tangible symbols – its barracks. In England, the barracks was commonly seen as a symbol of Continental despotism, a source of oppression and an incubator of vice which separated the standing army from the people. When John Keats wrote that “On the road from Cowes to Newport I saw some extensive Barracks which disgusted me extremely with Government for placing such a Nest of Debauchery in so beautiful a place,” he was expressing a traditional English opinion.

So was Cobden in 1848 when he said “something should be done to expose the

95 Beckett, The amateur military tradition, 148-152.
demoralization going on always in the neighbourhood of our barracks. They are become moral ulcers on the sides of all our larger towns.” 97 At a 1794 meeting of the London Corresponding Society, John Martin asked “We must now choose at once either liberty or slavery for ourselves and our posterity. Will you wait until BARRACKS are created in every village, and till subsidized Hessians and Hanoverians are upon us?” 98

In response, most army barracks imitated Georgian domestic architecture, a shy and retiring style that blended into the urban landscape and avoided the implication that the army was overbearing – as well as, not coincidentally, being relatively cheap to design and construct. 99 Exceptions to this utilitarianism were mostly built in a modest classicism similar to that of other public buildings. The Royal Military College at Sandhurst featured a “long, calm, Classical front” in Greek Doric, and the same style was adopted by Philip Hardwick in the façade for the Wellington Barracks near Buckingham Palace. 100 Even once the Houses of Parliament competition had enshrined the Gothic Revival as the national style, British barracks avoided this style with very few exceptions. 101 The residential style persisted even where there was a genuine threat that might have justified a more militarized form. Four Northern barracks were constructed under Sir Charles Napier’s supervision in the 1840s to resist a potential Chartist uprising.

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97 Cobden to Sturge, 11 Dec. 1848, Add. MSS 43668, fol.83, BL.
100 Douet, British Barracks, 125.
101 They were James Wyatt’s central school for the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich, in the extravagant “Gothick” he had used at Fonthill Abbey; the crenellated Waterloo Barracks within the Tower of London, in order to match its surroundings; and Anthony Salvin’s officers barracks at Dover Castle, built in Tudor Gothic style to match the rest of the garrison buildings.
Behind the low exterior wall, though, the barracks blocks were similar to those built elsewhere.  

In contrast, the new militia was ostentatious in its use of a militarized Gothic. The militia became barracks-builders in 1853, when a new act required each county lieutenancy to build or purchase a “storehouse” to store arms and equipment, as well as accommodations for a sergeant major and at least 6 NCOs. Though they varied from county to country, most used some variety of crenellated Gothic architecture. In Gloucestershire, one barracks had a battered basement, square entrance tower, and stair turret. In Lincoln, the storehouses had a tall, crenellated and loopholed wall. In Ipswich, it was chimney turrets and a drawbridge. At Macclesfield, the new barracks was built in polychromatic French Gothic, while the Duke of Cornwall’s Militia at Bodmin mimicked a small Loire chateau. The Royal London Militia Depot, in Finsbury, was executed in an Elizabethan manner complete with crenellated chimneys. In some cases, the fortified elements served a practical purpose by protecting the arms from riot or insurrection. Many, however, were strictly decorative.  

More importantly, the style of the new militia storehouses attempted to suggest that they were the true heirs of England’s martial history, and worthy of its legacy. Warlike army barracks would be an affront to English liberties, but warlike militia storehouses were their protectors.

Beyond the county lieutenancies, there were few who seemed to agree with this claim. Popular interest in the militia was limited. It inspired no novels, paintings or plays. The ballads of 1852 mocked militiamen for being mock heroes without real

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experience, as “where the powder rattles why there I’m never seen; / You may find me in
the rear but never in the van.”104 Most saw the militia as a new, if well-disguised and less
effective, army.105 In the last play to feature the militia, the 1846 bagatelle Drawn for the
Militia, service is the odious threat to the rich but cowardly Billy Small rather than a
noble service.106 Though the new militia was much improved in its behavior – Duncan
Anderson calls it “a half way house between a sunday school and a superior mechanics’
institute” – it remained unpopular.107

The First Volunteers

Despite its distant and honorable past, the militia’s status as an instrument of rural
patronage, a class-stratified institution, and a potential conscriptor of innocent men made
it odious to liberals and radicals alike. Increasingly, interest shifted to volunteer corps
which would offer a new, and purely voluntary, defensive force. Fifteen corps of rifle
volunteers offered their services to the crown in January and February 1852, one of
which – the Victoria Volunteer Rifle Corps – claimed to trace its ancestry via the Royal
Victoria Rifle Club (est. 1835) to the Duke of Cumberland’s Sharpshooters and the
Napoleonic Wars. Though Russell’s Home Secretary Sir George Grey tentatively
accepted several offers, Walpole rejected the idea and only one corps, the Exeter and

104 “The bold militiaman,” Harding B20(146), Bodleian Library Broadside Ballads. Available
http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/ballads/ballads.htm.
105 “The new militia train,” Firth c.14(323); “Shoulder Up, or the New Militia,” 2806 c.16(27); “New
Militia!” Firth c.14(325), Bodleian Library Broadside Ballads. Available
http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/ballads/ballads.htm.
106 T.G. Blake, Drawn for the Militia, or How to find a Substitute, [Feb. 1846], Add. MSS 42991, fols.821-
840, BL.
107 Duncan Anderson, “The English Militia in the Mid-Nineteenth Century. A Study of Its Military, Social,
Defense of the United Kingdom, 134.
South Devon Rifle Corps, finally received official recognition from the Derby administration.\(^\text{108}\)

The new enthusiasm for volunteers reflected an increasing liberal comfort with bellicosity and the use of force. Lord Palmerston personified this attitude with his militant approach to foreign policy, whether it was enforcing anti-slavery laws on the high seas or protecting British trade across the world. His belligerence was not unique, being matched by some of the more eccentric Radicals. Palmerston’s Don Pacifico speech originated with MP John Roebuck’s motion praising the government’s controversial actions.\(^\text{109}\) The trumpeting of Britain’s prestige and national exceptionalism helped to garnish support among plebeian radicals, for whom his combination of patriotism and constitutionalism was a heady mixture.\(^\text{110}\)

Hand in hand with this belligerence came the fear that Britons were too focused on commerce and their pocket-books to fight and win, and that the county was at risk of losing its moral and physical fibre. Tennyson’s first poem of the 1852 panic condemned “ye brawlers penny-wise” and the “babbling Peace Societies” for weakening the nation, while in “For the Penny-Wise” he said that the “cry ‘re-trench’ / Has a little docked our glory.”\(^\text{111}\) Two more political poems also expressed his concern that commerce had left Britain weak and degenerate. When Britons “too much we make our Ledgers, Gods,” it


leads to “fallen nobility, that, overawed, / Would lisp in honeyed whispers of this monstrous fraud!”\textsuperscript{112}

Most interest in the Volunteers reflected one of two visions. First, there were those who saw the Volunteers as an inexpensive and less oppressive alternative to the militia, which would be a popular – rather than coerced – expression of the post-1688 social status quo. Second, there were those who saw in the Volunteers an expression of individual self-help and self-confidence, especially among the entrepreneurial and professional segments of the middle-class, and the opportunity to extend this spirit into the military.

For more Whiggish liberals, what was appealing about the Volunteers was the idea that they might re-integrate society in a way that a compulsory militia would not. This was the view of Sir Joshua Walmsley. His October letter, which angered Cobden, said “I agree with you that standing armies are inimical to Liberty, but Companies of men officered by their own roots, and having a stake in the Country wd. have the effect of commanding good Laws as well as defending the Country.”\textsuperscript{113} It was also the view of Henry Berkeley, who said in the Commons “let them be headed by noblemen and gentlemen of the land, and a more effective body of riflemen than the tenantry of the great estates and the yeomanry, now perfectly useless in a military point of view, could not be found.”\textsuperscript{114}


\textsuperscript{113} Walmsley to Cobden, 6 Oct. 1852, A74, COBDEN/3. CWS, MF1313 (microfilm), MCL.

\textsuperscript{114} 120 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 1169.
Berkeley’s idea of a corps of tenantry was not a unique one. It was shared by General Sir Charles James Napier, whose 1852 pamphlet *A Letter on the Defence of England* said “do not be exclusive in forming your corps: – take your gamekeepers as your comrades, and any of your labourers that will enroll themselves: a gentleman will find no braver and better comrades than among his own immediate neighbors and tenants. Should you require to throw up a breastwork, they will be more handy with the spades and pickaxes than yourselves.”115 Even Tennyson embraced this view in his unpublished poem “Rifle Clubs!!!” when he wrote “Workmen, workmen, away with your strikes! / Close with your masters! sound an alarm! … You love freedom, the French love storm.”116

There were also those who saw the new Volunteers as a form of self-help commensurate with their status as independent men. The most effusive paean to these virtues came from the journalist Hans Busk, writing under the pseudonym “Long-Range.” His pamphlet compared the Volunteers with the militia and regulars. The latter “know full well that they are merely machines, and must bend to the law of command to the strictest degree.”117 Even the volunteer militiaman is corrupted by his pay, and has “all the mercenary feelings of the soldier, without that which renders the soldier of any value - his military discipline.” In contrast, the volunteer is quicker to learn military discipline and more sensitive to his duties because of his independent spirit. They

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“comprise, in one word, the flower of the middle class. Scarcely such a material exists in any other country in the world.”

Early Volunteer corps leveraged the existing appeal of the voluntary spirit and self-improvement as well as the broad appeal of clubs and associations, a culture which extended well beyond the professional middle class into the world of artisans, clerks, and shopkeepers. Some, like the Metropolitan Rifle Club, were clubs themselves. Others were outgrowths of other clubs, like the sports club of Hanover Park, Peckham.

The new corps and rifle clubs were the preserve of the professional middle-class. Militia commissions were controlled by the lords-lieutenant, many of whom considered involvement in commerce as unsuitable for an officer. In the new bill, the only concession to businessmen was that property qualifications could be fulfilled with personal goods instead of land, but property remained the mark of the necessary character. The Volunteers offered an opportunity to demonstrate virtue and to contribute to national security without that wealth.

The leaders of the new movement were professional men. Busk and Alfred Richards were well-educated journalists, Nathaniel Bousfield was a Liverpool cotton broker, and Coventry Patmore a poet and assistant librarian at the British Museum.

Cost kept men of a lower class out. The Metropolitan Rifle Club required an entrance fee

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118 Long-Range, The Rifle, 70.
120 Beckett, Riflemen Form, 15.
121 121 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 322.
122 Richards studied law at Exeter College, Oxford, and was called to the bar before becoming the editor of the British Army Despatch in 1851, while Busk was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, before becoming a barrister and writer. Basil L. Crapster, “A.B. Richards (1820-76): Journalist in Defence of Britain,” JSAHR 41 (1963): 94; Beckett, Riflemen Form, 14.
of 10s. and an annual subscription of a guinea, while the uniform of the Peckham club cost a stunning £14.123 Involvement with a rifle club was a sign of patriotism, but also of the principled disinterest appropriate to a voter – “surely a volunteer who desires no bounty, and is willing to equip himself at his own expense, is as likely to make an efficient soldier as he whose price is six guineas.”124

Though the rifle club movement and many of its associates saw independence and civic feeling as middle-class virtues, the same spirit was strong amongst artisans for whom Volunteering was a chance to show respectability and independence. Thornton Hunt’s radical newspaper The Leader approached the Volunteers in just this spirit. Rather than a “cheap and nasty ‘militia’ composed of wretched paid ‘substitutes’ – the riffraff that can be bought at any day for target practice,” the Leader asks for “many a sturdy yeoman or labourer, an undegenerate shopman or artisan, who might be a fit and willing material for sound, spirited, well-matched volunteer corps of infantry!”125

Plebeian radicals worried that the Volunteers were an attempt by the middle classes to further disenfranchise them. In his newspaper, Reynolds wrote that the opposition of men like Cobden and Bright to the militia was from fear that if “factory slaves” became militiamen then the cost of labor would rise. Middle-class volunteers posed no such threat.126

If workers were included, Volunteering might be the path, however oblique, to enfranchisement. The act of volunteering was an expression of the civic virtue usually

123 Basil Champneys, ed., Memoirs and Correspondence of Coventry Patmore, Vol. 1 (London: George Bell and Sons, 1900), 75; Beckett, Amateur military tradition, 159.
124 Liverpool Mercury, April 30, 1852, 6.
126 Reynolds’s Newspaper, 9 May 1852, 8.
connected with the responsibilities of the franchise. This was what General William Napier, Charles’ brother and another supporter of Volunteers over militiamen, meant when he said the Government feared accepting Volunteer corps because they might demand an extension of parliamentary reform.\footnote{127} W.J. Fox made the same point when he introduced an amendment to make only electors liable for militia service.\footnote{128} Even Walpole and the conservatives toyed with enfranchising militiamen, as a way to make that service more attractive, though they abandoned the idea within a few days.\footnote{129}

Both the paternalist and the middle-class approach shared a critical stance towards the regular army. The regulars were frequently condemned as un-English and un-constitutional, as in the Leader’s statement that “standing armies are but the hobby of Metternich; John Bull has had too much of them.”\footnote{130} Although British auxiliary troops had usually been dressed as similarly as possible to the regular army, the recommendations now were for Lincoln green, grey, or even corduroy.\footnote{131} “A Civilian” wanted an “inexpensive uniform … of any colour but red.”\footnote{132} Even Napier, who defended the continued use of the red coat by the regulars in his Letter, considered it inappropriate for the volunteers. He explained that “for you, the best dress would be your shooting jackets and leather gaiters. The danger that calls on England to arm, does not

\footnotesize{\begin{itemize}
\item[\footnote{127}]{Bruce, Life of General Sir William Napier, vol. 2, 522.}
\item[\footnote{128}]{120 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 1707-9.}
\item[\footnote{129}]{120 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 646, 683-4.  Greville called it an “extraordinary and still unexplained escapade.” Greville, Greville Memoirs, vol. 6, 338.}
\item[\footnote{130}]{“More Troops – The National Defence,” Leader, 27 Dec. 1851, 1234.}
\item[\footnote{132}]{A Civilian, Hints for a Volunteer Coast Defence Addressed to the Inhabitants of the Southern Coast of England (London: Longman, Browns, Green, and Longman, 1853), 18.}
\end{itemize}
demand pretty dresses, but deeds of arms.”¹³³ There were practical reasons for riflemen to adopt a dark-colored uniform that would reduce their visibility on the battlefield; the regular army’s rifle regiments already wore dark green. But there were also reasons to adopt the red, for uniformity and easy recognition on the battlefield. Abandoning the red coat made it easy to tell who were regulars and who were amateurs, both on and off the battlefield.

Though they might not be professionals, supporters of the Volunteers were confident that their superior character would make them far superior to a hired or conscripted militia. Colonel Thompson felt “there was no officer of his acquaintance who, if the necessity arose, would not rather lead ten volunteer riflemen than twenty local militia, or who would not consider a hundred volunteer riflemen dismounted, and twenty mounted, a more effective command than a regiment of the others.”¹³⁴ Hume agreed, saying that 500 volunteers would be better than 5,000 conscripts.¹³⁵ Volunteers could “render a cow-shed a stronghold; to make a pigstye even impregnable.”¹³⁶

More importantly, service in the Volunteers might further improve their character, perhaps even to “introduce amongst the people habits of organisation, as well as feelings of military spirit, and that spirit of self-dependence which would be our best resource in case of invasion.”¹³⁷ Many writers saw an opportunity with the Volunteers to unite the nation with a common cause, and a common will, which would erase or at least mitigate

¹³³ Napier, A Letter, 13.
¹³⁴ 121 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 247.
¹³⁵ 121 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 1202. See also 119 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 1415.
¹³⁷ 121 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 239.
class conflict. According to John Kinloch, the Volunteers would be “men of all classes, trades, and professions, … gentlemen residing in towns, magistrates, lawyers, writers, solicitors, merchants, bankers, manufacturers, and other professional men – their clerks, superintendents, overseers, and articled apprentices, – shopkeepers, tradesmen, and artisans, &c.”\textsuperscript{138} The Leader agreed. A “genuine trust of the People, without distinctions of class, would find its response in a forgetfulness of past dissension and a thorough revival of that national feeling which is already breaking forth with its cheerful countenance.”\textsuperscript{139}

In the eyes of Evans, the chief parliamentary advocate of the Volunteers, their service was an extension of a noble tradition of liberal volunteering.\textsuperscript{140} In the Commons, Evans announced the long legacy of volunteer troops fighting for liberty all across Europe, “for he could not forget that it was by such forces that the Swiss had been rescued from the yoke of Austria—that the Dutch had overthrown their Spanish masters—and that the Americans had erected themselves, despite of England, into an independent State.”\textsuperscript{141} This echoed his previous writing on the British Legion he had led to support the liberal Christinos in Spain, in which he explained how often liberal volunteers had fought. Even “we ourselves owe, in a great degree, the expulsion of the pre-eminent Tory, James II, –to the aid of a Dutch army of 14,000 men.”\textsuperscript{142} Other writers used the service of Evans’ British Legion in Spain as evidence of the military qualities of

\textsuperscript{138} Kinloch, Proposal, 7.
\textsuperscript{139} “Volunteer Regiments and Rifle Corps,” Leader, Jan. 24 1852, 84.
\textsuperscript{140} See 119 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 1413-14; 120 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 288-9, 1036; 121 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 212.
\textsuperscript{141} 119 Parl. Debs. (3d ser.) 1414.
\textsuperscript{142} George de Lacy Evans, Memoranda of the Contest in Spain (London: James Ridgway, 1840), 149.
volunteer troops. Tennyson alluded to the English Civil War and the Glorious Revolution in his pro-militia poem “The Third of February – 1852,” which proclaimed “From our first Charles by force we wring our claims. / Prick’d by the Papal spur, we rear’d, / We flung the burthen of the second James. / I saw, we never feared!”

Still, the idea of national unity could as easily carry conservative as radical connotations. Kinloch’s statement that “valiant and stalwart men, of all classes, interests, and political opinions, would combine together for the defence of their common country,” was the prelude to the statement that the Volunteers would “prove an effectual barrier to the machinations of Socialism.” His Volunteer corps offered an opportunity for gentry and employers to demonstrate their leadership, as “some country gentlemen might be willing to equip their gamekeepers, foresters, and watchers,” while “gentlemen at the head of large works, or other establishments in towns, might also equip some of the active young men in their employment.”

Tennyson was among those who saw the Volunteers as such an institution, writing in “Hands All Round” how “that man’s the best cosmopolite, / Who loves his native country best. / May Freedom’s oak for ever live / With stronger life from day to day; / That man’s the true Conservative, / Who lops the mouldered branch away.” Volunteering might help to recover the virtue Britain had lost with industrialization, “though niggard throats of Manchester may bawl, / What England was, shall her true sons

145 Kinloch, Proposal, 8.
146 Kinloch, Proposal, 7.
147 “Hands All Round!” Poems of Tennyson, vol. 2, 475.
forget? / We are not cotton-spinners all, / But some love England all her honour yet.”

Similar opinions were expressed by “An Old Officer,” who thought the Volunteers “might be considered a perfect security against socialism, on the one hand, and despotism, on the other.”

Volunteers even crept into the defense plans of conservative officers like Burgoyne. One of his 1850 memoranda suggested a “citizen force” of cavalry and artillery, in which noblemen and men of fortune would act with the same energy as they do in yachting and “sports of the Field.” A further proposal in 1854 suggested the enrollment of volunteers to man coastal batteries and the creation of a levee en masse in which “an uniform may be either entirely dispensed with, or so applied as to cause the smallest possible trouble or extra expense, the habitual frock jacket of mechanics of the country might be adopted and an uniform color and make recommended to the ordinary cloth foraging cap might be added a slight braid or cord of scarlet.” Though some might fear that the levies would become like France’s National Guards, and “give undue force to occasional popular delusions and outbursts,” Burgoyne argues that this would be restrained by “the sentiments of the officers and leading local authorities and in the Superior class of Volunteer Corps.”

Even those who rejected the use of Volunteers were forced to address the assumptions that underpinned them. A pamphlet like former Peelite MP Montague

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149 An Old Officer, Military Defence, 4.
150 J.F. Burgoyne, Remarks on the Military Condition of Great Britain, 29 May 1850, ND/A/9, PUS. Interestingly, this paragraph was not included when the memo was reprinted in Burgoyne’s Military Opinions.
151 Burgoyne to Palmerston, 10 April 1854, GC/BU/614, PUS.
Gore’s *National Defences*, supporting the expansion of the regular army, found it necessary to argue that, whatever the previous suspicions of standing armies, “no rational man could entertain real fears for the liberty of England.”

In his *Letter to Lord John Russell*, George Paget, Anglesey’s son and a lieutenant-colonel, made use of popular suspicions of the army in support his proposal for a reserve of discharged soldiers. Rather than directly challenge criticisms of military discipline, he suggested that ex-soldiers would handle it far better than raw civilians. These men would “laugh at all the bugbears one hears of Mutiny Bills, Military Prisons, Punishments of Death, Sufferings under the Lash, &c., &c.,” since they knew how easily “his good conduct will relieve him from all chance of coming into contact with punishment.”

The enthusiasm for creating Volunteer corps was one aspect of the transformation of mid-Victorian political culture. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the prerequisite for political involvement was independence, and its signs were landed property and rank, which conferred independence from financial pressures. In the aftermath of the Great Reform Act the mark of independence increasingly came not from land but from character instead, with claims to intelligence, education, and self-support through one’s own labors. This last factor was truly critical. The worship of manly effort, often-called the “gospel of work,” was associated most closely with the middle class but pervaded Victorian political culture. Chartists argued their status as workers

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providing for families justified an increased, “breadwinners” wage.\footnote{Clark, \textit{Struggle for the Breeches}.} A new ideal politician appeared, and in John Tosh’s words “manly simplicity” replaced “gentlemanly politeness.”\footnote{Tosh, “Gentlemanly Politeness,” 455-72.}

The military seemed to be one of the last bastions of the old conception of independence, but the intrusion of new ideas about character required new institutions. There were clear reasons why independent men could not serve in the ranks of the regulars or militia. No independent man could scruple to take orders so directly, or to subordinate himself so totally to other men, even of equal or superior social standing. Service in the militia also carried the burden of compulsion, while enlistment in the regulars required a ten-year commitment. Nor, unsurprisingly, were the lower classes eager to involve themselves with commitments which the upper and middle classes considered demeaning and signs of political immaturity.

Even a Conservative ministry like Derby’s had to recognize that this attitude made an increasingly broad segment of the population dissatisfied with the militia. The shift to an all-volunteer force, with the ballot acting solely as a lingering threat, was at least a partial response. So were Walpole’s musings on connections between the militia and the franchise, which would at least sweeten the burden of obedience. Volunteering seemed to offer an alternative to the entire problem. Unlike the militia or regulars, volunteering offered freedom of choice; men could stay or go as they wished. Nor would the Mutiny Act and military discipline apply except in time of war. It offered a way of proving one’s manly character, by exactly the application to labor which the new view of
character celebrated. While lawyers, clerks, and artisans alike saw the advantage therein, they also fought over who exactly would be included. Busk, Richards, and Coventry Patmore saw a far more exclusive movement than did Hunt, Evans, or even Napier. However, volunteering’s time had not quite come. Though it was readily discussed, the Derby ministry was not eager to arm or endorse an uncontrolled middle-class movement, let alone a wider one. Old prejudices against soldiering remained strong, as did the army’s criticism of amateurs. It would take the events of the next few years, especially the Crimean War, to solidify the new influence of character. For the Volunteers, the invasion panic of 1859 would be their moment.
Chapter 6: The Crimean War; or, A Militant Interlude

The British army’s troubles in the Crimea have been the subject of innumerable books, as have the reforms that followed the war. In part, scholarly attention to the Crimean War comes from the fact that it was an important moment in Victorian military history. However, it also comes from the fact that the war attracted an unprecedented amount of contemporary coverage. The Crimean War was the first war to feature almost immediate reporting from the front lines, courtesy of the telegraph, as well as substantial visual coverage including the earliest war photography. W.H. Russell, the “first” war correspondent, and Roger Fenton, the “first” war photographer, guaranteed not just that the war would resonate with the British public but also that it would resonate with historians for the next century.

This chapter is not intended to recapitulate the history of the war, or to introduce new arguments about its importance for the British military. Nor will it even try to catalog all the ways in which liberal military thought affected the war. Instead, this chapter will focus on the war’s impact on elite and popular conceptions of the military and their attitudes to it. It is impossible to understand the third invasion panic, and with it the impact of liberal thought in the 1860s, without discussing how the Crimean War and

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1 For this, see Anderson, Liberal State at War.
its aftermath changed British conversations about war and the army. It increased skepticism of the traditional military administration, especially of aristocratic officers, and enhanced the sense that middle-class culture might offer an alternative way of approaching the military. At the same time, it strengthened the sense among Britons that war and military service might be a moral activity. With this came increased respect for the work of the common soldier, and the belief that soldiering might be a respectable trade.

Crisis and Criticism

The Crimean War was the first in which there was immediate reporting from the theater of war itself. The main reporter, and the first war correspondent, was W.H. Russell of the *Times*. Russell’s dispatches were not the only reporting from the Crimea, nor were they even the only source for the *Times*. Much of the most damning reporting on the state of British hospitals came from the *Times* correspondent at Constantinople. The allegations – of mismanagement, lack of supplies and equipment, and poor treatment of the sick and wounded – were serious.

Much of the criticism fell on the officers in charge, and these attacks had a strong anti-aristocratic tone. The senior ranks were filled with titled scions who appeared not only to be incompetent but also corrupted by privilege. Lord Cardigan, commander of the Light Brigade, had a reputation as a martinet who bought his colonelcy in the 15th Hussars for a massive over-regulation purchase price of between £35,000 and £40,000 and commanded the brigade from the comfort of a private yacht anchored in Balaklava.
Bay. His personal quarrels with his brother-in-law and immediate superior, Lord Lucan, made a proper chain of command impossible. The commander-in-chief in the Crimea, FitzRoy Somerset, Lord Raglan, was Wellington’s former private secretary. His staff included at least five of his own nephews. The more radical papers were eager to suggest that Raglan, Lucan and Cardigan’s incompetence were not just personal failings but a consequence of living in a milieu that was effete, immoral, and ineffectual. This criticism was not new. After all, the villainous and depraved aristocrat had been a stock character in radical circles for generations, as well as a staple of popular melodrama.

However, these charges acquired new relevance with the Crimean disasters. In the aftermath of the Charge of the Light Brigade, the Count de Tocqueville famously observed that “military services are not enough to preserve an aristocracy” but it must also “know how to govern.” In 1855, it was not clear that the aristocracy was competent even for the former.

