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The Forgotten Front
British Home Defence and the Invasion Scare of 1914

by

Alexander Kari Maavara

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE
STUDIES IN PARTIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

Wilfrid Laurier University
Waterloo, Ontario
2018

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Advisor

Dr. Mark Humphries

Committee

Dr. Roger Sarty
Dr. Dan Gorman
Dr. Geoffrey Hayes

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Abbreviations

BEF	British Expeditionary Force
CAVTC	Central Association Volunteer Training Corps
CID	Committee of Imperial Defence
CIGS	Chief of the Imperial General Staff
DMO	Director of Military Operations
DMT	Director of Military Training
DORA	Defence of the Realm Act
MP	Member of Parliament
NSL	National Service League
TF	Territorial Force
VTC	Volunteer Training Corps

Acknowledgements

This thesis owes its completion to the unwavering guidance of Terry Copp and Mark Humphries. Equally important have been the litany young academics who have proven most capable mentors, Matthew Baker, Kandace Bogaert, Andrew Cardy, Brittany Dunn, Katrina Pasierbek, Eliza Richardson, Lyndsay Rosenthal, Eric Story and Sean Summerfield. Finally, I'd like to thank my family and friends for their support and love.

Introduction

Few issues have impacted the British people more than the historic fear or threat of invasion. From the Napoleonic Wars to the Second World War, the most “heroic” periods of British history have been those when the island faced possible invasion and destruction. Yet, few histories acknowledge that the fear of invasion, so predominant in the British experience during other conflicts, was an important aspect of the experience of the First World War on the homefront and in the halls of power. This historiographical oversight is influenced by the fact that unlike previous and later conflicts, there was no actual threat. The German Empire never attempted or comprehensively planned to invade the British Isles before or during the First World War.¹ However, we should not discount the role imaginary or perceived threats played in influencing historical patterns of thought and decision-making.

The apparent absence of analysis on the fear of invasion during the First World War is more conspicuous given the number of historians who have examined the fear of invasion during the pre-war period. A myriad of social and political analyses of Victorian, Edwardian and early Georgian Britain emphasize the role the fear of invasion had on British concepts of nationalism, xenophobia, volunteerism and militarism. Cultural historians argue that fears that enemy troops would storm England had a significant influence on pre-war British politics. Despite this analysis, military and naval historians deny the importance of the pre-war fear of invasion. Too often the ‘invasion bogey’ that beset the United Kingdom in the early 20th Century has been described variously as the comical machination of amateur strategists and science fiction authors, or a

¹ Moon, H. R., “The Invasion of the United Kingdom: Public Controversy and Official Planning 1888-1918” (unpublished University of London PhD Thesis, 1968), 653 – 677; P. M. Kennedy, “The Development of German Naval Operations Plans against England, 1896-1914,” *The English Historical Review* 89, no. 350 (1974): 52–57.

political ploy by self-interested defence strategists. Historians who have written on the subject from a social or military perspective have failed to extend their analysis into the First World War.

As an island nation governing the largest overseas empire in human history, the British Empire's home defence policy in the 19th and early 20th Centuries was undisputedly reliant on the naval supremacy of the Royal Navy. Naval theorists in the 1880s dubbed this doctrine the 'blue water' school.² It stipulated that no hostile army could ever invade and conquer Great Britain while the Royal Navy controlled the sea lanes. The Royal Navy's importance to home defence expanded by the mid-19th Century, because as the British Isles became increasingly dependent on imports, it made the invasion of Great Britain unnecessary to subjugate the British Isles. If a rival power ever achieved the naval supremacy necessary to invade Great Britain, then they could also establish a blockade forcing the country to capitulate. Even if Great Britain's home army defeated an invasion force, this would spare the country only weeks. It would be better not to even have a home army, 'blue water' advocates stated, because the funds would be better utilized by building more ships.

The 'blue water' rationale in British defence policy was not without its opponents. In the decades prior to the First World War, factions within the British nation began to question whether the Royal Navy provided the same protection it had in past centuries. The rapid technological development that came with the Industrial Revolution sparked a keen anxiety over whether Great Britain was now vulnerable from the sea, from the air, or even from below the earth. At the

² The British 'Blue Water' School in the late 19th Century was largely based in the writings of Royal Navy officer Philip H. Colomb, for the most concise record of Colomb's views see, P. H. Colomb, *Essays on Naval Defence* (London: W H Allen & Co Limited, 1893). The 'Blue Water' School was also heavily influenced by the writings of the United States Navy officer Alfred Thayer Mahan, see Alfred T. Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1890).

forefront of this newfound anxiety was the ‘bolt from the blue’ theory. In theory, with new mobilization machinery, namely steam ships and railroads, a hostile army could land on Great Britain before the Royal Navy would be able to intercept. The Continental European powers could send a fraction of their massive conscript armies across the sea in a sudden *coup de main*, dodging the Royal Navy and brushing the small British Army aside to conquer the British before the resources of the vast Empire could be brought to bare. With its large conscript army, growing navy, militarist tendencies and increasingly bellicose foreign policy, the German Empire presented the most terrifying foe to Britain in the early 20th Century.

In the 1960s, social and political historians began examining how the perennial fear of invasion, enflamed by newer theories such as the ‘bolt from the blue’, became ingrained within British society prior to the First World War. Beginning with I. F. Clarke’s seminal literary analysis of pre-war political writing and science fiction, *Voices Prophesizing War, 1763-1984*, (1966). Clarke identifies an escalation in the British fear of invasion in the decades prior to the First World War because of the increasingly powerful forces of “mass journalism, mass literacy, and the mass emotions of extreme nationalism”.³ The proliferation of these anxieties meant they became engrained in both popular and political culture. Initiated by George Tomkyns Chesney’s novella *The Battle of Dorking* (1871) which depicted a German invasion of Britain, the British people began to ravenously consume media predicting the future of warfare.⁴ Science fiction authors, political lobbyists and pundits followed Chesney’s example, and the morbid genre of ‘invasion

³ I. F. Clarke, *Voices Prophesying War 1763 - 1984* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), 64.

⁴ George Tomkyns Chesney, *The Battle of Dorking: Reminiscences of a Volunteer* (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1871).

literature' became popular. Best selling books such as Erskine Childers' *The Riddle of the Sands* (1903), William Le Queux's *The Invasion of 1910* (1906) and H. G. Wells' *The War in the Air* (1908), along with frequent articles in mass circulation newspapers such as *The Times* and the *Daily Mail* depict the importance invasion played in pre-First World War British culture.⁵

Clarke's literary examination set the foundation for much of the historical interpretation of how the fear of invasion impacted the United Kingdom socially and culturally before the First World War. Many other political and social studies of the pre-war United Kingdom expanded on Clarke's analysis. Samuel Hynes' *The Edwardian Turn of Mind* (1968) ties the rise of invasion literature to a growing anxiety within British society over the decline of the British Empire internationally and the perceived degradation of British morals.⁶ Cecil D. Eby's *The Road to Armageddon – The Martial Spirit in English Popular Literature, 1870-1914* (1987) examines how the prevalent themes in the pre-war literature were used to instill ideals of patriotism and militarism in British society.⁷ A.J.A. Morris' *The Scaremongers: The Advocacy of War and Rearmament 1896-1914* (1984) chronicles the campaign of "Teutophobia" in popular media in pre-war Britain, Morris argues the fear of invasion was a popular device used by the Northcliffe press to vilify Germany. Similarly, R. J. Q. Adams and Philip P. Poirier's *The Conscription Controversy in Great Britain, 1900-18* (1987) analyze how Britain's National Service League used the fear of invasion

⁵ Erskine Childers, *The Riddle of the Sands: A Record of the Secret Service* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1903); William Le Queux, *The Invasion of 1910* (London: MacMillan and Co., Limited, 1906); H. G. Well, *The War in the Air* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1908).

⁶ Samuel Hynes, *The Edwardian Turn of Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 34–53.

⁷ Cecil Degrotte Eby, *The Road to Armageddon: The Martial Spirit in English Popular Literature, 1870 - 1914* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987), 61–109.

as a rhetorical tool to lobby for the implementation of compulsory service in the pre-war United Kingdom.⁸

As the British people began participating in defence politics to an unprecedented degree, the United Kingdom's defence establishment was undergoing a period of upheaval. This shift followed the nearly disastrous British experience in the Second Boer War (1899-1902). The Committee of Imperial Defence (C.I.D.), established in 1903 to coordinate policy, was at the forefront of these reforms. The British Army underwent comprehensive change, beginning with the War Office (Reconstitution) Committee (referred to as the Esher Committee) and later with the reforms of the Secretary of State for War Richard Haldane (1906-1912). Additionally, the Anglo-German Naval Race was ongoing and intensified following the 1906 'Dreadnought Revolution'. Home defence played a role as well. Between 1903 and 1914, the C.I.D. convened three major sub-committees to investigate the security of the United Kingdom from invasion, specifically the 'bolt from the blue' theory.

Military and naval historians studying this period of reform regard home defence and the invasion inquiries as secondary issues within wider studies of the pre-war restructuring of Britain's defence establishment describing the invasion debate as an inter-service conflict between Britain's Army and Navy.⁹ The Army is often portrayed as the villain, engineering the 'bolt from the blue'

⁸ R J Q Adams and Philip P Poirier, *The Conscription Controversy in Great Britain, 1900 - 1918* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1987), 33.

⁹ Franklyn Arthur Johnson, *Defence by Committee: The British Committee of Imperial Defence 1885-1959* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960); Arthur J Marder, *From Dreadnought to Scapa Flow - The Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, 1904-1919 - Volume I The Road to War, 1904-1914* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961); Michael Howard, *The Continental Commitment: The Dilemma of British Defence Policy in the Era of the Two World Wars* (London: Temple Smith, 1972); Nicholas d'Ombrain, *War Machinery and High Policy: Defence Administration in Peacetime Britain 1902-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973); John Gooch, *The Plans*

argument as a method to expand the Army for their own purposes. This is best exemplified by the earliest of these authors, Franklyn Johnson, who alternates using ‘blue water’ and ‘bolt from the blue’ with ‘blue water’ and ‘big army schools’ to describe the participants in the C.I.D. inquiries.¹⁰ Following the Johnson’s precedent, Arthur Marder, Michael Howard, and Nicholas D’Ombrain make similar arguments regarding the aspirations of military officials who sought a large British Army, not for home defence, but to deploy overseas.¹¹ In contrast to these works, D’Ombrain and John Gooch characterize the Royal Navy as equally maniacal, arguing the Admiralty feigned concern over home defence to leash the British Expeditionary Force to Great Britain, so the Royal Navy could dictate offensive operations against Germany.¹² Invasion scares and the C.I.D. inquiries are treated as a sideshow political affair within the larger context of Britain’s defence reform that subsequently became irrelevant once the First World War began.

Arthur Marder and John Gooch recognize that there was an invasion scare of sorts in 1914.¹³ However, since neither believed an invasion was feasible, they limit their analysis of the invasion scare to brief descriptions of the decision-making process of the British high command.

of War: The General Staff and British Military Strategy c. 1900-1916 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974).

¹⁰ Johnson, *Defence by Committee: The British Committee of Imperial Defence 1885-1959*, 37.

¹¹ Marder, *From Dreadnought to Scapa Flow - Vol I*, 346–48; Howard, *The Continental Commitment*, 37–41; d’Ombrain, *War Machinery and High Policy*, 108–9.

¹² d’Ombrain, *War Machinery and High Policy*, 108–9; Gooch, *The Plans of War: The General Staff and British Military Strategy c. 1900-1916*, 293–95.

¹³ Arthur J Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow: The Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, 1904-1919 - Volume II The War Years: To the Eve of Jutland*, vol. 2, 6 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1965); John Gooch, *The Prospect of War, Studies in British Defence Policy 1847 - 1942* (London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1981), 14–16.

The result has been a noticeable disconnect in the history of the United Kingdom. Prior to the 1980s, neither military nor social historians comprehensively analysed how the fear of invasion influenced the United Kingdom's defence establishment and civilian population before or after the outbreak of war.

One exception is an unpublished PhD dissertation by Howard R. Moon, "The Invasion of the United Kingdom: Public Controversy and Official Planning, 1888-1918" (1962). Drawing on a wide breadth of sources from the lower ranks of Britain's defence establishment, Moon argues that in the pre-war period there was much more of a concern that the British Isles would be attacked in a war with Germany. He does not deny that inter-service rivalry was influential. Moon identifies the self-interest of the 'bolt from the blue' advocates as: "... home defence enthusiasts did not so much believe in invasion as in their own remedies against it."¹⁴ Likewise, Moon contends that within the politicized C.I.D. inquiries, Britain's armed services were compelled to adopt dogmatic arguments, either 'blue water' or 'bolt from the blue', to safeguard their interests. In contrast to earlier works, Moon recognizes that the C.I.D. inquiries represented only the public personas of the highest echelons of Britain's defence establishment, which were not representative of the whole. His work was also the first examination of the manifestation of these themes during the First World War itself. Detailing origins and events of the Invasion Scare of 1914, Moon was the first to argue that from October 1914 to February 1915, home defence of the United Kingdom became the primary focus of the British war effort.

Since the late 1980s, there has been a growing acceptance that home defence and the fear of invasion impacted the British war effort during the First World War. This view has been

¹⁴ Moon, "Invasion of the United Kingdom," 285.

especially prevalent within the naval historiography that has begun to accept that defending against a possible German invasion was a major priority of the defence establishment.¹⁵ Likewise, social histories of the British home front have noted, albeit sparingly so, that there was a fear of invasion on the British home front during the First World War.¹⁶ However, many of these works fail to contextualize the British fear of invasion with the pre-war experience or provide adequate evidence as to the persuasiveness of invasion panic across the home front.

Since the mid-2000s, several key works have expanded the social and military study of the fear of invasion. The first was K. W. Mitchinson's *Defending Albion: Britain's Home Army 1908-1919* (2005), a study of the United Kingdom's national defences.¹⁷ *Defending Albion* analyses themes of recruitment, manpower and operational policies for defending Great Britain before and during the First World War. The outpouring of voluntary enlistment for home defence in 1914 is identified as mandating the creation of a home army that would remain in place for the entire conflict. With such a large portion of the United Kingdom's resources prioritized to the British

¹⁵ Nicholas A Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1999); Shawn T. Grimes, *Strategy and War Planning in the British Navy, 1887-1918* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2012); Christopher M Bell, *Churchill and Sea Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); David G Morgan-Owen, "'History Is a Record of Exploded Ideas': Sir John Fisher and Home Defence, 1904-10," *The International History Review* 36, no. 3 (2014): 550–72; James Goldrick, *Before Jutland: The Naval War in Northern European Waters, August 1914-February 1915* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2015); David G Morgan-Owen, "An 'Intermediate Blockade'? British North Sea Strategy, 1912-1914," *War in History* 22, no. 4 (2015): 478–502; Richard Dunley, "Invasions, Raids and Army Reform: The Political Context of 'Flotilla Defence', 1903-5," *Historical Research* 90, no. 249 (2017): 613–35.

¹⁶ John Morton Osborne, "Defining Their Own Patriotism: British Volunteer Training Corps in the First World War," *Journal of Contemporary History* 23 (1988): 59–75; John Horne and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914 - A History of Denial* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001); Nicoletta F Gullace, *"The Blood of Our Sons" Men, Women and the Renegotiation of British Citizenship During the Great War* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

¹⁷ K. W. Mitchinson, *Defending Albion: Britain's Home Army 1908 - 1919* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

Isles, Michinson argues they are a historically unrepresented theatre of operations in the United Kingdom's war effort. In doing so, *Defending Albion* established itself as seminal text on the United Kingdom's defences in the First World War period.

Catriona Pennell's *A Kingdom United - Popular Responses to the Outbreak of the First World War in Britain and Ireland* (2012) studies British public opinion during the first five months of war.¹⁸ An expansion of Pennell's earlier study of invasion fears in 1914 Essex County, *A Kingdom United* ties the Invasion Scare of 1914 to a variety of popular reactions to war.¹⁹ Seeking to dispel the conflicting contentions on the British reaction being one of 'war enthusiasm' or of 'business as usual,' Pennell argues the reaction across the United Kingdom was far more nuanced across ethnic, class and regional lines. Pennell does not dispute that the popularly recorded memories of war enthusiasm hold some merit but argues "[a]cts and gestures should not overshadow the realm of imaginary – what ordinary people perceived to be true."²⁰ Thus, Pennell argues the Invasion Scare of 1914 was one of the principal strains on British society following the outbreak of the First World War.

David Morgan-Owen's *The Fear of Invasion: Strategy, Politics, and British War Planning, 1880-1914* (2017), provides an innovative look at defence policy in the pre-war period.²¹ Morgan-

¹⁸ Catriona Pennell, *A Kingdom United - Popular Responses to the Outbreak of the First World War in Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

¹⁹ Catriona Pennell, "'The Germans Have Landed?': Invasion Fears in the South-East of England, August to December 1914," in *Untold War: New Perspectives in First World War Studies*, ed. Heather Jones, Jennifer O'Brien, and Christoph Schmidt-Supprian (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 95–118.

²⁰ Pennell, *A Kingdom United*, 7.

