Chapter Nine

'With remorseless fury': National fervours, fulfilments, fears and deceptions

> 'I think it much better we should do this thing quietly without any paper on the subject, because I am sure in some of the Dominions it might be better not to say anything about preparations'
>
> General Sir William Nicholson, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, 17 June 1911

Amid much rejoicing and self-congratulation, Australia became a nation at the start of the new millennium on 1 January 1901. The aspirations and actions of the country's political leaders were informed from the beginning by the key tenets of the new Australian nationalism. The sentiment championed by the *Bulletin* and its supporters that Australia should be for Australians was given substance first through the *Immigration Restriction Act*. This passed through the new national parliament with little dissent and would be used to ensure that the nation's population remained exclusively white and of Anglo-Saxon and Celtic origin. This foundational legislation was supported by the *Pacific Island Labourers' Bill* which outlawed the further importation after 1904 of coloured workers and required those Kanakas who were already in Australia to be repatriated back to their Pacific homelands. The *Quarantine Act* of 1908, which included measures for the exclusion, detention, segregation, and isolation of incoming persons and vessels, provided a third and powerful means of creating the pure, wholesome and uncontaminated society imagined under Australia's new nationalist creed (see Bashford, 2002 and Bashford and Strange, 2002).

In addition to being white, the new Australian nation had also to be made secure from physical threats. The second, equally important, component of the country's hedge against unwanted external intrusions was the 1903 *Defence Act*. This was formally enacted by the Commonwealth Parliament in March 1904 but not before considerable redrafting and a good deal of rancorous debate. As made clear by John Mordike (1992, 2002), largely from

whose works the following account is drawn, the debates and tensions over Australia's new system of defence stemmed not just from domestic political differences and concerns, but also as a result of the renewed actions and manipulations of the British imperialists and their local supporters.

The first draft of the federal Defence Bill, tabled in June 1901 by Barton's Minister for Defence Sir John Forrest, was withdrawn after members of all parties in the House objected to its proposals to establish and maintain a standing army in Australia, and to subject Australian citizens to compulsory military service. The consensus was that when needed, Australians would readily volunteer and would not have to be conscripted to defend their country. Many members were also concerned that the proposed legislation could lead Australian military personnel to be despatched to serve overseas in support of Britain's imperial interests. As a radical Liberal Member of the House, Henry Bourne Higgins, informed his colleagues, taken together, the provisions of Forrest's Bill could lead a man who joined a rifle club today to be sent tomorrow to serve on the north-west frontier in Afghanistan or to shoot down his fellow-countrymen in Ireland (Hirst, 1993: 613).

The politicians had good reason to be suspicious. For as Mordike (1992: 66-84) documents, this outcome was exactly the intention of at least some of the members of the federal defence committee that had been appointed by Forrest—then a self-confessed novice in the affairs of his ministry—to advise him on an appropriate military force structure and Defence Bill. These were the military commandants of the former colonies who had earlier advocated an imperial role for Australia's defence forces and, in one case at least, believed that Australian military personnel should form part of Britain's official war reserves.

The withdrawal under pressure of Forrest's first Bill could be interpreted as a blow to the imperialist cause, but was it? The government's stated reason for the Bill's withdrawal was to enable the inaugural commander of Australia's military forces to have a say on the structure and roles of the force he was about to command. This officer, appointed during the debate in parliament and on Forrest's recommendation, was none other than Colonel, now Major-General Sir Edward Hutton. Since serving as the commander of New South Wales' military forces in the 1890s, Hutton had strengthened both his view and his resolve that the mounted and light infantry forces in particular of Britain's former

colonies should be combined with units from Britain's own militia to form an imperial expeditionary force. This would operate under British command and be deployed to defend the Empire's global interests. Hutton's ideas and objectives had wide support within the British establishment even though some among them were concerned that his obsessiveness and lack of tact could provoke rather than assuage nationalist sympathies among the Australian political elite. 'For heaven's sake', Hutton's friend and mentor Major-General Sir Ian Hamilton warned him in a letter sent prior to Hutton's departure to Australia, 'be deferential and agreeable to them, and to their wives, and fill them up with Champagne, whenever you get a fair opening' (cited in Mordike 1992: 90).

On arrival in Australia in January 1902, Hutton set about ensuring that the Defence Act would contain no impediment to the future overseas deployment of Australian forces by arguing that such a ban would unduly constrain Australia's capacity to defend itself against an external aggressor. While Barton and some in his cabinet appeared initially to accept this argument—leading Hutton to report to London that his proposal 'was received with a most satisfactorily acquiescence' (Mordike, 1992: 93)—they later changed their tune especially after it became known that two Australian officers serving in South Africa, Lieutenants Harry ('Breaker') Morant and Peter Handcock, had been executed by a British firing squad and without the knowledge of the Australian Government. Not recognising the signs, Hutton continued on, arguing again for a two-tiered military force structure whose 14,000-strong field force component, comprising mounted infantry with supporting artillery and logistics elements, could in war be quickly expanded and deployed overseas as part of an imperial force (Hutton did not, of course, inform his Australian masters of this last possibility). But under pressure from political opponents and allies alike, Barton too, was distancing himself from the imperial line. At a dinner in Melbourne before leaving for the 1902 Colonial Conference in London—which had been organised to coincide with the coronation of King Edward VII—the Prime Minister informed his audience, which included General Hutton, that while Australia was prepared to be more responsible for its own defence, it could not afford also to participate actively in any imperial defence scheme.