For many, the corollary of the aristocracy’s military mismanagement was its moral weakness. The painters of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood were particularly keen workers in this genre. William Holman Hunt’s 1853 painting *The Awakening Conscience* depicted the room of a kept woman in remarkable detail, with the man’s mistress rising from his lap pricked by her conscience. His student, Robert Braithwaite Martineau,

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painted *The Last Day in the Old Home* (1861) in which a spendthrift aristocrat drinks a final glass of champagne in the ancestral home while his old mother is forced to dismiss the last family retainer.\(^7\) Equally pointed was James Everett Millais’ 1853 drawing, *The Race Meeting*, which presents the debauchery of horse racing through a dissipated gentleman and his distraught mistress. Its inspiration was a scene Millais observed at a visit to Epsom in 1853, which he recounted in a letter to Charles Collins: “Such tragic scenes I saw on the course. One mustachioed guardsman was hanging over the side of a carriage guilty of a performance only excusable on board a ship in a state of abject intoxication, while with a white aristocratic hand dangling, as dead a lump, as the plaster casts of hands in painters studios, in the same carriage seated beside him endeavouring to look as though she was not cognisant of the beastly reality; his mistress.”\(^8\)

Millais’ most direct response to the situation in the Crimea was the famous painting *Peace Concluded*, which depicted an English officer returned from the Crimea to rest in comfort amidst his wife and children. Exhibited in 1856, it appeared to celebrate the return of the victorious British army, but hid an earlier meaning. According to Millais’s friend Holman Hunt, Millais originally intended to title the painting *Urgent Private Affairs*. This was a reference to the scandalous frequency with which well-connected officers were given permission to leave the theater of war for the comfort of England, with the excuse that they had “urgent private affairs” with which to deal. In this context, Millais’s peaceful scene becomes an indictment of the central figure, an officer

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who abandoned his men and his duty for the comforts of home.\textsuperscript{9} Far blunter was a private sketch by fellow Pre-Raphaelite Joseph Noel Paton, in which a skeletal Lord Raglan waving a baton labeled “Routine” rode on a skeletal house over the corpses of his army.\textsuperscript{10}

The same anti-aristocratic ethos appears in one of the earliest novels about the Crimean War. In G.W.M. Reynolds’s \textit{The Soldier’s Wife} plebeian virtue comes in stark contrast to aristocratic vice. In the novel, the hero is laborer-turned-soldier Frederick Lonsdale, an intelligent man oppressed by the military code. His tormentor is the vain Gerald Redburn, army officer and dissipated scion of the local gentry who tries to seduce Lonsdale’s sweetheart and force her into marriage. Lonsdale is flogged, imprisoned, and eventually executed. \textit{The Soldier’s Wife} is a stock anti-aristocratic melodrama with a military setting, and its democratic sentiment is undermined by a famous melodramatic device: at the last minute, Lonsdale is revealed to be the illegitimate son of the local pastor and Gerald Redburn’s aunt, though it does not save him from execution.\textsuperscript{11} The new image of the British soldier was as “an honest man doing his duty” rather than a social misfit.\textsuperscript{12}

The theme of the mendacious officer was a common one. \textit{Temple Bar}, for example, featured a story in late 1861 in which one seduces and impregnates the sister of

\textsuperscript{9} Matthew Paul Lalumia, \textit{Realism and Politics in Victorian Art of the Crimean War} (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1984), 92-5. Michael Hancher argues that although Millais probably planned to make a painting which criticized officers shirking their duties, \textit{Peace Concluded} was only begun once Millais had settled on the idea of post-peace painting without those cynical elements. Despite this, the fact remains that Millais considered a painting on the theme of “urgent private affairs.” Michael Hancher, “‘Urgent Private Affairs’: Millais’s ‘Peace Concluded, 1856’” \textit{Burlington Magazine} 133 (1991): 499-506.

\textsuperscript{10} Lalumia, \textit{Realism} 97-8.


\textsuperscript{12} Peck, \textit{War, the Army and Victorian Literature}, 107.
a respectable farmer, driving the brother to drink. The brother then joins the army under an assumed name, becoming an excellent soldier until the seducer becomes his commander and begins to torment him. The farmer only breaks free by shooting the officer in the back in the midst of the battle of Alma.\footnote{\textit{Shot in the back}, \textit{Temple Bar}, November 1861, 473-481.}

The most concrete response to aristocratic ignominy in the Crimea was the movement to reform the government and public service on middle-class commercial lines. This had been one of the aims of the Financial Reform Associations of the 1840s, but in the mid-1850s it became a temporary mass phenomenon. The reform of government administration was not a new issue, having inspired a substantial number of reports over the years. The most important of these was written by Sir Charles Trevelyan, former assistant secretary at the Treasury, and Stafford Henry Northcote, one of Gladstone’s private secretaries. Their 1853 report outlined a plan for the use of competitive examinations and promotion by merit. As befitted a report sponsored by Lord Aberdeen’s coalition ministry, it was the work both a Whig (Trevelyan) and a Peelite (Northcote). Inspired by years of pressure for administrative reform, the report tried to merge demands for efficiency with those for a purer, more meritocratic public service.\footnote{Jennifer Hart, \textit{The genesis of the Northcote-Trevelyan Report}, \textit{Studies in the growth of nineteenth-century government}, ed. Gilliam Sutherland (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), 81. See also John Greenaway, \textit{Celebrating Northcote/Trevelyan: Dispelling the Myths}, \textit{Public Policy and Administration} 19 (2004): 1-14.}

The most important organization pushing for government reform during the Crimean War was the Administrative Reform Association (ARA), established in May 1855. The Association was a middle-class movement which argued that the exigencies of
war required the government to put men of business, rather than the well-born, in charge. Its followers were legion, and its leadership included a mixture of City professionals, notable authors, and MPs. Among them were the authors W.S. Thackeray and Charles Dickens, social reformer Edwin Chadwick, the shipowner and MP William Schaw Lindsay, and MP and archaeologist A.H. Layard. Despite some overlap, the ARA’s aims were not the same as those of the Northcote-Trevelyan report. While the Association appealed to the “mystique of business” with a faith that was truly remarkable, it connected the necessary skills and qualities almost exclusively with the commercial and professional middle classes. Unlike its predecessors, the National and Constitutional Association and the State Reform Association, it had no Chartist or lower-class support. Lord de Grey might wonder about the “talk of a commission of practical commercial men? Practical men would surely be enough,” but the ARA considered practicality and success the exclusive preserve of the middle classes. J.S. Mill similarly thought the Association “entirely wrong in their assumption that the middle classes of this country possess the eminent qualities which are wanted in the higher,” and that middle class rule would be as bad, if not worse, than the present system.

In her study of the Association, Olive Anderson wrote that the ARA appealed to “the potent mid-nineteenth-century mystique of business” which “exclusively equated

17 Qt. in Anderson, Liberal State, 112.
efficiency with commercial experience.” That narrowness helped to lead to the Association’s swift decline. By autumn the movement was collapsing in on itself, converting itself into a vehicle for Roebuck to attack aristocratic preeminence like he had in the parliamentary committee that examined the army’s performance in front of Sevastopol.

The Association had the advantage that the Crimean War saw a great deal of use of civilian expertise, whether it was Isambard Brunel’s prefabricated buildings, Florence Nightingale’s nursing work, or the Balaclava railway. Brunel, the engineer responsible for the Great Western Railway and the steamship Great Eastern, designed and built a prefabricated hospital for the British army at Renkioi. Nightingale, already a professional nurse, went out to Scutari to take charge of army nursing. The Times publicized her work there, calling her “the lady of the lamp.” Nightingale also helped have Alexis Soyer, the chef at the Reform Club, come out to Crimea to reorganize the army’s food. Sir Thomas Peto, with Edward Betts and Thomas Brassey, used civilian navvies to build a railway up from the port at Balaclava. Meanwhile, the Crystal Palace’s designer, Sir Joseph Paxton, was helping organize the Army Works Corps. In

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21 Anderson, Liberal State, 116-118.
23 “Nightingale, Florence,” DNB.

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April 1855, Wood admitted to W.S. Lindsay that he felt “you cannot find any adequate substitutes for the stimulus of private and individual interest.”

Those who celebrated the commercial mentality were in the process of establishing a pantheon of middle-class business heroes, men like James Watt, inventor of the steam engine, or George Stephenson, the railway engineer. However, they were also in the process of adapting Britain’s existing heroic pantheon to their purposes. Soon, the Duke of Wellington – an Anglo-Irish aristocrat and landowner – would be amongst them. Lionized even before his death as the epitome of Englishness, the files of his correspondence are filled with requests for advice, for assistance, and for signatures to be sold as curios at church bazaars. In his later years, the Duke embraced his reputation for modesty and stoicism. His bedroom at Apsley House was famous for its austerity, with bare walls and a simple bed. His virtues, according to Rev. Charles Boutell, were “Law and Order, Loyalty and Patriotism, Self-denial and Self-devotion.” As a soldier, Wellington was praised not for genius or inspiration but good-sense and consistency. Comparisons were made to Romans like Fabius and Scipio, and the Duke was praised for his “logistical skills, his caution and his humanity.” Despite his family background, he was even praised as a self-made man who rose by merit and had the modesty of a true gentleman, rather than the bad habits of the parvenu Napoleon.

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25 Qted. in Anderson, Liberal State, 117.
26 General Correspondence, passim, WUS.

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In Samuel Smile’s best-selling 1859 work, *Self-Help*, the classic text of the eponymous movement, Wellington’s superiority to Napoleon was identified as the fact that he was “self-denying, conscientious, and truly patriotic.” While Napoleon aimed for “Glory,” Wellington chose “Duty.” By the second edition, though, Smiles went further in connecting Wellington to business-sense. Observing that the qualities of perception, tact, and decision of purpose were as indispensable for commanders as for businessmen, Smiles wrote that “it is not merely necessary that the general should be great as a warrior but also as a man of business.” Both Napoleon and Wellington were therefore “first-rate men of business,” and it was Wellington’s “business faculty amounting to genius” which meant he never lost a battle.

A Martial Nation

The celebration of business-sense brought with it counter-attacks on “Mammonism” and the threat of moral decay or enervation from commerce. In 1852, Tennyson had wondered if Britons were too close to their ledgers to fight for their homes. Three years later in the middle of the Crimean War he returned to the question with the epic poem *Maud*. A lengthy dramatic monologue in which the unnamed and emotionally

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unstable speaker becomes infatuated with the eponymous Maud, kills her brother in a duel and leaves to fight in the Crimea. Although the narrator’s madness makes his claims ambiguous, his story suggests that peace can be a curse and war a release.\textsuperscript{33} The former led to a “lust of gain, in the spirit of Cain,” while the latter made “smooth-faced snubnosed rogue[s]” into vigorous men. The alternative to war was to descend to became as petty as the “broad-brimmed hawker of holy things, / Whose ear is crammed with his cotton, and rings / Even in dreams to the chink of his pence.”\textsuperscript{34} The final section ends with a clarion call to forsake “the long, long canker of peace” for the “blood-red blossom of war.”\textsuperscript{35}

\textit{Maud} was only one of many texts which proclaimed the revivifying powers of a just war. Olive Anderson uses the term “Christian militarism” to refer to the Crimean and post-Crimean move to Christianize and proselytize within the army, which brought with it the belief that piety would not only be compatible with military service but would make better soldiers.\textsuperscript{36} More generally, the 1850s saw the continuing rise of a philosophy


\textsuperscript{34} Tennyson, “Maud,” \textit{Poems of Tennyson}, vol. 2, 521, 523, 542-3.

\textsuperscript{35} Tennyson, “Maud,” \textit{Poems of Tennyson}, vol. 2, 584. This went somewhat too far, and Tennyson both abandoned the “canker” line and added a more optimistic concluding stanza which ended “It is better to fight for the good than to rail at the ill; / I have felt with my native land, I am one with my kind, / I embrace the purpose of God, and the doom assigned.”

which made physical, and moral, manliness the basis for personal, and social, action – what historians call “muscular Christianity.”

In Charles Kingsley’s classic novel *Westward Ho!*, the hero Amyas Leigh combines moral and physical strength, and fights with Drake against the Spanish – supporting not just the secular authority but also the Protestant faith. Muscular Christianity’s precepts were equally apparent in books like Tom Hughes’ *Tom Brown’s Schooldays*, which made the public school *bildungsroman* into an English genre. Praise for manly strength was not the exclusive preserve of Kingsley and Hughes’ anti-Tractarian Christianity. The High Church writer Charlotte Yonge made noble army officers the heroes of several of her novels, including *Kenneth; or The Rear-Guard of the Grand Army* (1850), *The Young Stepmother* (1856), and *Clever Woman of the Family* (1865).

Closely connected in leading personalities, if not philosophy, was a parallel movement known as “Christian Socialism.” Far more Christian than socialist, Christian Socialism emphasized the potential of the Bible and the Church to bring men of classes into spiritual and material harmony. Although their advocacy of the equality of the working man as a Christian led them to be branded as radicals, with Kingsley calling himself both a parson and a Chartist, Christian Socialism was mostly apolitical. Instead of claiming political rights for working men, it wanted them to educate and improve themselves. Unlike the self-help movement, however, Christian Socialism rejected

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37 This is yet another of the many protean terms which surround nineteenth-century Britain. For the best accounts of “muscular Christianity,” if not clear definitions, see Norman Vance, *The Sinews of the Spirit. The Ideal of Christian Manliness in Victorian Literature and Religious Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985); and Donald E. Hall, ed., *Muscular Christianity. Embodying the Victorian Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994).

38 Susan Walton, *Imagining Soldiers and Fathers in the Mid-Victorian Era. Charlotte Yonge’s Models of Manliness* (Farham: Ashgate, 2010), 69
competition as motive force. Instead it preferred co-operatives, communal principles, and Christian brotherhood. At times this made it an almost reactionary force, embracing benevolent paternalism in a Carlylean sense.\textsuperscript{39} Kingsley’s first novel, \textit{Alton Locke, Tailor and Poet}, expressed this complex combination: a self-educated tailor is led by the squalor of his surroundings and the indifference of the higher classes to become a Chartist but discovers that his compatriots are driven to violence by their passions and in the end is “saved” by the benevolence of a aristocratic widow who draws him back to the Church. As a finishing touch Alton’s cousin, a social climber who has parlayed his ordination into an aristocratic marriage, dies from plague contracted from the impoverished family of tailors who made his coat at starvation wages. Kingsley, alongside Hughes and F.D. Maurice, made relatively little headway with their pamphlets and newspapers, but they made a lasting impression with the London Working Men’s College. All three were, despite their Christian faith, enthusiastic about war and soldiers.\textsuperscript{40}

A superficial but widespread mark of new bellicosity can be seen in the “beard movement.” The beard was considered unfashionable in early Victorian Britain but in the late 1840s and early 1850s it increasingly became a signifier of masculinity and masculine qualities like independence and decisiveness. Despite the connection between masculinity and military prowess, beards were forbidden in the British army, though they were sometimes worn on colonial campaigns. Charles James Napier wore one in the 1843 conquest of Sindh, as did troops in South Africa in 1846 and 1847. It was the military experience with beards that was used as evidence of their salutary moral and

\textsuperscript{40} Norman, \textit{Victorian Christian Socialists}, 55.
health effects. Beards proliferated alongside increasing concern about British manhood and interest in encouraging masculinity and bellicosity. Susan Walton suggests that it was interest in the 1853 Chobham camp, a popular display of British military strength, which catalyzed the change in attitudes to the beard.\(^{41}\)

The new bellicosity extended far beyond the complacent middle-class circles with which its armchair belligerence has often been associated. Poets of the working-class such as Gerald Massey and Ernest Jones eagerly embraced the unifying potential of patriotic discourse and the inherent nobility of sacrifice and service. While Robert Brough’s *Songs of the Governing Classes* (1855) and John Critchley Prince’s *Autumn Leaves* (1856) condemned the waste and injustice of war, Massey’s *War Waits* (1855) adopted a more enthusiastic tone.\(^ {42}\) In “A Battle Charge,” Massey, who only a year earlier had been writing of “Labour’s Lordlier Chivalry,” presented the war as unifying the nation and overwhelming its class differences.\(^ {43}\) Massey’s poems retained some of their class politics, as in “Certain Ministers and the People” where Massey declares “With warrior joy we greet this crimson Dawn. / To crown'd Bloodsuckers they would bind us slaves: / We would be free, or sleep in glorious graves.”\(^ {44}\) But Massey was now also writing how, “In Freedom's fight, to rescue Right, / God bless the dear Old Land!”\(^ {45}\)

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\(^{44}\) Gerald Massey, “Certain Ministers and the People.” Available http://gerald-massey.org.uk/massey/cpm_war_waits.htm

Jones’ war poetry similarly walked the fine line between patriotic enthusiasm and the abandonment of class politics. In the preface to The Waves and the War, he wrote that “party differences are the mere question of a day: but the honour of a nation and its martial deeds are themes for all time.” Jones himself cut an interesting figure, the son of a minor landowner who was called to the bar before he became a Chartist poet, propagandist and politician. Imprisoned for two years for seditious behaviour and unlawful assembly, after his release in 1850 he became a serial editor, founding the Notes to the People (1851-2), the People’s Paper (1852-8), London News (1858), Cabinet Newspaper (1858-60), and finally the Penny Times and Weekly Telegraph (1860). Jones’ first collection of war poetry, The Battle Day (1855), was a repackaging of his collected works. His second collection, The Emperor’s Vigil, and The Waves and the War (1855), was more germane. Miles Taylor observes that “with its depictions of heroic British tars, the ‘fettered millions of peasant Russia, and its plea for a war of nationalities, The Emperor’s Vigil had a democratic refrain.”

Although some Radicals, such as Roebuck or the paranoid Russophobe David Urquhart, were comfortable with national bellicosity, for most supporting the war meant finding ways in which it seemed to advance their causes. Taylor’s Emperor’s Vigil was

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46 Qtd. in Dereli, A War Culture, 111.
47 Miles Taylor, Ernest Jones, Chartist, and the Romance of Politics, 1819-1869 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003), 137. As an editor-publisher, Jones was perpetually broke, and eventually became entangled in expensive litigation with GWM Reynolds. The files from his resulting appeal for funds provide a remarkable entrée into working-class political circles. A surprising number of semi-literate working men sent in several shillings each, as well as their opinions on the weak state of Chartist politics. A.0.10 no.4, Ernest Charles Jones Collection, Chetham’s Library, Manchester.
48 Taylor, Ernest Jones, 178.
not unusual in identifying Russia as a despotic empire whose own subjects deserved
liberation. Many Radicals supported Polish, Italian and Hungarian national independence
to an extent that challenged their commitment to non-intervention and pacifism. This
challenge had been particularly acute since the visit of the Hungarian revolutionary Lajos
Kossuth to London in 1851. The spate of meetings surrounding his arrival saw calls for
direct British action against the Austrians and Russians; speeches which Cobden called
“gunpowder vomited forth.” Yet it was hard to claim to support Kossuth and the
Hungarians without implying a willingness to take military action. Even Cobden’s own
statements about this were ambiguous. He explained to Henry Richard that if Russia
knew “there was a unanimous opinion in England & America against its interference in
the affairs of Hungary – not a soldier would cross its frontiers,” but followed this with “it
may be said that this would only be from fear of the physical force at the command of
England & America.–It is true that the physical majority is at the back of the moral
majority.” One of Cobden’s correspondents put it more bluntly a few days later:

But when Bright tell us that the proudest aristocracy in the world have quailed
before the expression of that public opinion in the Free Trade Hall at Manchester,
does he believe, or does any man believe, that they would have so quailed if the
authors of that opinion had not had brawny arms at their sides, or if they had
folded theirs, & promised, upon no occasion to use them? This is all that Kossuth
asks us not to do. It is not necessary, on this account, to keep up large standing

People, 72-74. Interestingly, in 1860 Urquhart wrote a scathing attack on the Volunteers and fortifications
50 Taylor, Decline of British Radicalism, 207; qtd. in John Morley, The Life of Richard Cobden, vol. 2
(London: Chapman and Hall, 1881), 106.
armies, or force of arms, which are a source of weakness – not of strength. There are other means of maintaining the bold attitude which it is desirable to assume in the cause of European freedom. I do not desire to ‘bark’ unless I am in a condition to ‘bite’ – nor do I wish to ‘bite’ out of season – but I desire that my ‘bark’ shall mean that I will ‘bite’ when I can do so with effect.  

Birmingham politics show how Radical foreign policy swung between pacifism and bellicosity. The home town of Urquhart and the Quaker Joseph Sturge, whose brother Charles was mayor in 1862, Birmingham swung between pacifism and intervention and back again. In 1848, it praised Kossuth and Mazzini but condemned socialism in the French revolution, and then five years later rallied to the Crimean War as a struggle between democracy and despotism. It was, according to David Butcher, “sympathy with foreign liberty” which “brought home to middle-class radicals the ostensible bankruptcy of British foreign policy.” By 1858, Birmingham had elected John Bright to parliament, on the basis that the government should “either prosecute its wars successfully, or not fight wars at all.”

The increasing respectability of militancy was reflected in the army’s new architecture, beginning with the plans which Sir James Pennethorne, the Office of Works’ chief architect, prepared for a new monumental building to replace the War Office’s converted houses on Pall Mall. Pennethorne’s “impressive but overpowering design,” as architectural historian Geoffrey Tyack describes it, would have cost £80,000 and consisted

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52 Williamson to Cobden, 16 Nov. 1851, A44, COBDEN/3, CWS, MF1313 (microfilm), MCL.
54 Butcher, “Foreign Politics,” 129.
55 Butcher, “Foreign Politics,” 129.
of three ranges around a courtyard, with the old Ordnance offices in Cumberland House on the fourth side.\textsuperscript{56} The range facing Pall Mall would have been an imposing four-story block with three-bay turrets on each end, with extensive surface decoration, rusticated piers and massive cornices. Its “copious carvings of trophies and statues of military heroes would have left the spectator in no doubt as to the building’s purpose.”\textsuperscript{57} The Commissioner of Works, Sir Benjamin Hall, disliked Pennethorne’s plans and chose instead to launch competition to design both new Foreign and War Offices.

That competition showed the symbolic importance with which the Victorians imbued the styling of their government buildings. Known as the “battle of the styles,” it pitted those who argued that the Gothic constituted Britain’s native and natural style against those who claimed that, by representing order, balance and harmony, classical styles were better suited to representing the British state. A “Second Empire” style design by Henry B. Garling was selected as the winning War Office design in the first round of competition, while eventual winner George Gilbert Scott proposed a design similar to that of Deane and Woodward’s Ashmolean Museum.\textsuperscript{58} The mediocrity of those designs led to a new competition, which both replaced the War Office with a new India Office building and awarded the commission to Scott. Palmerston, however, had an


\textsuperscript{57} Tyack, \textit{Pennethorne and the Making of Victorian London}, 261.

\textsuperscript{58} The Second Empire style, combining the mansard roof with classicized façades, was so called because of the way it predominated in Napoleon III’s Parisian projects. Christina Cameron and Janet Wright, \textit{Second Empire Style in Canadian Architecture}, Occasional Papers in Archaeology and History No. 24 (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1980), 7-10. Garling’s design appears as ill. 5 (p.32-33).
extreme personal dislike of the Gothic and forced Scott to redesign his elevations in a classical style.\textsuperscript{59}

Regardless of style, the new buildings had a self-confidence which their previous incarnations had lacked. G. Alex Bremner argues that the new construction represented the first phase of new national and imperial self-assurance.\textsuperscript{60} Whether it was the Albert Memorial or more practical structures, new government buildings proclaimed their importance rather than hiding behind domestic styles.\textsuperscript{61} Both the army and navy were early adopters of new building technology. The navy pioneered long-span wood and iron roofs in its shipbuilding slips, its small boat store at Sheerness was the first multi-storey iron-framed building and a forerunner of the functional tradition in architecture, and Shoeburyness school of artillery’s drill shed had one of the first free-span roofs to let in light through north-facing apertures.\textsuperscript{62} More public structures were more grandiose. George Morgan’s plan for Chelsea Barracks, the winner of the 1855 model infantry barracks competition, was a four-story oblong building of "simple Anglo-Italian


character” with “well-arranged masses.” Even more imposing was Pennethorne’s new Staff College at Camberley, a classical building with four-story pavilions at each end, two internal courtyards, and “a central frontispiece with a raised pediment enclosing a sculptural representation of martial trophies.”

Sympathy for the Common Soldier

The new acceptability of belligerence was partially expressed in increasing sympathy and respect for the plight of the common soldier. It was as frequent in wartime art as it was in Russell’s dispatches. The suffering soldier had been a rare subject in British painting. That changed with the Crimea. Beginning with the artists sent by the Illustrated London News, Joseph Crowe and Edward Goodall, the focus was on the difficult conditions which the average soldier faced. The same theme was taken up in Punch, where John Leech’s cartoons blamed the lack of supplies, clothes, and victories on mismanagement by foppish aristocrats. Scenes of Queen Victoria inspecting wounded soldiers became the subject of several notable watercolors and oil paintings. So did the return of soldiers to their wives and families, as in Joseph Noel Paton’s Home (1856).

According to Matthew Lalumia, the absence of battle painting in the grand manner and the frequency of genre paintings of wounded or otherwise pitiable soldiers represents the appearance a new strand of artistic Realism which abjured high-minded

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66 Lalumia, Realism, 54-84.
67 Lalumia, Realism, 96-7.
platitudes about the nobility of war in favor of recognition of its gritty truth. The recognition of the enlisted man also existed outside British art. The Victoria Cross itself was an important sign of the new respectability of the common soldier. Marks of recognition for British enlisted men were a recent innovation. The first, apart from the Waterloo medal, was the Good Conduct Badge introduced in 1837. The idea of being “mentioned in dispatches” was similarly recent, originating with Sir Charles Napier in 1843. The first award for valor, the Distinguished Conduct Medal, was only a year old and still restricted to non-commissioned officers. The introduction of the Victoria Cross as an award open to all ranks was therefore a substantial sign of new respect for the ranker. Louis William Desanges’ popular portraits of Cross-winning episodes, of which he exhibited 24 in 1859, constituted merely one sign of the Cross’ importance.

However, it is important not to overstate the new sentiment. As J.W.M. Hichberger demonstrates, battle painting in the grand manner had always been a rare genre in Britain even before the war. Only a few artists worked consistently on battle paintings between the Napoleonic Wars and 1874. Similarly, of fifty Victoria Cross paintings Desanges completed, only six depicted private soldiers, and four of them were in the act of rescuing a superior officer. Celebrated as a depiction of national history – the paintings were on almost-continuous display at the Crystal Palace until 1880 –

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69 It was also an effort to counteract parliamentary criticism of the army, and to emphasize the personal connection between army and sovereign – the Queen was the final authority on matters of selection. Melvin Charles Smith, Awarded for Valour. A History of the Victoria Cross and the Evolution of British Heroism (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 26-42.
70 Hichberger, Images of the Army, 51.
Desanges’s paintings eschewed aristocratic commanders only to focus on “middle-ranking and middle-class officers” rather than the common man.\footnote{Hichberger, Images of the Army, 63-67; see also J.W.M. Hichberger, “Democratising Glory? The Victoria Cross Paintings of Louis Desanges,” Oxford Art Journal 7 (1984): 42-51.}

Though Paton’s skeletal Raglan might suggest otherwise, artists struggled with how to appropriately celebrate the soldier’s valor amidst the horror. Despite the critical message planned for Urgent Private Affairs, Millais was not a pacifist. In fact, his first major oil painting was a celebration of the Spanish conquest of Peru in Pizarro Seizing the Inca of Peru (1846). Instead, his paintings reflect his sensitivity to the combination of virtue and pathos within the military experience. In The Order of Release, 1746 (1853), both the injured Jacobite prisoner and his guard are diminished men, oppressed by the surrounding darkness in a scene with palpable tension.\footnote{Paul Barlow, Time Present and Time Past. The Art of John Everett Millais (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 48-50.} Millais’s 1855 L’Enfant du Régiment (The Random Shot) probably represents the first Victorian portrayal of “collateral damage.” Inspired by Donizetti’s opera, the painting depicts a young girl with a bandaged hand, covered with a soldier’s jacket and asleep on a medieval tomb while the fighting continues in the background. In this painting, Paul Barlow suggests “the context implies that she has been wounded in crossfire during a skirmish, and has been hastily found a safe resting place by one of the soldiers. … The potentially brief, fragile life of the child is set against imagery of repeated violence over time (medieval and modern warfare).”\footnote{Barlow, Time Present, 59.} However, there is no implication of fault in L’Enfant, no sense that the soldiers are culpable for the harm to the girl. The fragility of wartime life in L’Enfant – a theme also of Millais’s earlier romantic history scenes A Huguenot on St. Bartholomew’s
*Day* (1852) and *The Proscribed Royalist, 1651* (1853) – is not intended to deny the basic nobility of the soldier’s duty. This is apparent in *Sir Isumbras at the Ford* (1857) and *The Black Brunswicker* (1859; discussed further in Ch. 7). *The Rescue* (1855) was a rare exception in which a fireman is the hero who carries the family to safety.