²¹ David G Morgan-Owen, *The Fear of Invasion: Strategy, Politics, and British War Planning, 1880 - 1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

Owen identifies a ‘false dichotomy’ in the previous historiography created by historians actively aligning with a particular faction in the inter-service debates.²² Distancing himself from these debates and drawing on in-depth archival research, Morgan-Owen, like Moon, argues there were severe concerns among the higher and lower echelons of the British defence establishment that the British Isles would be raised or invaded if they went to war with Germany. Taking this concept to its logical conclusion, Morgan-Owen decries the British Empire’s war plans as being doctrinally defensive and therefore unprepared to wage a total war against Germany.

In the past sixty years, the historiography has reassessed both the military seriousness of the issue, and its relationship to the British Empire’s military and social history in the early 20th Century. Moon, Mitchinson and Morgan-Owen have successfully argued that the threat of German invasion was a serious consideration for the United Kingdom’s defence establishment in the pre-war and First World War periods. Pennell has shown the fear of invasion was present amidst the British homefront. The recent publication of *If The Kaiser Comes: Defence Against a German Invasion of Britain in the First World War* (2017) by Mike Osborne, an analysis of the construction of fortification on Great Britain during the First World War, indicates the topic will continue to receive historical attention.²³

Rich as the literature on defence policy is, historians have failed to provide a compelling account of the continuity between developments in the pre-war and wartime periods, leaving several important questions to be answered. The purpose of this thesis is to address the following unanswered questions. How did the British public’s understanding of invasion influence the

²² Morgan-Owen, 4.

²³ Mike Osborne, *If The Kaiser Comes: Defence Against a German Invasion of Britain in the First World War* (Fonthill Media, 2017).

deliberations of the defence establishment? Was public engagement in national defence perceived to burden policy-makers? If so, did the defence establishment attempt to solve this problem? Did the onset of the Great War change government thinking on this issue? This study seeks to answer these questions by addressing the importance the fear of invasion to British civil-military relations, before and during the First World War.

This thesis will argue that invasion was indisputably the most public and controversial aspect of British defence policy before and during the initial stages of the First World War. The prospect of a hostile army marching through the countryside was an image that terrorized British society, the sheer breadth and consumption of 'invasion literature' indicates this. The defence of hearth and home was far more imperative to the average British citizen than the defence of distant colonies. The defence of the British Isles also required the greatest level of cooperation between the armed services, the civil service and professional politicians. Thus, the formulation of British home defence policy was not only an important strategic deliberation for Britain's defence establishment, but also the cornerstone of British civil-military relations.

The relationship between the fear of invasion and civil-military relations in the United Kingdom became irrevocably more intricate in the decades prior to the First World War. Past naval and military historians have downplayed the impact that political lobbying, especially from civilian sources, had on home defence policy, but this approach is misguided. Before the First World War, the United Kingdom's defence establishment acknowledged the importance that the perceived threat of invasion exerted amongst British society. In doing so, the defence establishment predicted the growing status that civilian morale and the homefront would come to have in modern warfare. However, despite attempts to do so, the defence establishment failed to implement measures to manage Britons' fear of invasion. Following the onset of the First World War, this deficiency

helped bring about and escalate the Invasion Scare of 1914. Facing increasing public criticism over Great Britain's preparedness for invasion, the British Government fashioned the United Kingdom's first civil defence apparatus. Intended to both calm invasion hysteria and further militarize the British Isles, for many Britons the creation of this anti-invasion civil defence network represented the entry of the United Kingdom into a truly total war.

Seeking to link the deliberations of the United Kingdom's defence establishment with the British public's understanding of national defence issues, this study draws on a variety of archival sources. The upper echelons of the British defence establishment are represented through archival documents retrieved from the United Kingdom's National Archives, chiefly those created by the Committee of Imperial Defence, the Admiralty, the War Office and the Home Office. The private papers of policy-officials have also been used to frame the analysis. The civilian perspective of national defence is represented through the lens of national mass-circulation newspapers such as *The Times*, *Daily Mail*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Spectator*, *The Pall Mall Gazette* and *Manchester Guardian*. Additionally, political debates voiced in the Houses of Parliament and the activities of public interest and lobbyist groups, such as the United Kingdom's National Service League, are also cited to depict both the priorities of average citizens and of policy-makers.

This study begins in early 1911, a transitory period as the United Kingdom's defence establishment dealt with possible war during the Second Morocco Crisis. Chapter one encompasses the period from 1911 to July 1914, in which the defence establishment acknowledged that attack on the British Isles was becoming more likely than at any time since the Napoleonic Wars. This acknowledgement culminated with the 1913 Committee of Imperial Defence Sub-Committee on Attack on the British Isles from Overseas. The public controversy generated over home defence during the Sub-Committee's proceedings reveal that as strategic concerns mounted,

so too did the British public's anxiety over possible invasion. This in turn bred a corresponding acknowledgement amidst the defence establishment that public criticism could detrimentally influence wartime operations. Despite this recognition, the government of Prime Minister Herbert Asquith and the defence establishment, out of political expediency, failed to address this public alarm.

Chapter two begins in August 1914, with the United Kingdom's entry to the First World War. The fear of invasion did not re-emerge within British society upon the outset of war, but by October 1914, with discouraging events on all fronts, the British reverted to their perpetual fear. With the widespread fearmongering across the British press and the Government conspicuously quiet, Britons began taking national security into their own hands. As paramilitary groups began to organize across the country, public criticism of the Asquith Government's failure to pacify the home front mounted.

Finally, chapter three examines the United Kingdom's defence establishment decision making process concurrent to the British descent into invasion hysteria depicted in the previous chapter. The United Kingdom's defence establishment had its own serious concerns over the British Army's manpower crisis and the Royal Navy's precarious position in the North Sea, prompting extensive precautions against invasion. However, by December 1914, the strategic worries became secondary to rising public hysteria. To quell this hysteria, the United Kingdom fashioned its first civil defence apparatus.

Highlighting the fear of invasion amongst British society offers new perspective on the social and military history of the United Kingdom during the First World War. The direct threat to the British Isles can be used to contextualize how Britons conceptualized the United Kingdom's entry into and role in the conflict. Consequently, home defence had a defining role in the

establishment of the 'homefront' mentality across British society. The fear of invasion, both as a feasible prospect and an imaginary threat, also directly impacted Britain's war effort. Admirals, generals and politicians acknowledged its societal importance and accordingly altered the United Kingdom's war effort to defend against this public terror.

**Chapter I – “The Rich, the Proud, and the Unprepared”: The Politics of British Home
Defence Policy, 1911 - 1914**

On 25 January 1910, the indomitable First Sea Lord of the Royal Navy, Admiral John Fisher, retired from his post. Best known as the man who initiated the so-called ‘Dreadnought Revolution,’ Fisher had guided the Royal Navy through one of the most innovative periods in its long history. This illustrious and controversial legacy continues to be debated amongst historians to this day. Even in retirement, Fisher had little intention of withdrawing from debates on the United Kingdom’s defence policy. With his newfound free time, he continued to discuss and advise policy-makers and commentators. In one such case, Fisher sent journalist J. A. Spencer an old Admiralty memorandum he doctored to reflect his belief that the purpose of Great Britain’s home army, nominally in place to protect against invasion, was in fact “to comfort the old women of both sexes!”²⁴

Despite Admiral Fisher’s vehement ‘blue water’ belief that questioning the Royal Navy’s ability to defend the United Kingdom was preposterous, just as he made his jibe at the home army, the United Kingdom’s defence establishment began to disagree. Between 1911 and 1914, the core principles of British home defence were called into question, culminating with the Committee of Imperial Defence’s 1913-14 Sub-Committee on Attack on the British Isles from Overseas. A direct attack on the British Isles was now considered a tangible threat. As this threat became increasingly evident to the public, Britain’s defence establishment also had to acknowledge the effect it would have on British civil-military relations. Despite this recognition, the Liberal government of Prime

²⁴ John Fisher to J. A. Spencer, 27 February 1911 in Arthur J Marder, ed., *Fear God and Dreadnought - The Correspondence of Admiral of the Fleet Lord Fisher of Kilverstone*, Vol 2. (London: Jonathan Cape, 1952), 359.

Minister Herbert H. Asquith and the armed services consistently obscured the specifics of defence deliberations from the public eye. Conjecture, gossip and the press ruled public discourse and scandalized the formulation of home defence policy. The result was, when the United Kingdom entered the First World War, the British people were left wondering whether their country was truly safe from foreign invasion.

Of the three Committee of Imperial Defence (C.I.D.) Sub-Committees on Attack on the British Isles from Overseas convened before the First World War, the third and final, held from January 1913 to April 1914, has received the least academic analysis. Since the conclusions reached in 1913 were seemingly identical to those put forward in 1907, most studies have overlooked the significance of that final meeting. This oversight is due to the fact much of the historiography has failed to examine the development of home defence policy outside the realm of the C.I.D. Rather than a reconfirmation of the previous inquiries, the 1913 C.I.D. Sub-Committee was responding to new circumstances and its proceedings portrayed a greater sense of urgency absent from the two earlier sub-committees.

The political climate of the Second Moroccan Crisis of 1911 generated the impetus for reform in British home defence policy. As Germany and France diplomatically clashed over imperial possessions in North Africa and a general European war loomed, the United Kingdom was forced to address how it would uphold its alliance obligations to France and wage war against Germany. In doing so, the Second Moroccan Crisis of 1911, more commonly known as the Agadir Crisis, set in motion a series of events that would prompt a major reassessment of British home defence policy. Firstly, the immediate threat of war revealed flaws within Britain's home defence infrastructure that made several defence policy-makers question its feasibility. Despite this concern, the crisis also saw the United Kingdom commit to war plans that contradicted several of

the conclusions of the 1907-8 C.I.D. Invasion Sub-Committee. The result was that following 1911, the home defence policy of the United Kingdom was in flux and increasingly inadequate.²⁵

The Agadir Crisis, although centred on events in North Africa, directly challenged the home defence infrastructure of the United Kingdom. On 21 July 1911, *The Times* reported that the Germans High Seas Fleet had begun its annual cruise off the Norwegian North Sea coast.²⁶ The Germans had informed the British Foreign Office they intended to go ahead with the cruise despite the ongoing crisis, but the move still shocked the British defence establishment. The same day, Director of Naval Intelligence Admiral Alexander Bethell anxiously wired British diplomat Sir Arthur Nicolson as to whether the Foreign Office had intelligence on the location or schedule of the German Fleet.²⁷ Bethell's anxiety was understandable because the unthinkable had occurred. Amongst the squalls and fog of the North Sea, the German High Seas Fleet had vanished.

Years earlier, the British government had been given assurances that what was unfolding in July 1911 was impossible. These assurances were made by the 1907-1908 C.I.D. Invasion Sub-Committee, which had been prompted by the political lobbying of Britain's National Service League (N.S.L.). The N.S.L. campaigned for the implementation of conscription in the United Kingdom, and often used threat of invasion as a rhetorical device. In 1907, the N.S.L.'s leadership, the Committee of Four, made up of its president, former British commander-in-chief Lord

²⁵ Samuel R Williamson Jr., *Politics of Grand Strategy: Britain and France Prepare for War, 1904-1914* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), 167–204; Gooch, *The Plans of War: The General Staff and British Military Strategy c. 1900-1916*, 289–92; Morgan-Owen, *The Fear of Invasion: Strategy, Politics, and British War Planning, 1880 - 1914*, 196–202.

²⁶ *The Times*, 21 July 1911, p. 5.

²⁷ Admiral Bethell to Sir A. Nicholson, July 21, 1911 in Gooch, G. P., and Harold Temperley, eds. *British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898 - 1914. Vol VII The Agadir Crisis*. (London: Johnson Reprint Ltd, 1932).

Fredericks Roberts, *The Times* military correspondent Charles à Court Repington, Lord Lovat, and Sir Samuel Scott, put a new twist on the ‘bolt from the blue’ theory.²⁸ They claimed the German Empire could embark an invasion fleet completely unbeknownst to the British intelligence. In their minds, this necessitated a conscript reserve to resist a surprise invasion.

After convincing former prime minister and leader of the Unionist Party Arthur J. Balfour, the N.S.L. compelled the Liberal Government of Prime Minister Henry Campbell-Bannerman to convene the second C.I.D. Sub-Committee on Overseas Attack.²⁹ The conscriptionists’ charge was successfully parried by the Admiralty, the War Office and the Foreign Office, each of which gave assurances such an invasion force would certainly be detected in port or at sea. However, naval opinion was not as unified as the Admiralty made it seem. The British Naval Attaché in Berlin, Captain Philip Dumas, had warned in the years preceding the C.I.D. Inquiry that although invasion was impracticable, the Germans were capable of undertaking sizable naval operations in complete secrecy.³⁰ The C.I.D. rejected the N.S.L.’s recommendations, but in July 1911, Dumas was vindicated.

Following the disappearance of the German High Seas Fleet on 24 July 1911, Anglo-German relations continued to deteriorate. On the night the High Seas Fleet put to sea, Chancellor

²⁸ Adams and Poirier, *The Conscription Controversy in Great Britain, 1900 - 1918*, 34–36.

²⁹ “Notes on Invasion Supplied to Mr. Balfour”, 20 July 1907, The National Archives [hereafter TNA] CAB 38/13/27.

³⁰ Captain Philip Dumas, *Invasion of England by Raids from North Sea Coast Towns*, 25 November 1906, TNA FO 371/80; Captain Philip Dumas, *Report on the German Navy for 1907*, 12 February 1908, TNA FO 371/458; Captain Philip Dumas, *The Relations between Germany and England from a Naval Point of View*, 30 July 1908, TNA FO 371/461 in Seligmann, Matthew S., ed. *Naval Intelligence from Germany - The Reports of the British Naval Attachés in Berlin, 1906-1914*. (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007) p. 52-56, 134-152, 168-182.

of the Exchequer David Lloyd George gave a speech at the London Mansion House condemning Germany's actions in Morocco and declaring Britain's intent to uphold its international alliances.³¹ German diplomats vehemently protested Lloyd George's remarks. Sir Arthur Nicholson informed Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey on July 24th that he had spoken with Captain Charles Ottley, the Secretary of the C.I.D., who had repeatedly warned that the German Fleet could be in position for a 'bolt from the blue'.³² Ottley explained the 1907-1908 C.I.D. Invasion Sub-Committee had predicated its conclusion that surprise invasion was impossible on the assumption that a period of strained international relations would provide time for the Royal Navy and home army to mobilize; and what was the Agadir Crisis if not a period of strained international relations? Yet the Royal Navy was dangerously spread across British ports, unprepared, and the professional head of the Navy, First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Arthur Wilson, was on vacation.³³ Indeed, the situation appeared dire enough for Grey, following a message from the German Ambassador, to remark to Home Secretary Winston Churchill that "... the Fleet might be attacked at any moment. I have sent for [First Lord of the Admiralty Reginald] McKenna to warn him!"³⁴

By 26 July the German High Seas Fleet had still not been located and George Macdonough, the head of British military espionage, was asked for assistance. He took the matter to his superior, Director of Military Operations (D.M.O.) Brigadier General Henry Wilson. Wilson, who already

³¹ *The Times*, 22 July 1911, p. 7.

³² Sir A. Nicholson to Sir Edward Grey, 24 July 1911 in Gooch, G. P., and Harold Temperley, eds. *British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898 - 1914. Vol VII The Agadir Crisis*. (London: Johnson Reprint Ltd, 1932) p. 625.

³³ Marder, *From Dreadnought to Scapa Flow - Vol I*, 242–43.

³⁴ Winston Churchill, *The World Crisis*, vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1923), 44.

had a low opinion of the Royal Navy, had previously described the Home Fleet as “thoroughly frightened” and recorded in his diary that night that “our Admiralty have lost the German Fleet + have asked us to find them... The whole thing is like a Pantomime.”³⁵ Agents were dispatched to investigate German ports, but before they arrived the German Fleet was located on the 27th. However, the damage to Britain’s home defence policy was already done. The experiences of July 1911 showed the conclusions given in the 1907-1908 C.I.D. Invasion Sub-Committee were erroneous.

Despite mounting concern over the viability of Britain’s home defence infrastructure, another faction within Britain’s defence establishment sought to use the Agadir Crisis to commit the United Kingdom to waging offensive war. The Secretary of State for War Richard B. Haldane and D.M.O. Brigadier General Henry Wilson were this movement’s champions. Wilson, whom Naval Assistant Secretary to the C.I.D. Maurice Hankey believed had “a perfect obsession for military operations on the Continent”,³⁶ saw an opportunity to enshrine the British Army’s ‘continental commitment’ in official doctrine. Plans for dispatching an expeditionary force to France’s aid in the event of war with Germany had begun in January 1906 but until 1911 they remained unofficial.³⁷ Haldane and Wilson began lobbying for a special meeting of the C.I.D. to discuss the United Kingdom’s plans in the event of war between the Triple Entente and Triple

³⁵ Adrien Grant-Duff Diary, 7 October 1910, McMaster University Archives RC0197; Nicholas P. Hiley, “The Failure of British Espionage against Germany, 1907-1914,” *The Historical Journal* 26, no. 4 (1983): 881.

³⁶ Keith Jeffrey, *Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson A Political Soldier* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 91.