This turn of events would not have pleased Hutton's superiors in the War Office who had drafted for consideration at the Colonial Conference a scheme for employing colonial troops as part of Britain's Imperial Reserve. Although supported by New Zealand,

the plan was rejected by the Premiers of both Australia and Canada who argued that it derogated from their sovereign right to decide whether and in what form any future military assistance to Britain might be provided (a position that was forcefully supported by newspaper editorialists in Australia after news of the British proposal reached the southern hemisphere). The British government obtained some consolation from the colonies agreeing to the renewal of the 1887 Naval Forces Agreement. Under the revised formulation, Australia would now pay £200,000 rather than £106,000 annually. More importantly it relinquished to the Admiralty its earlier control over the operational deployment of the Australasian naval squadron whose Australian members were to made part of the Royal Naval Reserve. The hopes of such nationalist naval officers as Captains Collins and Creswell of establishing an Australian Navy had for the time-being been dashed by a combination of political and financial concerns. From the imperialist perspective there remained now only Australia's land forces to be similarly converted.

The problem was that Britain's actions at the Colonial Conference led Australians at home to view more closely Hutton's defence proposals to ensure they did not, in the words of James Page, a member of the Free Trade Party, 'put the collar and chain on the kangaroo' (cited in Mordike, 1992: 116). For his part, while acknowledging that the British move had made his task more difficult, Hutton was still hopeful he would be able at least to prepare the ground for the future overseas deployment of an 'Imperial Australian Force'. Hutton's case was not helped by an assessment of his scheme prepared for the British government by its Colonial Defence Committee. This argued that likely threats to Australia could be met by Hutton's proposed garrison forces alone, and that his suggested field force could not be justified in terms of Australia's own defence requirements. It recommended, however, that a slightly reduced field force should nonetheless be established since it was needed to contribute to imperial operations in the South Pacific and beyond. The position Hutton was trying so assiduously to conceal was laid bare (although partly concealed still by the Committee's hope that the Commonwealth government would acquiesce in any decision to deploy the force outside Australia).

Hutton's response to his predicament involved an admixture of deception and delay. With the help of the Governor-General and imperial zealot, Lord Tennyson, he ensured that only Barton and Forrest received the Colonial Defence Committee's report. He then

sought through various means to deflect his Minister's inevitable inquiries until Forrest's need to deliver the Defence Bill became overwhelming and questions of detail would give way to those of process. Hutton's ploy worked in at least one regard. In tabling the new version of his Defence Bill in July 1903, Forrest informed the House he was proceeding with the GOC's proposed defence reorganisation before the Bill was enacted because he would have felt 'absolutely ashamed' if the new structure was not in place when parliament next sat (Mordike, 1992: 124). Hutton's campaign to establish an Australian field force was thus successful although his subsequent efforts to see his goal achieved in practice—by converting existing cavalry units into mounted light infantry, disbanding long-standing infantry formations that could not be so-converted, and halting the payment of the garrison force militia—caused much angst amongst Australia's military personnel, and a reduction in the overall size of its military forces (Mordike 1992: 131-47).

Much less successful was his second aim of ensuring the field force could be readily despatched overseas on imperial operations. The provisions for this option had been included in the draft legislation Hutton had submitted to Forrest in February 1903 but were subsequently deleted by the Minister on the advice of the Attorney-General, Alfred Deakin, and his law officers. Even then Higgins and his more sceptical colleagues in the Parliament insisted on further amending the Bill, first, to prohibit the establishment in Australia of permanent infantry forces, and second, to ensure, that only those soldiers who volunteered to do so could be made serve overseas. The broad consensus was that Australia should maintain a primarily part-time military force and, while its citizens may be conscripted for national defence tasks, they should not be compelled to fight in wars beyond the country's shoreline. As John Hirst argues, the amendments indicated that Australia's politicians were unwilling to trust their governments, then and later, to use the country's armed forces purely in the national interest, nor did they yet trust Britain to allow them this freedom: 'The Empire on whose strength they still relied, might yet seduce or stifle the young nation. The Defence Act 1903 was the handiwork not of an independent nation but a suspicious colony' (Hirst, 1993: 614)

As we will see, the politicians were right to be wary both of the schemers of Whitehall and of their own capacity to resist the siren calls of Empire and military glory. For the time being, however, national considerations seemed to be holding sway over imperial

ones. This trend was reinforced by the subsequent decision of the Reid-McLean government in … to disband the position of GOC and replace it with a board of officers tasked with administering the military establishment on Parliament's behalf and under the overall direction of the Minister for Defence. A Council of Defence was also legislated for in order to ensure that national political considerations would be brought to bear on Australia's defence policy-making process. Hutton's plan to create an Australian imperial military force that would be subject to British control was now, in Mordike's, words 'beyond salvage'. The General had, moreover, only himself to blame for the fiasco, managing, in his determination to honour his promise to the King and his majesty's key officials, to antagonise not only Australia's nationalist press and politicians, but also key defence officials as well as virtually the whole of the country's militia. This time he would be given no second chance. Returning home to England at the end of his appointment in December 1904, Hutton was ignored by his superiors and 'never again consulted on the question of colonial or imperial defence' (Mordike, 1992: 164). Britain's officials, too, seemed resigned to the fact that their efforts to put in place an Australian imperial force had stalled—or so it seemed.