The same tension between nobility and pathos occurs in Tennyson’s poems. If *Maud* reflected the abstract glorification of war, then Tennyson’s more famous poem, “The Charge of the Light Brigade,” represented the compromises and uncertainties of war as it is fought in reality. The heart of the poem is the repeated phrase “someone had blundered,” and though it celebrates the stoic obedience and heroic self-sacrifice of the Light Brigade, it does not celebrate the order to charge. As Stefanie Markovits argues, Tennyson’s poetry on the Crimean War was characterized by “an ambivalence that registers not as the fixed double-awareness of irony but as a kind of bewilderment.”

Without celebrating the aristocratic commanders who blundered at Balaklava, Tennyson shows his respect for Britain’s soldiers, as well as the inevitability of tragedy. Stefanie Markovits argues that the same tension appears in the novels of the Crimean War era as well, whether in Charles Kingsley’s *Two Years Ago*, Henry Kingsley’s *Ravenshoe*, or Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s *Aurora Leigh.*

The heroic common soldier, still often with comic undertones, was becoming as much of a dramatic staple as the immoral officer. In Pierce Egan’s 1856 novel *Clifton Grey*, the eponymous hero is raised as a gentleman but lacking any money is forced to

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74 Markovits, “Giving Voice,” 487.
enlist as a ranker, has numerous adventures, and conquers a villainous officer – his (unknown) cousin Captain Winslow, to eventually be rewarded with a commission in the Scots Guard. The heroic soldier shared the London stage in plays like *The Battle of the Alma* with villainous Cossacks, opportunistic war correspondents, and young lady nurses. Although the failures of British supply system occasionally intrude, Crimean plays tended towards spectacle rather than drama – they were played, with horses at Astley’s circus or with fireworks at Belle Vue Gardens.

This transformation of the British soldier’s image had consequences for British manpower policy. Respectful depictions in newspapers, novels and art did not lead British workers to enlist in droves. The traditional solution of recruitment from the militia was only insufficient, since the government refused to fill the militia by ballot and continued to rely only on volunteers. Manpower policy was a struggle between traditionalists, led as usual by Palmerston, and the political economists. The latter, mostly Peelites, argued that the only way to recruit more in a competitive labor market was to offer better pay, improved terms of service, and a shorter enlistment. They

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76 Reed, “Fighting Words,” 337-339.
achieved only the first, with an increase in pay of sixpence.\textsuperscript{78} Without more enlistment the government was forced to adopt new expedients to find manpower. The construction of the Balaklava railroad by civilian navvies was one, as was the creation of a non-combatant Land Transport Corps – whose men were paid twice at the rate of regular soldiers. The British also recruited foreign soldiers into mercenary German, Swiss and Italian Legions, but the new respect for soldiering made the mercenary corps unpopular in Britain. So was the proposal to recruit ticket-of-leave men, ex-convicts, into a labor corps. Soldiering might not be attractive enough to attract recruits, but it was becoming too respectable to be in the hands of foreigners and criminals.\textsuperscript{79}

Although the years following the Crimean War saw improvements in almost every aspect of the soldier’s condition, his surroundings attracted the most attention. As a strict sanitationist Florence Nightingale made cleanliness her premier cause, but she also encouraged interest in the soldier’s food, clothes, and shelter. She found a vital ally in Sidney Herbert, a Peelite and former Secretary at War. After the Crimean War, Herbert became the chair of a royal commission on the sanitary state of the army. The commissioners found that most soldiers lived in squalid conditions that were overcrowded, poorly ventilated, inadequately lit, and without much privacy, which led to a mortality rate twice the civilian average. Their report led to the creation of a second commission on improving barracks and hospitals, also led by Herbert. That

\textsuperscript{78} Olive Anderson, “Manpower Problems,” 526-36.
\textsuperscript{79} Anderson, “Manpower Problems” 536-9; C.C. Bayley, Mercenaries for the Crimea: The German, Swiss, and Italian Legions in British Service, 1854-1856 (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s UP, 1977). For the German Legion, the Crimea was only the beginning of a bizarre anabasis which took its men to South Africa and then on to India during the Revolt of 1857. See John Laband, “From Mercenaries to Military Settlers: The British German Legion, 1854-1861,” Soldiers and Settlers in Africa, 1850-1918, ed. Stephen Miller (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 85-122.
commission’s report insisted on a minimum allocation of 60 square feet and 600 cubic feet per man, exterior privies, proper ventilation and lighting, as well as separate married quarters and other amenities. When Herbert became Secretary of State for War in 1859, he continued his work on barracks improvement. As Secretary of State, Herbert tripled spending on barracks improvements to £726,841 in 1859-60. New barracks were to feature separate lavatories and access to fresh air via walkways or verandas. Older barracks were to be retrofitted. New married quarters were built, based on a model plan erected at Hounslow, a tall single range with full-width walkways and lavatory towers at each end.

As an MP and then as Secretary, Herbert also showed an interest in other aspects of the soldier’s condition. Herbert also turned his attention to the soldier’s health, for which he supported the professionalization of the Army Medical Department as well as the building of pavilion-plan hospitals along the lines proposed by Florence Nightingale and Captain Douglas Galton, RE, who completed a model at Hounslow for the Royal Engineers. Galton was also responsible for the first large-scale pavilion hospital in England, completed at Woolwich in 1865 and named the Royal Herbert Hospital in his honor after the Secretary’s death in 1861.\(^\text{80}\) As one of Peel’s Secretaries at War Herbert had been involved with the reform of the army educational system, beginning with the Duke of York’s school for soldiers’ sons, which Herbert helped make a training ground for schoolmaster-sergeants to run the regimental schools. As Secretary, he was an

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\(^{80}\) Douet, *British Barracks*, 139-146.
opponent of purchase, and recommended abandoning it above the junior ranks. In 1859 he was involved in a proposal to increase the size of Sandhurst to 600 cadets, and when this collapsed for financial reasons he supported a second – also abortive – proposal to make attendance at Sandhurst mandatory for an army commission.

All these developments carried moral as well as material importance. Barracks modernization was supposed to improve not just the health of the soldier but also his moral character. Better light and ventilation meant a soldier felt less like a servant and more like an honest man. So did separate married quarters, which respected the dignity of the soldier and his wife, as well as the libraries, recreation rooms, and supervised canteens which Herbert encouraged. Trade training, better health care and sanitation, and improved education were also supposed to make better soldiers.

The Earl Grey had worked on improving many of these same areas in the 1840s, but Herbert’s approach – while also liberal – had its philosophical differences. Grey’s reforms, especially limited enlistment, sought to free the individual soldier from constraints which hindered his development of moral qualities. Herbert’s, on the other hand, tried to establish material conditions which would exert an improving influence on the soldier. They reflected his paternal instincts, imbibed from Peel in the 1840s. Herbert’s reforms also, however unconsciously, maintained the stigma of the soldier as a subordinated individual. Unlike the private citizen, the soldier was not expected to be able to improve himself. He required improving institutions to act upon him.

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The Crimean War inspired a series of harsh condemnations of the machinery of government, and especially of the command and administration of the regular army. At the same time, it inspired feelings of patriotism and bellicosity which made taking up arms seem more like a legitimate duty and less like an atavistic weakness. Together, these developments smoothed the way for military service, at least when done in a liberal fashion, to become widespread and legitimate in the decade to follow.
Chapter 7: The Third Invasion Panic and the Rise of the Volunteers

The third mid-Victorian invasion panic was a pivotal moment for the liberal approach to the military. While in previous moments the push for a liberal alternative to the usual military measures had collapsed in the face of disinterest and disunity, in 1859 public opinion finally tipped in favor of the Volunteer Force. Though official plans remained tied to the militia, the Volunteers proved to have the strength and popularity to overcome ministerial disdain. Beyond liberal principles like individualism and self-help, the Volunteers spoke to a desire to revivify British manliness, to maintain independence and local self-government, as well as the continuing artisan struggle for the franchise. With more than 160,000 members by 1861, the Volunteers were a bona fide popular phenomenon.

Though the 1859-60 invasion panic was rooted in the distrust between Britain and France that preceded the Crimean War and returned swiftly after the war was concluded, Anglo-French relations reached a new low in 1858 with the Orsini affair. Since the Bourbon Restoration, England had been a haven for French revolutionaries. There was a long British tradition of political asylum, which had protected Mazzini and Kossuth, among others. Britain protected Louis Napoleon when he was young and Louis Philippe when he was old. Though it was source of pride, asylum was also a source of constant aggravation for successive British governments, since political exiles tended to bring
their politics with them. In 1851, the British government seriously considered importing French policemen to watch the exiles during the Great Exhibition, and thereafter exiled revolutionaries were a source of constant concern. On 14 January 1858, a bomb was thrown at Napoleon III and the Empress Eugenie outside the Paris Opera. Though the Emperor and Empress escaped unscathed, eight people were killed. The bomb was hurled by Felice Orsini, an Italian revolutionary who considered Napoleon to be the chief obstacle to Italian unification. Orsini’s plot had been formed, and the bomb built, in Birmingham. This fact enrag ed the French public. Though the British police had warned the French of Orsini’s trip to Paris, the French ambassador, Count Walewski, still delivered a sharp rebuke to the Foreign Secretary about harboring assassins. With Anglo-French relations in trouble, Palmerston considered it worthwhile to placate the French by strengthening British law on the matter. The Conspiracy to Murder bill was a modest response under the circumstances, making it a felony rather than a misdemeanor to plot a murder abroad from England. The bill was firmly in line with Palmerston’s own views on law and order, and not far from those of the other parties. The first reading passed 299-99 with the support of the Conservatives as well as the Liberals. However, in the next few days public opinion came out firmly against the law. Whatever the merits of the bill itself, it was a matter of patriotism not to present legislation at the behest of a foreign power. With tempers running high, Derby and Disraeli saw an opportunity and the Conservatives reversed themselves. With the support of about 80 Liberals, they passed a

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1 Russell to Wellington, 2 April 1851, WP2/168/82, WUS; Wellington to Russell, 2 April 1851, WP2/168/83, WUS.
2 For cabinet discussions of the bill, see CAB/89-101, PUS.
hostile amendment. Palmerston resigned, and in February 1858 Derby became prime minister again.\(^3\)

For the next year and half, Derby and his Foreign Secretary, Lord Malmesbury, were the ones forced to deal with the reverberations of Napoleon’s actions. The first of these was a simple misstep, inviting the Queen and Prince Albert to attend the grand opening of the massive naval arsenal at Cherbourg. Queen Victoria returned and immediately asked for a report on the state of the Royal Navy, while Prince Albert wrote to the Duchess of Kent that “The war preparations in the French Marine are immense! … My blood boils within me.”\(^4\) Matters only got worse with the development of Napoleon’s Italian policy. The Emperor had been a carbonari in his youth and he was still sympathetic to Italian nationalism. Equally importantly, Napoleon thought Italy might be a way to break the post-Congress sanctity of boundaries and to reestablish French influence within the international system.\(^5\)

The opportunity came from the ambitions of Piedmont-Sardinia and its prime minister, Cavour. In the summer of 1858, Napoleon met with Cavour at Plombières to make arrangements for a joint war against Austria. In exchange for French support for Piedmontese ambitions in north-central Italy, Cavour agreed to cede Nice and Savoy to France. On January 1, 1859, Napoleon started the march to war with an off-hand comment to the Austrian ambassador that relations between the two countries were not as


good as they once had been. Public opinion in Britain was firmly pro-Italian, but it was also wary of foreign entanglement and favored moral support and benign neutrality rather than direct intervention. Because of this, the British public interpreted French maneuvering not as honest support for the worthy Italian cause but as proof of Napoleon’s belligerence and mendacity. Britons wanted Italian independence, but not as a gift from the French emperor.

Though war did not actually break out in Italy until April 1859, the intervening months were uncomfortable ones for the Derby government. By 1858, the French navy was already building and converting steam liners at a rate sufficient to raise fears that they might actually outnumber the British fleet. A confidential report on the two navies showed that the two fleets were currently equal in steam battleships, and that the French had a noticeable edge in steam frigates. Though the Admiralty was forging ahead with its own building program in response, by the time that began in late 1858 the nature of the Anglo-French naval competition was already changing.

The catalyst for the shift was the French naval architect Dupuy de Lôme, who had risen to prominence as the designer of the steam battleship Napoléon. In 1856, he convinced a planning commission that in addition to a substantial fleet of fast steam liners and enough transports to carry 40,000 men, the French should begin to launch ironclad frigates. De Lôme was inspired by the havoc that shell-firing guns had wreaked on the wooden Turkish fleet at Sinope in 1853, and by the Allied use of armored floating

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7 Salevouris, *Riflemen Form*, 46-57.
8 Navy Estimates, 1852 &1858, ADM 116/1, 16, TNA.
batteries for shore bombardment at Kinburn. With the personal support of the emperor, he became both director of material and director of naval construction in early 1857. In March 1858, he laid down the world’s first seagoing ironclad warship, *La Gloire*. A frigate with a full ship rig, armored with iron plates which would resist both shot and shell, *Gloire* was a potential revolution in naval warfare. If its armor made it invulnerable to gunfire from British ships and forts, it would be able to seize control of the English Channel for the French and enable an invasion to proceed unhindered by the Royal Navy. This success was not guaranteed: it was unclear if the armor would be protective enough, if an armored ship would remain seaworthy, and if armored frigates would be sufficient to protect the large transport fleet required for an invasion. The mere possibility required a response, and in May 1859 the British laid down their own ironclad frigate, HMS *Warrior*. Its sister ship, HMS *Black Prince*, was begun five months later.9

The Franco-Austrian war in Italy lasted less than three months, from the moment Austrian troops crossed the Piedmontese frontier on April 23 to the signing of the treaty of Villafranca on July 11. French victories at Magenta and Solferino seemed to confirm their military preeminence in Europe, although the butcher’s bill at Solferino inspired Swiss businessmen Henri Dunant to found the Red Cross. The war was well covered not just by the press, but also by photographers, illustrators, and military attachés.10 At almost the same time, a mixture of domestic and foreign policy defeats forced the Conservatives out of office in Britain. With the formation (or re-formation) of the

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10 See Jonathan Marwil, *Visiting Modern War in Risorgimento Italy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 5-149.
Liberal party at Willis’ Rooms, Palmerston returned as prime minister with strengthened support.

By then, the invasion panic in Britain had acquired a momentum of its own. In May 1858, Secretary of State for War Jonathan Peel established a secret committee on the best means of repelling invasion, chaired by the Duke of Cambridge, one of King George III’s grandsons and Lord Hardinge’s replacement as Commander-in-Chief from 1856 onwards. The committee exuded skepticism about the navy’s ability to guarantee that there would be no French landing. It considered the regulars the only reliable troops in the field, although the yeomanry, embodied militia and country constabulary could provide useful service. The unembodied militia, however, were described as entirely useless, and the committee was skeptical about the use of irregular levies like the Volunteers anywhere beyond the immediate coastal area. The report therefore endorsed the expansion of the regular army and the embodied militia to provide the combination of a strong field force with garrisons at key ports and naval arsenals – unsurprising, since Burgoyne was among the committee members.11 Soon, though, the national defense question went public as Peel ordered a Royal Commission to consider the state of the militia. Led by the Duke of Richmond, Anglesey’s son-in-law and a distinguished soldier in his own right, the commission was ordered to investigate the organization and efficiency of the militia staff. Its conclusions were mostly favorable, although it made several controversial recommendations regarding the enlistment of experienced men. In order to retain militiamen who had previously been embodied, as well as former regular

11Report of the Committee on the best means of repelling an invasion of the United Kingdom, 26 May 1858, WO 32/6342, TNA.
soldiers, the commission recommended granting these men good conduct pay as well as exempting them from annual training and some musters. The implications were interesting – that it was more useful to have been a full-time soldier than any amount of rifle or drill practice. When Palmerston returned to power, he ordered a further Royal Commission on the national defenses, this time focusing on coastal fortifications. These official projects helped to keep the threat of invasion in the public mind for almost a year.

If anything, however, the public response to the invasion threat was more extreme than the official one. All the major newspapers stoked fears of the French, while the nascent Volunteer movement grew by leaps and bounds. Gathering momentum from early 1859 onwards, the Volunteers received official sanction in early May. From then on, the invasion panic was practically a self-sustaining phenomenon. Buoyed by a long history of mistrust of the French, the panic would last until 1861, almost two years after the diplomatic and military events which gave it life.

The Volunteer Movement

The formal creation of the Volunteer Force was not because of interest from the Derby ministry, which remained focused on the militia into its last days. Instead it was due to the work of eager publicists like the journalists Hans Busk and Alfred Richards, who wrote articles on the Volunteers for the People’s Paper, Portsmouth Times, British Army Despatch, and especially the Morning Advertiser. On 16 April 1859, Richard

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12 Report of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the Establishment, Organization, Government, and Direction of the Militia of the United Kingdom; together with the Minutes of Evidence and Appendix,” PP [2553] (1859 Session 2), viii.
helped organize a public meeting on the Volunteers chaired by Admiral “Black Charlie” Napier.\textsuperscript{13} On May 9, Tennyson lent his influence to the movement with the poem “The War.” Its pounding refrain was “Riflemen, riflemen, riflemen form! / Ready, be ready against the storm.”\textsuperscript{14} Tennyson’s was genuinely anxious about the French threat, asking Argyll “Will no one put that second sight-seen bullet into Louis Napoleon's forehead \textit{before} he gets to London?”\textsuperscript{15} Three days later, Peel issued a circular authorizing the Lords Lieutenant to raise Volunteer corps according to the regulations in the Yeomanry and Volunteer Consolidation Act of 1804.

The terms of the first circular were simple. The men were to provide all their own equipment and arms, and would only be subject to military law when on actual service. At any other time, they could resign from the corps on only fourteen days notice. Efficient men – those who trained for at least twenty-four days each year – were exempted from the militia ballot. Aside from the requirement that corps have the approval of their county Lord Lieutenant, there was very little oversight.\textsuperscript{16} The second circular on the Volunteers, issued on May 25, was the work of the Prince Consort. A potential successor to Wellington as Commander-in-Chief, Prince Albert retained a keen interest in military affairs and frequently corresponded with Palmerston about them.\textsuperscript{17} His circular was slightly clearer on the intent of the force, which was to encourage “those

\textsuperscript{13} Crapster, “A.B. Richards.”
\textsuperscript{15} Tennyson to Argyll, 18 July 1859, \textit{Letters of Alfred Lord Tennyson}, vol. 2, 236.
\textsuperscript{17} Wellington to Albert, 6 April 1850, WP2/165/84-86, WUS. See RC/H and RC/HH, esp. Albert to Palmerston, 22 March 1853, RC/H/47, 18 Nov. 1856, RC/H/71, 10 Dec. 1856, RC/H/71; Palmerston to Albert, 15 Nov. 1856, RC/HH/8, PUS.
classes” which do not enter the regulars or the militia to become involved in military service. Because of this, though the Volunteers would be subject to military discipline, their training should not be too irksome or time-intensive, nor should they be required to be as proficient in close-order drill as the regulars. Instead, they would train as skirmishers. In these circumstances, the Volunteers’ morale would come not from red coats or habits of obedience but from confidence in their marksmanship and from “reliance on the support of his comrades – men whom he has lived with from his youth up.‖¹⁸ This circular also introduced the idea of artillery volunteers, sedentary troops to man coastal batteries. Their morale would be even higher, since their service would be protecting their property and families.¹⁹

What General Peel and Prince Albert had created was a simple force, a way to placate the agitation of men like Busk and Richards without much cost and to take advantage of middle class military enthusiasm. Still, the second circular made explicit the liberal conception of service on which the Volunteers were founded. The Volunteers were expected to serve valiantly not because of subordination, or of fear of flogging, or the honor of their regiment. They would serve because of their individuality, their confidence in their own skills, and their personal relationships with their neighbors and comrades.

With Palmerston’s leadership, the cabinet adopted a three-pronged approach to the continuing military crisis. The first was to continue the naval building program

¹⁹ “Text of General Peel’s Supplementary Circular to the Lords-Lieutenant of Counties, May 25th 1859,” 408.
which Derby and his First Lord, Sir John Pakington, had begun. *Warrior* and *Black Prince* were followed by two smaller ironclads, *Defence* and *Resistance*. An unfinished screw liner, *Royal Oak*, was taken in hand for armoring, followed by another seven conversions. Palmerston followed the development of the ironclad with great attention. He was, in many ways, a skeptic about the ships, encouraging the continued construction of wooden liners. For several weeks he pestered Somerset with demands that ironclads be armored not merely amidships but from stem to stern, which would have made them ungainly or even unseaworthy. Good naval sense prevailed, in the face not only of Palmerston’s energetic interference but also Gladstone’s panic over costs, and the broadside ironclad became the *de facto* warship of choice for the English Channel.

The second prong of Palmerston’s plan was the construction of new fortifications to protect the main naval arsenals on the south coast. Responsibility went to the royal commission on the national defenses, which completed its report in February 1860. Though it considered several alternative approaches, including various types of floating batteries, it endorsed a comprehensive and conservative plan. In addition to the usual coastal batteries, there would be sea forts on several coastal shoals, as well as substantial landward defenses. In the eighteenth century the arsenals had been protected by bastioned fortifications, but the increased range of rifled artillery meant that an enemy

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20 Somerset to Palmerston, 25 Nov. 1859, GC/SO/13, PUS.
21 Palmerston to Somerset, 25 Sept. 1859, Add. MSS 48581, fols.38-40, BL; Somerset to Palmerston, 28 Sept. 1859, GC/SO/6, PUS; Palmerston to Somerset, 7 April 1861, Add. MSS 48582, fols.100-102, BL.
22 Somerset to Palmerston, 14 Dec. 1860, GC/SO/42, PUS; Palmerston to Somerset, 16 Dec. 1860, Add. MSS 48582, fols.64-66, BL; Somerset to Palmerston, 21 Jan. 1861, GC/SO/46, PUS; Palmerston to Somerset, 27 March 1861, Add. MSS 48582, fols.93-6, BL; Paget to Palmerston, 10 Nov. 1861, GC/PA/1, PUS.
23 Gladstone to Palmerston, 25 Nov. 1859, GC/GL/20, PUS.
landing force could now bombard the port from beyond those lines. The new plan therefore included an extended line of detached forts on the hills overlooking the major bases. By freeing the regulars to operate in the field rather than protect the ports, the commission claimed the new fortifications were a cost-effective means of defense.  

The fortifications came, however, with a substantial initial cost. Including the £1.46 million already sanctioned, the total costs of the proposed works came to £11.85 million. This staggering bill made the new forts a divisive issue within the Liberal party. No one was more concerned than Gladstone, who realized their expense was likely to overwhelm his plans to reduce government expenditure and cut taxes. Worse yet, to make it possible to complete the works as quickly as possible Palmerston suggested paying for them not out of current taxation but with a series of terminable annuities – interest-bearing bonds which could be redeemed rather than being perpetual. This tactic violated the basic principles of political economy that Gladstone championed, that a state – like an individual – should not spend beyond their means.

The commission’s report was endorsed by the government’s Defence Committee, although the latter urged the government to expand the regulars as much as possible rather than rely on auxiliaries to garrison the new works. The report also had Russell’s

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24 Report of the Commissioners appointed to consider the Defences of the United Kingdom, *PP [2682]* (1860).
support, although he was wary of Palmerston’s plan for a loan.\textsuperscript{27} The opposition from Gladstone was impassioned but increasingly solipsistic; the bill was “matter of personal honour” and to vote for it was a “betrayal of my public duty.”\textsuperscript{28} Argyll, the Lord Privy Seal, attempted to mediate, encouraging both Palmerston and Gladstone to accept the fortification of Portsmouth on the scale recommended by the Commission as an appropriate first step, to be followed by other works only when the finances allowed.\textsuperscript{29} Gladstone threatened resignation, and Palmerston told him no one would respect that decision; if he left the cabinet he would soon be thrown together with Bright and ruined as a public man.\textsuperscript{30}

Gladstone summarized his arguments in a memorandum to the cabinet on May 26. He attacked the plan on military, fiscal, and constitutional grounds. He argued that focus on the dockyards was excessive, and that they would require vast new garrisons who might not even be recruitable in the current labor markets. The costs would be substantial, with ordnance, maintenance, and interest payments adding £6 million to the original estimates for the first four years and £1 million each year thereafter. Finally, and most questionably, Gladstone argued that Palmerston’s plan was unconstitutional. Building five or six new fortresses was a potential “threat to liberty,” while borrowing to pay for expenditures likely to occur under a different parliament was a “grand constitutional innovation, fraught with many evil consequences.” The threat, Gladstone

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{27} Russell to Palmerston, 29 March 1860, GC/RU/588, PUS; Russell to Palmerston, 20 May 1860, GC/RU/600, PUS.
\item \textsuperscript{28} Gladstone to Herbert, 31 March 1860, GC/HE/64, PUS; Gladstone to Palmerston, 4 Feb. 1860, GC/GL/23, PUS.
\item \textsuperscript{29} Argyll to Palmerston, 4 June 1860, GC/AR/22, PUS; Argyll to Palmerston, 17 June 1860, GC/AR/23, PUS.
\item \textsuperscript{30} Palmerston diary, May 24, June 5, June 9 1860, D/20, PUS.
\end{itemize}
wrote in language that approached hysterical, was the “alienation of the people from the
Throne and laws,” the “disturbance of the relations of class,” and “the constant and
indefinite increase of financial burdens.”

The argument did not go well, Russell
considering it particularly weak. As late as July 7, Palmerston was unsure if Gladstone
would stay or go. In the end, the Chancellor flinched, and on July 21 Palmerston wrote in
his diary that “he evidently has throughout been playing a game of Brag & trying to bull
the Cabinet & finding he had failed he has given in.”

The final prong of the government’s policy was the troops which would garrison
the new fortifications. Among cabinet members, the preference was for regulars but this
was fiscally impossible. The apparent alternative was to rely on the embodied militia,
and this is where the attention of the cabinet was focused. Although Sidney Herbert, now
Secretary of State for War, thought relying on volunteering rather than the ballot made
them more expensive than they were worth, he accepted the militia’s status as the most
useful reinforcements for the army in times of crisis. He and Palmerston considered
militiamen more useful than Volunteers, and they worked to find money to keep them
embodied as long as possible.

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31 Gladstone, memorandum, 25 May 1860, CAB/110, PUS.
32 Russell to Palmerston, 28 May 1860, GC/RU/604, PUS.
33 Palmerston diary, July 7, July 21 1860, D/20, PUS.
34 Herbert to Palmerston, 2 Nov. 1859, GC/HE/55, PUS; Russell to Palmerston, 5 Nov. 1859, GC/RU/550,
PUS.
35 Stanmore, *Herbert*, vol. 2, 218-220. Herbert’s preference was for the reintroduction of the ballot, but this
proposal was never introduced in Parliament (Stanmore, *Herbert*, vol. 2, 395).
36 Herbert to Palmerston, 27 March 1860, GC/HE/63, PUS; Herbert to Palmerston, 10 April 1860,
GC/HE/67, PUS; 3 April 1860, D/20, PUS; Palmerston to Hatherton, 25 Oct. 1859, Add. MSS. 48581,
fols.60-1, BL; Stanmore, *Herbert*, vol. 2, 389
only the militia and regulars, with their long-term service commitments, were truly dependable.\textsuperscript{37}

In these circumstances, responsibility for the Volunteers fell to the undersecretary at the War Office, the Earl de Grey. De Grey’s ties to Christian Socialism made him sympathetic to the Volunteer urge for self-improvement. Herbert described him as an “excellent man of business, full of tact and good sense, a thorough gentleman, and fond of work,” who had managed the Volunteers “with the greatest success and credit.”\textsuperscript{38} A supporter of the cooperative movement, the Society for Promoting Working Men’s Associations, civil service reform and the abolition of purchase in the army, he saw the Volunteers as yet another means of promoting working-class improvement and military reform.