³⁷ John Gooch, “Haldane and the ‘National Army,’” in *Politicians and Defence: Studies in the Formulation of British Defence Policy 1845-1970*, ed. Ian Beckett and John Gooch (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1981), 73–74.

Alliance. Hankey correctly surmised D.M.O Wilson's political lobbying and attempted to warn McKenna that Lord Fisher and Lord Esher, opponents of the 'continental commitment', were abroad and could not be relied upon for support.³⁸ Additionally, Fisher had consistently advised McKenna to rely on Hankey, and not First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Arthur Wilson, to present the Royal Navy's objectives in political circles.³⁹ McKenna did not heed either warning.

On 23 August 1911, the C.I.D. convened for its 114th Meeting. A gathering of such importance that it has been described by historian Samuel Williamson Jr. as the C.I.D.'s "only excursion before 1914 into the realm of grand strategy and overall strategic co-ordination."⁴⁰ In a presentation complete with detailed maps and mobilization timetables, D.M.O. Wilson laid out the General Staff's plans for intervention in a continental war. He correctly predicted that Germany would violate Belgium's neutrality to invade France through a corridor extending from Luxembourg to Liège. Given the disparity in mobilization speed and army size between the two, by the fifteenth day of war, Wilson believed Germany would be able to deploy an estimated eighty-four divisions to France's sixty-three. France would swiftly be defeated. Germany would then remobilize its armies on its eastern frontier to combat the still mobilizing Russian Empire. Wilson recommended only one course of action, the dispatch of the British Expeditionary Force (B.E.F.). He calculated if the entire B.E.F., six infantry divisions and one cavalry, took up positions on the French left-flank just before the Germans achieved numerical superiority then the French line

³⁸ Stephen Roskill, *Hankey: Man of Secrets - Volume I 1877-1918* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1970), 101.

³⁹ Fisher to Mrs. Reginald McKenna, 18 May 1911; Fisher to Reginald McKenna, 20 August 1911 in Arthur J Marder, ed., *Fear God and Dreadnought - The Correspondence of Admiral of the Fleet Lord Fisher of Kilverstone*, Vol 2., 359.

⁴⁰ Williamson Jr., *Politics of Grand Strategy*, 191.

would hold.⁴¹ A shrewd political officer, Wilson had put forth a scenario in which the only thing that stood in the way of the German domination of Europe was the British Army.

After D.M.O. Brigadier Wilson's Army proposal, it fell to First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Arthur Wilson to present the Royal Navy's war plans. "In this battle of the Wilsons," Hankey recorded, "the grim old First Sea Lord was no match for the witty and debonair Director of Military Operations."⁴² Admiral Wilson's counter-proposal to the plan to dispatch the B.E.F. to France's aid, was a series of joint Navy-Army operations aimed against the German North Sea coast, within the Heligoland Bight. The Royal Navy, using its overwhelming naval supremacy would establish a close blockade of the German ports, destroying or sealing off the German High Seas Fleet. Wilson also proposed amphibious assaults against the islands of Sylt and Wangeroog to establish advanced bases for further assaults against Wilhelmshaven, Bremerhaven, Cuxhaven, and Kiel. This amphibious pressure, Wilson argued, would draw vast numbers of German troops away from United Kingdom's allies, as "even if no actual success is gained, the mere fact of keeping the field army in motion must tend to exhaust their resources."⁴³

The Admiralty's plan for a naval offensive into the Heligoland Bight garnered serious criticism, much of which was directly connected to British home defence policy. The Royal Navy had consistently stated prior to 1911 that in the event of an attempted invasion, British coastal-

⁴¹ War Office, "The Military Aspect of the Continental Problem – Memorandum by the General Staff", 15 August 1911, TNA CAB 38/19/47.

⁴² Maurice Hankey, *The Supreme Command 1914 - 1918*, vol. 1 (London: George Allen and Unwin Limited, 1961), 81.

⁴³ Admiralty, "Remarks by the Admiralty on Proposal (b) of the Memorandum by the General Staff", 21 August 1911, p. 2, TNA CAB 38/19/48.

based torpedo craft would provide a sufficient second line of defence to defeat an invasion fleet.⁴⁴ This theory had been upheld publicly in January 1911 in the second edition of General Ian Hamilton's book *Compulsory Service*. Included within was a leaked Admiralty memorandum entitled "Notes Containing the Admiralty View of the Risk of Invasion", which carried Admiral Wilson's initials (but was actually scripted by Admiral Sydney Fremantle).⁴⁵ Those present, including Chief of the Imperial General Staff (C.I.G.S.) Field Marshal William Nicholson and Churchill, questioned Admiral Wilson's rationale as to why British torpedo craft could defend the British coast, but German torpedo craft were supposedly powerless to the British fleet.⁴⁶ This criticism has formed a strong consensus within naval historiography as many works condemn the theories of Admiral Wilson. Recent examination, however, have shown Admiral Wilson's strategies were not as detached from contemporary naval thinking as many commentators have claimed. Torpedo craft were recognized as a threat to armored battleships, but the 1911 naval exercises had convinced Admiral Wilson the best tactical countermeasure was maintaining a close blockade on German ports to prevent the torpedo craft from escaping into the North Sea.⁴⁷

Nevertheless, Admiral Wilson had conflated tactics with strategy. Compared to D.M.O. Wilson's grand strategic vision for defeating the Triple Alliance, the commander of the Royal Navy had presented battle plans rather than war plans. Furthermore, the Admiralty's failure to

⁴⁴ Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution*, 124–25, 134, 164.

⁴⁵ The Admiralty Memorandum had originally been produced for the War Office's reference. Ian Hamilton, *Compulsory Service - A Study on the Question in Light of Experience*, Second Edition (London: J. Murray, 1911), 209–12; Morgan-Owen, *The Fear of Invasion: Strategy, Politics, and British War Planning, 1880 - 1914*, 199.

⁴⁶ Grimes, *Strategy and War Planning in the British Navy, 1887-1918*, 166–67.

⁴⁷ Grimes, 168–69; David G Morgan-Owen, "Cooked up in the Dinner Hour? Sir Arthur Wilson's War Plan, Reconsidered," *The English Historical Review* 130, no. 545 (2015): 881–89.

properly coordinate its plans with the British Army was equally discouraging as well as unrealistic. Hankey remarked that Admiral Wilson's plans had been "cooked up in the dinner-hour",⁴⁸ while Ottley would later state other admirals considered them "lunatic".⁴⁹ Churchill, having already criticized the Royal Navy response in July 1911, was particularly disappointed in Admiral Wilson.⁵⁰ Secretary of State for War Richard Haldane declared he would resign his post unless the Admiralty organized a proper war staff.⁵¹ Prime Minister Asquith agreed, saying Wilson's plans were "puerile".⁵²

The 23 August 1911 C.I.D. Meeting shattered the preconceptions of British home defence policy. They were left struggling to find a coherent doctrine for years to come. Lacking viable naval war plans, Asquith approved D.M.O. Wilson's plans as in his words, "in principle, the General Staff scheme is the only alternative."⁵³ D.M.O. Wilson and the British Army were authorized to strengthen ties with the French General Staff. The Royal Navy, sidelined in offensive

⁴⁸ Hankey, *The Supreme Command 1914 - 1918*, 1:81.

⁴⁹ Nicholas A Lambert, "Strategic Command and Control for Maneuver Warfare" Creation of the Royal Navy's 'War Room' System 1905-1915," *The Journal of Military History* 69, no. 2 (2005): 389.

⁵⁰ As Home Secretary, Churchill was aghast to discover on July 27, 1911 that Royal Navy dockyard magazines were unprotected, and he demanded their protection. When the Admiralty refused, Churchill used his own authority to dispatch police constables to guard the naval infrastructure and later requested support from Secretary of State for War Richard Haldane. Churchill, *The World Crisis*, 1:47-48.

⁵¹ Marder, *From Dreadnought to Scapa Flow - Vol I*, 246-47.

⁵² Morgan-Owen, "Cooked up in the Dinner Hour? Sir Arthur Wilson's War Plan, Reconsidered," 866.

⁵³ John Gooch, "Adversarial Attitudes: Servicemen, Politicians and Strategic Policy, 1899-1914," in *Government and the Armed Forces in Britain, 1856 - 1990*, ed. Paul Smith (London: Hambledon Press, 1996), 73.

operations, was forced onto the defensive and discovered its defensive schemes were lacking. With the majority of the British Regular Army committed to operations on the continent, questions were also raised as to whether the existing military defences were sufficient. Influencing both developments was ongoing and escalating public pressure that exacerbated the burden on defence policy-makers.

The Royal Navy's lackluster performance during the Agadir Crisis and amidst the C.I.D. prompted upheaval in the Admiralty. Asquith replaced McKenna with Churchill in October 1911, who subsequently replaced Admiral Sir Arthur Wilson with Admiral Sir Francis Bridgeman in December 1911. Bridgeman spent just over a year in the position, before Admiral Prince Louis of Battenberg replaced him. Under Churchill's increasingly imposing command over the Admiralty, the Royal Navy's offensive doctrine was re-evaluated. The viability of the Royal Navy's planned 'close' blockade of German ports in the event of war, as exemplified by Admiral Arthur Wilson's 23 August proposals, came under scrutiny. As the Admiralty would later explain to the C.I.D.:

The continuous development of the mine and the torpedo make it impossible to establish a close watch on the exits from the Heligoland Bight with heavy ships. To do so for a long period of time would mean a steady and serious wastage of valuable units from the above causes, and, if prolonged, would effectually alter the balance of naval power.⁵⁴

Unwilling to risk dangerously exposing the Royal Navy's ships, the decision was made to abandon plans for a close blockade of the German North Sea coastline.

The withdrawal of the blockade line created a myriad of operational, logistical and strategic difficulties for the Royal Navy. The most serious of which was that Britain's East Coast was now dangerously exposed to naval or amphibious attack. Without a constant British naval presence in

⁵⁴ Committee of Imperial Defence, "Attack on the British Isles from Overseas", 15 April 1914, p. 15, TNA CAB 38/26/13

the Heligoland Bight, reliable intelligence on the movements of the German High Seas Fleet was impossible. In the event of hostilities, this meant the intelligence failure of July 1911 would become the norm and the Royal Navy would be unable to intercept hostile raids before they reached the East Coast. As Churchill would later testify to the C.I.D. in March 1913, the Royal Navy's ability to prevent hostile landings "depended upon where the blockading line was drawn".⁵⁵ Put simply, the Admiralty had to choose between the safety of the fleet or the British coast. Attempts to reconcile these two objectives formed the principal struggle in Royal Navy planning before and during the First World War.

In early 1912, Chief of the War Staff Rear-Admiral Ernest Troubridge put forth his solution to this strategic dilemma. Troubridge envisioned a compromise between a close or distant blockade by establishing an 'intermediate' or 'observational' blockade consisting of a series of mid-North Sea patrols of light cruisers and destroyers, a cordon striking across the North Sea from southern Norway to the Dutch coast.⁵⁶ It was hoped the patrols would protect the East Coast by allowing enough early warning of any sizable German naval action, giving the British fleet time to intercept. Despite Troubridge's optimism, intermediate blockade faced criticism from other admirals who believed that rather than providing intelligence as to German intentions, Troubridge was dangerously exposing Royal Navy vessels. The isolated patrols would be susceptible to defeat in detail by more powerful German squadrons allowed to mobilize unmolested in the Heligoland Bight. With reservations swelling, Churchill ordered the war plans halted until they could be tested.

⁵⁵ Committee of Imperial Defence, "Minutes of the 1st Meeting", 18 March 1913, p. 30, TNA CAB 16/28A.

⁵⁶ Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution*, 263–64.

The intermediate blockade strategy was trialed during the July 1912 annual naval manoeuvres. The scenario envisioned a friendly 'Blue' fleet defending against an enemy 'Red' fleet tasked with ferrying an invasion force to British shores. The 'Blue' Fleet was ordered to use a cordon of light cruisers and destroyers to patrol the mid-North Sea in accordance with the concept of an intermediate blockade. On 18 July the 'Red' Fleet, under the command of Admiral George Callaghan, bypassed the defending 'Blue' patrols and successfully landed 28,000 men on the Yorkshire coast without interruption.⁵⁷ Intermediate blockade had failed; the Royal Navy had too few light vessels to maintain a proper patrol.

After the intermediate blockade plan was found to be ineffective, the Admiralty implemented a 'distant' blockade. Admiral Callaghan, Commander-in-Chief of the Home Fleet, was given new war plans on 25 November 1912 calling for the Royal Navy to "exercise pressure upon Germany by shutting off German shipping from oceanic trade through the action of patrolling cruisers on lines drawn across the approaches to the North Sea".⁵⁸ The two points of entry to the North Sea were the northern entrance, between the northern tip of Scotland and the Norwegian coast, and the southern entrance, the Dover Straits. The main battle fleet, which came to be known as the Grand Fleet, was to be based in Northern Scotland. Callaghan noted that this effectively meant "the British coasts themselves [were] the only true and certain line of observation."⁵⁹

With Great Britain's eastern coastline now the front line in a hypothetical North Sea theatre, the Admiralty shifted strategies from intercepting an invasion force to improving coastal

⁵⁷ Morgan-Owen, "An 'Intermediate Blockade'? British North Sea Strategy, 1912-1914," 488.

⁵⁸ Marder, *From Dreadnought to Scapa Flow - Vol I*, 371.

⁵⁹ Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution*, 266–67.

defences. A system of coastal patrols of torpedo craft, destroyers, light cruisers and submarines had been in place along the East Coast since 1908 and was expanded by Churchill in 1912.⁶⁰ The Admiralty recommended in 1912 that the Humber river estuary's defences be upgraded, an indication the enemy was now expected to reach the coast unopposed.⁶¹ The seriousness of coastal defence in 1913 is exemplified by Chief of the War Staff Vice Admiral Henry Jackson's admission that the battle fleet would be unable to interrupt raids and thus the country would have to "trust to our flotillas and shore batteries to inflict much damage to them during the raid."⁶² The use of 'flotilla defence' to protect the coastline had been Admiral Wilson's undoing at the 23 August 1911 C.I.D. meeting as well as the reason the Royal Navy decided to withdrawal from the Heligoland Bight. However, the British East Coast did not have the defensive attributes of the Heligoland Bight. The Royal Navy had too few ships to cover 600 miles of coastline. Moreover, the combat effectiveness of the battle fleet held precedence, as most modern torpedo craft were assigned to protect the Grand Fleet.⁶³ In 1913, the Admiral of Patrols, the commander of all coastal flotillas, had only four obsolete cruisers, seventy-four destroyers and eighteen submarines under his command.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Churchill announced the expansion during his parliamentary presentation of the 1912 Naval Estimates. Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, 5th Series, *Commons* Vol. 35 (18 March 1912) col. 1550 - 1584.

⁶¹ Committee of Imperial Defence, "Report and Proceedings of the Standing Sub-Committee on the North-East Coast Defences", 29 November 1912, p. 8, TNA CAB 38/22/41.

⁶² Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution*, 268.

⁶³ Lambert, "Strategic Command and Control for Maneuver Warfare" Creation of the Royal Navy's 'War Room' System 1905-1915," 394.

⁶⁴ Winston S. Churchill, "Notes by the First Lord of the Admiralty," March 29, 1913 excerpted in, Churchill, *The World Crisis*, 1:165.

These deficiencies became apparent during the naval manoeuvres conducted the following year. The results proved equally discouraging with regards to the Royal Navy's ability to defend the East Coast. These manoeuvres were held as the 1913-1914 C.I.D. Invasion Sub-Committee was already in session, but the exercises influenced the proceedings. Again, a friendly 'Blue' Fleet was tasked with defending against a 'Red' Fleet seeking to invade Great Britain. On multiple occasions the 'Red' Fleet, commanded by Vice Admiral Sir John Jellicoe, successfully landed troops along the East Coast, upwards of 60,000 troops. The coastal defence flotillas disappointed. They disrupted one landing but were defeated in every other instance.⁶⁵ Many officials, including Maurice Hankey now Secretary of the C.I.D., who had attended the exercises voiced their displeasure at the abilities of the home fleet.⁶⁶ In fact, the 'Red' Forces were so successful, Churchill decided to end the manoeuvres early, "lest we might teach the Germans as well as ourselves."⁶⁷

Between 1911 and 1914 the Royal Navy did not abandon the 'blue water' school. Many of the traditional principles of sea power remained constant and the withdrawal of the blockade line was a wise decision given the evolving strategic realities in the North Sea. Further, the Royal Navy did not believe a surprise 'bolt from the blue' invasion was possible. Such a feat was still outside the operational capacity of the German Navy and would likely be interrupted by the Royal Navy. Instead, the Royal Navy merely admitted that Germans could now hypothetically land smaller

⁶⁵ Christopher M Bell, "The Myth of Naval Revolution by Proxy: Lord Fisher's Influence on Winston Churchill's Naval Policy, 1911-1914," *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 38, no. 7 (2015): 1033.

⁶⁶ Roskill, *Hankey: Man of Secrets - Volume I 1877-1918*, 127.