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The immigration and defence acts together provided the outer ramparts behind which Alfred Deakin and his colleagues could pursue their dream of establishing an outpost of British civilisation at the foot of Asia; in Deakin's words, the creation of a nation comprising 'one people,—mighty, [and] serving God' (William Gay cited by Deakin, 1898). Their aim was to make this latest country of 'independent Australian Britons', economically prosperous, democratic, and free from the cleavages, taints and frictions of the Old World. Freedom from want, equality of opportunity, the preservation of law and order, and the absence of structures of privilege, poverty and economic exploitation were the catch-cries. The aim was a high one and given the country's history, optimistic. But as Gordon Greenwood (1955: 207) later remarked, the temper of the times was both hopeful and self-confident: 'The world was young, and despite the turmoil and depression of the nineties there was an idyllic and anticipatory assumption of future triumphs'. Energised by a sense of social experimentation and manifest destiny, much progress was indeed made. With the support of Labor, Deakin's government introduced in September 1902 a *Customs Tariff Act* that would enable Australia to develop its fledgling industrial capacity

without fear of undue external competition. Importantly the new tariff barrier applied only on the condition that the benefits obtained would be shared by Australia's male workers via an arbitrated minimum wage, and by the public-at-large through access to an old-age pension and other basic benefits. Deakin's doctrine of 'new protection' had a social as well as an industrial and broader economic objective.

To avoid the rancour and divisiveness of the 1890s the new Commonwealth government led the way in developing the appropriate machinery for conciliating and arbitrating industrial disputes. It provided money for railways and other elements of national infrastructure, established a range of public enterprises, such as the Commonwealth Bank, that would compete with their equivalents in the private sector, and encouraged the states to continue on with the process of closer agricultural settlement. In this last regard, the government was determined, like its colonial predecessors, to 'people the land' with a class of yeoman farmers comprising the sons of existing settlers and a new wave of agricultural immigrants brought out from Britain. The model of the yeoman farmer with its emphasis on self-sufficiency and family production, appealed to radicals and conservatives alike. The former saw it as a means of democratising land ownership, and achieving capitalist production without economic exploitation or class warfare. The latter saw the model as a means of replicating in Australia an English rural landscape and associated system of social control. As Marilyn Lake argues, while strongly held, the yeoman model of land settlement was neither economically nor socially appropriate to Australian conditions:

> The results of putting moneyless men into an occupation which required a large investment of capital were widespread poverty, large-scale indebtedness and for many ultimate abandonment. The yeoman model was also anachronistic in terms of social developments. It assumed a family production unit in which individual interests would be subsumed by the family interest. Yet from the 1870s, women's 'separate' interests and rights were increasingly recognised and articulated in Australia … Increasingly, the engagement of wives in farm production was seen as unacceptable by both women and men (Lake, 1985: 181).

The need to labour in the fields besides their husbands was certainly seen as unacceptable by such nationalist writers as Henry Lawson who 'emphasised the effect of bush work on women's physical appearance. No longer soft and "womanly", they grew "hard", "bronzed" and "gaunt"', (Lake, 1985: 179). As we saw in

the previous chapter, the physical and mental exploitation of women and children also, in many cases, created tensions and acrimony within families, laying bare the patriarchal assumptions that underpinned the traditional understandings of family relationships and challenging the equally romanticised notion of women as 'helpmates'.

The society Deakin and his colleagues were building, then, was not as equal, progressive or as free as they hoped or made out. For all the talk of equality, women remained exploited and discriminated against well into the Federal era; on the land where, as we have seen, they were expected to work as unpaid labourers as well as be home keepers and child bearers; in education where only a privileged few were able to gain entry into university; in the urban workforce where they were neither recognised nor paid as much as men employed in the same occupations; and at home where they bore the social (and sometimes physical) burden of both policing and conforming to the middle-class ideals of respectability and sobriety (McCalman,…). Although none would be elected to federal parliament until 1943, they at least had the vote, unlike Australia's Aboriginal peoples who under the provisions of the 1902 *Franchise Act* were excluded from participating in elections unless they had already been awarded this right by one of the states (which the majority hadn't). Aboriginal Australians were thus not directly represented in parliament, enjoyed no formal rights of citizenship under the laws of the country, and didn't count—literally in the case of the federal censuses—in the day-to-day calculations of white society. As members of a primitive race thought to be headed for extinction they were not even offered the new pensions or the other benefits being made available under the doctrine of 'New Protection'.