With de Grey’s support, the first two years of the Volunteer movement were a time of rapid growth. 133 corps were founded in 1859 and a further 578 in 1860.\textsuperscript{39} With the corps came a series of new institutions. Both Lord Elcho and Earl Spencer created rifle associations, which merged on 16 November 1859 into the National Rifle Association with Herbert as President and Spencer and the Lord Mayor of London as Vice-Presidents.\textsuperscript{40} The \textit{Volunteer Service Gazette} became the semi-official newspaper of the Force, supplemented by weeklies such as the \textit{Volunteer Times}, \textit{Volunteer Journal for Lancashire and Cheshire}, \textit{The Rifleman}, and the \textit{Army and Navy Gazette}, which was edited by the former Crimean war correspondent W.H. Russell and styled itself the

\textsuperscript{37} Qtd. in Stanmore, \textit{Herbert}, vol. 2, 389.
\textsuperscript{38} Herbert to Palmerston, 23 Dec. 1860, GC/HE/79, PUS.
\textsuperscript{39} Beckett, \textit{Riflemen Form}, 31.
\textsuperscript{40} Beckett, \textit{Riflemen Form}, 33. For the relevant correspondence, see letters of Aug. 26, 27, 29, Sept. 4, 21, 24, Add. MSS. 77797, BL.
“Journal of the Militia and Volunteer Forces.” There were also monthlies, like the short-lived *The Literary Volunteer’s Journal. A Monthly Serial of Volunteer Information and Amusement*. Among the more opportunistic attempts to capitalize on the new force was Kent & Co.’s *British Volunteer’s Diary* which merely added a few sections on drill and target practice to an otherwise standard annual pocketbook.

Early expectations for the Volunteer movement were that it would harness the substantial moral, financial, and demographic capacities of the burgeoning Victorian middle class. As Prince Albert’s circular had stated, Volunteer corps were a way to involve men in military service who would otherwise shy away from the militia and army. From this perspective, the Volunteers were a less radical continuation of the program of the Administrative Reform Association, introducing men with sound business sense to solve the problem of national defense. The reality, at least in the early years, was closer to that than one might expect. The most extensive research into this comes from Ian Beckett, whose studies show the predominance of professionals amongst the officers and of tradesmen amongst the other ranks.41

The new force was constantly in flux, with frequent debates about the proper uniforms, weapons, members, and rules. The need to use common ammunition meant that there was some standardization for weapons from the start. All Volunteer rifles had to take government-standard .577 bullets with paper cartridges and a regulation pattern bayonet. In July 1859 the War Office began to provide Enfield rifles to those corps which requested them, and from February 1861 all new arms had to come from

Government stores. Until then, many Volunteers bought customized weapons with features including “shotgun pattern lock, buttplate and trigger guard, patent breech with break-off, fine quality wood and considerable floral and scroll engraving.”

There was far less consensus on uniforms. Until 1863, there were no requirements except that they be approved by the county’s Lord-Lieutenant. Even after that, the Royal Army Clothing Depot in Pimlico offered cloth in scarlet, white, blue, green and grey for tunics, green, grey, and rifle green tartan for trousers, and red, blue, and green serge for frock coats. While each corps was permitted to adopt their own colors, the most common were shades of green and “Elcho” grey. There were practical reasons to adopt these, since both were useful camouflage for skirmishers. Grey matched chalky ground, so “a body of grey men, lying still in long grass at six hundred or seven hundred yards distance, might easily be mistaked for a flock of sheep, or so many pieces of rock or stone.” Compared to scarlet red, both colors hid dirt and wore well. Finally, of course, they easily distinguished their members from the men of both the army and militia. The full range of uniforms could be seen at the first royal review of the Volunteers in Hyde Park on 23 June 1860. A chromolithograph of the event appeared in the Illustrated London News in October, and of the seventeen uniforms on display seven were green, six gray, and only three scarlet. The Volunteers’ sartorial excesses were

43 R.J. Wyatt, Collecting Volunteer Militaria (Newton Abbott: David & Charles, 1974), 44.
45 Cunningham, The Volunteer Force, 94.
easy to mock, with a profusion of braid, swords, and other flashy accoutrements even for enlisted men. Several corps adopted uniforms reminiscent of Garibaldi’s red-shirts.\textsuperscript{47}

In the absence of martial law, discipline was mostly financial. For example, the rules of the 5\textsuperscript{th} Hampshire R.V. included a schedule of fines for almost every possible infraction. Being absent from a parade or leaving without permission was 5s., misbehavior was 10s., while minor offences such as appearing late, speaking or laughing in the rank, appearing with arms or kit in improper or ineffective condition were punishable by fines between 6p. and 2/6. The fines were slightly more substantial for more dangerous behavior, 5s. for pointing a rifle, loaded or unloaded, at a person, and the same for firing accidentally or without orders. The fine structure was more severe for officers, who presumably were expected to be of superior moral fiber and resources. An officer conducting himself improperly towards other ranks could be fined up to 21s. on the first offence and twice that on the second, while a ranker was fined only 5s. for their first act of disobedience or disrespectful conduct.\textsuperscript{48} There were similar fines in the 1\textsuperscript{st} Middlesex Artillery Volunteers, 11\textsuperscript{th} Surrey Rifle Volunteers, and other corps.\textsuperscript{49}

Training focused on close-order drill and marksmanship, neither of which necessarily came easily to middle-class men from commercial backgrounds. If the Volunteer’s Diary’s “Jottings About Drill” are any guide, many must have found drill quite difficult. How else can one explain the following piece of advice? “7\textsuperscript{th} – Don’t

\begin{footnotes}
\item[47] Cunningah, Volunteer Force, 108.
\item[48] Rules of the 5\textsuperscript{th} Hampshire Rifle Volunteer Corps (Portsmouth: Harrison & Co., 1860), 5-6.
\item[49] First Middlesex Artillery Volunteer Corps. Rules (London: Alfred Robins, n.d.), 11, in L/46, London Metropolitan Archives (hereafter LMA); Draft rules of the corps, 8411-97-19, 11\textsuperscript{th} Surrey R.V. Papers, NAM; Code of Rules – Civil Service Rifle Brigade – Audit Office Company, 2000-03-143-1, Minutes of the Audit Office Corps, NAM; Rules of the 1\textsuperscript{st} Middlesex Engineer Volunteer Corps (London: Head-Quarters at the South Kensington Museum, 1860) 11, L.46, LMA.
\end{footnotes}
forget which is your right and which your left; success or failure depends mainly upon this.”

The slowest learners in each company were often formed into an “Awkward Squad,” a term which entered the popular lexicon. One wag even wrote How not to do it. A manual for the Awkward Squad or a handbook of directions for the instruction of raw recruits in our Rifle Regiments. In contrast to drill, which merely required an open or enclosed space, marksmanship training required a lengthy rifle range – easy to create in the country but a real problem for the many urban corps. An incident in Wandsworth Park led to the mocking call “Who shot the dog?” which followed Volunteers throughout the 1860s. The importance of marksmanship was its potential to let men with limited training harass, if not repel, proper soldiers. It was a skill, compared with close-order action, which seemed eminently suited to the intelligent men the Volunteers hoped to recruit. Most training was by company or, occasionally, battalion, but in the field the Volunteers would have to operate in entire brigades.

Larger formations came together in three kinds of exercises: reviews, shooting competitions, and sham fights. Public reviews and shooting competitions had limited value as training, but sham fights were the closest most Volunteers would come to the chaos and confusion of the battlefield – even if the fight had been carefully choreographed beforehand. To a critical eye sham battles exposed the weaknesses of the Volunteers, but to the untutored observer they offered an impressive display of martial

prowess. All three kinds of event were entertainment as much as training, offering the chance for a day away from home with food, drink, and revelry. This was true as much for the public as for the Volunteers, and the former flocked to Volunteer events – even when there was ticketed admission. The carnivalesque atmosphere was reflected in the choice of venues; Brighton was a popular choice. The most important shooting competition of the year was the National Rifle Association’s Wimbledon competition.52

Lord Elcho described the atmosphere:

The Camp fire songs & midnight meeting will likewise become a most valuable permanent Institution. It was the banquet & most interesting meeting. I saw […] & the acc. in the Times gave but a faint idea of it. Lords Ladies Officers Privates Soldiers Sailors Volunteers Commissionaires the British public and Shoeblacks all gathered together around the Campfire drinking punch singing songs and solos Chairmen making business Speeches and Chaffing one another. Not a word being said or sung w. could give offense of any kind. It … was a delight to be seen nowhere but in this Island.53

The best of these events even carried a royal imprimatur. In Hyde Park the troops were reviewed by Prince Albert, while Queen Victoria fired a bulls-eye from a specially-calibrated rifle to open the first Wimbledon shooting match.54

The royal levee of March 1860 was the most important mark of recognition, with Queen Victoria entertaining Volunteer officers for the first – and almost the last – time. This was, for the Volunteers,

53 Elcho to Spencer, 8 Aug. 1862, Add. MSS 77233, BL.
54 See also Punch, 7 July 1860, 4-5.
a great honor. Yet it also exposed the amateurish nature of the movement. One satirical account, *The Remarkable Experiences of Ensign Sopht*, made attending Volunteers seem like naïve country folk, swindled by cabmen and ignorant of all military matters.55

It was unsurprising, then, that there was aristocratic involvement in the new movement. Many of the early corps commanders were men of leisure, peers like Lord Elcho and Spencer.56 Aristocratic leadership offered publicity, desirable social approval, and financial support. The commander of the Queen’s Volunteer Rifles in Belgravia was suitably blunt in explaining what was required for the movement’s national leadership. What was needed were “good names” who would give their names and their money “to support – not to manage.” What was needed were “Some Peers – (such men as Ld. Derby) – some military men (some Sir G. Browns), some Ld. Mayors (& Provosts, City magnates) – and men of influence of any soil [sic].” He concluded, “if ‘swells’ will do this generally; ‘oi polloi’ [sic] will follow.”57 The literary critic Matthew Arnold, himself a member of the Queen’s Westminster R.V., complained that this was “hideous English


57 George Russell to Spencer, 21 Sept. 1859 and 24 Sept. 1859, Add. MS 77797, BL.
toadyism” proceeding from “immense vulgar-mindedness” amongst the middle-class.\textsuperscript{58}

However, aristocratic patronage did have some practical advantages. As the local landlord around Wimbledon, Earl Spencer was able to create rifle ranges on Wandsworth and Wimbledon Commons and support the annual Wimbledon rifle competition despite complaints from local residents.\textsuperscript{59}

Despite its liberal connections, many saw the new force as a Conservative institution. Between 1814 and 1852, most offers of Volunteer corps were to suppress internal disorder rather than oppose a foreign invasion, and especially against Chartism in 1839 and 1848.\textsuperscript{60} The \textit{Quarterly Review} wrote that while those “who remember the troubles of 1819-20 look with dread at the idea of putting arms into the hands of the people,” now the country must be “governed with and through the people; they may be guided, but hardly opposed. Notwithstanding this, it would not be wise to arm only the lower classes; but as there will be at least two volunteers of the upper and middle classes to one of the lower, the arming would really be on the side of order.” In fact, the Volunteers might be seen as a positive reinforcement of middle-class security, since “if every man amenable to the income-tax was forced by law to buy and keep a rifle, an \textit{émeute} of the mob would be impossible.”\textsuperscript{61}

Volunteering was also one of the few ways for the gentry to maintain their reputations, after the catastrophes of the Crimean War. A histrionic article in the \textit{Saturday Review} claimed “our gentry have now a fair chance of redeeming some portion

\textsuperscript{59} Add. MS 77798, \textit{passim}, BL.
\textsuperscript{60} Cunningham, \textit{Volunteer Force}, 8.
\textsuperscript{61} \textit{Quarterly Review}, July 1859, 282.
of that national respect and influence which they must in their cooler moments be aware that they forfeited by a long adherence to all political injustice, by their selfish resistance and ignominious defeat in the matter of the Corn Laws, and by the degradation into which, as a political party, they have since been dragged.” This service was the only hope for reviving Conservatism, for otherwise the gentry would decline into useless rentiers, and should an invasion occur it would be thrown back by a revolutionary government whose “convulsive efforts will hurl back the invasion; but the ebbing wave of conquest will leave England a Republic, and the peasants lords of the land.”

Manliness, Independence and Self-Help

Enthusiasm for the Volunteers was intimately connected to the ongoing crisis of Victorian masculinity. John Tosh, the preeminent historian of Victorian masculinity, writes that the Victorian era saw the decline in arms-bearing as a core element of masculinity, with the importance of military manliness in steep decline following the Napoleonic Wars. The post-Napoleonic revival of interest in chivalric values, represented by Young England, the Eglinton Tournament, and Kenelm Digby’s Broad Stone of Honour, merely “displaced valour and danger into a safe haven of agreeable fantasy.” Instead, the hegemonic masculinity of mid-Victorian Britain was the domestic simplicity of provincial merchants. Both polite polish and vigorous

64 Tosh, Manliness and Masculinities, 65; for more on chivalry and the Victorians, see Girouard, The Return to Camelot.
65 John Tosh, A Man’s Place, 27-50; Davidoff and Hall, Family Fortunes.
libertinage were increasingly replaced as the masculine ideal by an idea of manly simplicity that celebrated restraint and self-discipline.\textsuperscript{66} This new conception of manliness was as focused on character as it was on physical prowess. Tosh explains: “the traditional vocabulary of manliness – words like ‘sturdy’, ‘vigorous’ and ‘robust’ – was redefined to include a moral as well as a physical dimension; this was particularly true of ‘courage’, now interpreted to mean standing up- for what is true and right, rather than showing physical guts.”\textsuperscript{67} A good man was a breadwinner, a devoted husband, and a firm father. Though manly simplicity respected strength, it looked down on the high-flying libertinage of bachelor officers and the crude muscularity of common soldiers. Tosh observes that even for a military hero like General Henry Havelock, the teetotal savior of Lucknow in the Indian Revolt of 1857, his fame relied as much on his status as a father and family man as on his military achievements.\textsuperscript{68} Tosh’s conclusions are endorsed by John Peck, whose study of British literature sees a precipitous decline in the presence of military elements in the books of the 1850s and 60s.\textsuperscript{69}

However, the rise of manly simplicity came with a commensurate anxiety about the sources of strength. The new ideal celebrated the business- and family man, but what if commerce and family life made it impossible for him to retain the necessary strength of body and mind? This fear of enervation made the Volunteers into the repository for hopes and dreams. John Ruskin may have said it best when he wrote that the Volunteers might be “the only thing to save us from our accursed commerce – and make us men

\textsuperscript{66} Tosh coined this term in “Gentlemanly Politeness and Manly Simplicity,” 455-72.
\textsuperscript{67} Tosh, A Man’s Place, 112.
\textsuperscript{68} Tosh, Manliness, 66. The cult of Havelock is more fully explored in Graham Dawson, Soldier heroes: British adventure, empire, and the imagining of masculinity (London: Routledge, 1994), 79-144.
\textsuperscript{69} John Peck, War, the Army and Victorian Literature, 100-105.
again instead of gold shovels."70 Ruskin would explore the necessity of such service at length in his tract on political economy, *Unto this Last*, and a speech on “War” to the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich. The former, originally serialized in *Cornhill Magazine*, included harsh criticism of excessive military spending that bought Britain and France “ten millions sterling worth of consternation” rather than real security.71 Ruskin, however, was even harsher in his criticism of commerce motivated by greed rather than the provision of goods.72 As he explained to the cadets at Woolwich, war was necessary to cultivate civic virtue and intelligence, but only when it was fought by willing men. It was a travesty to fight with conscripts, or to make war into an industrial struggle which made personal virtues irrelevant. The duty of the soldier is not to be passive and to obey, but to struggle and die to make Britain the best it can be.73 The ennobling war which Ruskin spoke of was a chivalrous fight which even he admitted was unlikely in the modern age but was most closely approached by the self-defense of England.74 The Volunteers fit perfectly into this philosophy.

Ruskin was not the only one who saw the virtuous potential of the Volunteers as saviors from Mammon and a source of moral and physical strength. His friends within the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and the artistic community at large agreed. In early 1860 a meeting at the studio of Henry Wyndham Phillips led to the creation of the Artists Rifle

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72 Ruskin, “Unto this Last,” 38-40.
74 Ruskin, “War,” 465.
Volunteers (later the 38th Middlesex R.V.). Drilling at the Royal Academy’s home in Burlington House, the Artists Rifles included the Pre-Raphaelites Millais, Arthur Holman-Hunt, William Morris, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and Edward Burne-Jones, as well as the painters Frederick Leighton and G.F. Watts, and the poet Algernon Swinburne. Leighton, a future president of the Royal Academy, was elected ensign; Millais was elected lieutenant. Ruskin was an honorary member, and William Blake Richmond the honorary secretary. Richmond’s memoirs show that the Pre-Raphaelites were enthusiastic, if incompetent, soldiers. They took their duties, and the connection between physical and moral strength, seriously. Many took boxing lessons from Alec Reid, manager of the Cambrian, about which Hunt wrote that it was because of “our ancestors’ pugnacity and warlike propensities that England had become great.”

The Pre-Raphaelite interest in the Volunteers extended beyond their service into their art as well. Millais, who had painted subtle condemnations of the officer corps (Peace Concluded) and sympathetic portraits of soldiers (Order of Release), now created a stunningly popular portrait of love and duty. The Black Brunswicker was set in the

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75 Swinburne’s first opinion on the Volunteers was that it was a lark. See Swinburne to Scott, 16 Dec. 1859, Cecil Y. Lang, ed., The Swinburne Letters, vol. 1, 1854-1869 (New Haven: Yale UP, 1959), 29. Swinburne, whose reputation is as an aesthete and a decadent, was an odd representative for the chastened patriotism epitomized in Millais’ paintings, but he publicly criticized Tennyson’s war poems as “beardless bluster … [with] the shrill and unmistakable accent … of a provincial schoolboy.” The exceptions were his anti-Louis Napoleon poems of 1852, “Hands all round” and “Britons, guard your own,” which criticized the coup as, in Swinburne’s words, a crime unequalled in “cowardly vileness” since the massacre of St. Bartholomew’s day. A.C. Swinburne qtd. in John Jump, Tennyson: The Critical Heritage (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), 343-4.


78 Qtd. in Caroline Dakers, The Holland Park Circle. Artists and Victorian Society (New Haven: Yale UP, 1999), 65. D.G. Rossetti was more flippant, composing the doggerel “There is a big artist named Val, / The roughs’ and the prize-fighters’ pal: / The mind of a groom / And the head of a broom / Were Nature’s endowment to Val.”
Napoleonic Wars, as a volunteer for an elite corps raised by the Duke of Brunswick takes leave of his love. The composition emphasizes the intensity of feeling, but also the tortured nature of the departure with its contorted bodies and dark, enclosed space. A print of David’s famous “Napoleon crossing the Alps” alludes both to the historic moment and to the contemporary threat from Napoleon III. Like Millais’ earlier works, *The Black Brunswicker* presents military service as a noble but dangerous duty, but this painting also introduces an allusion to the necessity of such service being voluntary – freely chosen, and perhaps even outside the regular service.

Millais’ friend Holman Hunt had already made his own comments on England’s defenseless state. In the previous panic he produced a pastoral painting of unwatched sheep by a precipitous cliff, called *Our English Coasts, 1852* (retitled *Strayed Sheep* to be exhibited in Paris). Though Hunt was less fond of medieval imagery than Rossetti, his work combined careful naturalism with intense symbolism. In *Our English Coasts*, the sheep represented Britain’s unprotected populace – an allusion to Edwin Landseer’s *Time of Peace* (1846), itself a comment on a prior panic – grazing along the coast near Hastings, where a more famous French invasion came ashore eight hundred years before.79 Though the carnage of the Crimean War inspired him to return to the illustrations of “Peace” and “War” he had created for James Leigh Hunt’s *Captain Sword and Captain Pen*, which showed the families widowed and orphaned, Hunt made no direct comment on the present panic.80

The Pre-Raphaelites were not the only painters to approach the Volunteers with interest. In fact, Volunteer genre paintings proliferated so badly in the 1859-60 that William Powell Frith, the master of the mass genre scene since his *Derby Day*, chose not to paint one.\(^81\) Some of the best of them were painted by Arthur Boyd Houghton, a talented commercial illustrator who sadly “never metamorphosed from being a struggling painter-illustrator into a successful painter.”\(^82\) Houghton’s style mixed Pre-Raphaelite innovation with the long British tradition of social satire, and he was a member – with Brown, Morris, and W.M. Rossetti – of the Hogarth Club which “sought to discuss ways and means by which a democratic art might flourish in what was an undemocratic society.”\(^83\) Houghton’s 1859 *Recruiting Party* was a sharp commentary on the regular army, in which “a motley bunch of naïve and foolish looking men” are led by a drummer and pipers to a recruiting officer inscribed as “N.S. Butcher.”\(^84\) Its pendant, *The Deserter*, shows a terrified man in chains on his way to execution. In contrast, *Volunteers* and *Volunteers March Out* are more sympathetic portrayals. In the former, the men of the Volunteer corps are fit and well-built, surrounded by a cross-section of respectable society.\(^85\)

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\(^85\) Some critics see satirical elements in both paintings. The Tate Modern staff observe that in *Volunteers*, a gentlemen on the left is “carefully not looking at the soldiers,” while Bryant says the facial types and expressions in *Volunteers March Out* gives it a satirical air. Tate Collection website: [http://www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?cgroupid=999999961&workid=6756&searchid=12503](http://www.tate.org.uk/servlet/ViewWork?cgroupid=999999961&workid=6756&searchid=12503); Bryant, *Kenwood Paintings*, 247.
An interesting commentary on manly simplicity and the continuing bad reputation of the militia comes from George Eliot, in her 1859 novel *Adam Bede*.

Set in rural “Loamshire” in the middle of the Napoleonic Wars, *Bede* follows the tangle of relationships surrounding Dinah Morris, a devout Methodist and future lay preacher. One of her suitors is Arthur Donnithorne, militia captain and son of the loyal squire, while the other is Adam Bede, a poor but virtuous artisan. Though a well-developed character, Donnithorne reflects many of the stereotypes of the bachelor officer. He is handsome, well-bred, and good-hearted, but at the same time weak-willed at heart. In the course of the novel he becomes a sexual predator as well, impregnating and dishonoring Hetty Sorrell. The glamorous but predatory aristocratic militia officer was a historic trope, like Mr. Wickham in Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*. In *Bede*, however, the true hero is not a better aristocrat but the artisan, ennobled by the simplicity of his life. Adam’s moral qualities are without question. He is kind, dutiful, thrifty, hard-working and slow to anger. Adam is a true gentleman because of these qualities, while the gentleman-by-birth, Arthur, fails because of his lack of them. As for military qualities, we learn in the very first chapter that Adam had the air of a soldier standing at ease.”

He is, a militia colonel remarks, exactly the sort of man needed to beat the French. However, Adam is quite definitely not a soldier. In fact, he pays the necessary money to keep his brother Seth out of the army. His virtue is created and preserved by hard work, rather than the

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questionable attractions of the militia. The regular army seems more virtuous, in comparison, but unattractive for its own reasons. To atone for his treatment of Hetty, Arthur goes abroad towards the end of the novel, but he returns eight years later with his health shattered by a fever caught on foreign service. 91 In 1859, Adam represents the sort of man the Volunteers sought, and Arthur the stereotype of whom they wanted to avoid.

Recovering simplicity and strength was far more important for those, unlike Adam Bede, whose work involved none of his sweat and exertion. The middle-class clerk seemed far more likely to be effeminized or corrupted by his work, and his Volunteer service therefore commensurately more important. For someone like the economist W. Stanley Jevons, it was important that battalion and regimental drill was “an excellent antidote to metaphysics.” 92 The importance of encouraging a physical revival explains some of the interest in prize-fighting, a sport which survived only on the fringes of legality in Britain. Despite this, pugilism had both an aristocratic and a working-class clientele. The fight between the English Tom Sayers and the American John Heenan in 1860 was, while illegal, approved of by Palmerston himself. 93 Its appeal as a contest of violence without lethality explains its appeal to so many Volunteers, and Sir William Hardman explicitly connected the rise of Volunteering with the resurgence of prize fights. 94

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91 Eliot, Adam Bede, 499.
Still, there were those in the Volunteers movement who were less concerned with reviving Hardman’s race of men which “advocated port wine and beefsteaks in unlimited qualities, [and] which never went to bed sober,” and more interested in the potential of Volunteering to promote restraint and self-discipline.\textsuperscript{95} An example of this approach can be seen in the phenomenon of temperance corps: Volunteer corps whose members were all also teetotalers. Two of these appeared in London in late 1860. One, the South London Temperance Rifle Volunteers, had the endorsement of Havelock’s widow Hannah, who provided both her husband’s name and financial support. The 24\textsuperscript{th} Surrey Volunteers, “Havelock’s Own,” were commanded by the noted cartoonist George Cruickshanks, also the author of the pro-Volunteer pamphlet \textit{A Pop-Gun fired off by George Cruickshank, in defence of the Volunteers of 1803}.\textsuperscript{96} In June 1861, Cruickshank’s corps absorbed the London Temperance Corps, but the discovery that the 24\textsuperscript{th} recruited mostly outside Surrey, and that neither its commander nor adjutant lived in that county led to its reorganization as the 48\textsuperscript{th} Middlesex, “Havelock’s Rifles.” With eight companies, the 48\textsuperscript{th} Middlesex was a substantial force but its later history was a humiliating one. Endless squabbles over mismanagement led Cruickshank to force out many of his officers, while a lack of teetotal volunteers meant that in April 1864 the temperance pledge became optional.\textsuperscript{97}

Claims that the Volunteers were capable of reviving manliness, whether for strength or self-discipline, were open to ridicule. Farces like \textit{The Rifle and How to Use}

\textsuperscript{95} Ellis, \textit{A Mid-Victorian Pepys}, 26-7.
\textsuperscript{96} Ian F.W. Beckett, \textit{The Victorians at War} (London: Hambledon, 2003), 18.
It, The Rifle Volunteer, and The Garibaldi ‘Excursionists’ poked fun at the prospect of re-masculinized merchants. J.V. Bridgman’s The Rifle and How to Use It is the most blatant, in which Volunteers Percival Floff and Sidney Jubkins prove themselves far more weak and hysterical than their wives. While drunk, Floff and Jubkins shoot a man (actually a clothes dummy) in the back, spending the rest of the play terrified that their misdeed will be discovered but even more terrified of the browbeating they will receive from their wives.  

98 A similar situation, complete with cross-dressing Volunteers, appears in The ‘Queen’s Rifles, where three wives join a local Brigade of Female Rifle Volunteers and browbeat, bamboozle, and drill their husbands into submission.  

99 Our Volunteers, or Pressed Into the Service follows a similar plot, as three husbands who use Volunteering as an excuse for drinking, carousing and staying out late are discovered by their wives, dressed as members of the “Royal Great Eastern never-say-die Volunteers.” Armed with this knowledge, the women declare themselves members of the “female-stand-no-husband-nonsense Rifle Volunteers” and leave for a holiday. After a day of caring for their children, the men surrender and promise to only fulfill their real Volunteer duties.  