⁶⁷ Churchill, *The World Crisis*, 1:154.

scale amphibious raids. Over the course of 1913, the Admiralty admitted a hostile contingent of upwards of 20,000 to 30,000 men could likely land on Great Britain's East Coast unopposed.⁶⁸

The level of material damage such an enemy force could inflict was minimal. However, the Admiralty portrayed a striking anxiety over the potentially disastrous affect raids could have on the Royal Navy's prestige. Such a raid, or even mere threat of one, could provoke panic to limit the navy's wartime operational capabilities. Years earlier, in the preparation for the 23 August 1911 C.I.D. meeting, the Admiralty summed up this quandary by stating,

In the absence of practically the whole Regular Army the Navy will also have the responsibility for preventing raids and the panic arising therefrom thrown on it an increasing degree... Any failure on the part of the Army to deal promptly with a raiding party, however small, which lands on our shores, will lead to demands from the public and the press for ships to be attached permanently to the coast and this could only be done by weakening the watch on the enemy.⁶⁹

At the time of the meeting, this statement was a desperate attempt to prevent the dispatch of the B.E.F. By 1913, the Admiralty's concern that attacks on the British coast would weaken the Royal Navy's operational freedom was palpable.

Similar sentiments were voiced by Director of Operations Division Captain George Ballard in the aftermath of the 1912 manoeuvres. Ballard warned that without reliable intelligence on German naval movements in the North Sea, the Royal Navy would be forced to defend the coast itself. Ballard summarized his opinions in September 1912:

⁶⁸ Admiralty, "Notes by the First Lord of the Admiralty (Address to the Admiralty War Staff)", 18 April 1913; Admiralty, "Notes by the First Lord of the Admiralty (Addressed to the First Sea Lord)(Marginal Notes by First Sea Lord)(A)", 26 April 1913; Admiralty, "Notes by the First Lord of the Admiralty (Addressed to the First Sea Lord)(Marginal Notes by First Sea Lord)(B)", 24 April 1913 excerpted in Churchill, 1:165.

⁶⁹ Admiralty, "Remarks by the Admiralty on Proposal (b) of the Memorandum by the General Staff", 21 August 1911, p. 2, TNA CAB 38/19/48.

If long stretches of coast and lines of outer commercial blockade have to be protected against the enemy's fleets in this way – as would be necessary in the case of a defence of our position against Germany – such a plan would involve the maintenance of separate battle fleets at many points such as the Thames, the Humber, the Forth, Cromarty and Scapa Flow, besides cruisers and destroyers. This system of defence is, in fact, the most expensive of all...⁷⁰

Evidently, Ballard believed it was inefficient and dangerous for the battle fleet to be scattered across the British Isles. These statements indicate the Admiralty was beginning to place great importance on ensuring the British people of their safety.

The Admiralty's concern over public morale was justified. Since the Agadir Crisis, and after a Member of Parliament (M.P.) disclosed the Royal Navy's ill-preparation, criticism of the Admiralty had been mounting.⁷¹ While the strategic debates within the Admiralty were hidden from public view, the naval manoeuvres were not. Although Churchill attempted to suppress the publication of the specifics of the naval manoeuvres by banning journalists and naval attachés, information of the Royal Navy's failures in 1912 and 1913 quickly leaked.⁷² *The Times* and the *Daily Mail* reported and ran editorials on the landings in detail.⁷³ Advocates for change in British

⁷⁰ George Ballard, "Remarks on War Orders for an Observation Forces in the North Sea in connection with the lessons of the 1912 Manoeuvres", 16 September 1912, p. 1a, TNA ADM 116/866B.

⁷¹The M.P. was Captain Walter Faber. Ima Christina Barlow, *The Agadir Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1940), 318–19.

⁷² *Daily Mail*, June 27, 1912, p. 7.

⁷³ For reports on the 1912 Naval Manoeuvres see, *Daily Mail*, 20 July 1912, p. 3; *Daily Mail*, 22 July 1912, p. 7; *Daily Mail*, 10 September 1912, p. 6; *The Times*, 22 July 1912, p. 5; *The Times*, 31 July 1912, p. 7; *The Times*, 7 August 1912, p. 8. For the 1913 Naval Manoeuvres see, *Daily Mail*, 23 July 1913, p. 6; *Daily Mail*, 25 July, 1913, p. 5; *Daily Mail*, 26 July 1913, p. 6; *Daily Mail*, 28 July 1913, p. 8; *Daily Mail*, 13 August 1913, p. 6; *Daily Mail*, 8 November 1913, p. 5; *The Times*, 9 July 1913, p. 3; *The Times*, 22 July 1913, p. 6; *The Times*, 25 July 1913, p. 8; *The Times*, 28 July 1913, p. 6.

home defence policy were keen to highlight the failures of the ‘blue water’ school and the embarrassment of the 1912 and 1913 naval manoeuvres presented the perfect target. Charles Repington, in one his more deplorable acts, revived a character he first imagined in 1911 to comment on the naval manoeuvres in *The Times*. This was Colonel von Donner und Blitzen, a fictional member of the German General Staff. In a series of ‘letters’ over the summer of 1913, the Colonel gleefully detailed the naval manoeuvres and how they proved that a German invasion of the United Kingdom was possible.⁷⁴ Herr Donner und Blitzen concluded that a German invasion was now more likely than ever, as “[w]as there ever in history a temptation so great as the successful invasion of Albion the rich, the proud, and the unprepared?”⁷⁵

With the Royal Navy forced on the defensive, Churchill informed his friend and colleague Secretary of State for War John Seely that the Royal Navy could not guarantee the security of the British East Coast.⁷⁶ This news was no doubt unwelcomed by Seely who had faced near constant criticism over the existing system of military home defence since his appointment in June 1912. This too was tied to the decisions made at the August 23rd, 1911 C.I.D. meeting. In his proposal for the continental commitment, D.M.O. Wilson argued that for the B.E.F. to be successful, it was imperative that all six Regular Army infantry divisions stationed in the United Kingdom be immediately dispatched to the continent. This proposal conflicted with the conclusions of the 1907-1908 C.I.D. Invasion Sub-Committee that the retention of Regular Army divisions in the

⁷⁴ *The Times*, 27 August 1913, p. 5; *The Times*, 2 September 1913, p. 5; *The Times*, 8 September 1913, p. 5.

⁷⁵ *The Times*, 2 September 1913, p. 5.

⁷⁶ Lambert, *Sir John Fisher’s Naval Revolution*, 268–69.

United Kingdom was necessary because the country's dedicated home army, the Territorial Force (T.F.), was deemed an insufficient military defence against an invading force.

Proposed by the Territorial and Reserve Forces Act of 1907 and officially established in April 1908, the T.F. was designed to act as the United Kingdom's home army. Created as a portion of Haldane's reorganization of the British Army, the T.F. was an amalgamation of Britain's antiquated auxiliary forces, the Volunteers and the Yeomanry. It was established with an intended strength of 302,199 officers and men, later expanded to 315,000. As a reservist army, Territorials served for four-years, trained on weekends, and attended a yearly fifteen-day training exercise.⁷⁷ Territorials were only mandated for service in the British Isles and could not be compelled to fight in any overseas conflict. Whereas the Special Reserve, Britain's other major reservist formation, was designed to act as reinforcement for the Regular Army and could serve at home or abroad.

The T.F. was never intended to combat a full-scale invasion, which had, in any event, been declared "impossible" by the Royal Navy. Rather, as envisaged by the C.I.D. in 1908 and announced publicly by Asquith on 29 July 1909, the T.F. was to:

... be sufficient in numbers and organization not only to repel small raids, but to compel an enemy who contemplates invasion to come with so substantial a force as will make it impossible for him to evade our fleets.⁷⁸

Thus, the T.F. was expected to combat raids, but essentially acted as a deterrent. The C.I.D. estimated that the largest force that could cross the North Sea without naval interception was

⁷⁷ Territorial and Reserve Forces Act, 1907, in War Office, *Manual of Military Law*. (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1914). 753 – 776.

⁷⁸ Committee of Imperial Defence, "Invasion – Report of a Sub-Committee appoint by the Prime Minister to reconsider the question of Oversea Attack", 22 October 1908, p. 9, TNA CAB 38/14/11.

70,000 lightly armed troops. Therefore, as Asquith announced to the House of Commons that the “margin of force for maintaining home defence should be one capable of dealing with an invading force of 70,000 men.”⁷⁹ The roughly 315,000 men of the T.F. would act in concert with Regular Army garrisons of defended ports, to provide sufficient local defence as well as a mobile central field army to combat enemy landings.

In announcing the principles of military home defence in 1909, Asquith concealed the other conclusions of the 1907-1908 C.I.D. Sub-Committee. Many defence policy-makers voiced concerns that the T.F. was ill-prepared to combat professional German soldiers. Lord Roberts felt four Territorials were not equal to a single German regular.⁸⁰ This deficiency had been recognized during the T.F.’s creation. It was planned that in the event of war, the entire T.F. would be embodied and begin a comprehensive training regime to bring them up to Regular Army standards. However, if the entire B.E.F. left the British Isles immediately, there would be a dangerous period in which the untrained Territorials would not be able to defeat 70,000 trained enemy troops. In 1908, the C.I.D. mandated that two Regular Army divisions be retained in the United Kingdom for at least six months to allow time for the T.F. to train and combat raids if necessary.⁸¹ While defence policy-makers were aware of this, Asquith failed to mention this to the House of Commons when he announced the conclusions of the Sub-Committee in July 1909.

⁷⁹ Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, 5th Series, *Commons* Vol. 8 (29 July 1909) col. 1389.

⁸⁰ Committee of Imperial Defence, “Invasion – Report of a Sub-Committee appoint by the Prime Minister to reconsider the question of Oversea Attack”, 22 October 1908, p. 8, TNA CAB 38/14/11.

⁸¹ Committee of Imperial Defence, “Invasion – Report of a Sub-Committee appoint by the Prime Minister to reconsider the question of Oversea Attack”, 22 October 1908, p. 9, TNA CAB 38/14/11.

D.M.O. Wilson's proposals on 23 August 1911 threatened to negate the C.I.D.'s earlier conclusions. If all six infantry Regular divisions left British shores, the United Kingdom would be dangerously exposed for the six month period between the T.F.'s embodiment and completion of its training. To investigate the ramifications of this, the Director of Military Training (D.M.T.) General Archibald Murray was summoned to testify before the C.I.D. As D.M.T., Murray was responsible for peacetime home defence planning. Murray assured the C.I.D. that the T.F. was sufficient to repel possible raids, and the B.E.F. should be allowed to proceed to France.⁸²

Asquith agreed with D.M.O. Wilson's August 1911 proposal to send the B.E.F. to France's aid. However, he remained committed to the conclusions of the C.I.D. Invasion Sub-Committee that only four divisions should be dispatched immediately. Shortly afterwards, Asquith informed Haldane of this.⁸³ However, it appears Asquith was either not clear enough or Haldane did not accept the order as he failed to inform the War Office. Lord Esher, who had also been briefed on Asquith's views of the B.E.F., noted that the War Office was operating contradictory to the Prime Minister's wishes. Esher wrote that Asquith's views "would astonish dear old Pussy [Haldane] and the General Staff. If they, as they do, think that their strategic plan would be feasible, they are highly mistaken."⁸⁴ Moreover, much of Britain's political leadership, including the opposition Unionist Party, also believed after August 1911 that the whole of the Regular Army in the United

⁸² Hankey, *The Supreme Command 1914 - 1918*, 1:82.

⁸³ Williamson Jr., *Politics of Grand Strategy*, 193.

⁸⁴ Esher to M.V.B., October 4, 1911; Esher Journal, October 4, 1911 in Brett, Maurice, V, ed. *Journals and Letters of Reginald Viscount Esher*. Vol 3. (London: Ivor Nicholson & Watson Limited, 1934), 60 – 62

Kingdom would be sent to France.⁸⁵ Asquith's failure to properly announce his views on the size of the B.E.F. was a grave mistake, as it led to the widespread public assumption that the onus of the military defence of the United Kingdom was now on the T.F.

Assumption turned to fact in February 1912. Between 1908 and 1911, all military defensive schemes of the United Kingdom had been drawn up under the assumption that the 4th and 6th Regular Army Infantry Divisions would remain in country for at least the first months of war.⁸⁶ However, in February 1912, new military defensive plans were drafted that allowed for the possibility that no Regular Army divisions would remain in country. The only Regular Army troops in the United Kingdom would be those garrisoning defended ports and the 11,000-man 'flying column' of uncommitted Regulars.⁸⁷ Each of the seven home command districts were informed their defensive schemes should not account for the presence of Regular Army troops, and should only involve the Royal Garrison Artillery, Royal Engineer garrisons, Special Reserve troops, and the T.F.⁸⁸

Following 1911, the military framework for home defence set down publicly by Asquith became gradually untenable as indications the T.F. could not fulfill its obligations became increasingly known. Even at the formations' peak of enlistment, it was still 17% below its 315,000-

⁸⁵ Rhodri Williams, *Defending the Empire - The Conservative Party and British Defence Policy 1899 - 1915* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 215.

⁸⁶ Mitchinson, *Defending Albion: Britain's Home Army 1908 - 1919*, 35–36.

⁸⁷ Moon, "The Invasion of the United Kingdom," 437.

⁸⁸ Mitchinson, *Defending Albion: Britain's Home Army 1908 - 1919*, 37.

manpower establishment.⁸⁹ Even more alarming was the lack of re-enlistment amongst Territorials, with only half of those whose enlistments expired in 1912 choose to rejoin.⁹⁰ Inexperience and youth burdened the formation. During the 1912 annual training exercises, only 155,000 out of 252,000 serving Territorials reported for duty and a further 6,000 left before permitted.⁹¹ These problems were compounded by a lack of proper equipment. Modern Lee Enfield rifles had yet to be distributed, and most Territorial artillery batteries were armed with obsolete 15-pounder guns and 5-inch howitzers.⁹²

Criticism of the T.F. amongst Britain's defence establishment began to mount as officers and policy officials publicly declared the formation's failure. The War Office ordered a thorough study of the T.F.'s efficiency in 1909, and by late 1911 the assessments had been completed. Each of the home commands reported little to no improvement of the T.F. Many, including Lieutenant-General A. Paget, commander of the crucial Eastern Command, voiced concerns that even after months of training, professional soldiers would easily beat the Territorials.⁹³ Director of Staff Duties Launcelot Kiggell surmised that these reports indicated that even after six months of

⁸⁹ K. W. Mitchinson, *The Territorial Force at War, 1914-1916* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 16.

⁹⁰ Peter Dennis, *The Territorial Force 1906 - 1940* (Woodbridge: Royal Historical Society, 1987), 24–25.

⁹¹ Mitchinson, *Defending Albion: Britain's Home Army 1908 - 1919*, 38.

⁹² Ian F. W. Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition, 1558-1945* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), 219.

⁹³ War Office, "Reports of General Officers Commanding-in-Chief as to the relative value of Territorial Troops as compared with corresponding units and formations of the Regular Army", 1911, TNA WO 32/9192.

training, it was unlikely nine divisions of Territorials would be able to defeat four professional German divisions.⁹⁴

Despite these disheartening figures, much of the General Staff was not concerned about the T.F. The War Office was convinced the decisive battles of the coming war would be decided on the Continent, and thus, to many officers, the combat efficiency of the Territorials was inconsequential. Even if the Germans did mount a direct attack, the Royal Navy was the main line of defence. However, as the structural faults of the T.F. became increasingly known in 1912, an anxiety began to rise in the War Office akin to the concerns within the Admiralty. If the Germans launched small-scale raids against Great Britain, it was likely professional German soldiers could achieve temporary victory against the Territorials. If raids occurred, or were even threatened, the Government might bow to political pressure and retain portions of the Regular Army at home, to the detriment of the B.E.F. This dilemma is well documented in several of Launcelot Kiggell's reports. In consultation with other officers including D.M.O. Henry Wilson, Kiggell made no allusions as to the weaknesses of the T.F. The formation's foremost ailment, Kiggell argued, was public perception. His report stated,

So far as the present is concerned, the task of the T.F. is clear; and its fighting power is sufficient for that task. But, even so, unless public opinion be educated to accept this belief we run serious danger of the whole, or part, of the Expeditionary Force being retained in these Islands, and of the Navy being seriously hampered in offensive action⁹⁵

Despite Kiggell's desire to educate the British public as to the realities of the T.F., the War Office had failed to do so. Just as it had with the deterioration of the naval aspects of home defence,

⁹⁴ Launcelot Kiggell, "Reports of the G.O.'s C. in C. on the efficiency of the Territorial Force", 12 January 1912, p. 1, TNA WO 32/9192.

⁹⁵ Launcelot Kiggell, "Reports of the G.O.'s C. in C. on the efficiency of the Territorial Force", 12 January 1912, p. 4, TNA WO 32/9192.

public pressure matched the increasing professional concern over the viability of the T.F. However, unlike the Royal Navy, the T.F. did not have centuries of prestige to fall back on, and thus faced far more dogmatic hostility. In October 1912, the N.S.L. launched a fresh campaign for the implementation of conscription. Joined by the National Defence Association, another lobbyist group, the lynchpin of this dual campaign was highlighting the deficiencies of the T.F.⁹⁶ Lord Roberts underwent a busy speaking circuit, delivering his most impassioned speech in Manchester on 22 October. Roberts announced the “Territorial Force is now an acknowledged failure – a failure in discipline, a failure in numbers, a failure in equipment, a failure in energy”.⁹⁷ Two conscription bills were proposed in parliament in 1913. The first, proposed by M.P. George Sandys in the House of Commons, sought conscription to bring the T.F. up to strength.⁹⁸ The second, raised in the House of Lords by Lord Willoughby de Broke, was a bizarre piece of legislation calling for the conscription of only ‘gentlemen’, meaning those of higher education or income.⁹⁹ Both bills were defeated.