The new Australian state may have had a constitution and a parliament—whose final location was still to be decided—in which matters concerning the country as a whole could be debated and legislated on, but it remained subordinate in important ways to British authority, to British sensibilities, and to British law. This was made clear when the Colonial Office, desiring not to embarrass either Britain's other imperial subjects or the Japanese Government, argued that Australia's immigration policies were too explicitly racist and suggested it follow instead the example set by the Natal Province and apply the ruse of a dictation test to keep out unwanted aliens. Under pressure, the Australians eventually agreed but not without some grumbling and protest. 'Are we to be treated as schoolboys or men?' wondered the Irishman, Australian

nationalist and future Federal Arbitration Commissioner, Henry Bournes Higgins. ‘Are we to look after the interests of Australia, or to subordinate those interests to the interests of the old country?’ (cited in Lake, 2003: 108).

Although the Constitution made Australia responsible for its own defence and ‘external affairs’, it could neither declare war on another country nor sue for peace, only the British government could do that. It could not even, should it want to, declare itself neutral in, say, Britain’s conflict with the Boers in South Africa; if the United Kingdom was at war then so too was its Empire. Australia was unable, until 1923, to conclude treaties or agreements with foreign powers, these had to be done through the Governor-General and the Colonial Office in London. The country’s approach to foreign policy was therefore less to develop a position that was independent from that of Britain as to ensure that Australian interests continued to be taken into account by British decision-makers. The Governor-General could also, on behalf of the British King or Queen, withhold assent from any of the Bills passed by federal parliament, or reserve them for his or her Majesty’s consideration. Under the doctrine of colonial repugnancy, Australian laws were required until 1931 to be consistent with those of the United Kingdom. If they were not they could be rendered inoperative either by royal decree or an Act of the British parliament. For all these reasons, as Gavin Souter concluded in his book *Lion and Kangaroo* (2000: 24), ‘it was clear to anybody who thought about the matter that the Commonwealth of Australia would still be…what the Colonial Office was going to call it for several years to come: a self-governing colony’.

This subordinate status was reinforced by a dependent economic relationship in which more than half of Australia’s exports went to Britain, and most of its imports and investment capital came from there. It contrasted with the prevailing rhetoric of Australia as a ‘nation of independent Britons’ and emphasised the fact that the Australian character remained, in the words of Marilyn Lake (2003: 101), ‘an ambiguous in-between figure—on the one hand the beneficiary of British Imperialism and Aboriginal dispossession, on the other, dependent on, and subordinate to, the imperial power’. This uncertainty at the heart of Australia’s identity, Lake argued, caused the country’s male leaders to be unduly anxious about both the nation’s and their own worthiness and future. The normally assured Alfred Deakin, for example, saw the ‘presence of aliens inside and outside the nation…as the cause of “so much anxiety” because it spoke to “the profoundest instinct of

individual or nation—the instinct of self-preservation for it is nothing less than the national manhood, the national character and the national future that are at stake"' (cited in Lake, 2003: 100).

Lake continues that in order to allay their personal misgivings, Deakin and Australia's other political leaders sought to assert 'their distinctive capacity for government, over themselves and variously designated Others: natives, coloured aliens, some Europeans and women of all kinds' (Lake, 2003: 110-1). In this way, it could be further argued, the uncertainty of being gave Australia's brand of nationalism some of its strident, aggressively xenophobic, and misogynist overtones. A sense of anxiety also spawned the publication of, and was reflected in, a series of highly popular and often lurid accounts of 'imagined invasions' of the country by Mongol or Asiatic hordes. These were seeking to colonise (or inseminate) Australia's unpopulated north, and were able to take advantage of Britain's preoccupation in a European war on the one hand, and on the other a largely urban domestic (and domesticated) society that had grown increasingly comfortable and complacent.

As Robert Dixon (1995) argues, the emergence of Australia's invasion literature reflected a similar trend taking place in Great Britain where the writers there were motivated by concerns over the strength and vitality of the British Empire. The local genre included such early works as William Lane's novella *White or Yellow? A Story of the Race War of A.D. 1908* (1888), published serially in the *Boomerang*, and Kenneth Mackay's racist yet enormously popular *The Yellow Wave: A Romance of the Asiatic Invasion of Australia* (1897). Significantly, however, the bulk of Australia's invasion literature was written after the country had become, in theory if not wholly in practice, independent of Great Britain and therefore potentially isolated strategically and, as one newspaper editorialised, 'so alone'.

Many of the later accounts were published in the nationalist magazine, the *Lone Hand*, which was established in Sydney in 1907, had the blessing and financial support of Alfred Deakin and his government, and included in its readings jingoistic and militaristic adventure stories in which 'invasion and the need for retaliatory action are made to seem compellingly real' (Dixon, 1995: 140). Interspersed among the magazine's 'ripping yarns' were editorials and more 'serious' articles on Australia's defence vulnerabilities and needs. Unlike the earlier tales, the later works focussed almost entirely on the potential threat posed to Australia

by Japan. Australians had been wary of Japan since its military successes against China in the mid-1890s. These fears were officially downplayed following the signing of the Anglo-Japanese alliance in 1902, but resurfaced again after Admiral Togo's fleet defeated the Russians in the battle of the Tsushima Straits in May 1905. The Japanese victory had a major effect on Alfred Deakin for one. In an interview with the Melbourne *Herald* in June of the same year, he warned of the growing power and strategic reach of Japan, which lies, 'so to speak, next door while the Mother Country is many streets away'. Australia needed, he continued, drastically to improve its harbour defences and defence industries, and to expand its own naval forces. Echoing one of the key themes of the invasion stories, Deakin ended the interview by warning his more complacent readers that 'when we are attacked it will not be with kid gloves, or after convenient notice, but it will be when and where we least desire it, and with remorseless fury' (cited in Meaney, 1985: 154-8).