100 The female Volunteer, complete with uniform, was also a feature of several other plays. In Edward Stirling’s Rifle Volunteers and Henry Byron’s Garibaldi “Excursionists” the Volunteers are sufficiently effeminate that they can be imitated with

99 Wm. B. Donne, The ‘Queen’s’ Rifles, 11 Aug. 1860, Add. MSS 52994W, BL.  
100 Our Volunteers, or Pressed Into the Service, 3 June 1862, Add. MSS 53014M, BL.
great success by women disguised as Volunteers. The same is true in W.E. Suter’s *Double Dealing, or The Rifle Volunteer*, a duologue which sees Miss Angelina Stumpins dress up as a young Volunteer to avoid marriage to Mr. Jeremiah Dumpins, who has disguised himself as his own maiden aunt. With their normal roles thus reversed, the somewhat dandyish Jeremiah is chased at bayonet-point around the room by a rifle-armed Miss Angelina. The ballad “Form, Girls, Form” took a similar tack, “For if the field our lads should yield” then “We girls would fight for our native right.” So enrolled, “Before our charms, they’d [the French] lay down arms.”

*Punch* found it easy to mock the Volunteers for their follies, whether they were naïveté, pride, youth, age, or corpulence. The penumbra which surrounded the Volunteers, whether it was the grandeur of the Volunteer levee or a perfume for Volunteers, was also easy to poke fun at. *Punch* expressed its doubts about the manly revival the Volunteers promised. Could drilling really “not alone chase invasion’s fears, / But they also drive out dyspepsy and gout / From the Rifle Volunteers!”? It was easy to mock the lawyers of the fictitious “Chancery Lane Rifles,” but *Punch* never doubted

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104 *Punch*, 14 Jan. 1860, 22; 21 Jan. 1860, 26; 11 Feb. 1860, 64; 18 Feb. 1860, 68; 24 March 1860, 117, 124; 14 April 1860, 148-9; 16 June 1860, 239; 30 June 1860, 262. Many of these were by Charles Keene, who alongside John Leech was one of *Punch’s* most important cartoonists. Keene’s style was naturalistic, with a lovely sense of draughtsmanship. During the Crimean War, he worked up sketches from the special correspondents into polished illustrations. In 1859, he joined the 2nd Middlesex R.V., which gave him ample experience he made use of in *Punch*. George Somes Layard, *The life and letters of Charles Samuel Keene* (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Co., 1892), 70; Simon Houfe, *The work of Charles Samuel Keene* (Aldershot: Scolar, 1995).
105 *Punch*, 17 March 1860, 116; 7 April 1860, 139.
106 *Punch*, 5 Nov. 1859, 185.
the essential patriotism of the Volunteers or the essential threat from Napoleon and the French.\textsuperscript{107} Despite japes like the joke that the smell of sewage in the Thames would repel a French invasion, its pages were full of images of John Bull, Britannia, and the British bulldog – often staring down the French poodle.\textsuperscript{108} \textit{Punch} was critical of those who challenged the Volunteers, and its writers embraced the common critiques of the regulars.\textsuperscript{109} Its writers mocked those who suggested the Volunteers adopt the uniform of the regular army, which they called a “life of killing torture.”\textsuperscript{110} They also opposed flogging.\textsuperscript{111}

It was an unfortunate fact for those enamored with the Volunteers that they would never have been able to function without government assistance. The provision of arms in July 1859 was only the beginning, followed in January 1860 by the first Volunteer Regulations. In early February, Volunteer corps were authorized to hire drill instructors from the regulars. Permission to hire former regular officers as adjutants came later in the month, and between them the instructors and adjutants meant an increasingly professionalized veneer for the Force. On January 22 the War Office appointed Colonel William Montagu Scott McMurd as Inspector General of Volunteers. By March,
McMurdo had ten Assistant Inspectors to examine corps and enforce the government regulations.\textsuperscript{112}

Despite the increasing government involvement, the Volunteers were jealous guardians of their independence. As one Volunteer officer proudly wrote in the \textit{Times}, “I know nothing whatever of Her Majesty’s Service. I am a Volunteer.”\textsuperscript{113} With their own cavalry, artillery, and engineers, the Volunteers could be an entire parallel army.\textsuperscript{114} Though there were no Volunteer formations larger than a battalion (and even these were mostly administrative structures) the Volunteers also wanted their own general officers to command Volunteer brigades even if they were to be retired army officers.\textsuperscript{115} There was similar enthusiasm for the creation of a Volunteer staff, which could manage the logistical and transport needs of the force.\textsuperscript{116} One of the leaders of the movement to make the Volunteers a parallel army was Viscount Ranelagh, commander of the South Middlesex R.V. and a Conservative. At his instigation, a meeting of Metropolitan Commanding Officers resolved that the command of divisional field-days would be in the hands of Volunteer colonels rather than regulars – a decision only rescinded in April 1861.\textsuperscript{117}

Independence from the army was so important to the Volunteers because of the force’s image as an unfettered expression of the self-help and voluntarism. Either “the

\textsuperscript{112} Beckett, \textit{Riflemen Form}, 125-7. McMurdo had served with Napier in India, and commanded the Land Transport Corps in the Crimea. He encouraged the Volunteers, and always maintained a high opinion of their potential (see “McMurdo, Sir William Montagu Scott,” \textit{DNB}).
\textsuperscript{113} Qtd. in Patricia Morton, “Another Victorian Paradox,” 183.
\textsuperscript{114} John Burgoyne, “A Plea for Engineer Volunteers,” \textit{VJLC}, Nov. 17, 1860, 150.
\textsuperscript{116} Hughes to Ripon, Add. MSS 43548, fol.77, BL.
\textsuperscript{117} Cunningham, \textit{The Volunteer Force}, 84-5.
Volunteer force is a body totally distinct from the regular army, and never amenable to the same system, or it is nothing, and can never be made an efficient service in any active duty.” Voluntees felt their independence offered not only moral superiority, but also freedom from petty martinets and stultifying red-tape. It was supposed to make better individual soldiers, as well as a better institution:

It has been asserted by military Barnacles, that the question of indiscriminate obedience to orders, said to be so essential to all martial organizations, is the rock on which this noble civilian army of ours must split. We do not, of course, agree with the croakers who put forward such an assertion: on the contrary, we recognise in judicious and discriminating opposition to the imposition of tyrannous edicts, an earnest of the inherent vitality of the service to which we are proud to belong; we rejoice in our independence, and in the assurance which the asserting of that independence give us, that the Volunteer Movement shall attain the dignity of a permanent institution.

This independence, The Rifleman suggested, might be even more important than its historical resonance for the force’s long-term survival, since “it will prosper, as much because it is manly, and independent of Routine, as because it is enshrined in the heart of every true-born Englishman.”

The pose of total independence also connected the Volunteers with a strong, if fringe, movement for local self-government led by men like Joshua Toulmin Smith.

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120 “Routine,” The Rifleman, October 25, 1860, 132.
Although Smith is often interpreted as on the libertarian edge of liberalism, he was also an exponent of the legend of Saxon democracy and of collective responsibilities as an antidote to commercial atomism. According to Smith, involvement with parish self-government was critical both to the local community and to the development of the individual. In military affairs, that meant not just that the standing army was a perversion of the principles of 1688 but that the local citizen militia should be a civic obligation.\footnote{Ben Weinstein, “‘Local Self-Government Is True Socialism’: Joshua Toulmin Smith, the State and Character Formation,” \textit{English Historical Review} 123 (2008): 1222-3.} He explored this idea in the 1859 with his pamphlet \textit{National Defence in Practice}, which argued that the secret of England’s defense has always been the obligation of all Englishmen to have a knowledge of arms and a practice ground in every parish; and that the Common and Statute Law always insisted on knowledge of the long-bow, now replaced by the rifle. Such forces needed no statutory basis, since they were fundamental Institutions of the State under the Common Law of England. Smith’s pamphlet was critical of the militia as too much like the regular army, and though he never mentions the Volunteers they seemed far closer to his ideal of localized self-defense.\footnote{Joshua Toulmin Smith, \textit{National Defence in Practice, with the Opinions of William Pitt, Charles James Fox, etc., etc., on the Arming of the People} (London: W. Jeffs, 1859).}

This kind of attitude explains why government funding was so controversial for many Volunteers. In mid-1861, Lord Elcho and the semi-official \textit{Volunteer Service Gazette} were already encouraging the idea of a £1 capitation grant for each effective Volunteer. It had the support of the \textit{Army and Navy Gazette}, the \textit{Volunteer Times}, and the commander of the St. George’s Rifles.\footnote{Army and Navy Gazette, Jan. 21, 1860, 40; “Subsidy,” \textit{Volunteer Times}, June 21, 1862, 103; “Government Aid to Volunteers,” \textit{The Rifleman}, May 16, 1861, 362.} \textit{The Rifleman}, on the other hand, was
irrevocably opposed, claiming that it would eviscerate the core of the movement. It would make Volunteers into “hired servants” and “volunteer paupers,” just like the militia and regulars.\textsuperscript{124} In hysteria, the editors claimed that subsidy would “render them [the Volunteers] incapable of self-action and self-direction.”\textsuperscript{125} In fact, if government aid came through it might be better to just dissolve the Volunteers altogether and increase the regular army.\textsuperscript{126} The Rifleman thought that independence need not be a bar to discipline and efficiency, merely to their imposition from outside. After all, even if “the vital principle of the Volunteer movement is freedom – all is voluntary and self-imposed,” there is no reason that Volunteers could not impose on themselves the military law of the regulars, since discipline is a necessity for effectiveness.\textsuperscript{127}

Whatever the implications of the capitation grant for the independence of the Volunteers, opposition from The Rifleman and its readers could only be a temporary bar. The Volunteer movement was simply too broad, and too expensive, to avoid the support for ever. The Rifleman might wonder how anyone who could afford the 17s. 4d. for a subscription to the Volunteer Service Gazette needed a £1 grant, but the government was concerned with creating a force more numerous and diverse than the subscribers of the Gazette.\textsuperscript{128} So were many of those seeking to join the force.

While the ideals of manliness, self-discipline, and even self-help were not exclusive to the middle classes, there were as many reasons why it was difficult for

\textsuperscript{125} “The Thin Edge of the Wedge,” The Rifleman, May 2, 1861, 348.
\textsuperscript{126} “Tares Among the Wheat,” The Rifleman, April 18, 1861, 332.
\textsuperscript{127} “Room for Improvement,” The Rifleman, Aug. 1, 1861, 36.
 artisans to become Volunteers as there were reasons for them to aspire to it. Even once the government began to provide weapons and ammunition, a Volunteer was still responsible for his own uniform and accoutrements as well as whatever subscription fee the corps charged. He needed free time to drill. Discipline in the Volunteers was pecuniary rather than corporal and the costs of any infraction in discipline were too high for many. Even if it was possible to become a member, either with one’s own resources or with outside support, the practice of charging “fees of honor” for officers – in the 5th Hampshire R.V. rising from £10 for an ensign to £30 for a major put a commission out of reach of most men. 129 Cost was thus a serious obstacle to working class involvement. 130 Excessive ornamentation on uniforms, in particular, was acknowledged as likely to “expel the less wealthy and labouring classes from the Volunteer movement.” 131 The social obstacles were as strong as the practical ones. The Volunteer corps was an association of equals, and although many middle-class members were eager to be recognized as the equal of regular officers and gentry, they were unlikely to take well to having their social inferiors in their midst. In 1864, one Lancashire Volunteer recalled the hazards for the sole déclassé member of a corps. When a chimney-sweep of “unprepossessing appearance & caliper shaped legs” joined the corps, its “advanced office boys, embryo swells, and other aristocratic gentlemen” hazed him mercilessly to drive him out. Constantly insulted by those around him, one day the company Captain saw him out of step and ordered him to change, but thinking it was merely one his usual

130 VJLC, Oct. 5, 1860, 72-3.
tormentors he told him to “shut up for a fool, or he’d break his mouth,” &c. &c.” Fined five shillings and discharged, he was so happy that he practically forced the money into the colonel’s hand at once. In fact, there were many who saw the ejection of the working classes as a necessity. The economist W. Stanley Jevons explained that the Force was “formed from all classes from noblemen and M P’s down to shipmen, and some employees of railways, works etc. but as a general thing there are none of the working classes,” and though “it may seem rather illiberal to say so, but I think it even thus a benefit, that the upper classes who possess the most intelligence, and are in a minority should be most armed.”

In keeping with their liberal sympathies, many early supporters of the Volunteers saw the inclusion of the working classes within the Volunteers as a path to national reconciliation and a hallmark of popular liberalism’s capacity to unite “the People.” It was a principle which extended into the topmost circles, where Lord Leigh of Warwickshire expressed his willingness to “shoulder his rifle by the side of a sweep.” Among the most fervent support for working-class involvement were the Christian Socialists. Tom Hughes wrote that the Volunteers were a chance to “stand shoulder to shoulder, and man to man, each counting for what he is worth; the peer without condescending, and the peasant without cringing,” while Charles Kingsley called them

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132 B.A. Redfern, “Military Reminiscences,” Odds and Ends 10 (1864), 144-168, in M38/4/1/10, St. Paul’s Literary and Educational Society, MCL.


134 Qtd. in Cunningham, Volunteer Force, 18.
“centers of cordiality between class and class.” The Volunteer press also supported the idea that “a mixture of classes then must be the leading feature of this movement,” with *The Rifleman* calling disparagement of working-class volunteers, whether official or unofficial, a slur on their honor and loyalty. Even *Punch* seemed to embrace the vision of cross-class harmony without irony. It mocked those who saw danger in the arming of the working classes, and praised the unity of “Squires, Shop, and Warehousemen” alongside “Lib’ral and Tory.”

The controversy came from the way that Volunteer service, with its connotations of independence and respectability, was impossible to separate from the ongoing question of franchise extension. Working-class service in the Volunteers required equality while in service, and “the very act of voluntarily bearing arms for a patriotic principle” should be “sufficient to establish a community of sentiment which, during the time of military duty, supersedes the merely social distinctions of rank.” Equality as patriots and soldiers was on a slippery slope to equality as individuals and maybe even as voters. Several of the major working-class newspapers supported the Volunteers for exactly this reason. Volunteering offered proof of respectability and leverage in the search for the franchise. In mid-1861 a new paper, *The Volunteer*, began to support both the enfranchisement of the working classes and the adoption of the secret ballot. After all, if

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137 *Punch*, Aug. 20, 1859, 75; Dec. 3, 1859, 229. See also Dec. 24, 1859, 259; Oct. 6, 1860, 137.
138 “How are the Working Britons to Strike Home?” *The Rifleman*, Sept. 8, 1860, 84.
“they [working-class Volunteers] are considered able to use firearms,” then “why not let
them vote by Ballot instead of holding them in terror?” They argued that there was no
reason to join the movement to boycott the Volunteers because enrollment did not give
the vote.

There were many, then, who saw working-class Volunteers as potentially
destabilizing. Lord Hardwicke of Cambridgeshire opposed them since “if a weapon was
given to a man who had no real property, his natural tendency would be to acquire a
property which he had not.” His opinion was inadvertently reinforced by the comments
of Ernest Jones, now editor-proprietor of the Cabinet Newspaper, who claimed that the
invasion panic was an attempt to distract working men from their real problems and arm
the middle-class against them. Therefore, he recommended working men should use
this opportunity to form rifle corps to protect themselves from the weapons of their
employers. It was an opinion echoed elsewhere. Involvement in the Volunteers also
seemed to promise to strengthen the working-class critique of the army as a haven for
patronage and incompetence. Writers played up the threat of snobbery, jobbery, and
favoritism if the aristocrats were permitted to control the force. Much was made of an
incident at Wandsworth Common, where a gentleman enrolled in the 1st Sussex

141 “The Volunteer Movement,” The Volunteer, Aug. 10, 1861, 6.
142 Northumbrian, “No Musket, No Vote,” RN, Feb. 5, 1860, 7; 1.8.1860; “Rifle v. Reform Volunteers,”
Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper, Jan. 8, 1860, 6.
143 Qtd. in Cunningham, Volunteer Force, 18. For criticism of Hardwicke, see RN, July 15, 1860, 7-9.
144 “Class Armament in England,” Cabinet Newspaper (hereafter CN), May 21, 1859, 5.
146 The Ballot and Manhood Suffrage, RN, Jan. 29, 1860, 14.
147 “The Aristocracy and the Volunteer Movement,” RN, Nov. 11, 1860, 7; “The Inefficiency of Volunteer
Volunteers shot a lady’s poodle, as proof of the degeneracy of the upper classes.\textsuperscript{148} In contrast, working-class involvement would end the aristocracy’s military monopoly and lead to more informed criticism of the army.\textsuperscript{149}

Despite these circumstances, the creation of working-class corps tended to reinforce their position within the social hierarchy, rather than erase it. Many of the new corps embodied the belief that their mechanical skills made artisan Volunteers particularly suited to sapping, mining, and engineering duties.\textsuperscript{150} When A.B. Richards sought approval for the London Workingmen’s Brigade, part of his argument was that the enrolled workmen were “of a most respectable class” and “vouched for as to character and conduct by their employers.”\textsuperscript{151} With official support it grew rapidly, and by October 1860 the \textit{Volunteer Journal for Lancashire and Cheshire} was reporting its strength as over 1,000 men, commanded by army lieutenant-colonel Sir William Plunket de Bathe.\textsuperscript{152}

Many of the workmen enrolled in corps associated with their workplaces. They were often initiated by their employers, who made arrangements not just to create the corps but also to subsidize the uniforms, provide space for drill and time off for training. In return, they became its \textit{de facto} leaders. When 150 men from John Broadwood’s piano factory enrolled in the Queen’s (Westminster) Rifles, it was John Broadwood who wrote to the Lord-Lieutenant and a Broadwood who was commissioned as an officer to command the

\textsuperscript{148}“A Volunteer of the Wrong Sort,” \textit{RN}, April 15, 1860, 8.
\textsuperscript{151}A.B. Richards to Salisbury, 31 Aug. 1860, L/40, LMA.
\textsuperscript{152}“The Volunteer Movement in England,” \textit{VJLC}, Oct. 13, 1860, 82.
company. In Glasglow, Wylie and Lochhead provided £80 and cloth for uniforms and, in return, they elected two Wylies and a Lochhead as officers. These arrangements were not restricted to industry. Lord Zetland in the North Riding enrolled all his male household servants, while the 1st Administrative Battalion in Dorset wore its Colonel’s family crest, as did many of the Argyll Corps in Edinburgh. Involving working men in such an expensive activity also tended to require external support. Both the 1st Middlesex Engineer Volunteers and the London Workmen’s Brigade used public subscriptions to pay for uniforms and limit the monthly costs, but this involved making the corps reliant on external support – losing the core principle of self-sufficiency. When uniforms were provided for them rather than purchased by the men, “the sentiment of charity enters” and “the morale of the whole effort is lowered.”

One of the few working men’s corps not directly associated with employers or a workplace was the rifle corps of the London Working’s Men College established in late 1859. With more than 200 men by April 1860, the College corps (later the 19th Middlesex) soon became a four-company battalion. However, its close association with the College and the Christian Socialists made it anomalous even among artisan corps. Its founder, Tom Hughes, was a personal friend of Lord de Grey, who helped him find rifle ranges, a mare to ride at the first field day, and to make Philip Read – a former color sergeant in the 33rd Regiment of Foot – the first Volunteer adjutant taken from the ranks. Still, like the College in general the rifle corps was a mixture of working-class and

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154 Cunningham, Volunteer Force, 21.  
paternalistic leadership. The first Captain, John Martineau, had a bachelor’s degree from Cambridge, even if the second was a former wood-turner.\textsuperscript{156}

Artisan corps without the benefit of a personal relationship with a member of parliament found themselves in substantially more difficulty. It was a matter of general policy to reject artisan corps as “class corps,” “the essence of which must be a distinction of Classes entirely inconsistent with a national movement like the present.”\textsuperscript{157} Condemnation as a class corps was the kiss of death for any such proposal, and Richards was required to deny that the Workmen’s Brigade was one: “looking at the books of the corps, he found that out of 200 names 74 belonged to different trades and occupations in the City of London.”\textsuperscript{158} Sir John Shelly’s corps was one hamstrung by the charge.\textsuperscript{159} It was rejected despite his claim that there would be bankers and lawyers clerks enrolled, and that the men “would not come under the usual acceptation of the world Artisans, but either of men earning weekly wages of the highest class say from 2 to 4 guineas per week.”\textsuperscript{160} An appeal to Palmerston, Herbert, and De Grey was rejected by all three. It took until March 1861 for it to be accepted.\textsuperscript{161}


\textsuperscript{157} De Grey to Palmerston, 6 Sept. 1860, GC/DE/27, PUS. The policy of rejecting exclusive corps appears in the War Office correspondence subject index, but the letter (like almost all those pertaining to the Volunteers) is now lost. V/Gen No./1319, 15 Dec. 1860, WO 139, TNA. See also VJLC, Nov. 10, 1860, 142.

\textsuperscript{158} Qtd. in “The Workmen’s Volunteer Brigade,” The Rifleman, Nov. 8, 1860, 147.

\textsuperscript{159} “Sir J. Shelley on Artisan Volunteers,” The Rifleman, Sept. 8, 1860, 83.

\textsuperscript{160} De Grey to Palmerston, 6 Sept. 1860, GC/DE/27, PUS.

\textsuperscript{161} Cunningham, Volunteer Force, 24.
The ban on class corps constituted an act of blatant hypocrisy, since many middle-class formations were single-class or even single-workplace corps. The Civil Service Rifles, for example, recruited from among the government clerks in London, subdivided by office into sub-units like A (Audit) Company. Middle-class formations evaded rejection as “class corps” by making membership possible – if unlikely – for those outside their social circle, the same sleight of hand used by corps which recruited exclusively – if not officially – from the London Jewish community. It was a hypocrisy apparent to any informed commentator.

Despite these objections people continued to enroll separate corps, whether because, as the Rifleman observed, “the English workman is too proud and too sensitive, in his own honest fashion, to desire to enter a Corps nine-tenths of which would be composed of ‘swells,’ or people of superior means,” or because workplace corps seemed to move employees towards their masters and away from radicalism. Captain William Mathews of Somerset said that service in the Volunteers would turn men against “the political demagogue, the Chartist, and Dissenter.” John Martineau agreed, writing that he hoped that Volunteering would reduce the interest in the franchise, elections and

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162 The sole exception was the War Office clerks, since their duties would continue to be necessary even in time of invasion. However, it was impossible to prevent the joining other, non-Civil Service corps. See Herbert to Palmerston, 27 Nov. 1859, GC/HE/57, PUS.  
Reform. This was a sentiment echoed by Tennyson, whose “Riflemen Form!” had included the plea “Let your reforms for a moment go! / Look to your butts, and take good aims! / Better a rotten borough or so / Than a rotten fleet and a city in flames!” Lord Elcho, who had encouraged the enlistment of artisans in his London Scottish corps, praised the Volunteers for “almost extinguishing the trade of agitators who went about setting class against class.” John Pettie, a sergeant in the London Scottish, was blunter: volunteering made men worth three shillings a week more to their employers, more attached to the Government, and less likely to become political agitators. A paper read at the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science suggested that volunteering made the men cleaner, prompter, and more obedient. Though its principles might have had revolutionary potential, in practice the Volunteers were no threat to the social order.

Criticism and Challenge

Army opposition to the Volunteers began at the top with the commander-in-chief. Commenting on the potential use of Volunteers in India, the Duke of Cambridge called

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166 John Martineau, “Volunteering, Past and Present,” *Macmillan’s Magazine*, Sept. 1860, 401-2. Martineau’s opinion was rejected by his editor, David Masson, a friend of Mazzini and the Pre-Raphaelites and a member of the London Scottish Rifles (see note on p.402).
167 Tennyson, “Riflemen Form!,” *Poems of Tennyson*, vol. 2, 604.
them “unmanageable bodies” and “an armed and a very dangerous rabble.” Sir George Hay Wetherall, the Adjutant-General, made a similar statement in his evidence before the royal commission on the militia, saying that the current militia was “indispensable” and their replacement by volunteer corps would be a “very bad principle” because the latter were not subject to martial law. Furthermore, the emphasis on marksmanship made Volunteers inferior to regulars, since “it is by the bayonet, as well as by the bullet, that victories are gained.” Public enthusiasm meant the Duke of Cambridge was forced to make his official opinion more favorable. However, he continued to believe government-funded Volunteers would only increase temptation to consider them a substitute for the army, and thus to open the way for parliament to cut the regular army’s funding. If the Volunteers were to be accepted, it was best that they remain as independent as possible – presumably lest they be taken too seriously. George Cornewall Lewis, Sidney Herbert’s replacement as Secretary of State for War, agreed, writing that history taught the superiority of professionals and that the Volunteers did not justify reducing the size of the regular army. In this spirit, most army officers could be seen as friends of the Volunteers. They were not unsympathetic to the Volunteers’ goals, nor even to their training and improvement, as long as it did not hinder the regular army’s expansion.

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172 Report of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the Establishment, Organization, Government, and Direction of the Militia of the United Kingdom; together with the Minutes of Evidence and Appendix,” *P.P. Cmd [2553]*, 233.
Instead, the most virulent opposition came from economic Liberals who saw the Volunteers as dangerously militaristic. After rejecting Palmerston’s offer of the Presidency of the Board of Trade, Cobden went to France to negotiate a commercial treaty with Napoleon III. Cobden’s enthusiasm for the treaty, and his faith in Napoleon’s interest, knew no bounds. He saw the Third Panic and the government’s military responses as threats to his treaty and bemoaned their effects. Sometimes he went as far as suggesting that they were deliberate attempts to upset the negotiations. He urged Palmerston and his ministers to suspend their military measures until after the treaty was signed.

Cobden’s criticism of British military spending was focused on the two most expensive elements, the new warships and the fortifications. However, his arguments rested on two problematic claims: first, that the French were committed to peace and that any arming by the British would undermine this, and second, that the British had a naval superiority that made further spending unnecessary. The former was unlikely to be believed after the crises of the past decade, and the latter was too reliant on simplistic measurements – of manpower, numbers of ships, or overall financing – that were both open to question and failed to address the difference between aggregate strength and actual military needs, especially when the premise of the entire crisis was that steam

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176 Palmerston to Cobden, 24 June 1859, Add. MSS 48581, fols.4-5, BL; Palmerston to Cobden, 27 June 1859, Add. MSS 43669, fols.208-9, BL; Russell to Cobden, 25 June 1859, Add. MSS 43669, fols.206-7, BL; Cobden to Sales, 4 July 1859 Add. MSS 43669, fols.217-224, BL, describes Cobden’s meeting with Palmerston.
177 Cobden to W.E. Baxter, 20 Nov. 1860, Add. MSS 43670, fols.71-2, BL; Cobden to E.J. Ellis, 28 Jan. 1861, Add. MSS 43670, fols.84-7, BL.
178 Cobden to Bright, 16 Jan. 1860, Add. MSS 43651, fols.60-67, BL.
179 Cobden to Bright, 12 Jul 1860, Add. MSS 43651, fols.150-151, f.152-5, BL.
made the offense superior to the defense.\textsuperscript{180} If there was any advantage to the crisis, it was that the increased expenditures might lead taxpayers to reconsider their support for new spending.\textsuperscript{181}

Though it was new ships and fortifications took the lion’s share of the money spent on new defenses, Cobden and the rest of the economic liberals saved an equal share of their vitriol for the Volunteers corps. Evidence to the contrary, one correspondent claimed that nine tenths of the Volunteers were Tories.\textsuperscript{182} Cobden claimed that “I have no prejudice against a voluntary armed force like the riflemen of Switzerland, or the Militia of America,” and that whether it was better to have regulars or Volunteers was an open question, but that in Britain’s present state the Volunteers were a “disgraceful act of folly” and their arguments “a jumble of contradiction,” as well as a threat to peace with France.\textsuperscript{183} In this he was joined even by some liberals who had supported earlier efforts to create Volunteer corps and strengthen the national defenses. Despite his support for Volunteers in 1852, in 1860 T.P. Thompson considered them “silly wickedness” and a “studied insult” to France.\textsuperscript{184} He blamed his electoral defeat on his opposition to this “War in Peace with France,” among other things.\textsuperscript{185}

\textsuperscript{180} Cobden to Gladstone, 29 June 1860, Add. MSS 43670, fols.40-41, BL; Cobden to Palmerston, 12 July 1860, Add. MSS 43670, fols.49-50, BL. His most substantial correspondence was with Lord John Russell, who categorically rejected Cobden’s arguments. See Russell to Cobden, 31 Jul 1860, fols.51-3; Cobden to Russell, 2 Aug. 1860, fols.54-5; Russell to Cobden, 22 March 1861, f.113-15; Russell to Cobden, 2 April 1861, Add. MSS 43670 f.134-8; also Add. MSS 43678 f.13-23, passim.