Despite the lack of legislative progress, the N.S.L. continued to pour criticism on the T.F. Unsurprisingly, Charles Repington and *The Times* were at the forefront of the N.S.L.’s media campaign. Repington’s most frequent criticism had to do with the idea that three reservists were

⁹⁶ The National Defence Association included – Sir George Taubman Goldie (President), Bedford, Cheylesmore, Fortescue, T. F. Fremantle, Glenconner, R. Martin Holland, Arthur Leatham, Lovat, Walter H. Long, Methuen, Peel, Charles A.C. Repington, Scarborough, Samuel Scott, R. C. Temple, Frank D. Watney, S. H. Godman (Secretary)

⁹⁷ *The Times*, 23 October 1912, p. 5.

⁹⁸ Adams and Poirier, *The Conscription Controversy in Great Britain, 1900 - 1918*, 47.

⁹⁹ Denis Hayes, *Conscription Conflict - The Conflict of Ideas in the Struggle for and Against Military Conscription in Britain between 1901 and 1939* (London: Sheppard Press, 1949), 134–35.

equal to one professional soldier. Repington stated if this ratio was to be believed and if the enemy landed with 70,000 men, the T.F. would need a countrywide strength of 600,000 men to mount a counter-attack. It would be impossible to do so without dangerously denuding garrisons in other parts of the country.¹⁰⁰ Other right-wing newspapers followed Repington's lead. The *Daily Mail* ran dozens of articles condemning the Territorial Force over the course of 1911 – 1914. Much of the content and criticism was the same as Repington's, but the headlines were far more sensational. "Territorial Farce", "Territorial Breakdown", "Territorial Imposture" and "Make-Believe Army" were commonly used.¹⁰¹ *The Spectator*, a conservative academic journal, was a frequent commentator as well. *The Spectator's* editor, John St. Loe Strachey, who believed an invasion was imminent had been organizing volunteer defence formations since 1902 and had been a leading voice for the establishment of the National Reserve in 1910.¹⁰² Even the British Army's qualms over the T.F. did not remain confined to the War Office. Between 1911 and 1914, the *Royal United Services Institute*, a British defence publication, was inundated with articles written by politicians, Regular Army officers, Territorial officers, occasionally using aliases, disparaging the T.F.

¹⁰⁰ *The Times*, 7 February 1913, p. 7; *The Times*, 28 February 1913, p. 6.

¹⁰¹ For "Territorial Farce" see, *Daily Mail*, 15 April 1913, p. 5; *Daily Mail*, 17 April 1913, p. 8-9; *Daily Mail*, 18 April 1913, p. 9; *Daily Mail* 26 April 1913, p. 5. For "Territorial Breakdown" see, *Daily Mail*, 31 January 1913, p. 6; *Daily Mail*, 1 February 1913, p. 3; *Daily Mail*, 4 February 1913, p. 3; *Daily Mail*, 8 February 1913, p. 3; *Daily Mail*, 10 February 1913, p. 5; *Daily Mail*, 11 February 1913, p. 6; *Daily Mail*, 20 February 1913, p. 5; *Daily Mail*, 5 April 1913, p. 5. For "Territorial Imposture" see, *Daily Mail*, 8 November 1912, p. 8; *Daily Mail*, 9 November 1912, p. 4; *Daily Mail*, 13 November 1912; *Daily Mail*, 14 November 1912, p. 6; *Daily Mail*, 24 January 1913, p. 4. For "Make-Believe Army" see *Daily Mail*, 28 November 1912, p. 8; *Daily Mail*, 1 January 1913, p. 4; *Daily Mail*, 14 July 1913, p. 6.

¹⁰² The National Reserve was a roster of former Regular Army and Territorial Force members. They were not required to report for service in anyway, but the government could request their services in the event of a national emergency. Moon, "The Invasion of the United Kingdom," 545.

Common criticisms included the poor standards of training, the shortage of officers and non-commissioned officers, low recruiting rates, and the necessity of a more efficient national reserve.¹⁰³

Such was the political climate regarding naval and military home defence when Asquith decided to call for a new C.I.D. Sub-Committee on Overseas Attack in January 1913. The exact reason Asquith called the new inquiry is unknown, although it was likely prompted by urging from both Churchill and Seely. The Sub-Committee's proceedings indicate there was greater professional concern over home defence than in previous inquiries. The interception of an invasion force of 70,000 men or greater, previously stated by the Admiralty in 1908 as an "absolute certainty

¹⁰³ See for example, Colonel A. J. A. Wright, "The Probable Effects of Compulsory Military Training on Recruiting for the Regular Army," *Royal United Services Institution* 55, no. 406 (1911): 1589–1610; Colonel S. A. E. Hickson, "The Development of Our System of National Land Defence," *Royal United Services Institution* 56, no. 409 (1912): 303–22; Colonel E. A. Lambart, "The Value of Territorial Artillery," *Royal United Services Institution* 56, no. 413 (1912): 989–96; Colonel H. H. Mulliner, "The Supply of Horses for the Territorial Force," *Royal United Services Institution* 56, no. 412 (1912): 807–24; Colonel the Rt. Hon. Earl Fortescue, "Discussion on the Most Pressing Requirements of the Territorial Force with Special Reference to Recruiting," *Royal United Services Institution* 56, no. 408 (1912): 209–38; Lieutenant-Colonel G. Le M. Gretton, "The Raising of the National Reserve in a Country District," *Royal United Services Institution* 56, no. 410 (1912): 529–52; Major H. L. Pritchard, "The Best National System for Providing the Necessary Military Force: (I) To Secure the Safety of the United Kingdom on Land; (II) To Support the Defence of the Empire; (III) To Assist in Maintaining the Balance of Power in Europe," *Royal United Services Institution* 56, no. 414 (1912): 1075–1120; Tanj, "The Territorial Force," *Royal United Services Institution* 56, no. 407 (1912): 37–51; Colonel J. G. Hicks, "The National Reserve," *Royal United Services Institution* 57, no. 423 (1913): 661–66; Colonel H. C. C. D. Simpson, "The National Reserve," *Royal United Services Institution* 57, no. 423 (1913): 666–70; Footslogger, "The Best Possible as Applied to the Territorial Infantry Force," *Royal United Services Institution* 57, no. 429 (1913): 1501–2; General Sir E. P. Leach, "The National Reserve," *Royal United Services Institution* 57, no. 419 (1913): 102–7; Major F. K. Windeatt, "Some Reasons for the Shrinkage in the Territorial Force, and Several Suggested Remedies," *Royal United Services Institution* 57, no. 430 (1913): 1649–57; Colonel P. E. F. Hobbs, "The Army Service Corps of the Territorial Force," *Royal United Services Institution* 58, no. 436 (1914): 727–54; Invicta, "A Few Suggestions for the Improvement of the Territorial Force," *Royal United Services Institution* 58, no. 433 (1914): 389–94; Lieutenant-Colonel W. Campbell Hyslop, "Suggestions for the Improvement of the Territorial Force," *Royal United Services Institution* 58, no. 436 (1914): 810–12

or guarantee” was now to be a “reasonable expectation”.¹⁰⁴ The C.I.D. reasserted that the “bolt from the blue” theory of surprise invasion was unlikely to occur, given such a feat would be “unprecedented in the history of civilized nations.”¹⁰⁵ While an invasion was doubtful according to the Admiralty, the possibility of a raid was not. Whereas the earlier invasion inquiries had focused on discerning the probability of hypothetical attack on the British Isles, the 1913-1914 Sub-Committee portrayed greater concern for preparing the British Isles for such attacks. The two priorities of the C.I.D. reflect the naval and military difficulties that had arisen in the previous years, the navy’s dilemma in the North Sea and the efficiency of the T.F.

Most of the hypothetical raid scenarios put forth in the C.I.D. were predicated on the assumption that the Germans would launch an attack to delay or prevent the dispatch of the B.E.F. and ultimately disrupt the Admiralty’s war plans. Again, this depicts the concern amongst Britain’s defence establishment that the Germans may exploit British public opinion to achieve a military victory. The War Office announced that:

No sound strategist would employ any part of his forces on a raid merely to cause damage, unless that damage were expected in some way to influence the decisive events of the war... Damage, or even the threat of damage, which might be expected to influence popular opinion in such a degree as to result in forces being diverted from their strategical role, would be a legitimate objective... Popular terror might lead to the whole, or a considerable part, of an army or fleet being diverted altogether from a decisive battle.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Quoted in Moon, “The Invasion of the United Kingdom,” p. 442

¹⁰⁵ Committee of Imperial Defence, “Attack on the British Isles from Overseas”, 15 April 1914, p. 6, TNA CAB 38/26/13.

¹⁰⁶ War Office, “Appendix I: Notes by the General Staff on Mr. Balfour’s Memorandum of 1905 on the Possibility of a Raid by a Hostile Force on the British Coast”, March 1913, p. 330, TNA CAB 16/28A

The Admiralty's position mirrored that of the War Office but from the naval perspective. Churchill, Prince Louis of Battenberg and Henry Jackson warned that unless:

... adequate military force is maintained in Great Britain, naval operations will be greatly hampered and complicated... There is also the grave danger that, at a time when a decisive naval battle is impending or it is in progress, the Government or some Board of Admiralty may be led by the anxiety of having a defenceless country at its back to make some fatal division of forces necessary to secure victory.¹⁰⁷

These statements demonstrate that the armed services during the 1913 C.I.D. Invasion Sub-Committee were unified in acknowledging that public concern over home defence could detrimentally influence their strategic deliberations.

The Royal Navy's strategic dilemma was demonstrated by the reaffirmation of a 1905 figure that for a raid to be interrupted, the battle fleet needed to be within 300 miles of the combat zone. This reality was a serious admission because with the Grand Fleet now based at Scapa Flow, located 600 miles from Dover, it was highly unlikely raids on the South East Coast could be interrupted.¹⁰⁸ Therefore, the C.I.D. recommended Great Britain's early warning intelligence infrastructure along the East Coast be improved, to lower the response time of the fleet.

The existing coast guard system was deemed inadequate for wartime, as it was primarily tasked with nautical accidents and policing smuggling. Additionally, most coast guard personnel were also naval reservists and would leave their posts in the event of mobilization. To remedy these faults the Admiralty, with cooperation from the War Office, Home Office and Board of Trade established new protocols for the coast watch. Although the lack of manpower within the coast

¹⁰⁷ Winston Churchill, Prince Louis of Battenberg, Henry Jackson, "Appendix XXIII: Landings from Overseas", 25 June 1914, p. 449, TNA CAB 16/28A.

¹⁰⁸ Committee of Imperial Defence, "Attack on the British Isles from Overseas", 15 April 1914, p. 16, TNA CAB 38/26/13.

guard upon naval mobilization was not remedied, new special service sections were to be raised to keep watch over predicted landing sites. Municipal authorities and the police were also to be provided with new protocols for rapidly informing London of enemy landings.¹⁰⁹ New plans for the deployment of thirteen Territorial cyclist battalions to patrol the coast were also drawn up.

The C.I.D. placed a priority on redistributing resources to the East Coast to make up for the deficiencies of the T.F. The Humber's defences were to be upgraded again in May 1914 and the C.I.D. recommended Harwich and the Tyne River also be fortified.¹¹⁰ The Admiralty and War Office also jointly recommended in February 1914 that the garrisons of fourteen defended home ports (predominantly on the South and West coasts) be reduced, a total of thirty-six battalions.¹¹¹ Eleven and a half battalions were committed to reinforcing the garrisons of East Coast defended ports, while the War Office remobilized the remaining twenty-four and a half battalions into the mobile army and increased coastal defence. Finally, the Admiralty put in place new units tasked with destroying or blocking ports to avoid their capture by the enemy.¹¹² These remedies hardly solved the Royal Navy's strategic difficulties in the North Sea. The Admiralty remained preoccupied with how to place the Royal Navy on a more offensive footing until the beginning,

¹⁰⁹ Committee of Imperial Defence, "Coast Defences of the United Kingdom and the Question of a Coast Watch", 7 May 1914, TNA CAB 38/27/19; Committee of Imperial Defence, "Methods of Passing Intelligence of Hostile Raids to the Admiralty and War Office", 23 December 1913, TNA CAB 38/25/41.

¹¹⁰ Committee of Imperial Defence, "Coast Defences of the United Kingdom", 8 May 1914, TNA CAB 38/27/21; Committee of Imperial Defence, "Attack on the British Isles from Overseas", 15 April 1914, p. 19, TNA CAB 38/26/13.

¹¹¹ Committee of Imperial Defence, "Coast Defences of the United Kingdom and the Question of a Coast Watch", 7 May 1914, TNA CAB 38/27/19.

¹¹² Committee of Imperial Defence, "Measures to Prevent the Blocking of Commercial Harbours", 24 February 1914, TNA CAB 38/26/8.

and for much of the duration, of the First World War.¹¹³ This shows how the fear of attack on the British Isles continued to influence the strategic thinking of Britain's defence establishment. Nevertheless, the C.I.D.'s implementation of stronger coastal defences and intelligence apparatus limited the possible impact of hostile raids which was the main professional strategic naval concern regarding home defence.

Addressing the state of the T.F. was the C.I.D.'s other major task in 1913-1914. Most of the high command of the Regular Army was called to testify as to the Force's efficiency, as well as a contingent of generals commanding the Territorial Force itself.¹¹⁴ The C.I.D. concluded the criticism of the Territorial Force over the past years was certainly justified and that the combat effectiveness of the Force was an unknown factor. Given these reservations, the C.I.D. concluded "our army for Home Defence ought to be sufficient in numbers, organization *and efficiency* not only to repel small raids, but to compel an enemy who contemplates invasion to with so substantial a force as will make it impossible for him to evade our fleet."¹¹⁵ The new addition of "and efficiency" indicates there was a general acceptance that the T.F. was too weak to combat 70,000 professional soldiers. Therefore, the C.I.D. recommended that two divisions of the Regular Army should be retained in the United Kingdom for at least six months upon the outbreak of war.

¹¹³ Grimes, *Strategy and War Planning in the British Navy, 1887-1918*, 181-99.

¹¹⁴ Those who testified included General Sir John French (Chief of the Imperial General Staff), Lieutenant-General Sir James Grierson (Commander-in-Chief Eastern Command), Brigadier D. Henderson (Director of Military Training), Major-General E. C. Bethune (Director General of the Territorial Force), Major-General W. Fry (First London Division), Major-General Sir A. E. Codrington (General Officer Commanding the London District), Major-General C. C. Munro (General Officer Commanding the Second London Division), Major-General H. I. W. Hamilton (General Commanding the North Midland Division) and Major-General T. S. Baldock (General Commanding West Riding Division).

¹¹⁵ Committee of Imperial Defence, "Attack on the British Isles from Overseas", 15 April 1914, p. 25, TNA CAB 38/26/13. Their Emphasis.

Although, as previously mentioned, this recommendation had not been included in army planning since 1911. C.I.G.S. Sir John French admitted as much to the Invasion Sub-Committee, shocking Asquith who at last realized the War Office's contradictory planning.¹¹⁶ Despite being discovered, D.M.O. Wilson was infuriated the B.E.F. was to be limited. Asquith, again seeking the path of least political resistance with the Army and acting inconsistent, privately informed Wilson five divisions would be dispatched. This satisfied Wilson.¹¹⁷

. While the C.I.D. Sub-Committee was able to calm much of the professional concerns with British home defence policy, it utterly failed to address the ongoing public concern. Even with the recognition of the importance of public morale to home defence, the C.I.D. focused on addressing tactical and strategic problems rather than discussing public opinion itself. The actions of defence policy-makers prior to the First World War indicate they decided the best course of action was non-engagement. Unwillingness within the government and armed services to address these civil-military relations faults led to the narrative falling out of their control. Certainly, much of the criticism that fell on the Asquith Liberal Government over its defence policy can be attributed to partisan politics as *The Times*, the *Daily Mail*, and *The Spectator*, as well as the National Service League and the National Defence Association, all had strong ties to the Unionist Party. Regardless of their political leanings, the opposition to the Asquith Government's home defence policy was significant. *The Times* was one of the most influential newspapers in British politics and reported a daily circulation of 53,130 in 1913 which grew to approximately 170,000 by May 1914.¹¹⁸ The

¹¹⁶ Committee of Imperial Defence, "Minutes of the 4th Meeting", 18 April 1913, p. 50, TNA CAB 16/28A

¹¹⁷ Jeffrey, *Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson A Political Soldier*, 126–27.

¹¹⁸ *The Times*, 9 May 1914, p. 8.

Daily Mail was the United Kingdom's most popular newspaper, reporting a circulation of 768,850 per day for their fiscal year of 1913.¹¹⁹ The sheer weight of public discussion within the press and in parliament indicates that the British public knew the home defence of the United Kingdom was being reassessed behind closed doors.