At the time of his interview, Deakin was in opposition. A month later he was again Australia's prime minister and confronted with the task of preparing the country and its increasingly alarmed population for a possible future Japanese invasion. While convinced that Australia needed an indigenous naval capability, Deakin was less certain about how the country's land forces should best be structured. His doubts were not helped by the differences of opinion among his military advisers over the structure and role of Australia's field force in particular, a legacy of the Hutton era. Deakin sought the opinion of the newly established Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) in London, but was dismayed when it reported that in view of the Royal Navy's global supremacy, Australia was unlikely to be threatened with invasion but, rather, attacks by sea-born raiders. These, the committee concluded, could be handled by the country's land-based garrison forces. Despite this finding, it recommended that the field force established by Hutton be retained and used for training purposes as well as a base for military expansion in an emergency. What this emergency might be and how an expanded force might be used were not spelt out even though, as Mordike (1992: 174) later argued, 'the committee clearly had an imperial and expeditionary role in mind'.

The dismissal of his proposal (and underlying rationale) for establishing some form of independent naval capability was particularly galling for Deakin who hoped the committee might have been more sensitive to the strategic and domestic political

imperatives involved. It did not surprise the prime minister's chief naval adviser and architect of the proposal, Captain R. W. Cresswell. In his memoirs, the former member of the Royal Navy indicated that the Admiralty's 'active opposition' to Deakin's proposal was likely to have had little to do with strategy or politics. It stemmed, rather, from a more primitive concern: 'an obstinate resistance of unhallowed tradition…against which ordinary mortals beat their knuckles in vain'. In the way of all imperial hegemons, Cresswell added, the Admiralty

> …neither desired nor would tolerate a family of infant navies overseas, and resolutely set its face against providing a nursery for the brats. Colonial control would have spelt dual control and dual control of the sea forces of the Empire was not to be thought of, for it seemed bound to lead to disaster (cited in Souter, 2000: 167).

As Deakin was contemplating the CID's advice, public speculation over the Japanese threat was intensifying. On 15 December 1906, the *Age* newspaper warned of an impending war between Japan, 'greatly elated with her success against a white race', and Australia's kindred nation, the United States. At 'the very inception' of such hostilities, the newspaper insisted, Japan would seize the Philippines from where it 'could rapidly throw troops into the Commonwealth of Australia'. As an ally of Japan and distracted by the gathering German menace in Europe, Britain would be either unwilling or unable to assist its threatened dominion. Australians had to 'wake up to the gravity of our position', the newspaper stormed, and 'Build our own Navy'. (cited in Meaney, 1985: 162-3). The same conclusion was reached by C. A. Jeffries in an article, 'Building an Australian Navy', published in the *Lone Hand* in June 1907. A month earlier Jeffries had thrilled the magazine's readers with a short story entitled 'A Hero of Babylon'. This was an account of an attack against Sydney by an Asiatic squadron which destroyed Australia's limited naval forces and then held the city to ransom. Salvation came in the guise of Cecil W. Ashley, a gentleman-of-leisure and skilled sportsman who, taking stock of his previously hedonistic and dissipated life, sought redemption by crashing his high-speed and heavily-armed motor boat into the hull of the enemy's principal battleship (Dixon, 1995: 140-2).

Deakin responded to these developments by deciding that Australia should go its own way in defence. In a speech to parliament in December 1907, he announced his intention to cancel the 1902 Naval Agreement with Britain and begin constructing an indigenous navy. His government would also introduce

compulsory military training for young men between the ages of 19 and 21, expand the existing school cadet system and link its training regime with that of the National Guard (in which Australia's conscripted soldiers would serve), and establish a local defence industry. Arguing that Australia was no longer 'outside the area of the world's conflicts', Deakin made it clear that his proposals were aimed solely at improving the country's capacity to defend itself against a future attack by Japan or some other aggressor. His government was not, the Prime Minister emphasised to his parliamentary colleagues, 'preparing for any expeditionary adventures outside Australia' (cited in Mordike, 2002: 15). Australia was on the verge of implementing a comprehensive national defence strategy, one that was driven by local rather than imperial concerns. If carried out, moreover, Deakin's vision would likely spell the end of Hutton's field force and any real prospect of it being deployed on future imperial missions.

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This last possibility served to alarm the latest of the imperial schemers, Australia's own Chief of Intelligence and Military Board member, Lieutenant Colonel (later Major General) Sir William Throsby Bridges. Born in Scotland and educated in England, Bridges served on Hutton's headquarters and shared his superior's strong views on the proposed structure and use of Australia's field force elements (Mordike, 1992: 171-2). Appointed in 1911 as the inaugural commandant of the Royal Military College, Duntroon in Canberra, Bridges would later command the country's forces at Gallipoli where he was mortally wounded by a sniper's bullet and accorded, in September 1915, a state funeral in Melbourne. Since the bodies of no others killed in action were brought back to Australia, Bridges' funeral provided, in Tanja Luckins words, 'a unique opportunity for the populace to participate in an actual funeral of a soldier who had died overseas'. As a result the people turned out in their thousands.