\textsuperscript{181} Cobden to Russell, 2 Aug. 1860, Add. MSS 43670 f.54-55; Lindsay to Cobden, 15 July 1861, Add. MSS 43670, f.101-102; Lindsay to Cobden, 8 March 1861, Add. MSS 43670, f.106-107.

\textsuperscript{182} Hargreaves to Cobden, 5 June 1860, 24D, COBDEN/6, CWS, MF1316 (microfilm), MCL.

\textsuperscript{183} Cobden to Bright, 29 Dec. 1860, Add. MSS 43651, fols.48-55, BL; Cobden to Bright, 3 Jan. 1860, Add. MSS 43651, fols.56-59, BL; Cobden to Douglas, 1 June 1860, Add. MSS 43670, fols.22-3, BL.

\textsuperscript{184} T. P. Thompson, \textit{Audi Alteram Partem. Letters to his former Constituents}, vol. 3 (London: A.W. Bennett, 1861), 112.

\textsuperscript{185} Thompson to Cobden, 13 Nov. 1861, Add. MSS 43663, fols.111-113, BL.
continued to claim that the threat was real, Cobden had nothing but derision for them. He called De Lacy Evans, who continued to support the Volunteers in and out of parliament, “a good fighter & a bad politician,” and wondered “when will our constituencies perceive that there are other & better ways of rewarding a good fighter than sending him to play the part of a bad politician in the House?”

Probably the most disappointing criticism of the Volunteers came from Gladstone. The Chancellor of the Exchequer continued to be a severe critic of both fortifications and naval modernization, but he was also unimpressed by the Volunteers. On the face of it, the Volunteer Force could be considered the answer to Gladstone’s prayers. It palliated the anxieties of many Britons about invasion without much expense, or much encouragement to the military and naval establishments. It offered what was likely to be the cheapest and least militaristic defensive option for the foreseeable future, yet Gladstone never spoke in Parliament on the topic. Though he called the Volunteer review at Hyde Park “a very noble spectacle,” he was lukewarm when obligated to talk to Volunteers themselves.

In late 1860, Gladstone was invited to speak at a grand banquet which followed a shooting competition for the Chester Volunteers. Following speeches from the army, navy, Volunteers, church and lord-lieutenant, Gladstone rose to speak. His speech included fulsome praise of the Volunteers, calling them gallant proof of the bravery and public-mindedness of Englishmen. Yet he also said that there was no current threat to

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186 Cobden to Morley, 29 Jan. 1861, Add. MSS 43670, fol.89, BL; Cobden to Bright, 2 Feb. 1861, Add. MSS 43670, fols.218-19, BL
England, nor was one likely to soon appear. The importance of the Volunteers was in Europe, where they would “add strength to the hopes of those who nurture and cherish principles like those of Englishmen.” Europe, Gladstone said, was on the cusp of a great moment. In Italy, “the struggles of a gallant country to free itself from long oppression deserve the sympathy of men,” and especially of Englishmen, and “the rifles that we have seen today, as the uniforms that are now before us, as all this splendour of military parade really aims at the security and peace of man, such is the aim of the war in Italy.”

Britain’s importance to Italy was not just by setting an example in 1688 to which Italy could now appeal, but also as Italy’s best friend in the present. Gladstone ended his speech asking the assembled Volunteers to give “no note of defiance to other countries,” to not disregard the rights of other countries, and to prove that even amidst the pursuits of peace England would never abandon “the martial fame and the heroic bravery of her former years.” It was an “uncomfortable speech,” Gladstone wrote in his diary “for I had to set up the Volunteers & yet cry down the alarms.” Though he found kind words to speak at Chester, Gladstone never became a supporter of the Volunteers.

Volunteering and Italy

Gladstone was only one of many men who were interested in the potential connection between Italy and the Volunteers. In fact, Italy and the *Risorgimento* was one of the few issues which seemed to unify the still-fractious Liberal party of 1860. Since

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189 *Chester Courant and Advertiser for North Wales*, July 11, 1860, 4-5. Excerpts reprinted in *VJLC*, Nov. 10, 1860, 141-2; *RN*, Nov. 11, 1860, 3.
190 *Gladstone Diaries*, vol. 5, 531.
the 1820s, support for foreign liberal causes was one factor which helped encourage the party to coalesce, and its importance continued into the 1860s. By Gladstone’s own reckoning, support for Italy cut across the usual divisions, with the five “most Italian members of the Cabinet” almost evenly split between those pro- and anti-military spending.

The most important symbol of the Risorgimento was the romantic leader Giuseppe Garibaldi. His military victories, his liberal and Anglophile sympathies, and his achievements for the Italian cause all made him immensely attractive to British audiences. So did his immense personal charisma. James Vernon writes that “contemporary portraits, figurines, and pub signs of Garibaldi portray an upright, handsome, plucky figure, resplendent in fine, showy clothes, a handsome, dashing man – undeniably playing up the element of machismo and (yes) sex appeal.”

His appeal crossed social as well as national boundaries. When he visited Britain in 1864, both the upper-class Garibaldi Reception Committee and the Working-Class Garibaldi Committee competed to greet the conquering hero and appropriate his image, while Palmerston wrote to Queen Victoria that the visit “had afforded great pleasure to the bulk of the nation, as proof of the community of feeling among all classes.” In British eyes, Garibaldi became the embodiment of the transition to constitutional government and

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191 Parry, Politics and Patriotism.
192 Gladstone, 30 May 1860, W.E. Gladstone III. Autobiographical Memoranda, 1845-1866, ed. John Brooke and Mary Sorensen (London: HMSO, 1978), 234. Palmerston and Russell were both pro-Italian and pro-military, while Gladstone, Argyll and Gibson were pro-Italian and anti-military.
193 Vernon, Politics and the People, 266.
political liberty which they considered themselves to have pioneered and which they expected European nations to replicate. Gladstone’s allusions to 1688 as an example for the Italians followed this pattern. In this vein, Russell even compared Garibaldi’s expedition to Sicily to William III’s invasion of England in 1688.\textsuperscript{195}

The Volunteer movement’s embrace of Garibaldi went well beyond their common interest in the English constitutional legacy. When Garibaldi arrived in London in 1864 Volunteers lined his route in violation of regulations.\textsuperscript{196} Many corps, such as the Third Middlesex, chose to emulate the color and cut of his dress in their uniforms.\textsuperscript{197} Others treated him as a unit patron.\textsuperscript{198} When the Rev. John Christian lectured in the City of London on January 7 1861, he spoke about the connection between Garibaldi and the Volunteers. According to the Rev. Christian, Garibaldi was the “noblest man of the present age,” a “Volunteer,” who fought not out of hatred of the king of Naples or the Pope but out of love of Italy, just like Volunteers at home armed not out of hatred of France but out of love of England. Christian ended his lecture with the impassioned plea for men and women to become Volunteers in all aspects of life and to fight against poverty, disease, ignorance and vice like they would fight for England or Italy.\textsuperscript{199} The refugee writer Alphonse Esquiros observed, with some skepticism, that ‘the name of Garibaldi has been mixed up with the whole volunteer movement.’\textsuperscript{200}

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\item\textsuperscript{195} 158 Parl. Deb. (3\textsuperscript{rd} ser.) (1860) 1405-6.
\item\textsuperscript{196} Beales, “Garibaldi in England,” 189; de Grey to Palmerston, 20 March 1864, Palmerston GC/DE/40, PUS.
\item\textsuperscript{197} Cunningham, \textit{Volunteer Force}, 108, 124 n10.
\item\textsuperscript{198} Beales, “Garibaldi in England,” 187.
\item\textsuperscript{200} Alphonse Esquiros, \textit{The English at Home}, vol. 2 (London: Chapman and Hall, 1861), 363.
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There was also a more tangible connection between the Volunteers and Garibaldi, through the British expedition which joined the *Risorgimento* in southern Italy. The impetus came from a group of liberals in London, led by the freethinker George Holyoake, who established the Garibaldi Special Fund to support an expedition to Sicily.  

The Central Committee, with the MP E.H.J. Crawford as the Chair, first met at the Volunteer Service Club in St. James on August 27 1860. On August 30 they agreed to place an advertisement in the London papers calling for volunteers. Because of the Foreign Enlistment Act, the appeal was necessarily oblique. It merely solicited men interested in a visit to Sicily and favorable to Garibaldi: ‘EXCURSION to SICILY and NAPLES. – All persons (particularly Members of Volunteer Rifle Corps) desirous of visiting Southern Italy, and of AIDING by their presence and influence the CAUSE of GARIBALDI and ITALY, may learn how to proceed by applying to the Garibaldi Committee, at the offices at No. 8, Salisbury Street, Strand, London.'

In addition to seeking recruits, the Committee busied itself collecting funds and arranging for a ship to send the men to Italy. They also sought the patronage and prestige of the Volunteers. For a benefit night in September, the Committee wrote to ask for Volunteer officers to appear in uniform, while the Volunteers of Glasgow raised more than £200 from a shilling subscription.

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The Central Committee kept a comprehensive roster of the more than 400 men who volunteered to go to Italy, including their prior military experience. The roster shows that the Excursion relied on the Volunteers rather than the regular army for most of its experienced men. Only forty-eight, or roughly a tenth, had prior service in the regular army. Thirty more had served in India and another thirty in either the militia or yeomanry. In stark comparison, 225 had seen some service in the Volunteers. Admittedly, one could easily be an honorary, or non-effective, member of a Volunteer corps. In the early years of the movement one could even claim a connection to a corps without having ever taken part in its drill. Still, it seems clear that more than half of the expedition were associated with the Volunteers.  

Although the official muster rolls of the Central Committee do not list the occupations, some supplemental pages do. Of the forty men for whom occupations are given, a full quarter gave their occupation as gentleman or squire. Most of the rest were connected with various trades. There were bookbinders, brassfounders, carriage makers, electroplaters, jewelers, printers and saddlers, as well as bricklayers, joiners, masons and tailors, the same sorts of trades that were involved with the Volunteering.

The adventures of the Excursionists were avidly followed in the British press, with both the Volunteer Times and the Volunteer Journal for Lancashire and Cheshire running series on reminiscences of the Garibaldi Volunteers. The 1860 theatrical farce The Garibaldi ‘Excursionists’ praised Volunteers who planned to serve in Italy: the

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204 Muster rolls, 11/2, GSFC. Interestingly, only one man listed prior service with the Spanish Legion.
205 Muster rolls, 11/2, GSFC.
curtain is rung down as the men arrive to the call of ‘a final cup to the success of the real Garibaldi Excursionists!’  

“Reynolds’ Newspaper wrote that serving Garibaldi was far nobler, more exciting, and better training than the snobbery and debauchery of the Volunteers at home.”

Despite the Foreign Enlistment Act and Britain’s official policy of neutrality, there was covert support for the Excursionists within Palmerston’s ministry. However, when MPs in Parliament complained about the recruitment of Papal troops in Ireland, Irish nationalist MPs took the chance to raise the issue of a double-standard. It was Lord Russell who spoke in defense of those joining Garibaldi. It was important, Russell explained, to distinguish between an adventurer “with no higher object in view than his own selfish interests,” and “a patriot fighting for the independence of his country.” In fact, less than 200 years ago, “a great filibuster” had landed in November 1688 on the coast of England. Despite Russell’s speech in the House, Palmerston reluctantly acceded that although “the Irish were to support an acknowledged fool and the excursionists go to overthrow one,” it was impossible not to enforce the Foreign Enlistment Act against both.

Not everyone was so impressed with the British volunteers. The poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote that they “left the worst impression of English morals and discipline. They embarked to return home dead drunk all of them, and the drunkenness

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211 Palmerston to Lewis, 3 Oct. 1860, Add. MSS 48582, fol.41, BL; see also Lewis to Palmerston, 30 Sept. 1860, 5 Oct. 1860, GC/LE/130-31, PUS
was not the worst.” Their behavior gave Barrett Browning a less than shining impression of the possibilities of the Volunteer force at home. She compared them to “babes and sucklings” and said of the invasion panics “never was any cry more ignoble. A rescues B from being murdered by C, and E cries out, 'What if A should murder me!' That's the logic of the subject. And the sentiment is worthy of the logic.”

The implication was that England (E), having seen France (A) rescue Italy (B) from Austria (C), and failing to aid the Italians in any signal way, had no right to use French arms as an justification for their own military adventures – even if those adventures were restricted to the home. Barrett Browning, like Cobden and others, blamed the panics on the military lobby, saying “I never doubted (for one) that it had its beginning with ‘interested persons.’”

The Garibaldi Excursionists were part of a pan-European culture of Volunteering which included Germans, Italians, Greeks, and many others. They were also an expression of the ways in which Volunteering was swiftly integrated into the loose

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collection of liberal causes, concerns and institutions which surrounded Liberal party politics themselves.

By the end of 1861, the national mood was already changing. Official work would continue, whether it was the fortifications recommended by the royal commission, the introduction of ironclads into the Royal Navy, or the Volunteers themselves. However, the public enthusiasm would never be the same. The end of the panic was also the end of interest in the military, at least temporarily. In parliament, the mood of the Commons was in favor of retrenchment, while Cobden proposed a radical initiative – a naval arms control treaty between England and France.216 Even Palmerston’s parliamentary whip warned him about the decline in support for military spending.217

The new mood had important consequences for the Volunteers, as middle-class professionals drifted out of the movement and were replaced by working-class men. Whatever revolutionary potential the Volunteers contained swiftly ebbed away. The creation and growth of the Volunteers was a marvel, occurring in the face of military opposition and cabinet indifference. It reflected the pervasive spread of liberal ideals, which made the movement so attractive to so many observers. Yet at the same time it revealed tensions within the Liberal party and liberal thought. For military traditionalists like Herbert, Volunteers were too undisciplined and too independent to amount to anything. For financial reformers like Gladstone, they were too militaristic. Even to those like Russell, who were most sympathetic to their principles and had been involved

216 Cobden to Morley, 29 Jan. 1861, Add. MSS 43670, fols.89-99, BL; Somerset’s comments appear in Somerset to Palmerston, 11 Jan. 1862, GC/SO/77, PUS.
217 Brand to Palmerston, 7 Jan. 1861, GC/BR/7, PUS; Brand to Palmerston, 20 Jan. 1861, GC/BR/18, PUS.
in similar previous efforts, they were too unruly to be fully embraced. Disagreement about the Volunteers highlighted the extent to which liberals continued to disagree about the basis of government finance, the balance between muscularity and probity, and the extension of the respectable individuality to the working classes.
Chapter 8: The Long Hand of Liberalism, 1861-1871

The panic of 1859-61 was the high water mark for liberal conceptions of the army. While Liberalism went from strength to strength in the 1860s, starting the decade with five more years of Palmerston’s leadership and ending it with Gladstone’s first term as prime minister, the idea that individualism, independence and moral improvement would spread throughout the military became increasingly unlikely. Despite the expansion of the franchise in Disraeli’s 1867 Reform Act, which made many artisan Volunteers into electors, the Liberals of the late 1860s were increasingly focused on economy and efficiency rather than the soldier’s autonomy. While improvements in conditions for regulars offered some new freedoms, the army remained opposed to making its soldiers more independent. At the same time, the capitation grant and the Volunteer Act of 1863 eroded the independence of the Volunteers. These developments came together in the famed Cardwell Reforms. Often portrayed as a great liberalization of the regular army, the Cardwell Reforms were mostly economizing measures. They demonstrated the extent to which economic liberalism dominated the Liberal party’s approach to the military by the start of the 1870s.

The end of the third invasion panic meant a slackening in the pace of French and British naval and fortification construction but not a change in the broader strategic context. The threat continued to be that a French fleet, now armored as well as steam-
powered, could cross the English Channel and land an invasion force or bombard British ports. Preventing such an attack required an Anglocentric naval deployment, with more of the Royal Navy in home ports than ever before. The new Channel fleet of ironclads was an expensive one, and in the absence of an imminent French threat there was pressure inside and outside parliament to cut the naval expenditures. Cobden, who had finally seen his free trade treaty with France signed, now made proposals for naval negotiations with France, but these were merely the tip of the iceberg.¹

Pressure within the cabinet came from Gladstone, who continued to call Palmerston’s efforts to expand the navy an expensive and misguided policy of expenditure.² The easiest way to try and cut costs was to reduce overseas deployments, which were now exclusively the province of obsolete warships. Limited endurance and middling seakeeping meant that the early ironclads were best restricted to the Channel. A warship like Warrior could sail across the Atlantic, but its use in an overseas operation would be like “loading a cannon to kill a rat.”³ A similar policy applied to the army, where overseas commitments had been shrunk by both Liberals and Tories since Earl Grey had offered the argument that “self-government begets self-defence” in 1846.⁴ A series of wars and crises, first the Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny, then the Arrow

¹ Cobden to Morley, 29 Jan. 1861, Add. MSS 43670, fols.89-99, BL; Cobden to Palmerston, 1862, ND/D/21, PUS.
² Gladstone to Palmerston, 25 Feb. 1861, GC/GL/48, PUS; 2 May 1862, GC/GL/76, PUS; 24 Nov. 1863, GC/GL/130, PUS.
War and the American Civil War, hindered this effort, but by the mid-1860s the garrisons and squadrons overseas had begun to shrink. Gladstone tried to hasten the homeward return of the garrisons, since he considered attempts to defend self-governing colonies like Canada inappropriate and foolhardy. In the process, the colonies adopted the same amateur military institutions which had developed in Britain. Canada, Nova Scotia, Australia and New Zealand all adopted militia or volunteer ordinances. A more innovative effort was the Colonial Naval Defence Act of 1865, which at the instigation of the state of Victoria made it legal for the settler colonies to maintain their own navies.

As the French ironclads came into service, whether the British forts would be able to repel an attack by ironclad warships became an open question. The sea forts at Spithead were the most controversial, a complex design for a difficult site, and on which would be far more expensive than the larger forts on the landward side of the town. In February 1861, at the instigation of Vice-Admiral R.S. Dundas, the Defence Committee and then the former Royal Commissioners reconsidered using floating defenses as an alternative to the Spithead forts. Dundas’ recommendation was for the conversion for

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5 Gladstone, “Confidential. Defence of Canada,” 12 July 1864, CAB 191, PUS.
7 B.A. Knox, “Colonial Influence on Imperial Policy, 1858-1866: Victoria and the Colonial Naval Defence Act, 1865,” Historical Studies. Australia and New Zealand 11 (1963-5): 61-79. The Act was the brainchild of Edward Cardwell while he was Colonial Secretary. Palmerston’s previous Colonial Secretary, the Duke of Newcastle, had been opposed. See Newcastle, “Remarks upon proposal to introduce a Bill to enable Colonial Navies to be formed,” 25 March 1862, ND/D/22, PUS.
8 The Assistant Inspector-General of Fortifications, Major Jervois, commissioned at least eight separate reports on the required foundations. See WO 33/9, Nos. 119-124, TNA; WO 33/10, Nos. 126-7, TNA.
£60,000 each of ships of the line into iron-cased steamers to be used as floating batteries. The commissioners were dismissive of the question, writing back to deny that there were any problems with the planned forts at Spithead and arguing that floating batteries would lack the speed or maneuverability to beat an attacking squadron. There was, in their opinion, no advantage to floating defenses compared to forts. Burgoyne, still Inspector-General of Fortifications, wrote a memorandum in support. Palmerston was an army supporter at heart, and so he remained unconvinced that forts would ever be inferior to attacking ships. The issue was raised again during the American Civil War with the frequent operations of both ironclads and unarmored ships in the face of an extensive network of coastal batteries and forts. Again, however, the topic disappeared. The army continued to build the forts recommended by the Royal Commission in a “condensed orgy of stronghold building” never seen before or since, with 76 forts and batteries either under construction or completed by the end of the decade.

The Volunteers: Declining Prestige, Declining Relevancy

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9 Letter Addressed by the Royal Commissioners on National Defences to the Secretary of State for War Relative to the Proposed Substitution of Iron-Cased Vessels for the Forts at Spithead, WO 33/10, fols.228-9, TNA.
10 Letter … Relative to the Proposed Substitution of Iron-Cased Vessels for the Forts at Spithead, WO 33/10, fols.229-32, TNA.
11 Letter … Relative to the Proposed Substitution of Iron-Cased Vessels for the Forts at Spithead, WO 33/10, fol.234, TNA.
12 Palmerston to Lewis, 9 March 1862, Add. MSS 48582, fols.219-221, BL.
13 Most British observers to the American Civil War were army men, and they supported the view that forts were far superior to ships. See Jay Luvaas’ *Military Legacy of the Civil War. The European Inheritance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,1959), 41. As an example, see Burgoyne’s commentary on the capture of Fort Fisher, which concluded that the attack did not disprove the superiority of forts. Burgoyne, “Capture of Fort Fisher,” 8 Feb. 1865, CAB/193, PUS.
As the war panic began to subside in late 1861, interest in the Volunteers began to flag. The professionals and gentry who had been the backbone of the early movement turned their attention elsewhere, and in their place came the tradesmen and artisans whom many of the movement’s early leaders had tried to discourage. With the shift in social background came a shift in financial capacity, as well as a slowing of public subscriptions. To address the question of whether the Volunteers could survive, Palmerston’s government appointed a royal commission to examine the state of the Volunteers. Its members were a mixture of senior Volunteers, regular army officers and senior civilians, including Inspector-General McMurdo. The commission’s chief concern was what government support was needed to sustain the movement. The witnesses were almost unanimous in saying that while there had been some slackening of interest in the Volunteers there was enough interest to keep them going, but that keeping those same men dressed and equipped required official funds.  

The committee’s witnesses demonstrated that working-class men increasingly predominated in the Volunteers. This raised numerous questions about their capabilities and impact. For example, the committee asked whether artisan involvement in the Volunteers was cannibalizing recruits from the militia and regulars – to which the witnesses responded in the negative. At least one witness, MP John Laird, wanted artisan recruits to pay for their own equipment as proof of their seriousness, but most of those who gave evidence accepted that men who could not afford their own kit could still make good Volunteers. Several of the witnesses claimed that artisans made the best

16 See, for example, “Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into The Condition of the Volunteer Force in Great Britain,” P.P. [3053] (1862) 57, 97, 112.
Volunteers, and almost every witness who was asked praised the influence that Volunteering had on the men. Involvement in the Volunteers was said to make men more disciplined, less idle, and healthier. It sobered their political conduct, moved them away from Chartism, and recued the chances of them rioting, as well as increasing “their respect for the institutions of the country.” The witnesses also made clear that the men in the Volunteers were a superior class of working men, more trustworthy, more independent, and more self-sacrificing than those joining the militia.

Despite this praise, most of the witnesses still considered artisan Volunteers workers first and independent men second. The ideal relationship between workers and Volunteers corps was still one mediated by their social superiors, with the foremen as sergeants and employers as officers. Nathaniel Bousfield of the Lancashire R.V.C., who thought artisan Volunteers were generally useless, believed that in corps which were led by employers – and in which conduct as a Volunteer was linked to continued good employment – work discipline would lead to good Volunteer discipline. This meant that much of the evidence still presented laboring Volunteers as bodies to be disciplined rather than individuals involved in self-fashioning. According to John Macgregor of the London Scottish, the moral effect of Volunteering came from “submission to another’s will on parade, … the influence of educated men,” and “intelligent admiration of the regular army.”

The commission concluded that to maintain the Volunteers it was necessary to give an annual capitation grant of 20s. for each Volunteer who completed a course of musketry instruction, knew his drill, and attended at least nine drills that year.\textsuperscript{20} This influx of money meant further government oversight of the movement, with more power for the Lords Lieutenant and the War Office to influence the uniforms and equipment of the corps.\textsuperscript{21} The capitation grant was made in law in the Volunteer Act of 1863, the first consolidation of laws relating to Volunteer corps since the Act of 1804.\textsuperscript{22} The bill was uncontroversial in parliament, with almost no complaints against the introduction of increased government supervision.\textsuperscript{23} Apart from the now-perennial attempt of the Irish MPs to use the exclusion of Ireland to embarrass the government, the only important debate was over the use of Volunteers by the civil power.

While the 1804 Act had allowed the Lords-Lieutenant to assemble the Volunteers with royal permission in case of rebellion or insurrection as well as invasion, when the government’s bill proposed making Volunteers who assembled for the suppression of “riots or tumults” subject to the Act’s regulations for “actual Military Service,” it attracted a surprisingly intense response. Member after member spoke against the use of the Volunteers in riots or disturbances, suggesting that this would make the Volunteers unpopular, divide corps from within, and be generally odious. The implication, which W.E. Forster made explicit, was that making Volunteers available to the magistrates – even if each case required the permission of the Secretary of State – would destroy the

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\textsuperscript{20}“Condition of the Volunteer Force,” \textit{P.P.}, v-vi.
\textsuperscript{21}“Condition of the Volunteer Force,” \textit{P.P.}, vi-viii.
\textsuperscript{22}Volunteer Act, 1863.
\textsuperscript{23}170 Parl. Debs. (3\textsuperscript{rd} ser.) (1863) 1701.
\end{flushright}
impression of cross-class unity, and “nothing would be so fatal to the Volunteer
movement as to generate the suspicion that the force was a power behind a class for any
purpose whatever.”\textsuperscript{24} One MP even invoked the memory of Peterloo and auxiliary troops
massacring innocents.\textsuperscript{25} The clause was struck in the interests of harmony, and with it
went the potential use of the Volunteers against civil unrest. As a series of memoranda
from the War Office and then the Law Officers in 1866-7 concluded, there was no legal
way to use Volunteers against rioters or strikers. Instead, Volunteers could only act as
private individuals under the common law responsibility to suppress disorder – in which
case they were open to charges of manslaughter in cases of excessive force.\textsuperscript{26}

By the time the Volunteer Act of 1863 was passed, the Volunteer Force had
already suffered a series of blows to its long-term importance, which neither the
capitation grant nor new efficiency standards could repair. The most important was the
steady flow of men of influence out of the Force, as the urgency of the French threat
declined and they found other interests. By the mid-1860s the gentry and professional
men had already left even the elite metropolitan corps.\textsuperscript{27} Volunteer corps increasingly
became a form of working-class entertainment and social cohesion, operating alongside
mechanic’s institutes, working-men’s clubs and music halls. Hugh Cunningham and
Lorna Jackson have argued that it was this entertainment capacity that was the most

\textsuperscript{24} 171 Parl. Debs. (3rd ser.) (1863) 352.
\textsuperscript{25} 171 Parl. Debs. (3rd ser.) (1863) 351.
\textsuperscript{26} HO 45/8060, TNA, esp. Charles M. Clode, War Office, Dec. 20 1866, and “Copy of L.O.O. No.160,” 8
March 1867.
\textsuperscript{27} Beckett, Riflemen Form, 83.
important inducement for men to join the Volunteers. Sham fights, shooting
competitions and field days became spectacular public entertainments. *The Earwig*, one
of several Volunteer camp newspapers, reported the Wimbledon meet as “two or three
thousand Volunteers, full of pluck and steady of nerve, joining together in friendly
intercourse before plunging into the great but peaceful contest for the Queen’s Prize.”