Yet the Asquith Government and the armed services were strikingly silent on their activities. Arthur Lee, Member of Parliament and frequent critic of the Asquith Government's defence policy, had this to say regarding the state of British home defence:

I do not think the question of public morale as distinct from the morale of the military forces, is sufficiently considered in our military policy... It is inevitable – the history of every country shows it – that in time of war, at the very first threat of war, there would be throughout the country a popular outcry and a demand from all kinds of localities and particular places near the coast for local protection, either by the Navy or the Army.¹²⁰

Lee's statements mirrored the concerns being voiced within the C.I.D. Yet, the armed services made no effort to inform the British people as to the deliberations and remedies being formulated within the C.I.D. Lee's statements also prophesize what was to occur in 1914.

The hesitance amongst the defence establishment to inform the public of the new realities of home defence was symptomatic of a longstanding problem. It is clear the armed services only had a vague understanding of their wartime powers within the United Kingdom. The existing procedures for the implementation of martial law were antiquated and the General staff has been recommending reform since the 1880s.¹²¹ The British Army's concerns were well documented in

¹¹⁹ *Daily Mail*, 30 March 1914, p. 4.

¹²⁰ Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, 5th Series, *Commons* Vol. 56 (30 July 1913) col. 561 – 564.

¹²¹ David French, *British Economic and Strategic Planning 1905-1915* (London: George Allen and Unwin Limited, 1982), 74–75.

a January 1914 *Royal United Services Institute* article. Its author, Colonel W. G. Simpson, derided the fact that British municipal authorities had no systematic guidance on how mobilization would affect the country or how to prepare their constituencies for attack.¹²² Simpson suggested the creation of new machinery for coordinating civil-military relations, akin to the established system in France, to better prepare the British people for war.

During previous attempts at reform, the political leadership and armed services consistently dodged the opportunity in fear their activities would escalate the situation and spark a panic. Given the prevalence of invasion scares in the early 20th Century, this fear was understandable, but evidently misguided. In 1909, the War Office requested the Cabinet formulate a new Emergency Powers Act that would be implemented should Britain enter a civil or military emergency. The Cabinet insisted the existing procedures were adequate, despite the fact they consisted of 576 pages of laws.¹²³ Later, while the C.I.D. 1913 Invasion Sub-Committee was in session, the War Office instigated the formation of an ancillary C.I.D. Sub-Committee on Emergency Powers in War. Hankey explicitly stated the importance of ascertaining the legal powers of the armed services in situations of imminent or actual invasion. The War Office concurred, wishing further clarification on the legality of erecting fortifications on private property. The Attorney General Sir John Simon

¹²² W. G. Simpson, "The Duties of Local Authorities in War Time," *Royal United Services Institution* 58, no. 431 (1914): 5–30.

¹²³ Charles Townshend, *Making the Peace: Public Order and Public Security in Modern Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 45–46.

favoured an ad-hoc system of Royal Proclamations and Executive Action rather than a new emergency powers act.¹²⁴ Few were satisfied with this decision.

While politicians were partially to blame for the lack of wartime preparedness, the War Office was equally responsible for creating these issues. In 1909, the War Office approached the Home Office to collaborate on preparing coastal towns for possible attack. The plan called for the evacuation of supplies and transport should parts of the country fall under enemy occupation. The War Office initially specified that it is “unnecessary that secrecy in the matter should be maintained.”¹²⁵ Home Office Permanent Secretary Edward Troup threw himself into the task, corresponding with Chief Constables across the country, drawing up detailed plans per county, and printing leaflets and notices to be distributed to the populace.¹²⁶ However, after a parliamentary candidate in Lincolnshire revealed Troup’s activities to the press, the War Office reneged on its earlier statements regarding secrecy. They first stalled then later ended the project in early 1913 over fears it would create a panic and exacerbate the public concern over the T.F.¹²⁷

During the 1913 Invasion Sub-Committee meeting, neither the War Office nor the Admiralty made any proposals to address public opinion, nor did they even mention their previous

¹²⁴ For a summary of the 1914 C.I.D. Sub-Committee on Emergency Powers in War, see Bone, Andrew G., “Beyond the Rule of Law: Aspects of the Defence of the Realm Acts and Regulations, 1914-1918” (unpublished McMaster University PhD Thesis, 1994), 50-53.

¹²⁵ War Office to Home Office, 7 June 1909, TNA HO 45/10596/187501/4.

¹²⁶ For documents pertaining to Edward Troup’s development of evacuation schemes from 1909 to 1912, see HO 45/10596/187501/9-34.

¹²⁷ The parliamentary candidate was Timothy Davies, he would later be elected to the House of Commons in December 1910, representing Louth Constituency. For articles on and the reaction to his leaking of the Home Office’s activities, see TNA HO 45/20596/187501/24; War Office to Home Office, 18 February 1913, TNA HO 45/10596/187501/35.

collaboration with the Home Office. Oddly, the lone member of the Sub-Committee to factor in how the British public could be co-opted to lessen the morale impact of raids, was Admiral Arthur Wilson. If Britain hoped to successfully repulse a German invasion or raid, Wilson argued, “the courage and self-reliance of the English race” must be organized.¹²⁸ Wilson proposed the formation of local defence committees designed to facilitate the growth of home guard militias. Tens of thousands of rifles were to be stockpiled along the East Coast, that could be distributed upon invasion. Although these levies could not be an effective mobile army, Wilson admitted, they could be relied upon to provide an adequate static defence across the English countryside.

The C.I.D.’s reaction to Wilson’s proposal was tepid. War Office representatives questioned Wilson’s interpretation of belligerent rights under the Hague Convention and the usefulness of unorganized levies.¹²⁹ However, Hankey, on orders from Asquith, investigated the issue and discovered Troup’s activities from the years previous. Hankey wrote to Seely saying the Prime Minister supported a scheme like Wilson’s and questioned the War Office’s trepidation because “is secrecy either necessary or desirable?”¹³⁰ Hankey proposed the public formation of defence committees in at-risk municipalities, and felt this measure, which was wholly defensive, was unlikely to spark a panic. Hankey hoped to organize local government for defence and public

¹²⁸ A. K. Wilson, “Appendix XV: The Use that can be made of the Civil Population in case of Attack from Overseas”, 28 April 1913, p. 416-419, TNA CAB 16/28A.

¹²⁹ Committee of Imperial Defence, “Minutes of the 2nd Meeting”, 1 April 1913, p. 37, TNA CAB 16/28A.

¹³⁰ Hankey to Seely, 2 April 1913, TNA CAB 17/13.

perception management. The War Office pledged to take up the issue of civil defence again in 1914.¹³¹ However, they failed to do so before the beginning of the First World War.

Instead of reassurances, over the course of 1913 and 1914, the British public was faced with increasingly contradictory statements from the government and the armed services. This conflict became most acute in April 1913, just after the C.I.D. Invasion Sub-Committee was announced. Seely was questioned in the House of Commons on April 11th if the new inquiry meant the 70,000-invasion ratio was invalid and that the government was finally admitting the T.F. was insufficient. Seely responded that while the T.F. could be improved, “the arrangements we now have are adequate to fulfill what is now known as the Balfour Standard; in other words, to prevent invasion in force”.¹³² This admission drew the extreme ire of the Unionist Party. Party leader Bonar Law accused Seely of failing to consult with the General Staff and intentionally obscuring facts from the populace.¹³³ The conservative press also attacked Seely’s remarks.¹³⁴ Facing undue criticism, Seely recanted on 16 April. He stated that “[it] would be manifestly impossible to assert with confidence that the Territorial Force only a few days after mobilisation could overcome a concentrated army composed of 70,000 highly trained European troops”.¹³⁵ Seely’s blunder could

¹³¹ War Office, “Memorandum by the General Staff on the Recommendations contained in the Invasion Report,” 9 May 1914, p. 6, TNA CAB 38/27/20.

¹³² The Balfour Standard was a political term for the necessity of maintaining a home army to combat 70,000 men. Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, 5th Series, *Commons* Vol. 51 (11 April 1913) Col. 1577 – 1584.

¹³³ Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, 5th Series, *Commons* Vol. 51 (11 April 1913) Cols. 1587 – 1594.

¹³⁴ *The Spectator*, 19 April 1913, p. 644-645.

¹³⁵ Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, 5th Series, *Commons* Vol. 51 (16 April 1913) col. 1923

be explained by his own lack of faith in the existing policy, but is also representative of the contradictory policies of the pre-war period.¹³⁶

Weeks later, the armed services issued equally disconcerting statements on the state of British home defence. On 21 April, First Sea Lord Prince Louis of Battenberg, in a speech at the Union Jack Club, announced that there was “no more foolish and mischievous statement” than to say the Royal Navy alone could prevent invasion.¹³⁷ Several days later, C.I.G.S. Sir John French openly agreed with Prince Louis’ statements.¹³⁸ The Director-General of the T.F., Major-General E. C. Bethune, also made headlines in April after he regretfully confessed that the T.F. was inadequate for its responsibilities.¹³⁹ As one citizen wrote into *The Spectator*, with the government and armed services in such disunity, “What is ‘the man in the street to think’?”¹⁴⁰

Similarly, Churchill’s decision to halt the 1913 naval manoeuvres and suppress the publication of its details met severe criticism in the press. Churchill later stated, “The Admiralty did not wish to create a situation that in certain quarters caused a panic in the country”.¹⁴¹ However, the Admiralty’s silence only exacerbated public concern. It allowed the N.S.L. and its supporters to publicize the Asquith’s Government’s failure to manage the United Kingdom’s home defence

¹³⁶ Williams, *Defending the Empire*, 218–19.

¹³⁷ Quotation from *Daily Mail*, 22 April 1913, p. 8; *The Times*, 22 April 1913, p. 5.

¹³⁸ *The Times*, 25 April 1913, p. 6; *Daily Mail*, 26 April 1913, p. 5.

¹³⁹ *The Times*, 15 April 1913, p. 6; *Daily Mail*, 15 April 1913, p. 5.

¹⁴⁰ *The Spectator*, 26 April 1913, p. 711.

¹⁴¹ A J A Morris, *Reporting the First World War: Charles Repington, The Times and the Great War, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 123.

policy.¹⁴² The *Daily Mail* reported “If the reports are correct, the security of this country is in the gravest of danger. If they are not correct, it is of the highest importance that a general statement as to what happened, which need disclose no vital secrets, should be laid before the country.”¹⁴³ The Liberal Government responded to these pleas with silence.

The consequences of the Asquith’s government mismanagement of the home defence was that the British nation entered the First World War with doubts as to their own country’s safety. The government’s shortcomings did not mean their opponents succeeded. The conscription movement failed to obtain any form of national service in the pre-war period. Blame can certainly be placed on the Asquith Government for their poor handling of the invasion problem throughout 1911 – 1914. Asquith consistently stalled in Parliament to avoid releasing the Sub-Committee’s conclusions.¹⁴⁴ If Asquith did release the details of the C.I.D. Sub-Committee, it is unknown what he would have been willing to admit or omit. Repington, following a visit to the War Office, surmised Asquith would likely repeat his actions following the release of the July 1909 report and “merely announce general principles, and that no attempt would be made to apply them until fresh blood comes in after an election.”¹⁴⁵

This criticism was unfounded since Asquith was never given the opportunity to release the C.I.D.’s findings. In this, he and the defence establishment are blameless. 1914 was a year of

¹⁴² *Daily Mail*, 8 November 1913, p. 5; *Daily Mail*, 1 December 1913, p. 8.

¹⁴³ *Daily Mail*, 8 November 1913, p. 5.

¹⁴⁴ Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, 5th Series, *Commons* Vol. 58 (25 February 1914) col. 1766

¹⁴⁵ Repington to George Geoffrey Dawson, 18 June 1914, in A J A Morris, ed., *The Letters of Lieutenant-Colonel Charles à Court Repington CMG Military Correspondent of The Times 1903-1918* (Cornwall: Sutton Publishing Limited, 1999).

political crises. The Home Rule Debate in Ireland, the threat of civil war, and the political revolt of the British Army in the Curragh Incident dominated the United Kingdom's defence establishment for much of the year. It cost both John Seely and Sir John French their positions. Other crises, such as the suffragists movement and a looming general strike, dominated headlines.¹⁴⁶ The politics of home defence were sidelined. The final C.I.D. Invasion Sub-Committee report was finished on 15 April 1914, and the armed services only began to implement its conclusions in mid May 1914.¹⁴⁷ Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated on 28 June 1914 and soon began the rapid spiral into world war. The United Kingdom, and the world, had run out of time.

The origins and proceedings of the 1913 – 1914 C.I.D. Sub-Committee on Invasion reveals that as professional concern over hostile raids mounted, so to do did the anxiety that in the event of war public panic could hamper naval and military operations. While Lord Fisher may have believed it was folly to pander to and 'comfort the old women of both sexes', before the onset of the First World War, Britain's armed services predicted that the home front and civilian morale would play a greater role, perhaps a detrimental role, in the future of warfare. Yet, the armed services, unwilling to stray past their professional defence roles, and the political leadership, unwilling to expend political capital, constructed no apparatus or machinery that could sustain public morale. The Asquith's Government's failure to clarify the specifics of the size and role of the B.E.F., confront the systemic flaws in the T.F., or address public morale indicates a critical

¹⁴⁶ Samuel Hynes, *A War Imagined - The First World War and English Culture* (London: The Bodley Head, 1990), 6–8.

¹⁴⁷ War Office, "Attack on the British Isles from Oversea – Memorandum by the General Staff on the Recommendations contained in the Report", 9 May 1914, TNA CAB 38/27/20

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breakdown in British home defence policy. The extent of this failure would become evident after August 1914.

Chapter II - For Hearth and Home: The British Public and the Invasion Scare of 1914

The long-awaited Armageddon had arrived. The United Kingdom declared war on the German Empire on 4 August 1914 and although Britain's armed services had yet to implement many of the recommendations of the C.I.D. Invasion Sub-Committee and therefore the national defence of the British Isles was outdated, the British were initially overwhelmingly lucky. As a cost saving measure the 1914 naval manoeuvres had been replaced by a test mobilization of the Royal Navy beginning on 10 July. As the July Crisis simmered, the planned dispersal of the fleet was pre-empted on 27 July and by the time the United Kingdom declared war, the fleet was at full war stations.¹⁴⁸ Despite minor reports that the German Navy was steaming west, no pre-emptive German assault on the coastline occurred.¹⁴⁹ The B.E.F. was free to sail to France.

Such was the situation on 5 August when an ad-hoc War Council gathered at 10 Downing Street. The topic of discussion: how many divisions of the B.E.F. should depart to France? With the fleets at war stations and the Territorial Force mobilizing, the Royal Navy's leadership was confident enough to allow five or even six Regular divisions be shipped to France. The army agreed, even Lord Roberts, an ardent supporter of home defence before the war, admitted the threat to the British Isles was negligible.¹⁵⁰ Five divisions would sail immediately to France. It appeared,

¹⁴⁸ Sir Julian S. Corbett, *Naval Operations Vol I* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1920), 22–24, 32–35.

¹⁴⁹ Consul-General Hearn to Sir Edward Grey, 30 July 1914; Sir E. Goschen to Sir Edward Grey, 2 August 1914; War Office to Foreign Office, 3 August 1914, in Gooch, G. P., and Harold Temperley, eds. *British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898 - 1914. Vol XI The Outbreak of War*. London: Johnson Reprint Ltd, 1926, p. 188, 276, 292-293.

¹⁵⁰ Committee of Imperial Defence, "Secretary's Notes of a War Council held at 10 Downing Street", 5 August 1914, p. 1-4, TNA CAB 22/1.

for a short time, home defence was not to be the impediment the armed services had feared. That is until the ascension of Lord Horatio Kitchener.

Having been appointed Secretary of State for War on 5 August, Kitchener disregarded much of the United Kingdom's war plans. He had not been privy to the C.I.D.'s deliberations during the years previous and held his own beliefs on home defence. As he was off to say, "I am only prepared to rule out the feasibility of invasion if I learnt that the Germans regard it as an impossible operation."¹⁵¹ Kitchener broke faith with the army on 6 August and demanded only four divisions be dispatched and two retained for home defence. Asquith agreed, albeit for different reasons. He worried that the "domestic situation might be grave, and Colonial troops or Territorials could not be called on to aid the civil power."¹⁵² D.M.O. Henry Wilson was furious at Kitchener's meddling, believing his actions could destroy the B.E.F, particularly after Kitchener began to arbitrarily transport Regular Army brigades to guard the East Coast.¹⁵³

The B.E.F. began to sail to France on 9 August. The crossing was a tenuous time; pre-war predictions stated if the Germans were to strike at the British Isles or on the North Sea it would come at this moment. Churchill wrote to the new Commander-in-Chief of the Home Fleet, Admiral John Jellicoe, to keep him informed of the possibilities. "[The Germans] know that the Expeditionary Force is leaving," Churchill wrote, "... They may argue that a raid or raids now

¹⁵¹ Peter Simkins, *Kitchener's Army: The Raising of the New Armies, 1914-1916* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 42.