> According to the *Argus*, Melbourne for the day had become a "city of mourning people". Among the khaki there were "banks of black—the people", and as the funeral procession passed through the city, it was women who sobbed, as "their own good sons were at the war" (Luckins, 2004: 82).

The sentiment of the occasion was also imperially-inclined, reminiscent of that exhibited following news of the death at Khartoum of one of the Empire's earlier favourite sons, General

Charles 'Chinese' Gordon. Australia's own imperial icon was buried with full military honours on a hillside overlooking the barracks at Duntroon whose initiates, then and since, were made by their senior classes to learn and cite by heart the inscription on his grave. One deluded soul was said to have slept at night alongside the General's tombstone hoping to experience, no doubt, something of his hero's imperial spirit.

Back in 1907 the ardent spiritualist Alfred Deakin and his Minister for Defence, Thomas Ewing, distrusted Bridges and kept him at bay while they developed their plans for preparing Australia's defence against the coming Japanese tide. By 1911, however, circumstances had changed sufficiently to enable the imperialists to again be in a position of advantage. To begin with, just as his legislation for Australia's National Guard was introduced into parliament, Deakin's administration lost the confidence of the House and was replaced by a Labor government led by Andrew Fisher. Labor, too, was unable to govern for long and soon gave way to a 'fusion' of conservative factions led by an ambitious but much less powerful Alfred Deakin. This was not before the Minister for Defence in Fisher's government, George Foster Pearce, agreed to a proposal by Bridges that his position on the Military Board be upgraded to that of Chief of the General Staff (CGS). Contrary to the approach under Deakin, the position of CGS was to act as the Board's senior military adviser. More importantly, the incumbent would work closely with members of Britain's Imperial General Staff. Established in 1909, this body was responsible for drawing up plans for the defence of the Empire as a whole. Although Labor had made it clear that Australia's participation in the scheme did not mean it would necessarily develop forces for roles other than for the defence of Australia, the British authorities were well satisfied with the outcome. With the right person in place they now had a key means of influencing military developments in the dominion along imperial lines. Australia's capacity to develop a fully independent military was accordingly much reduced. And if the requisite structure for a future expeditionary force could finally be put in place, then imperial fervour alone might be sufficient to fill it with the foot soldiers needed to help defend the empire.

On this last issue, the men in Whitehall had much to be comforted by. As we have seen, although suspicious of British officialdom, Australians at all levels of society remained strongly devoted to Britain's royal family and to the British Empire. In response, again perhaps, to a growing sense of strategic isolation and

vulnerability, this loyal sentiment seemed also to rise in the aftermath of political independence. As Stuart Macintyre (1986: 130) notes, during the colonial era, 'notwithstanding the republican sentiment of some radicals, Australian colonists had not needed to affirm their imperial connections because they were obvious'. Only when the formal links to Britain 'began to fray was there a conscious endeavour to strengthen them'. This trend was reflected in the decision, made in 1905, formally to celebrate Empire Day, or the 'Feast of St. Jingo' as it was derided by the *Bulletin*. Held on 24 May each year, it was to be a day on which patriotic functions were held, small Union Jacks were worn on coat lapels, and children were given lessons whose 'practical outcomes', the Director of Education in New South Wales enjoined his teachers, 'should be a deepening of a patriotic regard…for the portion of the empire that lies nearest to them'.

Teachers were not alone in instructing the nation's school children in their imperial duties and obligations. At a 'patriotic demonstration' for school children held in Melbourne's Town Hall on the inaugural Empire Day, a succession of speakers from the state's political and military establishment, reminded their cheering and flag-waving audience that they were Britishers as well as Australians who, when they heard England 'blow the bugle of war', would be expected to answer the call. The future of the Empire 'was in their hands', the Chief Justice Sir John Madden informed his rapt listeners, 'and there was no more glorious ambition than to die, whether on the battlefield or in bed, remembering that they had done their best to sustain the glorious empire as it stands today (Cheers)' (*Argus*, 25 May 1905, cited in Meaney, 1985: 153).

A strong imperial sentiment also underpinned the public reaction to the so-called 'dreadnought crisis' of 1909. This was precipitated by news that unless Britain built more dreadnought class battleships, it could lose the race for global naval supremacy with Kaiser Wilhelm's Germany. Alarmed by such a prospect the Melbourne *Age* suggested Australia demonstrate its imperial loyalty by financing the construction of a further British dreadnought. As Gavin Souter (2000: 176) describes, 'the idea ignited like a powder train'. Energised by New Zealand's subsequent announcement that it had offered to defray the cost of a battleship, businessmen and conservative politicians at both the state and federal levels entreated the Fisher government to do the same. Despite pressure from Pearce and his Attorney General, William Morris Hughes, to give in to public opinion, Fisher stood

firm, arguing that the government should continue instead to press for the expansion of Australia's own naval capabilities. The Labor Prime Minister did, however, wire the Governor-General, Lord Dudley, assuring him that, in the event of an emergency, 'the whole resources of Australia' would be placed at Great Britain's disposal (Meaney, 1985: 181).