Though its 1869 edition said goodbye to “camp midnight meetings, or theatres, or big
concerts, or great and late gatherings of any kind,” it reported “2000 men in the N.R.A.
Camps, 525 tents in the Volunteer Regimental Camps, and a perfect town of marquees,
shops, and booths, known as the Bazaar or Canvas Town.” Another camp paper, the 1st
Middlesex’s *Handspike*, gave a somewhat satirical account of the camp experience in
“My Camp Diary at Shoeburyness” where the naïve Gunner Anthony Eager is
manipulated by the more experienced Sergeant Charles Waggles to do all the work and
provide all the brandy. Camp life in the late 1860s would have been shocking to those
who had wanted the Volunteers to induce probity and respectability.

Some observers were not unhappy with the new artisan predominance within the
corps. Part of a brewing family in Marlow, Owen Wethered was commander first of the
5th Buckinghamshire (Slough) then of the 1st Bucks (Marlow) corps, and finally of the 1st
Bucks Administrative Battalion. Wethered saw the disappearance of gentlemen and

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28 Cunningham, *Volunteer Force*, 103-126; Lorna Jackson, “Patriotism or Pleasure? The Nineteenth
Century Volunteer Force as a Vehicle for Rural Working-Class Male Sport,” *The Sports Historian* 19
29 *The Earwig*, No.4, July 1867, 1. There were several camp publications: R.H. Bailey, “Victorian Army
35-39; R.H. Bailey, “Victorian Army Volunteer Periodicals—2: The Camp Kettle (1868) and The Handspike
30 *The Earwig*, No 6, July 1869, 1.
31 “My Camp Diary at Shoeburyness,” *The Handspike*, 1867.
professionals as a boon for the unity of the corps. In his memoirs, he wrote “I had always considered the artisan chap to be the backbone of the Volunteer Force, and our natural recruiting ground, as the agricultural (and other) day-labourers are for the regular army and militia.”

Volunteer training made men into soldiers who would otherwise never experience military discipline, and artisans made the best Volunteers because they had the intelligence to learn swiftly. Wethered’s opinion was not based on a democratic sympathy but on complacent paternalism. An all-artisan force was best because it would be demeaning for gentlemen to have to serve alongside artisans. Wethered wrote that “it seemed to me unreasonable to suppose that men who might be willing under the stress or supposed stress, of a national emergency to give up their late dinners, go out to night drills, frequently many miles away, in all weathers, in order to shoulder a rifle and stand in the ranks between (say) their own Gardeners and their Grocers’ Assistants, would continue to do this indefinitely in cold blood after the emergency had passed away.”

Despite the growing artisan predominance, the Volunteers had no radical edge in the latter half of the 1860s. Instead, they seemed increasingly comfortable with their integration into rural society. This relationship was encapsulated in the Volunteer paintings of the portraitist Henry Tanworth Wells, an early member of the Artists Rifles. Wells began his career as a miniaturist, and his first full-size commission was a portrait of Lord Ranelagh, commander of the South Middlesex Volunteers, which he exhibited at

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33 “Personal Reminiscences of the Buckinghamshire Volunteers,” 137. The same sentiment appeared in Wethered’s private letters, which show that he wanted his officers to all be gentlemen (“Personal Reminiscences, 128).
the Royal Academy in 1861. In 1866, his *Volunteers at the Firing Point* secured his election as an Associate of the Royal Academy. That painting, and the next year’s *The Rifle Ranges at Wimbledon*, brought him to the attention of Earl Spencer, who commissioned a portrait of him and his wife on Wimbledon Common.34 All three paintings presented Volunteer shooting as a wholesome activity which unified the classes and brought men together in manly activity. Art historian Cassandra Albinson describes *Volunteers at the Firing Point* as a painting in which “the participants put aside their individual status in order to be subordinated to the central action.”35 Yet, even more than earlier art featuring the Volunteers, Wells’ paintings highlighted the extent to which Volunteering was an activity controlled and constrained by the social order. *Volunteers at the Firing Point* was a group portrait featuring Lord Elcho, among others, but it was *The Earl and Countess Spencer at Wimbledon* which showed its connections with aristocratic privilege most clearly. In it, the Earl lounges in civilian clothes with a rifle, observing the shooting outside the frame. The context for the portrait was the Earl’s blocked attempt to sell Wimbledon Common, of which his ownership was constrained by customary law. Spencer proposed donating 700 acres of the Common in exchange for permission to sell the other 300 for development, but this was blocked by a Select Committee and litigation. Wells’ portrait was a statement of Spencer’s command of the Commons, “a symbolically important landscape deeply imbricated in questions of private

versus public good, hereditary rights, and aristocratic noblesse oblige.”  

In the end, the issue was only settled in 1871 by the Wimbledon and Putney Commons Act which gave the land to the nation in exchange for a £1200 perpetual annuity for the Spencers. As a further sign of noblesse oblige, Earl Spencer insisted that the National Rifle Association be allowed to continue having its annual meet on the Common.  

Although the Volunteer Force maintained a substantial bloc of MPs in the House of Commons, by the late 1860s the Volunteers had lost much of their popular prestige. The transformation can be clearly seen in the 1869 farce *The Volunteer Review*, set at a Volunteer review in Chuzzleton where the milliner Matty Prim and her assistants await the arrival of her suitor Farmer Claypole and four young farmers. At the same time, maidservant Biddy Bounce has let Corporal Ajax Nupkins of the “Nonpareil Volunteers” and his four friends into the pantry for provisioning – the town being so full of Volunteers there is no food to eat. The women, themselves disguised in Turkish dresses, mistake the Volunteers for the suitors in disguise. The Volunteers are confused and helpless in the face of their rapacious assault, but manage to get the drop on the real suitors, who arrive disguised as highwaymen. In the finale the Volunteers are saved from the terror of matrimony by the escape of the farmers. The women rapidly abandon the “Real *British* Volunteers! First-class-tip-top-A1” for their proper suitors. Harmony is restored by the humiliation of the Volunteers. In the finale, Corporal Nupkins says: “Why if we had been *starved* at *this* Review, we couldn’t have shown up at the *next*, so you see it’s all for the *public good*” and promises he and his men will do the utmost to

36 Albinson, “Peeresses in Paint,” 151.  
37 Albinson, “Peeresses in Paint,” 150 fn.30.
“entertain” the audience. In the *Volunteer Review*, entertainment replaces defense as the force’s raison d’être.\(^{38}\)

The loss of prestige was only compounded by questions about whether the Volunteers were really capable of fighting against an experienced army. The American Civil War offered the British a fertile, if too frequently ignored, source of lessons for the future of modern warfare.\(^{39}\) The Battle of Bull Run was an embarrassment for those who had claimed that spirit would make inexperienced volunteers into hardened soldiers. The flight of the Union volunteer regiments, combined with the questionable efficiency of their Confederate counterparts, was an embarrassment for advocates of Volunteer corps. This was especially true since American’s Antebellum “martial spirit” was derived from the English militia tradition, and had itself saw a revival in the 1850s.\(^{40}\) These new corps built dedicated armories like Brooklyn’s Henry Street Armory and Philadelphia’s National Guards Hall.\(^{41}\) The popularity of their parades and drill competitions has led one historian to call the movement “the first national pastime in the Middle West.”\(^{42}\)

Despite Bull Run being the first engagement between Anglo-Saxon volunteers, in Britain the comparison between British and American volunteers was muted. The

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*Liverpool Mercury* argued that the only real similarity between the English volunteers and the “panic-stricken mob” of Bull Run was that both are officered by men with little or no military experience. This deficiency, the *Mercury* explained, meant that a similar disaster could also befall the British force if the quality of Volunteer officers did not improve. However, English volunteers were “tolerably exempt from that foolish and unsoldierlike spirit of bravado” found among their American counterparts. The former’s “sense of manly honour and duty” meant that they would never march away from a fight, nor commit any of the embarrassing social *faux pas* – like breaking one’s parole – of American volunteers.43 A similar argument appeared in the *Saturday Review*, which claimed that the United States was a land of sudden impulse, emotion and insubordination which made the undisciplined rout of the American volunteers unlikely to also occur in Britain.44

Comforting chauvinism aside, sympathetic observers found at least some evidence in the American Civil War to suggest that British Volunteers would be successful. The Marquis of Hartington, a Liberal MP and future undersecretary at the War Office, spent several weeks each with the Northern and Southern armies. From his time in the United States he concluded that the American volunteers had the potential to be good soldiers. Northern volunteers were “a very fine-looking lot of men indeed, mostly farmers and country people,” while the Southern army was “composed of men animated by very much the same feeling, and drawn from the same class as our Volunteer

As for the British regular army, while they might have embraced the opportunity to embarrass the Volunteers, they were more concerned with minimizing the importance of the war. As one speaker to the Royal United Services Institute helpfully explained, if the Federal volunteer armies had succeeded they would have rendered professional soldiers entirely useless. 46

The complacency of the Volunteers was only further threatened by war in continental Europe. When the Austrians and Prussians invaded Denmark in 1864, the Duke of Cambridge annoyed Lord de Grey by pointing out that the British army was woefully inadequate to intervene. 47 In the subsequent Austro-Prussian War, the Prussian victory at Koniggratz came like a bolt from the blue. British attention was drawn to the Dreyse needle gun, to the use of mass conscription and the resulting reserves, and the general staff system. 48

The Regular Army in a New Era

The “condition of the army” continued to be a sore issue through the 1860s. In most ways, the army remained in its post-Crimean malaise with its leadership entrenched in its old attitudes. First as G.C. Lewis’ undersecretary, then as Secretary of State for War himself, Lord de Grey continued Herbert’s work to improve the treatment of the common soldier with the support of Florence Nightingale, who had lobbied Palmerston

for his appointment as Secretary. He helped create the Council of Military Education, tried to improve sanitation and medical treatment, and pushed for administrative reform at the War Office. With Cardwell, now Colonial Secretary, he shrunk the colonial garrisons. Whatever the good effects of Herbert and De Grey’s reforms, the army remained borderline as a respectable career for working-class men.

Some of the most trenchant criticisms of the army appeared in St. Paul’s Magazine, a monthly shilling magazine that was started in 1867. Edited first by Anthony Trollope and then by Alexander Strahan, St. Paul’s was remarkable for the breadth of experience of its writers on military affairs. Beyond the usual mix of civilians and army officers they included several ex-rankers, the most prolific being Archibald Forbes, who had served five years in the 1st (Royal) Dragoons. The articles in St. Paul’s covered the whole breadth of the army reform movement, from criticism of the purchase of commissions to complaints about the corruption of the recruiting process, as well as highlighting the plight of the common soldier. They attracted attention; in one case a sympathetic response from Sir Charles Edward Trevelyan.

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49 Nightingale to Palmerston, May 17, 15 April, and 16 April 1862, GC/NII/5-7. Nightingale then enlisted Harriet Martineau for her campaign in support of De Grey. Wolf, Marquess of Ripon, vol. 1, 192.
50 Denholm, Lord Ripon, 1829-1909, 64-72; Wolf, Marquess of Ripon, vol. 1, 169-190
51 Wolf, Marquess of Ripon 198.
52 For more on his career as a journalist and (later) war correspondent, see his DNB entry. Another still-anonymous ranker was “A Staff-Sergeant,” who wrote “Why the Army is Unpopular,” St. Paul’s, January 1871, 240-247; “How to make the Army Popular,” St. Paul’s, January 1871, 366-374; and “Hints to Army Reformers,” St. Paul’s, February 1871, 488-496.
The articles in *St. Paul’s* reflected more general public criticism of the army, some of it from within the War Office itself. The most obvious complaint was about the insufficient pay, which was further shrunk by various costs and stoppages – what Sir Henry Brackenbury called “paying the soldier fifteenpence [sic] with the right hand, and with the left taking away” as much as 20p. A War Office report comparing the pay of soldiers and agricultural laborers showed that even when pensions were included the laborer made as much or more than an army private in six of nine British regions. Without the pension, only laborers in Dorsetshire or Hereford earned less. Nor did time in the army improve a man’s chances for gainful employment outside the service, since many presumed that that while military service would improve his physical condition and discipline, it gave him no experience in a trade. Beyond this, though, what made the army so unattractive was the overbearing discipline and limited liberty. Nothing represented this better than the restrictions on sex and marriage for the common soldier. Although it was legally impossible to prevent soldiers from marrying, only a small number were given permission by their commanding officers. Moreover, the 1837 amendments to the Vagrancy Acts deliberately made it impossible to prosecute a soldier for failing to support their wife or children. Yet, at the same time that the army expected its soldiers to eschew marriage and all sexual contact, it also presumed that they would be unable to resist their desires. Until 1859, unmarried soldiers were regularly

55 [Brackenbury], “Our Army as it is, and as it should be” 607-8.
examined for Venereal Disease, and thereafter at the discretion of officers.\textsuperscript{59} The presumably immoral nature of the barracks led to a need to take children and even childless married couples away from that environment. In 1854 the Brigade of Guards built the Victoria Lodging House for married soldiers; in 1857 the Royal Victoria Patriotic Asylum was created to educate 300 daughters of soldiers, sailors, and marines; and in 1861 the Guards built their own Home for soldiers’ daughters.\textsuperscript{60}

Restrictions on sex and marriage prevented the common soldier from perceiving himself as an independent man. In 1858 the \textit{Edinburgh Review} argued that the fact that soldiers could not be the head of a household made it difficult for them to have proper self-respect.\textsuperscript{61} Harriet Martineau wrote an extended series of articles which argued that soldiers were on the cusp of moral hazard. For soldiers to be fully respectable individuals, “the first step unquestionably should be to give him the opportunity and inducement to be, like his old comrades the artisans and the labourers, a self-respecting man … If the soldier is more immoral than his contemporaries of the working class, it must be because the standard of morality is lower in the army than out of it.”\textsuperscript{62} It took until 1870 for the army to formally recognize the abandonment of families as unacceptable. That year, revisions to the Articles of War authorized the Secretary of State for War to withhold up to threepence from a man believed to have deserted his wife.\textsuperscript{63}

\textsuperscript{59} Trustram, \textit{Women of the regiment}, 126.
\textsuperscript{60} Trustram, \textit{Women of the regiment}, 166-7, 177.
\textsuperscript{62} Qtd. in Trustram, \textit{Women of the regiment}, 131.
\textsuperscript{63} Trustram, \textit{Women of the regiment}, 58.
For the military authorities, the army’s poor reputation was principally a problem because of its impact on recruiting. The Crimean War had already demonstrated the weaknesses of the current recruitment system. In times of economic growth, even increased military pay and bounties did not provide enough recruits to fill wartime demands. Nor were these men trained soldiers, a weakness when compared to the Prussian and post-1866 French reserves. By statute neither the militia nor the Volunteers were required to serve outside Britain. Enlistment conditions were expected to determine not only the attractiveness of service in the regular army, but also whether exregulars would follow their active duty with service in a reserve. However, although Derby’s government established a royal commission on recruiting in 1859, its 1861 suggested only minor changes to the recruiting system.64 There were therefore no particular inducements for men who finished their ten-year enlistment to serve in the army reserve which Herbert created by royal warrant in December 1859. To be composed of men who had served between ten and 21 years, it offered annual pay of £4 and that time in the reserves would count towards a military pension.65 It lingered on until 1867 but was almost entirely stillborn, with only 300 men joining.66

When the Liberals commissioned the former Lord Panmure, now Earl of Dalhousie, to chair a further commission on recruiting in 1866, it was specifically instructed to examine the need for a Reserve and determine if it should be a mandatory component of any enlistment. Despite the many improvements to the soldier’s rations,

clothing, honors, comfort and health, the Dalhousie commission concluded that recruiting still tried to “inveigle young Men into the army” rather than to make “an honest and open declaration of the Advantages which a Military career presents.” The commission therefore recommended a number of small increased benefits for soldiers, such as public funds to pay for their “Necessaries” and an improvement in the meat ration. They also suggested that recruiting become increasingly local, with each line regiment recruiting from specific counties.

On the broader question of supplying the reserve, the commission was remarkably conservative. After almost 20 years, the officers still treated limited enlistment like it was still an experiment. The military witnesses, the committee reported, still wanted to return to 21-year enlistments. As for the reserve, the commission tried to evade the question by declaring that this was a matter for statesmen rather than officers. Beyond that, they not only declared it a failure but showed no interest in trying to expand it. They suggested expanding the Enrolled Pensioners, and forcing men who purchased their discharge to serve as reservists, but they freely admitted that such measures would do very little to increase the size of the reserve. Instead, in language almost unchanged from the 1840s they wrote that “it is to our Militia we must look for the solid and constitutional Reserve of the Country.”

This suggestion was as ridiculous now as it was in the 1850s, and with the input of a special committee led by the Duke of Cambridge the new Derby administration adopted a mixed reserve structure instead. The First Reserve, liable to serve overseas,

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69 “Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Recruiting for the Army,” P.P. xvi.
consisted of 20,000 ex-Regulars who had served at least half of their first term of service and 30,000 men of the “Militia Reserve” who received a £12 bounty for a five year liability. They were to be supplemented on British soil by a Second Reserve of 30,000 men which would include the current pensioners and ex-regulars who had finished their first term of service. Unsurprisingly, this was only slightly more successful than Herbert’s plan. Only 2,000 ex-regulars joined the First Reserve and 19,000 the Second Reserve, with no more than 19,000 men in the Militia Reserve. Without more fundamental changes to the structure of army enlistment, there was hardly any incentive to join the army reserve. The army was a long way from being an advantageous career.

While reformers tried to increase the quality of the army’s enlisted men, they complained that the officer corps seemed to be impervious to their improving instincts. Even in the 1860s, the officer corps retained a reputation for being a source of aristocratic sinecures dominated by the landed elite. Though the actual social origins of officers were more varied, the largest single category was the sons of other army officers, and the army retained a reputation for being an exclusive club. If there were many junior middle-class officers, they came mostly from the families in the old, respectable professions rather than the newer industrial and entrepreneurial ones, and the senior ranks were still filled with titled men of questionable competence. Equally problematic was the fact that so many officers seemed to resist the professionalization of their training and daily routine.

71 Bond, “Prelude,” 236.
Whatever the real origins and quality of the mid-Victorian officer corps, the impression was of an elite caste which was quite out of step with the mainstream.\(^72\)

The most sympathetic public presentation of these men was in the plays of Thomas William Robertson.\(^73\) Robertson, inventor of the naturalistic “cup and saucer” play, gently examined class antagonisms in a series of wildly popular comedies. Rather than directly challenging the social status quo, Robertson’s plays gently revealed them for comic effect.

Robertson included officers in most of his plays, setting *Ours* (1866) within a regiment sent to serve in the Crimea. They epitomized the class ideals which Robertson respected: honor, integrity, restraint, and good manners, as well as a willingness to stand and fight. As for the exclusive nature of the officer corps, Robertson’s answer was that of officer George D’Alroy in *Caste* (1867): “Oh, Caste’s all right. Caste is a good thing if it’s not carried too far. It shuts the door on the pretentious and the vulgar; but it should open the door very wide for exceptional merit. Let brains break through its barriers, and what brains can break through love may leap over.”\(^74\) However, these virtues were, in Robertson’s plays, the preserve of regular officers. In *Ours*, Hugh Chalcot is a fop until he joins the army, even though he has always had a commission in the militia; in *Birth* (1870), the castle gamekeeper, an incredibly loyal ex-soldier, is an eccentric who shoots – with no provocation except for his anger – one of the heroes, Paul Hewitt. On the other


\(^{74}\) T.W. Robertson, *Six Plays*, 175.
hand, Sergeant Jones in *Ours* is loyal and respectful, as well as a family man, but overly concerned with money and somewhat uncouth in manner – a comic character.

The most public, and therefore controversial, mark of the officer corps’ old-fashioned ways was the purchase of commissions. In the 1850s, public opinion was beginning to favor an open meritocracy of government officials. The officer corps was not immune to this, and the formal route to the abolition of purchase began with a royal commission in 1857. While it included some notable voices in favor of reform – Ellice, De Lacy Evans, and Herbert – its conclusions were relatively moderate. The final report rejected interference in the purchase of first commissions, which it called “the least objectionable part of the present system,” or in regimental promotion up to the rank of major. Purchase was only to be replaced by selection in the case of regimental lieutenant-colonels and the staff.

When Herbert became Palmerston’s Secretary of State for War he began by equalizing the price of cavalry and infantry commissions to “improve the moral tone of the cavalry” by introducing more middle-class officers. Then in January 1860 he announced his intention to implement the 1857 commission’s reforms. This was opposed not just by the Commander in Chief, but also the Queen, the Prince Consort, and many in the Cabinet. Herbert’s only leverage was the fact that De Lacy Evans was planning to introduce his own bill to abolish purchase and this seemed to require a government

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response. Because of this he was able to get assent from Queen and cabinet, but once Evans’ motion attacking purchase tout court was defeated the cabinet now found itself disinclined to make any attempt at reform. The matter was concluded in July with a cabinet vote that was six to five against Herbert. Herbert’s only supporters were Gladstone, Russell, the Duke of Somerset, and the Earl Granville. That meeting was the last serious cabinet consideration of purchase for almost a decade.78

The limits of post-Crimean development, at least on certain issues, were reflected in the evidence of many of the witnesses before the 1866 commission on recruitment. Two kinds of arguments were made against trying to improve the conditions of service. Military traditionalists continued to insist that the average recruit was irrational, with nothing more than base motives. They enlisted, one of the 1866 commissioners suggested, “from distress, or from pique, or from a sudden impulse.”79 Many of the witnesses, both officers and former enlisted men, claimed that this sort of recruit cared very little about how long they were enlisted for. A substantial number felt twenty-one years was as good a term of service as ten. From this perspective, trying to make service more attractive as a rational calculation was simply wasted effort.80

At the same time, political economy was used to argue that improved conditions would still be insufficient to attract good men. The higher pay of civilian employment guaranteed that it would be hard to recruit good men – regardless of other factors. The cost of matching civilian wages was prohibitive, and guaranteed to raise the ire of

80 “Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Recruiting for the Army,” 6, 10, 14, 17, 22, 29, 33, 79, 82, 97, 100-102, 114, 141, 147, 165.
economic critics.\textsuperscript{81} Better men might not even be necessary. As writers like Professor T.E. Cliffe Leslie explained, in his \textit{Military Systems of Europe Economically Considered}, the duties of the regular army were best performed by those with poor “class and habits.” To take skilled mechanics and artisans from their “natural occupations” and make them soldiers would be like “ploughing with race-horses.”\textsuperscript{82}

Neither approach recognized the view that potential recruits were not just free agents but men motivated by character and morals. This was the view which Earl Grey had taken when he introduced limited enlistment, but its supporters were now in disarray. Palmerston, though not its best advocate, had tolerated this view. His death in 1865 was a blow to the entire Liberal party. His frequent Foreign Secretary and policy sparring partner, Lord John Russell, had replaced him as prime minister but lacked the charisma and populist sense which had made Palmerston so successful. Within a year he was out, replaced by a Conservative government. Apart from Dalhousie and de Grey, the rising men in the Liberal party were, if not as doctrinaire as Cobden, firmly of the economic school. They were more interested in retrenchment than reform when it came to the army.

The Cardwell Reforms

From this perspective, the wide-ranging reforms instituted by Cardwell as Secretary of State for War in 1870-2 prove to be derived as much from an economic

\textsuperscript{81} Leslie used Cobden’s “How, then, do you propose to bring the bone, muscle, and manhood of England into the field?” as an epigram on the cover of his \textit{Military Systems}.

\textsuperscript{82} T.E. Cliffe Leslie, \textit{The Military Systems of Europe Economically Considered} (Belfast: Shepherd and Aitchison, 1856), 9.
critique of government inefficiency as from Earl Grey’s introduction of limited enlistment. They were preceded by similar developments in the Royal Navy, where Gladstone’s First Lord of the Admiralty, H.C.E. Childers, not only executed widespread administrative reforms but also encouraged the development of turreted warships in the hope that these would, allow the navy to operate only two-thirds of its current manpower. Before his death in 1865, Cobden was connected with most of these efforts. The journalist Patrick Barry dedicated his 1863 book Dockyard Economy and Naval Power, which criticized the royal dockyards compared to commercial shipbuilders and called for the former to adopt business principles, to Cobden. Barry was only one of many who argued that putting military administration in the hands of officers rather than men of business was the source of all the “administrative inefficiency, misrule and waste.”

There was a similar connection between Cobden and the irascible genius engineer Phipps Cowper Coles, whose experiments with armored turrets had led to two warships, the Prince Albert and Royal Sovereign, which he claimed would revolutionize naval warfare. According to the Sovereign’s first commander, Coles’ friend Sherard Osborn, “with 12 such converted vessels the Fleet might be sent abroad to fight an enemy, & we could feel secure at home come what might.” Cobden agreed, writing to Coles that turreted coast guard ships would be an “instant revolution” which would make all the

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83 Patrick Barry, Dockyard Economy and Naval Power (London: Sampson Low, Son, and Co., 1863). For letters from Barry to Cobden see 6 June 1864, 115E; 9 June 1864, 116E, COBDEN/7, CWS, MF1317 (microfilm), MCL.
84 Patrick Barry, Shoeburyness and the Guns: A Philosophical Discourse (London: Sampson Low, Son, and Marston, 1865), vii.
85 14 March and 17 March 1862, ADM 1/5802, TNA; Coles to Cobden, 18 March 1865, 130F, COBDEN/8, CWS, MF1318 (microfilm), MCL; Coles to Cobden, 21 March 1865, 135F, COBDEN/8, CWS, MF1318 (microfilm), MCL; Coles to Cobden, 24 Oct. 1864, Add. MSS 43678, fols.41-44, BL;
86 “Trial report on the Ships Capabilities (copy),” 15 Oct. 1864, enclosed in Coles to Cobden, 24 Oct. 1864, Add. MSS 43678, fols.46-8, BL.
coastal fortifications unnecessary. Turret ships could cut the naval budget by two-thirds, as well as improve the morale of the sailors. 87 He followed the same line in parliament, saying that turret ships would shrink naval manpower and increase naval effectiveness at the same time as they cut costs. 88 With this sort of parliamentary support, Coles won approval to build a seagoing turret ship to his personal design in a commercial yard, despite dark warnings from the Admiralty – including chief designer Edward J. Reed, who was himself one of Cobden’s correspondents. 89 When he reached the Admiralty, Childers became a believer in Coles’ planned ship. As for the critics, Cobden complained that they tried to govern “in the interest of the great public instead of the great families,” while Coles claimed the jealous Admiralty was “whipping me to death with red tape.” 90 The reality was more prosaic: combining turrets and rigging made a ship dangerously topheavy and unstable. Coles’ ship, HMS Captain, went down in a storm soon after it was commissioned. It took with it not just Coles and all but 18 of the crew, but also Childers and his Admiralty reforms. 91

Cardwell’s reforms would have a far more auspicious outcome. Cardwell himself had come, like Gladstone, from the Conservatives to the Liberals via Peel. His first cabinet post was President of the Board of Trade in Aberdeen’s coalition ministry, and he had been a strong voice for Gladstonian policies of laissez faire and fiscal restraint.