¹⁵² Committee of Imperial Defence, "Secretary's Notes of a War Council held at 10 Downing street", 6 August 1914, p. 2, TNA CAB 22/1.

¹⁵³ C. E. Callwell, ed., *Field-Marshal Sir Henry Wilson Bart., G.C.B., D.S.O. His Life and Letters*, vol. 1 (London: Cassell and Company Ltd, 1927), 159–60.

upon the East Coast would interrupt, confuse and probably delay the departure of the Army, and further that it might draw the Grand Fleet rapidly South to interfere with the landing.”¹⁵⁴

The German attack never came. The four-division strong B.E.F. landed safely on the Continent and went onto meet the enemy at Mons. From Mons, the United Kingdom watched in abject horror as the armies of Europe fought a seemingly endless stream of titanic battles. Le Cateau, the Marne, the Aisne, Arras; the British Army cut a costly path through northeast France, followed closely behind in spirit by their nation. However, just as British soldiers entered the Belgian city of Ypres for the first time in late-October 1914, the British peoples’ gaze briefly turned away from their sons fighting on the Continent and towards their own shores. The Invasion Scare of 1914 had begun.

For hundreds of years, invasion had been the foremost imaginary terror in British society. It had played a significant role in the degradation of Anglo-German relations that contributed to the outbreak of war. Home defence, as discussed in the previous chapter, had already been one of the principal and public concerns of Britain’s defence establishment immediately before the outbreak of war. Yet, when the United Kingdom joined the Great War, hardly a murmur of invasion initially crossed British society. Near three months of horrific conflict elapsed before the perennial fear of invasion again reared within British society and within Britain’s defence establishment.

Triggered by the social and institutional reaction towards the demoralizing events on both land and sea, the Invasion Scare of 1914 gripped both the British people and the defence establishment from late October 1914 until February 1915. With a German invasion appearing

¹⁵⁴ Admiralty to Commander-in-Chief, Home Fleets, 8 August 1914 in Churchill, *The World Crisis*, 1:276–77.

imminent, the British nation became preoccupied with home defence just as it had many times before in both peace and war. Despite being triggered by new factors brought on by the war itself, the invasion scare and public hysteria escalated as the deficiencies in the United Kingdom's national defence were exposed. Widespread fearmongering across British society encouraged the rise in paramilitary activity, which, in turn, threatened to destabilize the homefront necessitating government action to resolve the crisis.

By September 1914, the expectations of a decisive victory had been dashed along the river Marne, the fields of Tannenberg and the hills over the Aisne. But the butchery continued. On the Western Front, the armies of France, Britain and Germany moved north, in a series of attempted outflanking manoeuvres in Northern France and Belgium. History records this period as the "Race to the Sea", but at the time, the British called this campaign the German "March to Calais".¹⁵⁵ The seemingly unrelenting German assault towards the Pas de Calais, the historic launching point for any would be invasion of the British Isles, from William the Conqueror to Napoleon, raised concerns amongst Britons that the Germans intended to attempt an invasion of the United Kingdom. The first port that lay in the path of the German advance was Antwerp. The Belgian Army had retreated to Antwerp following their defeats at Liège and Namur in the opening days of the war and had been spared concerted attack. That is until late September. The Germans turned their attention to securing their northern flank, and within weeks the city was under heavy bombardment and the defenders were running out of ammunition.¹⁵⁶ The defence of the city was considered vital enough to the British for Winston Churchill to dispatch the Royal Naval Division

¹⁵⁵ For examples of the use of the term "March to Calais", see *The Times*, 26 October 1914, p. 9; *The Daily Telegraph*, 28 October 1914, p. 8.

¹⁵⁶ Hew Strachan, *The First World War - Volume I: To Arms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 270–71.

to assist in its defence. Churchill even visited the city to personally oversee its defences. Despite the support of the British, Antwerp capitulated on October 10th, 1914.¹⁵⁷ As the city gave in, so too went Britain's invincible spirit.

Following the capitulation of Antwerp, anxiety over a possible invasion began to mount across the British Isles. The press attempted to assure the British public that the city itself was not strategically important. *The Spectator* spoke for many by declaring the loss of the city merely a moral blow, rather than a military defeat.¹⁵⁸ To make use of the port for military purposes, the Germans would need to violate Dutch neutrality along the Scheldt Estuary. The later losses of the Belgian ports of Zeebrugge and Ostend were also characterized as insignificant in the press.¹⁵⁹ Nevertheless, as the Germans continued to press along the coast, the frequency at which possible invasion was discussed in the British press, politics and society shows a considerable spike following 10 October. A common theory began to formulate across the British press as to the Germans' intentions. Facing stalemate in the East and West, it was believed the same brutal rationality that fashioned the timetables of the Schlieffen Plan would judge the attempted invasion of England, however perilous, a better alternative than continuing the war into 1915. Seizing Paris had been Germany's first great gamble; London was expected to be their second.

As in the pre-war period, the threat of invasion was largely a baseless fear perpetuated in the conservative press. *The Times*, *Daily Mail*, *The Spectator*, *Daily Telegraph* and *Pall Mall Gazette* each ran major stories on possible invasion on a daily to weekly basis. As invasion hysteria

¹⁵⁷ Strachan, 272–73.

¹⁵⁸ *The Spectator*, 17 October 1914, p. 513, 518 – 519.

¹⁵⁹ *The Times*, 21 October 1914, p. 9.

became ingrained within British society by late October 1914, even liberal newspapers, such as the *Manchester Guardian*, that had only ever mentioned invasion in jest, began commenting on the crisis. During most of the Invasion Scare of 1914, the press was able to print whatever conjecture they saw fit. Before the Great War, a ‘handshake deal’ was made between the defence establishment and the press. The agreement stipulated that the movement of British warships or soldiers would not be reported lest the enemy receive valuable intelligence.¹⁶⁰ But, postulating on possible enemy operations, such as the attempted invasion of the British Isles, was free reign.

The first convert amongst the popular press to theorize Germany’s intentions to invade was, predictably, Charles Repington and *The Times*. Shortly after Antwerp fell, Repington reported on what he called the German “Great Adventure”:

Now that the war is reaching its climax of violence... We must expect to be attacked at home, and must not rest under any comforting illusions that we shall be assailed. As an attack upon us can have no serious object unless the intention is to land an expedition in England for the purpose of compelling us to sign a disastrous peace, it is well that we should look the situation calmly in the face, and reckon up not only Germany’s power to do us harm, but also our power of resistance and means for improving it.¹⁶¹

Similar sentiments were soon seen in other newspapers. Each portrayed the Germans as bearing a callous rationality born from the bean-counting and Clausewitz devoted Prussian militarism that the United Kingdom had declared total war on. “Invasion, then is a logical necessity,” *The Spectator*, having shed its earlier confidence, declared, “[it] is true that the chances are small, and that failure might mean the loss of a quarter of a million Germans or more, but to the Germany military philosophers that matters nothing.”¹⁶² The *Daily Mail* agreed with *The Spectator* and

¹⁶⁰ French, *British Economic and Strategic Planning 1905-1915*, 75–76.

¹⁶¹ *The Times*, 15 October 1914, p. 4.

¹⁶² *The Spectator*, 24 October 1914, p. 549-550.

reported that the new German campaign route was “Antwerp-Calais-Dover-London... the course of Great Britain’s impending doom”.¹⁶³

With disheartening news arriving from the Continent, there was frustrating inaction on the high seas. The expected decisive naval battle to reassert British naval dominance and prestige had not yet materialized. The German High Seas Fleet remained in the safety of their ports. A minor British victory in the First Battle of the Heligoland Bight on 28 August did little to gratify the British people. Instead, British naval dominance was shaken by a series of small scale humiliations. This began on 22 September when a single German U-Boat in the North Sea sank three armored cruisers resulting in the loss of 1,397 men. The ensuing scandal saw a Royal Navy captain reprimanded for negligence.¹⁶⁴ On November 1st, the Royal Navy suffered its worst defeat in over a century. A Royal Navy squadron was caught and destroyed by the German East Asiatic Squadron off the coast of Chile. During the encounter, known as the Battle of Coronel, another 1,570 British sailors were killed. The ships lost were antiquated and inconsequential to British naval might, but the defeat was disastrous for morale. Finally, on 3 November a German squadron sortied into the North Sea and a skirmish was fought off the East Coast, near the town of Great Yarmouth. As will be detailed in the next chapter, the action off Yarmouth was more disconcerting to Britain’s defence establishment than the British public. Nonetheless, the appearance of German ships off Yarmouth was a disturbing image that shook the public’s confidence in the Royal Navy.

Rumour, conjecture and ‘expert’ analysis swept through the press putting forth theories on how the Germans planned to or could invade. Reports from citizens from neutral nations, mainly

¹⁶³ *Daily Mail*, 13 October 1914, p. 5.

¹⁶⁴ Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow: The Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, 1904-1919 - Volume II The War Years: To the Eve of Jutland*, 2:55–59.

Americans and Dutch, who had visited Germany told tales of massive invasion preparations supposedly being undertaken in German ports.¹⁶⁵ Hamburg was said to be filled with invasion craft.¹⁶⁶ The *Daily Mail* featured the interview of a German officer, General Baron von Ardenne, who laid out the Kaiser's plan to seize Calais and invade England.¹⁶⁷ The *Illustrated London News* printed photos of the German Navy practicing landing manoeuvres but failed to note when the photos were taken.¹⁶⁸ *The Times*' naval correspondent reported that the German naval mining of the North Sea indicated they intended to launch an assault south of the port of Harwich.¹⁶⁹

Decades of invasion literature had foretold of the fantastical war machines the Germans intended to unleash. The experience of the first months of the Great War proved to be prophecy incarnate. Britons began to worry what other technological marvels the Germans had in reserve for the invasion of Great Britain. Newspapers jockeyed to print the many possibilities, with the *Daily Mail* often being the most fanciful. Once the Germans seized Calais, the *Daily Mail*'s correspondents said, mines would be strewn across the Channel, which would create a protected corridor for the Germans to ferry their invasion fleet to Dover.¹⁷⁰ Other schemes included bridging the Channel itself using pontoons or using long range artillery, including ludicrously massive 24-

¹⁶⁵ *The Daily Telegraph*, 13 October 1914, p. 6.

¹⁶⁶ *Daily Mail*, 12 November 1914, p. 4.

¹⁶⁷ General Baron von Ardenne originally gave his interview to the *Saxon State Gazette*. *Daily Mail*, 27 October 1914, p. 5; *Daily Mail*, 28 October 1914, p. 4.

¹⁶⁸ *Illustrated London News*, 31 October 1914, p. 604.

¹⁶⁹ *The Times*, 16 October 1914, p. 5.

¹⁷⁰ *Daily Mail*, 27 October 1914, p. 5; *Daily Mail*, 31 October 1914.

inch guns the Kaiser had allegedly personally ordered, to bombard Dover.¹⁷¹ *The Daily Telegraph* reported that new ‘submarine-transports’ were being constructed in Antwerp.¹⁷² The looming capabilities of German Zeppelins presented another unknown factor. Reports of ‘Zeppelin Dreadnoughts’ raised concerns of the airships conveying thousands of enemy troops to British soil.¹⁷³

The perceived enemy within was another plot device of decades passed that remerged in autumn 1914. Invasion literature, especially William Le Queux’s *Invasion of 1910* (1906) and *Spies of the Kaiser: Plotting the Downfall of England* (1909) had long imagined that a “whole brigade of spies in England” was preparing a wave of sabotage, assassination and rebellion to assist German invasion.¹⁷⁴ Le Queux writings had generated enough political clout to play a role in the founding of the modern British Secret Service and rising anti-German sentiment.¹⁷⁵ Knowing spy mania was likely to spike following the declaration of war, Home Secretary Reginald McKenna announced on 5 August that the British Secret Service had arrested twenty-one German spies across the country.¹⁷⁶ However, this did little to calm the British press. By autumn 1914, the combined fear of enemy agents and invasion conjured a new alarmist fantasy. The rapid movement

¹⁷¹ *Daily Mail*, 13 October 1914, p. 5; *Daily Mail*, 14 November 1914, p. 5.

¹⁷² *The Daily Telegraph*, 27 October 1914, p. 11; *The Daily Telegraph*, 3 November 1914, p. 8.

¹⁷³ *The Times*, 26 December 1914, p. 4.

¹⁷⁴ William Le Queux, *The Invasion of 1910* (London: MacMillan and Co., Limited, 1906); William Le Queux, *Spies of the Kaiser: Plotting the Downfall of England*, Second Edition (Toronto: The MacMillan Company, 1909), X.

¹⁷⁵ Christopher Andrew, *Defend the Realm: The Authorized History of MI5* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009), 8–18.

¹⁷⁶ Andrew, 53.

and onslaught of German siege artillery in Belgium and France sparked claims of conspiracy. The Belgian and French press reported concealed gun mounts, preconstructed in the concrete floors of German owned buildings, had hastened the German advance.¹⁷⁷ The British press grasped these reports to claim similar emplacements existed in Britain, awaiting the German invaders. *The Times* beseeched the Home Office to conduct a thorough search for gun emplacements in Britain.¹⁷⁸ The *Daily Mail* called for Britons to “Remember Antwerp” and for the formation of ‘War Vigilance Committees’ to ensure every enemy alien and foreign owned building was carefully watched.¹⁷⁹ Rumour prompted action. On 16 October, London police raided a German owned factory on suspicion it concealed a gun position.¹⁸⁰ The military launched a similar raid the next day against an Edinburgh chocolate factory.¹⁸¹ M.P.’s further questioned the War Office about the suspicious location of London concrete factories and tennis courts.¹⁸² The rumours even influenced C.I.D. Secretary Maurice Hankey to join a friend in digging up an empty London plot owned by a German

¹⁷⁷ Brett Holman, “Constructing the Enemy Within: Rumours of Secret Gun Platforms and Zeppelin Bases in Britain, August-October 1914,” *British Journal of Military History* 3, no. 2 (2017): 28–29.

¹⁷⁸ *The Times*, 15 October 1914, p. 7.

¹⁷⁹ *Daily Mail*, 17 October 1914, p. 3.

¹⁸⁰ Holman, “Constructing the Enemy Within: Rumours of Secret Gun Platforms and Zeppelin Bases in Britain, August-October 1914,” 30.

¹⁸¹ Holman, 30.

¹⁸² Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, 5th Series, *Commons* Vol. 68 (23 November 1914) col. 782 – 783.

millionaire.¹⁸³ Hankey's labours, as with the government raids, failed to unveil evidence of artillery emplacements. Yet claims of enemy agents and saboteurs continued for the balance of the war.¹⁸⁴

Despite these frightful premonitions, the press, paradoxically, stressed the unlikeness of successful invasion. If an invasion were attempted, it would be a show of Germany's desperation, rather than strength. *The Times* took a levelled view of the German intentions, "[the Germans] hope, in vulgar parlance, to "establish a funk" in this country... the sole object of all these heroics will be to alarm the people of these island, to produce panics, and to induce the public to bring pressure to bear upon the Government."¹⁸⁵ *The Spectator* went so far as to hope the Germans attempted invasion, so that it could be defeated and British dominance re-established.¹⁸⁶ *The Daily Telegraph* claimed the frequent reports that the Germans intended to invade as a mere propaganda tactic.¹⁸⁷ To meet these terrorizing tactics, the newspapers began imprinting upon the British nation the traits that would come to define the British home front experience during the world wars – that of stoicism and calmness in the face of overwhelming odds. *The Pall Mall Gazette* adopted the simple yet effective slogan "Carry On!"¹⁸⁸ *The Daily Telegraph* stated "it rests with the manhood

¹⁸³ Hankey, *The Supreme Command 1914 - 1918*, 1:220.

¹⁸⁴ For further analysis of enemy aliens in the United Kingdom during the First World War, see Panikos Panayi, *The Enemy in Our Midst: Germans in Britain during the First World War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991).

¹⁸⁵ *The Times*, 26 October 1914, p. 9.

¹⁸⁶ *The Spectator*, 24 October 1914, p. 546.

¹⁸⁷ *The Daily Telegraph*, 28 October 1914, p. 8; *The Daily Telegraph*, 3 November 1914, p. 8.

¹⁸⁸ *The Pall Mall Gazette*, 7 November 1914, p. 5.

of the nation to do its duty if it would frighten the enemy away instead of leaving him the chance of frightening all the millions of women and children in this country”.¹⁸⁹

The fourth estate pleaded for calm in their editorials, but their new line of stories worked at cross purposes with these entreaties. The publishing of invasion theories evoked the memories of pre-war invasion scares and the many imaginary ones conjured by science fiction authors. These themes were one example of fearmongering in the press in autumn 1914, another was the Rape of Belgium. Since the start of the war, over 200,000 traumatized Belgian refugees had fled to Britain, and with them came tales of horrifying brutality.¹⁹⁰ In the weeks following their entry to Belgium, the German Army was accused of mass executions, torture, mutilation and sexual violence. Based on claims that Belgian civilians were illegally harassing the occupation, the Germans implemented a campaign of terror that resulted in the deaths of an estimated 4,421 Belgians and the deliberate destruction of over 20,000 buildings.¹⁹¹

The British press covered the German atrocities with a mix of fact and myth. Seemingly random savagery by German officers and the rank and file was particularly disturbing to Britons.¹⁹² The reaction of the British press’ to the burning of the city of Louvain played a pivotal role in perpetuating the belief that the Germans were uncivilized barbarians. It indicated the mounting

¹⁸⁹ *The Daily Telegraph*, 3 November 1914, p. 8.