The clamour surrounding the 'dreadnought crisis' subsided after Britain and Australia reached an agreement at the 1909 Imperial Defence Conference in London to establish a Pacific fleet which would include an Australian Fleet Unit comprising one 'Indomitable' class armoured cruiser, three 'Bristol' unarmoured cruisers, six destroyers and three submarines (Meaney, 1985: 182-3). The vessels would be manned as far as possible with Australian officers and seamen and, during peacetime, would be under the exclusive control of the Commonwealth government. Fears of Germany combined with an overriding need for Britain to organise its forces on a global basis, had led the Admiralty to drop its earlier opposition to the creation of 'infant navies' overseas, and to condone the establishment of what would become in 1911 the Royal Australian Navy.

Imperial sentiment soon surged again, however, with the arrival in Australia in December 1909 of the First Earl of … and hero of Obdurman and Atbaba in the Sudan, Field Marshal Horatio Herbert Kitchener. Lord Kitchener had been invited to Australia by Deakin's Fusion government to provide advice on how it should go about defending the country. The authorities in London, and Kitchener himself, viewed the visit rather differently: as a further opportunity to organise Australia's land forces for future imperial operations. That this was not seen by all but the most cynical of local observers was due in no small measure to Kitchener's immense standing among Australians of all classes who, as Mordike describes, clamoured to see or be seen with him:

> Everywhere the visiting officer went he was besieged by toadying officials and adoring crowds; he was venerated to the point of adulation. His name, it was exclaimed by the *Sydney Morning Herald*, had 'become a household word…associated with stirring scenes in the military history of the Empire'. He was a soldier of legendary status. One British officer in Australia at the time…observed that Australians 'mobbed him wherever he went and *fêted* him to an alarming extent'. As he moved southward on his tour of inspection, so the intensity of public excitement increased (Mordike, 1992: 224).

Kitchener's report supported the introduction of compulsory military training and, to the delight of Deakin and other nationalists, acknowledged for the first time that an invasion of the Australian mainland was both possible and could occur before the Royal Navy had time to concentrate its forces in Australia's defence. As Mordike (1992: 229-30) details, in spite of this important finding Kitchener's proposed scheme for Australia's land forces was less a plan for defending the country in such circumstances as a blueprint for simply expanding the number of its citizens under arms. Thus while the report provided guidance on the combat and training skills and structures Australia needed to develop, there was little information on the type and composition of the logistics and support units that would be required. Little if anything was said about a requisite military or industrial infrastructure, or an appropriate operational command system, or even, a concept of operations for halting and then defeating the invader. 'Overall', as Mordike (1992: 229) concluded, 'Kitchener's recommendations would not produce a defence scheme. They would not even produce a viable military force, only a collection of units or, with the addition of appropriately staffed headquarters, a collection of independent brigades organised on the imperial pattern'. These were to be administered by officers trained at the soon-to-be established Royal Military College Duntroon in Canberra that was to be headed by the trusted imperialist Bridges (who, contrary to government direction, ensured that Imperial officers filled the establishment's senior training appointments).

In spite of these limitations, Kitchener's recommendations were accepted by the government and incorporated into the Defence Bill that had been introduced into parliament by Joseph Cook on 13 December 1909 but was not formally proclaimed until 1 January 1911, eight months after Deakin's Fusion government was defeated by Labor in a federal election. It fell therefore to Cook's successor as Minister for Defence, Senator George Pearce, to implement (or not) the Field Marshal's recommendations. Although Pearce had now some experience of defence, he continued to rely on his advisers, in particular the shadowy Colonel George Kirkpatrick. An Imperial officer and principal staff officer to Kitchener during that officer's tour of Australia, Kirkpatrick had been appointed on Kitchener's suggestion to the position of Inspector General of Australia's military forces. Again as a result of Kitchener's recommendations, the Inspector General no longer worked under the direction of the Military Board but was directly responsible to the Minister for Defence. As pointed

out to Pearce by Lieutenant Colonel James Legge—a nationalist officer who tendered his resignation from the Military Board over the matter—Kirkpatrick was thus in a position to second-guess the Board and to insulate the Minister from important sources of nationalist opinion. Pearce rejected Legge's insinuations and forced him to withdraw his resignation thereby effectively preventing him from raising the potentially contentious issue in public.

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Although no doubt pleased about their renewed capacity to influence Australia's military practices, as always the men in Whitehall wanted more. With a war in Europe now a distinct possibility they were desperate for the dominions formally to commit to an imperial expeditionary force. This commitment had to be made sufficiently early, furthermore, to enable the detailed preparations needed to raise such a force to take place. As a planning document prepared for the Committee on Imperial Defence had warned its British readers, there would be little time for 'hasty improvisations' once war had broken out. 'If…organizations have to be improvised, staffs created, transport and equipment provided, and plans matured, after the outbreak of war', then 'the value of any [imperial] assistance given would be greatly lessened, even if not altogether belated' (cited in Mordike, 2002: 34).