87 Cobden to Coles, 30 Oct. 1864, Add. MSS 43671, fols.144-8, BL.
89 E.J. Reed to Cobden, 2 Oct. 1861, 102D; 30 Dec. 1861, 179D, COBDEN/6, CWS, MF1316 (microfilm), MCL; Reed to Cobden, 4 Jan. 1862, 2E, COBDEN/7, CWS, MF1316 (microfilm), MCL.
90 Cobden to Coles, 30 Oct. 1864, Add. MSS 43671, fols.144-8, BL; Coles to Cobden, 9 Nov. 1864, 170E, COBDEN/7, CWS, MF1317 (microfilm), MCL.
When he became Gladstone’s Secretary of State for War, Cardwell looked for ways to increase the army’s strength and efficiency without increasing expenditures. By reducing the length of a first enlistment to six years, with a mandatory six year stint in the reserves, Cardwell expected to maximize the number of trained men available for service without increasing peacetime manpower. The recruits needed because of the increased turnover would be provided by better “localizing” regiments in specific regions, formalizing the localized recruiting which had been recommended in 1866. Localization would also create an integrated reserve system, with each regimental colonel commanding not just his regular regiment and its reservists but also the Militia battalions and Volunteer corps in his army district. The shortened term of enlistment became law with the Army Enlistment Act of 1870 and regionalization with the 1872 Localisation Act.

More controversial and better-remembered than either of these laws was the long-awaited abolition of purchase. This was, regardless of the inevitability it acquired in retrospect, an unlikely development. Despite his ties to so many entrepreneurial Radicals, Cardwell had little interest in ending the landed control of the officer corps and opening the corps to wider middle-class involvement. He, Gladstone, and even the supporters of abolition within the War Office were more concerned with professionalization than with social change. They bemoaned the habit of officers to privilege hunting and riding over military education, and the fact that purchase prevented promotion by merit, but not the privileging of gentlemanly status. Cardwell continued to consider that the qualities which made a good officer were independence, self-confidence, and gentility.
At first, Cardwell sought only a minor reform, abolishing the useless junior ranks of cornet and ensign. However, the army response to this brought the broader problem into focus. Since the purchase of a commission constituted an investment, with the capital recoverable when the officer sold it at retirement, the abolition of any rank needed to be accompanied by compensation. Cardwell offered that compensation only at the regulation rate, but most officers had paid far more, and these over-regulation sums would be lost. The clamor this caused forced Cardwell to withdraw the bill, and led him to realize that abolition could only be all-or-nothing. With the cost of compensation, it was only possible because of the savings from Cardwell’s other reforms. The new bill, introduced in early 1871, which offered compensation to all officers at over-regulation rates, had great trouble passing the Commons – including an early use of the filibuster – and was stopped dead in the Lords. In response, Cardwell went for total abolition through legislative sleight-of-hand. Purchase had officially been illegal since the Sale of Officers Act of 1809, except at the prices set by regulation – even if the over-regulation payments were ubiquitous. By royal warrant, Cardwell eliminated the loophole created in 1809 and made purchase truly illegal. Faced with purchase’s effective abolition without compensation, the army interest in the Lords was forced to reevaluate its position and accept legislation so that officers might not lose their capital – although they did so with bad grace and a censure of the government.92

In some ways, Cardwell’s reforms seemed to be the culmination of the liberal campaign for a reformed army. The new short-service enlistment rules continued the trend of making army service less like a vocation and more like a trade, localization encouraged ties with the community, and the abolition of purchase suggested that the officer corps was becoming more meritocratic. However, in retrospect the Cardwell Reforms had serious negative consequences for the liberal approach. The abolition of purchase had relatively little impact on the actual social composition of the officer corps, while the Localization Act put the Volunteers under the control of the regular army, ending their independence.

Rather, the Cardwell Reforms constituted the resurgence of the regular army after two decades of stiff criticism and the creation of a respectable military image for the first time in the century. Signs of that new image can be seen in the new regimental depots that were built to provide a focus for their new local connections. The new depots were based on standard designs by Major H.C. Seddon, R.E. Most were built in red brick with decorated bands of yellow brick or terracotta, but some featured local touches. In Oxford and Bodmin, the depots were built with local stone, while the Cameron Barracks at Inverness were completed in the Scottish Baronial style complete with conical towers and corner bartizans. Each depot featured a defensible keep which provided secure, fire-proof arms storage. These adopted many of the same imagery that was used in the 1850s militia stores, with their turrets, machicolations, and other fortified features. As in the militia stores, they were mostly decorative features.93

The depots, and the barracks which would follow them, represented a new and more self-confident approach to barracks design. With the exception, perhaps, of the Royal Artillery barracks at Woolwich, these were the first barracks that were unashamed to announce their presence. The same would be true of those which followed them. The Britannia Barracks in Norwich, built in 1886, dominated the city from the crest of a hill in a sophisticated Queen Anne style.\footnote{Douet, \textit{British Barracks}, 174.} From now on, rather than seeking to avoid attention barracks would announce their presence and their importance. Furthermore, unlike the previous concentration in a few key military towns the Cardwell depots were spread out across the country in market towns like Bury St. Edmunds or Worcester. The army was establishing a positive public presence in a way that was unusual for the British regulars.

Though it seemed like a very small change, putting militia and Volunteers under the authority of the regulars meant an end to the rhetoric of independence which had been so integral to the Volunteers for much of the 1860s. From 1871 onwards the Volunteers would increasingly become adjuncts to the regulars rather than an independent alternative, with all the political consequences that implied. In the 1870s, the Volunteers began to move away from their variegated uniforms towards scarlet. Reporting on the 1872 Brighton field day, General Ellice argued that “the more closely the Force is identified in appearance as well as discipline with the Regular Forces, the more serviceable it will become.”\footnote{Qtd. in Cunningham, \textit{Volunteer Force}, 94.} Increasingly, Volunteers seemed to agree. By 1878-9, 91 regiments wore scarlet, 66 green, and 57 grey. More adopted scarlet in “a second wave

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\footnote{Douet, \textit{British Barracks}, 174.}
\footnote{Qtd. in Cunningham, \textit{Volunteer Force}, 94.}
of ‘scarlet fever’ in the 1890s.‖ This too was a rejection of their earlier rhetoric of independence.

End of an Era

Though the Cardwell Reforms began to be implemented before that war started, the Franco-Prussian War only increased the sense that the British system, and especially amateurs like the Volunteers, were vastly inferior to the militaries of continental Europe. Britain sent a series of observers to both the French and German armies, and they sent reports back which showed how impressed they were with the Prussian system. The Prussian reserves were of special interest, and even though they seemed incompatible with British politics their efficacy could not be gainsaid. In the reports he sent back, the British military attaché in Berlin concluded that compared to the Landwehr the Volunteers were “opposed to the first principles of military government.” More generally, not just the British official observers but the press as well came away from the Franco-Prussian war convinced that they had seen a revolution in military affairs.

The change was most apparent in a short story that appeared in Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine in May 1871. Entitled “The Battle of Dorking: Reminiscences of a Volunteer,” it was the work of Lieutenant-Colonel George Chesney of the Royal Engineers. In “The Battle of Dorking” southern England is invaded after the British fleet is destroyed by mines in the North Sea. The Volunteers, of whom Chesney’s protagonist

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96 Cunningham, Volunteer Force, 95.
97 Qtd. in Maureen Patricia O’Connor, “In the Eye of the Beholder: Western Military Observers From Buena Vista to Plevna” (PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 1996), 314.
is one, are defeated, and the story ends with Britain under the yoke of unnamed but obviously Teutonic invaders. The story was an unexpected bestseller. Sales of the magazine rose 65%, and “Dorking” was soon released as a sixpenny pamphlet.98 By July it had sold 110,000 copies in that form.99 The Battle of Dorking soon entered popular mythology, and “Weren’t you injured at the Battle of Dorking?” quickly became a popular response to seeing a friend with any sort of injury.100

In Chesney’s story, the Volunteers fight poorly. They hold their ground for most of the battle, even carrying out a credible bayonet charge. However, in the end they lack the discipline to maintain order and retreat.101 As one officer in the story puts it, the regulars would much rather be left alone to do the fighting than have the misguided help of the Volunteers.102 More importantly, however, they suffer a serious moral collapse even before the battle has begun. When the men reach the town of Dorking before the battle, they mob a bakery and steal the loaves.103 After the disastrous battle they waylay a military cart with stores, tear the tins of meat open with their bayonets and eat it without even determining if it had been cooked or not.104 When a staff officer harangues the Volunteers for stealing from the bakery, one responds: “Oh, blow it, governor … you

100 Finkelstein, “From Textuality to Orality,” 97.
101 Finkelstein, “From Textuality to Orality,” 59-60.
102 Finkelstein, “From Textuality to Orality,” 53.
arn’t going to come between a poor cove and his grub.” That this speech comes from an articulated attorney indicates how far, in Chesney’s opinion, the Volunteers would degenerate under the pressures of a real war. In stark contrast to usual rhetoric of manliness, in which Volunteers draw strength from the fact they are protecting their homes and families, Chesney’s Volunteers prove not just incapable this but also unfit in dialect or deed to be husbands. As amateurs, the experience of warfare proves to be unmanning for the Volunteers.

Chesney’s story reflected his conservative politics. He laid the blame for his fictional disaster on the fact that “power was then passing away from the class which had been used to rule, … into the hands of the lower classes, uneducated, untrained to the use of political rights, and swayed by demagogues.” “The Battle of Dorking” was the first in what became a whole genre of invasion narratives that reached their apogee with stories like William Le Quex’s Invasion of 1910 and Erskine Childers’ Riddle of the Sands. This kind of story condemned limitations on military spending, democracy, and pacific foreign policy as moral weaknesses – making it a vibrant “Tory-Conservative genre.”

Chesney’s invasion narrative laid out the dangers of putting too much trust in amateurs, but it was beyond Britain, in the empire, that the army made its real improvement in prestige. Beginning with the 1866 Abyssinian expedition, Britain began a long series of colonial wars which showered the army with publicity. The importance of

the new imperial mindset cannot be overestimated. It encouraged a new conception of
hegemonic masculinity, which favored the independent adventurer rather than family
man.\textsuperscript{108} The New Imperialism meant vast new reserves of enthusiasm for imperial
activity, and a reconceptualization of the importance of Britain’s imperial mission. It
erased much of the anti-imperial sentiment which Cobden and Gladstone had cultivated
over the years – in 1882 it was Gladstone who authorized the British intervention in
Egypt.\textsuperscript{109} From now on, the military would become increasingly entangled in its imperial
mission and its auxiliaries, like the Volunteers, would become entangled as well.\textsuperscript{110} The
Volunteers were never entirely free of the radical potential with which they began – in
1896 the members of the Inns of Court Rifle Volunteers (the “Devil’s Own”) protested
their colonel’s decision to reject an Indian law student (Mr. Mullick) on the basis of his
color and managed to have it reversed.\textsuperscript{111} However, from the 1870s onwards the
Volunteers were mostly a comfortable element of the British military establishment.
That establishment remained, despite the Cardwell Reforms, a deeply traditional one.
That those “Reforms” led to so little change can be explained by the fact that a Gladstone
government, no matter how devoted to its own causes, had little interest in a liberal
military – just like Cobden and his associates in the militia debates. The Cardwell
Reforms were a continuation of economic liberalism’s approach to the army, and an

\textsuperscript{108} Tosh, \textit{Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain}, 192-214.
\textsuperscript{109} Freda Harcourt argues that Gladstone adopted imperial and royal pageantry quite early in “Gladstone,
monarchism and the ‘new’ imperialism, 1868-1874,” \textit{Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History} 14
Robinson and John Gallagher with Alice Denny, \textit{Africa and the Victorians. The Official Mind of
\textsuperscript{110} MacKenzie, \textit{Popular Imperialism and the Military}.
\textsuperscript{111} Press clipping on this appear in the Regimental Scrapbook in Ms 14491, Guildhall Library, City of
London.

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abdication of the moral liberalism which Grey, Maule, Ripon and Russell had tried to infuse into Britain’s armed forces.
Chapter 9: Conclusion

The French threat which dominated home defense policy in the mid-nineteenth century may have been illusory, but its consequences were not.¹ Considering the need to maintain a substantial army at home without compromising the tradition of a small regular army capable of supplying colonial garrisons, the revival of the auxiliary forces was a foregone conclusion. They rose from their post-Napoleonic obscurity to massive strength, eventually becoming the basis of an army reserve which would survive both World Wars and the Cold War. Their structure was a function not just of military necessity, but of political fundamentals. Both the revival of the militia and the creation of the Volunteers reflected mid-century liberalism’s insistence on the importance of the autonomous individual and the applicability of its faith in individual rationality to military affairs. These are connections mentioned only obliquely in the historiography of the Volunteers, where individualism and self-help are connected to the rise of the middle class rather than liberalism. Yet, as this dissertation demonstrates, the liberal subject’s move into the military affected working-class Volunteers as much as middle-class ones, and was reflected in regular army policies like limited enlistment as well.

¹ See, for example, David Todd’s account of French policy of conciliation towards Britain in “A French Imperial Meridian, 1814-1870,” Past and Present 210 (2011): 155-186.
The political credit for these developments must go to people like Russell, Grey and Maule who rejected traditional military thinking in favor of more liberal approaches. They were supported, and often preceded, by a broad segment of the public who thought similarly. Cross-class liberal consensus helped make the Volunteers a mass movement, rather than a peripheral institution like the contemporaneous regular army reserves. Despite the extent to which condemnations of military waste and belligerence have resonated with post-World War One generations, the economic critiques of mid-Victorian liberals such as Cobden and Gladstone had a limited impact on military policy in their own era. In explaining why a commercial society like Victorian Britain was so enthusiastic about its armed forces, older generations of historians have emphasized the cost-benefit analysis of imperial control or the aspirations of the rising middle-class. More recent scholarship connects support for the military with atavism or vicarious bloodlust – what Graham Dawson has colorfully called the “pleasure culture of war.”

While both these arguments have merit, especially in the late Victorian era, neither is really necessary to explain why pacifist critiques failed to acquire traction in mid-century. Those critiques simply failed to address the fundamental issue at stake: how, if Britain must defend itself, should those defenses be structured? With a few notable exceptions, economic liberals argued for more or less spending on defense, but failed to discuss the nature of those defenses. While Cobden could comfortably tell Gladstone that defense policy was simply a “question of money,” claims to be ignorant of military

2 Dawson, *Soldier heroes*, 4-5.
matters did not endear them to the public.\(^3\) Counting ships or soldiers almost always failed to have an impact when compared to statements about the moral qualities of the nation’s defenders.\(^4\) In contrast, Palmerston offered an articulate and attractive account of how the armed forces served to protect Britain’s interests, reputation, and moral nature.

In these circumstances, the Cardwell Reforms were as much an abandonment of the Liberal approach to the army as a fulfillment of them. Despite the egalitarian aspects of the abolition of purchase and the shortening of the soldier’s commitment to serve, the reforms mostly served to strengthen the traditional approach to the army by stripping the Volunteers of their independence and entrenching the paternalistic approach to managing the regulars. As economic liberals, Cardwell and Gladstone were never entirely convinced that autonomy applied to military service. They were more interested in managing costs. Despite increasing questions about their effectiveness and moral qualities, as in Chesney’s *Battle of Dorking*, Volunteering maintained its unique amateur culture, which operated in parallel to that of the regulars.\(^5\) As late as the South African War, the use of amateurs recapitulated the regular-Volunteer tensions of the 1860s. Volunteer corps provided recruits for overseas service not just for the Volunteer Service Companies but also for the otherwise independent City of London Imperial Volunteers and both contingents of Imperial Yeomanry. As with the early Volunteers, historians

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\(^3\) Cobden to Gladstone, 29 June 1860, Add. MSS 43670, fols.40-41, BL; Cobden to Sturge, 10 Oct. 1848, Add. MSS 43656, fols.67-68, BL; See, for example, Gladstone to Somerset, 12 June 1861, Add. MSS 44304, fol.86, BL.

\(^4\) This should not suggest that *pacifists* lacked a moral basis for their arguments, merely that they were in the minority even in the peace movement. Most peace activists were not absolute pacifists and therefore found themselves arguing for a smaller military without rejecting the potential necessity of war.

\(^5\) For a similar case of parallel military cultures in British India, see Stanley, *White Mutiny*.
have argued about whether patriotism, jingoism or unemployment led men to volunteer. Similarly, the service of these amateurs in South Africa was used to support arguments for and against independence and individualism as soldiering qualities.

The trouble that both the various volunteer corps and the regular army faced in finding recruits led to a serious, if not excessive, reexamination of manpower in the aftermath of the war. The Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration, Elgin, Esher and Norfolk Commissions were all opportunities for Britain’s military and civilian leadership to debate the qualities of country versus townsmen, the need to enhance youthful fitness, and even to consider the introduction of compulsory service. With Lord Roberts of Kandahar as its spokesman, the National Service League found itself in conflict with Liberal War Secretary Lord Haldane and his plans to reform the voluntary system. What Haldane created in 1908, the Territorial Force, replaced the Volunteers and Yeomanry with a similar voluntary reserve. Despite efforts to better integrate them with the regulars, the Territorials retained their separate culture. Lord Kitchener, the wartime War Secretary, called it a “Town Clerk’s army” and rather than using it as the basis for the massive expansion of the army chose to create the New

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Armies de novo. Only four years of war and the introduction of conscription in 1916 merged Britain’s military cultures.⁹

Foreign Parallels

The spread of liberal ideas about individualism and amateurism into military affairs was not unique to Britain. Across Europe the bourgeois elements of society which embraced liberalism also toyed with liberalism’s military ideas, like amateur riflemen and the citizen-soldier. While none of the Continental rifle movements embraced quite the same mix of liberal individualism and anti-army militarism as the British Volunteers did, they did reflect the presence of such ideas in European liberal thought. Even in Prussia, the state most closely associated with conservative militarism, shooting clubs and defense associations flourished, as did supporters of a national militia.¹⁰ The support for these developments was enough to make Bismarck and the Prussian conservatives anxious, and to make their liberal opponents fight tooth and nail against Albrecht von Roon’s elimination of even the attenuated Landwehr militia that still existed in the 1850s.¹¹ As

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in Britain, it was open war which began to co-opt the liberals for regular army militarism.\textsuperscript{12}

While defense associations flourished, not just in Prussia but across Germany, in the early 1860s, similar movements had already existed across Europe for decades. According to Daniel Moran, “it would be difficult to overstate the importance of the citizen-soldier for the development of liberal internationalism in Europe.”\textsuperscript{13} In Belgium, a country whose moderate liberalism led Britons to see it as “little Britain on the continent,” Civic Guards had existed in its major towns since the Revolution of 1830.\textsuperscript{14} They were, Frans van Kalken has written, the “‘mayor’s army,’ especially in the large towns.”\textsuperscript{15} With its long tradition, Switzerland’s universal militia also provided an international example. In 1851, the French Second Republic converted its National Guard from a bourgeois guarantee of order into an institution consisting of all men over the age of 20, matching universal male suffrage with universal military obligation distinct from the army.\textsuperscript{16} Although Napoleon III abolished this force in 1852 following his coup, \textsuperscript{12} Müller, “Spectre of a People in Arms,” 101-104.
\textsuperscript{13} Daniel Moran, “Arms and the Concert. The Nation in Arms and the Dilemmas of German Liberalism,” The People in Arms. Military Myth and National Mobilization since the French Revolution, ed. Daniel Moran and Arthur Waldron (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003), 64. This dissertation has avoided the terms citizen-soldier and nation in arms because they carry connotations inappropriate to this context. By the mid-nineteenth century the reciprocal relationship between English liberties and the common law obligations to serve was mostly defunct. Instead, whether it was regarding regular soldiers, Volunteers or militiamen, mid-Victorian political discourse took voluntarism and choice as fundamental premises. Not until at least the 1870s did universal compulsory service become plausible in Britain.
\textsuperscript{15} van Kalken, “Ce que fut la Garde civique belge,” 549.
the same decree reestablished a more limited version for the rest of his rule.\textsuperscript{17} When Napoleon began planning to introduce mass conscription after 1866, the Guard was the potential basis for a new “French Landwehr.”\textsuperscript{18}

As in Britain, working-class politics were torn over how to respond to the new possibilities. In 1868, future founder of the German Social Democratic Party Wilhelm Liebknecht gave an emphatic endorsement of national militias. On the other hand, Engels, who had covered both the Volunteers and the American Civil War for the \textit{Volunteer Journal for Lancashire and Cheshire}, considered relying on a militia laughable.\textsuperscript{19} Instead, he argued “universal conscription — incidentally the sole democratic institution existing in Prussia, albeit only on paper,” was far superior to a volunteer force, “which is antiquated and only possible in exceptional cases such as England.”\textsuperscript{20} Making service truly universal would mean that “with \textit{this} military system Prussia can neither wage an unpopular war nor carry out a coup d’état which has any prospect of permanence. For even if the peace-time army did allow itself to be used for a small coup d’état, then the first mobilisation and the first threat of war would suffice to call all these ‘achievements’ in question once more.”\textsuperscript{21} This was an opinion he maintained for the next thirty years, writing in 1891 that “the real strength of the German

\textsuperscript{17} Carrot, \textit{La Garde Nationale}, 289-294.
\textsuperscript{18} Carrot, \textit{La Garde Nationale}, 299-306. In the end, the French military law of 1868 put far more emphasis on expanding the regular army than training the Guard.
\textsuperscript{19} See Engels as Military Critic.
\textsuperscript{21} Engels, \textit{Prussian Military Question}, 63.
social democracy does not rest in the number of its voters, but in its soldiers.”

Seven years earlier he had written in a letter to August Bebel that socialist strength in the army might even make a period of parliamentary democracy unnecessary on the road to socialism.

Two decades later, Jean Jaurès used his 1911 *L’Armée Nouvelle* to argue for introducing a Swiss-style militia to France. Jaurès’ thought there were numerous advantages for the socialists in supporting the continuation of the conscript army. By supporting mandatory service without regard for class, the socialist movement would demonstrate their commitment to national unity. Involvement in the army would also demonstrate the will of the labor movement to engage with the society, take responsibility, and remake it. Jaurès also argued that the combination of universal education and universal military liability lead almost inevitably to universal franchise. There were therefore numerous reasons why socialist engagement with military service would have positive implications for the working class.

Interestingly enough, there was frequent peacetime contact between the rifle corps of Europe. They circulated through the shooting competitions and field days that occurred in every nation, as a sort of Riflemen’s International. The oldest of these was, of course, the Swiss Tir Nationale. The Belgians were next, with the first Tir National

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24 Jean Jaurès, *Democracy and Military Service*, ed. G.G. Coulton (1916; New York: Garland, 1972) 89. This in an abridged version of Jaurès’ *L’Armée Nouvelle* and is the only English-language translation of that work.
25 Jaurès, *Democracy*, 68.
26 Jaurès *Democracy*, 93n.
held in Brussels in 1858. Britain’s National Rifle Association held its first meet at Wimbledon in July 1860, followed swiftly by the French in October at Vincennes and then the Germans at Gotha in July 1861. In Italy, Garibaldi was among those who spread the faith of *Santa Carabina* and the culture of rifle shooting, with the national association led by the Crown Prince Umberto.27

The national shooting fraternities began to interact almost at once. The French invitation to Britain’s riflemen in 1860 had a forced insouciance when it talked about “two great nations who have achieved glory in fighting together on far-off shores in favour of civilization and of humanity,” but there was clearly a friendly aspect to what the *Times* called this “amicable dalliance.”28 Still, in the aftermath of the competition the *Volunteer Journal for Lancashire and Cheshire* uncharitably observed that there was little popular enthusiasm in Paris for the match. The contrast between Wimbledon and Vincennes, it editorialized, showed that while Napoleon III might match Britain in military material “he will never be able to command the same moral strength as that which, with us, springs from the possession of good laws, a just government, and all the blessings of freedom.”29 Meanwhile, the first German meet at Gotha was sympathetically covered in Britain by *Cornhill Magazine.*30

The closest relations were between Britain and Belgium, where fraternization between Volunteers and Civic Guards was an important aspect of Belgian public

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29 *VJLC*, Oct. 13, 1860, 86.
diplomacy. Leopold II, first as Duke of Brabant and then as king of Belgium was an important patron of the Tir National and encouraged the reciprocal relationship between the British and Belgian riflemen as a way of highlighting Belgian military self-sufficiency, especially in the shadow of the German Wars of Unification. Six officers and about 80 Volunteers attended the 1864 Tir National in Brussels, and a similar number the year after. In 1866, 132 Civic Guards came to the competition at Wimbledon. The next year, though, saw a massive British delegation attending the Brussels Tir. While invitations went out to Dutch, French, Swiss, Prussian and Italian riflemen as well as the British, more than 1,000 Volunteers made the trip to Brussels. The Manchester Belgian Reception Committee presented Leopold II with a portrait in honor of the occasion. The next year, as a staggering 2,600 Civic Guards came to Wimbledon, and the National Rifle Association presented its guests with a silver challenge cup.\textsuperscript{31} For the next six years, the Anglo-Belgian Prize Fund offered a prize which was awarded alternately at the Wimbledon and Brussels competition. From then on, the Anglo-Belgian exchanges went into decline.\textsuperscript{32}

Liberalism and the Army

Following the trail blazed by studies of imperialism, historians of the British armed forces increasingly have explored the significance of public opinion, intellectual movements and popular culture on the explicit and unspoken elements of policy. Yet

\textsuperscript{31} A draft copy of what is probably the welcome speech can be found in Earl Spencer’s National Rifle Association papers. Add. MSS 77802, BL.

such work has so far failed to fully capture the complex dynamics connecting liberalism to the army. On the one side, Hew Strachan’s work since “The Early Victorian Army and the Nineteenth-Century Revolution in Government” has emphasized the agency of the military itself and its involvement in the politics of defense policy – most notably in The Politics of the British Army. On the other, socio-cultural studies such as Michael Paris’ Warrior Nation have tended to a public “pleasure culture of war” as dominating the issue. Neither approach quite reflects the way in which liberal thought sparked debate inside and outside the army.

Within politics, the military was not merely a technical issue but a serious topic of public discussion. This public debate was something every Briton felt entitled to be involved in, since every Briton was equally liable – in theory – to serve to protect the state. As such, the national defenses attracted more than their share of crack-pot ideas, ranging from mounting a cannon every thirty yards along the coast, to converting coasting ships into giant bombs and poison gas dispensers to attack French forts.33 It also attracted serious, considered opinions from men of all classes and situations.

Liberalism’s polyvalent language proved far better at bringing men together in agreement

33 The cannon every 30 yards appears in A Member of the Naval and Military Institution, The Invasion of England Rendered Impossible by a Simple and Practical Mode of Defence (London: Robert Hardwicke, 1860), 38. The use of poison gas was an idée fixe of Lord Cochrane, 10th Earl of Dundonald, a Radical MP and Napoleonic-era naval captain who, after a careers in the navies of Britain, Chile, Brazil and Greece, advocated its use against the French and/or Russians for almost fifty years without success. Cochrane’s stature (he was promoted to Rear Admiral in 1832) meant the proposal was seriously evaluated by successive governments. For a sympathetic view of Cochrane’s plans, see Charles Stephenson, The Admiral’s Secret Weapon. Lord Dundonald and the Origins of Chemical Warfare (London: Boydell, 2006). The original reports offer a more sober assessment of the plan’s total implausibility. The last of these, in 1854, featured a scientific analysis by Michael Faraday which showed the impossibility of generating enough poison gas from burning sulfur, as well as comments from all four reviewers that such a plan would be both unsuccessful and likely to bring considerable “odium” upon Her Majesty’s government. See Add. MSS 41370, fols. 334-336, 348-351.
than in sustaining that consensus once differences of opinion became apparent. Attitudes were shaped by class background as well as by political involvement and military experience. Regardless, liberalism’s impact on army policy in mid-Victorian Britain was extensive.
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