The consent of the dominions to these key requirements was to be the central aim of the Imperial Conference held in London in June 1911. It would be, the British decision makers acknowledged, no easy task, one that would require a delicate balancing of a number of sensitive and potentially conflicting considerations. In Australia's case it involved continuing to encourage the military build-up that followed Kitchener's visit to the dominion, but to lessen the import of the Field Marshal's suggestion that Australia could be subject to a Japanese invasion. This had the (intended) effect of frightening the Australians into arming their nation, but posed the risk that, when required to do so, they would not release their forces for imperial duties. Australia had to be alarmed but also reassured that the despatch of a sizeable portion of its military forces on imperial operations would not leave it vulnerable to a Japanese threat.

Unlike the Australians, the British believed that such a threat did not exist certainly as long as the Anglo-Japanese alliance, due for

renewal in 1915, was in force. They could not acknowledge this, however, in case it caused Australia to cut back on the defence preparations initiated by Deakin. Their approach was to argue that while the alliance remained in force, Australia may, in the worst case, be subject to sea-borne raids. Should the alliance be terminated, however, Australia's strategic circumstances would inevitably change and, in the event of hostilities, Japan could enjoy some period of naval superiority in the Pacific. Having raised the alarm, Britain's strategic planners sought to reassure their southern dominion by asserting, first, that Britain's overall naval superiority would mean that the opportunities for a Japanese strike at Australia would in practice be relatively limited. Australia's ultimate security, in short, would continue to be underpinned by the power and global reach of the Royal Navy. The defence of Australia in such conditions could be improved, Britain's planners would further argue, if it continued (or preferably accelerated) its build-up of land forces. This would serve both to deter any prospective Japanese attack and, should Australia's land forces be deployed in support of Britain's imperial interests overseas, enable the Royal Navy better to defend the southern seas.

The imperial schemers were not at all confident, given past experience, that even these carefully constructed arguments would work and that they would not, once again, be left with nothing more substantial than the Sudan model on which to plan for the defence of the empire. As it eventuated, their expectations were vastly exceeded due in large measure to the intervention of Australia's Minister for Defence, George Foster Pearce. As Mordike's detailed research shows, at a secret meeting held in the War Office on 17 June 1911, Pearce surprised his British hosts by suggesting that his staff officers in Australia be informed of the uses intended for Commonwealth troops in an emergency so they, in turn, 'could be employed…in arranging schemes for mobilisation and transportation of the troops'. Caught off-guard by the Minister's remarkable and apparently unsolicited offer, the meeting's chair, Britain's Chief of the Imperial General Staff General Sir William Nicholson, 'pressed Pearce so there could be no dispute about the nature of the agreement about to be reached'. As Nicholson understood it, Pearce had decided that the military forces being developed for the defence of Australia would in future also have an expeditionary role. On his return to Australia, the Minister would also direct his military staff to 'work out a scheme so that, if the Government of Australia so desires, they will have preparations made for mobilising a certain proportion of

their force to proceed to certain ports for overseas action'. On gaining Pearce's affirmation of this understanding, Nicholson informed the meeting, which included Canada's Minister for Militia and Defence Sir Frederick Borden, that 'I think it much better we should do this thing quietly without any paper on the subject…because I am sure in some Dominions it might be better not to say anything about preparations'. Pearce replied 'I quite recognise that', thereby joining the conspiracy, and added in justification 'I suppose we have as large a proportion of that kind of people in Australia as there are anywhere else' (all cited in Mordike, 1992: 241).

In line with Nicholson's suggestion, no report of the discussion just described was published in the proceedings of the 1911 Imperial Conference (a transcript was placed on an unrelated War Office file where it was discovered by Mordike some eighty years later). Nor did Pearce or any of the other Australian delegates speak openly or publicly about the undertaking they had given to provide an expeditionary force for Britain. Indeed, fearing the consequences of the news leaking out, Pearce and his collaborators let be known that Australia's military preparations were largely a response to changes taking place in Asia rather than Europe. As Mordike describes, by this stage the preparations being made were quite extensive. In addition to providing compulsory military training for Australia's boys and young men, from 1911 the Fisher government

> … made significant increases to defence expenditure by approving a special vote of £600,000 in addition to the normal budget allocation. Machinery was acquired and installed in the small arms factory at Lithgow…Woollen mills were established at Geelong and clothing factories were brought into production at South Melbourne. A harness and saddlery factory was also established at Clifton Hill. At the Royal Military College, Duntroon, the training of officer cadets from Australia and New Zealand began under the supervision of Bridges (Mordike, 1992: 242).

At the same time Australia's General Staff were working on detailed and secret plans for the mobilisation in wartime of a 100,000-strong military force. While some of this would be used to secure the country's naval bases and harbours, much of it was to 'be left free to form a field army capable of acting as a mobile expeditionary force'. From November 1912 the planned expeditionary force was broadened to include a prospective New Zealand contingent. Although the combined planned force could operate locally, Pearce's staff officers were 'considering ways in

which a “special expeditionary force for employment in an Imperial undertaking” could be raised by voluntary enlistment' (Mordike, 1992: 243). The public at large and the soldiers undergoing military training remained unaware, of course, that the force being established would be involved in a war in Europe rather than the direct defence of Australia.

(8,233 words)