¹⁹⁰ Ministry of Health, *Report on the Work Undertaken by the British Government in the Reception and Case of the Belgian Refugees* (London: His Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1920), 5.

¹⁹¹ Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914 - A History of Denial*, 74–76, 161–66.

¹⁹² Horne and Kramer, 186–96.

understanding amongst British society that the Germans represented a civilizational threat.¹⁹³ Popular writers who had once penned alarmist invasion literature now contributed their literary talents to detailing this new traumatizing reality. William Le Queux described the German Army as a “vast gang of Jack-the-Rippers” who unreservedly raped and mutilated the Belgian people.¹⁹⁴

As Britons came to grips with the blurring boundary between civilian and combatant in modern warfare, alarmists warned that Great Britain would share the same fate should the Germans invade. In one recruitment drive in Sussex in late September, an M.P. predicted that British civilians would be massacred if the Germans landed there.¹⁹⁵ Former prime minister Lord Roseberry invoked the same image in October. “If the Prussians were ever to land here,” Roseberry stated, “the scenes which have been enacted [in Belgium] will also take place here.”¹⁹⁶ A Irish Sligo County reverend informed his congregation that the “Germans have cherished the ambition for the past thirty years of planning their surplus population on the fair fields of Ireland and of relegating the ancient Celts once more in the bogs and the mountains.”¹⁹⁷

While in some cases this propaganda encouraged citizens to enlist, in many cases it merely frightened the British people. On 11 October, a Liverpool schoolteacher named Ada McGuire put voice to this rising hysteria. McGuire wrote,

¹⁹³ Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 50–52.

¹⁹⁴ Gullace, “*The Blood of Our Sons*” *Men, Women and the Renegotiation of British Citizenship During the Great War*, 18–19.

¹⁹⁵ Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914 - A History of Denial*, 186.

¹⁹⁶ *The Times*, 11 November 1914, p. 15.

¹⁹⁷ Michael Farry, *Sligo 1914-1921: A Chronicle of Conflict* (Trim: Killoran Press, 1992), 42.

If they [the Germans] do come here they will have no mercy on us, and oh! their cruelty is appalling. There are children in Waterloo and Birkenhead who have no hands... Two little Belgian girls [whose] parents were dead and their nurse had been found bayoneted at their side *but* both children had had their arms chopped off from above the elbows!! Now that is a fact. Poor wee mites... That is, I suppose, only one of the many cases and some of the things are too dreadful to mention. Laura says if the Germans come here she will commit suicide.¹⁹⁸

McGuire's stirring words depict the connection many Britons were drawing between the Rape of Belgium and the perceived threat of invasion.

Even though the British people believed the Germans were ready to invade, the British Government was conspicuously silent. The possible loss of the Channel ports and the brutality of the conflict could not have been predicted, but as detailed in the previous chapter, the 1913 Committee of Imperial Defence Sub-Committee had acknowledged the importance of managing public opinion to maintain the home defence of the British Isles. Yet efforts to implement a fledgling civil defence system were neglected out of political expediency. The work of the Home Office and Edward Troup had been on track to prepare the country for military emergencies. Had further study been done, the complexities of civil defence would have at least been considered before the war. Similarly, albeit poorly conceived, Admiral Arthur Wilson and Maurice Hankey's proposals for forming home defence militias held merit. This would be exemplified by how Britons would come to react during the Invasion Scare.

The Invasion Scare of 1914 manifested across British society in multiple forms. It contributed to growing anti-German sentiment and the fear of enemy aliens on Great Britain, as well as contributing to Britain's conviction that the war was justified. However, it was the Government's inability to manage the threat of invasion on the homefront that led to the proliferation of paramilitary home defence groups in 1914. Lacking an guarantee against invasion

¹⁹⁸ Pennell, *A Kingdom United*, 127.

or guidance from the Government, the British people looked to themselves for their security. Across the country, men, and in some cases women, began spontaneously, and at times illegally, organizing themselves into home defence militias. Their model came from the old auxiliary Volunteers that the Territorial Force had amalgamated and replaced. A variety of names were used by these units. “Drill Clubs”, “Rifles Clubs”, “Home Guards”, and “Village Guards” were the most common. Eventually this movement would be described using the catchall term: The Volunteer Training Corps (V.T.C.)

The first person to suggest a home defence militia was Percy A. Harris, a liberal politician on the London County Council. On 6 August in *The Times*, Harris urged the citizens of London to form a paramilitary group modelled after the Irish Nationalists and Ulster Volunteers.¹⁹⁹ The cause was quickly picked up by two of Great Britain’s most prolific living authors: Arthur Conan Doyle and H. G. Wells. Each published an article on 8 August advocating new volunteer units. Conan Doyle reported he had already enrolled 120 men in his own village guard and hoped other towns would follow suit.²⁰⁰ Wells’ hoped to tap the “great mass of useful untrained material” by forming battalions of men over forty-five and boys of fifteen.²⁰¹ “Perhaps it would not be a very effective fighting force,” Wells’ argued, “but it would permit the release of a considerable number of men now keeping order, controlling transport, or doing the like of work. Nobody wants to be a non-combatant in a war of this sort.” However, as the war progressed, Wells’ ideas became more extreme than those of Harris or Conan Doyle. He advocated the volunteers train in guerilla warfare

¹⁹⁹ Percy A. Harris, *The Times*, 6 August 1914, p. 3.

²⁰⁰ *The Times*, 8 August 1914, p. 9.

²⁰¹ *The Times*, 8 August 1914, p. 9.

for the coming invasion, specifically “the waylaying of and capture of scouts, sniping of advancing enemies, and hedge and ditch guerilla work generally.”²⁰²

Many across the British Isles took up the calls sent out by Harris, Conan Doyle and Wells. The result saw the growth of an assortment of militia groups, eclectic in character and custom. In urban centres, V.T.C. militias formed around existing social or professional networks, most often middle-class in origin. The largest London groups included the Old Boys’ Corps, the Optimists’ National Corps, Harris’ City of London Volunteers and a coalition of sports teams calling itself the Athlete’s Volunteer Training Corps.²⁰³ Other more unique groups included the United Arts Rifles, which attracted the elite of the London art world and the London Architects’ V.T.C. which only enrolled engineers.²⁰⁴ The most bizarre included a militia for the deaf and mute, and the Ju Jitsu V.T.C.²⁰⁵

Rural corps were less diverse in composition than their urban comrades but had a greater range of available duties. Village corps, especially in coastal regions, set to work fortifying their own villages or at times patrolling the coastline alongside Territorials. With the central government initially apathetic towards the V.T.C., it was the purview of local authorities to cope with the volunteers. In some areas, Chief Constables were pleased with the assistance and employed volunteers to guard bridges, railways and other important infrastructure. In other cases, Constables

²⁰² *The Times*, 17 August 1914, p. 9.

²⁰³ *The Volunteer Force and the Volunteer Training Corps During the Great War - Official Record of the Central Association Volunteer Regiments* (London: P. S. King & Son, 1920); Mitchinson, *Defending Albion: Britain’s Home Army 1908 - 1919*, 84.

²⁰⁴ Mitchinson, *Defending Albion: Britain’s Home Army 1908 - 1919*, 84.; *The Pall Mall Gazette*, 6 November 1914, p. 4.

²⁰⁵ Mitchinson, 84.

were perturbed at the actions of the V.T.C. The case of local authorities in Somerset (a southwestern county highly unlikely to be attacked) first accepting and then declining the assistance of a local V.T.C. after they began harassing civilians, is just one of hundreds of examples of overzealous volunteers blurring legality in the name of home defence.²⁰⁶

The V.T.C. were self-armed and frequently poorly so. Few volunteers owned weapons, drilling and parading instead with broomsticks or clubs. The Village Guard in Colchester, Essex counted only one working rifle in their arsenal.²⁰⁷ Other units were so formidably armed they outclassed local New Army units in training. A Buckinghamshire corps, generously sponsored by two local lords, was armed with 150 new rifles and 10,000 rounds of ammunition.²⁰⁸ In some cases, the clergy supported the V.T.C. One Brixton rector had his church, St. Matthew's, convert the crypt into a rifle range.²⁰⁹ While some V.T.C. units relied on gifts such as these, others required their members to pay subscriptions to join.²¹⁰

Although the V.T.C. movement was ostensibly for the over-age and ineligible, the pervasiveness of invasion anxiety in Great Britain generated further expansion. Youth groups were quickly mobilized by Sir Robert Baden-Powell, the 'Hero of Mafeking' and founder of the British Boy Scouts Organization. Putting their survival training to good use, Baden-Powell dispatched his

²⁰⁶ Mitchinson, 81.

²⁰⁷ Michael Foley, *Essex in the First World War* (Gloucestershire: The History Press, 2009), 29–30.

²⁰⁸ *Volunteer Training Corps Gazette*, 5 December 1914, p. 16.

²⁰⁹ Jerry White, *Zeppelin Nights - London in the First World War* (London: The Bodley Head, 2014), 31.

²¹⁰ Mitchinson, *Defending Albion: Britain's Home Army 1908 - 1919*, 111.

scouts, newly organized into ‘Scouts’ Defence Corps’, to guard the East Coast.²¹¹ By the First World War’s end, upwards of 30,000 scouts had patrolled the coast, ever watchful of an invasion fleet that never came.²¹² Women were also galvanized by stories of German aggression. The reports of sexual violence coming out of Belgium spurred the British suffragette movement to action. Suffragist periodicals debated on whether women should take up arms, culminating with the militant suffragette Evelina Haverfield proposing to form her own Women’s Volunteer Rifle Corps.²¹³

As the V.T.C. movement grew, Conan Doyle and Percy Harris partnered with Lord Desborough, a prominent peer who had already raised his own volunteer battalion, to form the Central Association of Volunteer Training Corps (CAVTC). Included within their ranks were droves of British peers, politicians and retired military officers. Believing standardization would bring War Office recognition of their patriotism, the CAVTC sought to unite the many volunteer militias. In September 1914, the CATVC released a scheme stating, “Recent events have shown that the greater part of the manhood of the nation may be suddenly called up to mobilise for its defence”.²¹⁴ Therefore, the CAVTC listed their objectives as:

1. To encourage recruits for the Regular and Territorial Army
2. To encourage men not of age for service in the ranks, or otherwise disqualified for service, to Drill and learn the elements of Musketry in their spare time.

²¹¹ *The Daily Telegraph*, 10 November 1914, p. 4; *The Daily Telegraph*, 23 November 1914, p. 12.

²¹² Eby, *The Road to Armageddon: The Martial Spirit in English Popular Literature, 1870 - 1914*, 69–71.; *Daily Mail*, 7 November 1914.

²¹³ Gullace, “*The Blood of Our Sons*” *Men, Women and the Renegotiation of British Citizenship During the Great War*, 146–47.

²¹⁴ Central Association Volunteer Training Corps, “Leaflet A1,” September 1914, p. 2, TNA WO 161/105.

3. To co-ordinate all existing organizations with similar objects and to promote uniformity in their rules and regulations.²¹⁵

These goals were chosen in part to quell the increasing government apprehension that the V.T.C. was siphoning recruits from the Regular Army and the Territorial Force. The exact size of the V.T.C. during the Invasion Scare of 1914 is unknown. The wayward corps were too splintered and disorganized to keep adequate records. In mid-November it was reported the V.T.C. numbered over a million men, and by December 1914, CAVTC claimed that over a 1,000 individual corps had formed.²¹⁶

With such numbers, the existence of the V.T.C. posed a serious threat to the civil-military order in the British Isles. Rather than being only for the elderly, the young and the ineligible, it is likely that a number of men included within the V.T.C. were eligible to serve in the Regular Army but preferred to join the part-time home defence units. By November, enlistments in the Regular Army and Territorial Force had totaled 898,635, technically exceeding the calls for 600,000 recruits.²¹⁷ This was until 12 November, when Parliament called for another million volunteers.²¹⁸ Thus, the V.T.C. posed a serious threat to the growth of the British Army. The War Office had initially tried to ban the V.T.C. movement in fear that it would draw public attention away from

²¹⁵ Central Association Volunteer Training Corps, "Central Association Scheme," September 1914, in *The Volunteer Force and the Volunteer Training Corps During the Great War - Official Record of the Central Association Volunteer Regiments*, 51–52.

²¹⁶ *The Daily Telegraph*, 13 November 1914, p. 10; *The Volunteer Training Corps Gazette*, 1 December 1914, p. 3.

²¹⁷ The War Office, *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire During the Great War* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1922), 364.

²¹⁸ Ian Beckett, "The Nation in Arms," in *A Nation in Arms: A Social Study of the British Army in the First World War*, ed. Ian Beckett and Keith Simpson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), 12.

the reinforcement of the Expeditionary Force.²¹⁹ However, the General Staff realized they could not prevent patriotic old men and young boys from practicing martial drills. Nor did they wish to try, should they sour public opinion. On 4 September Percy Harris received begrudging authorization from the War Office for the formation of his London Volunteer Force which went onto become CAVTC. However, Under-Secretary of State for War H. J. Tennant insisted it was only for training, not defence, and was to be only for “men not of age for service in the ranks or otherwise disqualified for active service”.²²⁰

Nevertheless, as invasion panic continued to spread throughout the country, the V.T.C. increasingly became disassociated with providing service opportunities to the unfit in favour of home defence. As it grew, so too did the criticism over the government’s failure to pacify the invasion hysteria and reassure the British public of their safety. The failure of the War Office to implement some form of civil defence doctrine in the pre-war period was a lost opportunity. The organization of CAVTC was remarkably similar to Admiral Wilson’s and Hankey’s pre-war proposals for the growth of home defence militias. Had they been implemented, the Government would have had a semblance of control over the rising public hysteria. As will be shown in the next chapter, the British Government began remedying this deficiency following the declaration of war, but instead of in preparation, it was belated. With the government rushing to formulate policy, not only were Britons taking national security into their own hands, but the government’s failure to provide guidance was becoming politically embarrassing. This situation became most

²¹⁹ Osborne, “Defining Their Own Patriotism: British Volunteer Training Corps in the First World War,” 64; Mitchinson, *Defending Albion: Britain’s Home Army 1908 - 1919*, 72.

²²⁰ H. J. Tennant to Percy Harris, 4 September 1914, in *The Volunteer Force and the Volunteer Training Corps During the Great War - Official Record of the Central Association Volunteer Regiments*, 3.

evident in the criticism that arose towards the government's failure to hastily settle the disputes over the jurisprudence of the V.T.C.

The 1907 Hague Convention on Land Warfare stipulated that spontaneous militias that took up arms before their territory was occupied and whom followed the established rules of warfare would be considered lawful belligerents. This fact had been the basis for the legal justification for the V.T.C. However, as German atrocities in Belgium became clearer, reservations mounted. The Germans justified their policies of collective punishment in Belgium with accusations that their soldiers were being attacked by *franc-tireurs* (free shooters) - Belgian citizens who the Germans claimed were illegally taking up arms against the German Army.²²¹ If the Germans invaded Great Britain and the V.T.C. irregulars arose to oppose them, it was feared the same policies of collective punishment would be unleashed upon British towns in reprisal.

The first public figure to raise these concerns in the press was Foster H. E. Cunliffe, an Oxford professor. Cunliffe supported Wells' schemes and the growth of the V.T.C. in spirit, but he doubted the defensive effectiveness of guerilla fighters. The V.T.C. should only take auxiliary roles, leaving combat to the regular armed forces.²²² Further, as the growing violence in Belgium became clearer, Cunliffe believed if V.T.C. irregulars harassed invading Germans they would incite violent reprisals against British towns. Cunliffe warned,

We should be treated to the ghastly and maddening spectacle of blazing villages, brutal executions, and all the nameless horrors that the retaliation of an exasperated soldiery almost inevitably involves.²²³

²²¹ Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914 - A History of Denial*, 113–29.

²²² *The Times*, 18 August 1914, p. 7.

²²³ *The Times*, 21 August 1914, p. 4.

Wells' responded by attacking Cunliffe's logic, because "[this] seems to me to set a premium upon brutality on the part of the invader and cowardice on the part of the invaded."²²⁴

In the coming weeks, other commentators supported Cunliffe's views. An equivalency was drawn between the V.T.C. and the Belgian *franc-tireurs*. Frank Lethbridge, the deposed British consul to Ghent who had only just fled from Belgium, was vehemently opposed to the V.T.C. He went so far as to blame the Belgians for instigating German atrocities since, he believed, "the civilian who retaliates on the enemy in any way whatever is an enemy to his fellow-citizens."²²⁵ Similarly, Lord Rutland, the Lord Lieutenant of Leicestershire, announced that, "Nothing could be more dangerous to the civil population of the country than a *franc-tireur* warfare."²²⁶ Others took a more moderate tone. The physicist Oliver Lodge argued that the further blurring of belligerency should be avoided at all cost lest the Great War become a truly total war.²²⁷ A *Manchester Guardian* editorial warned that "[n]o one has a right to indulge his emotions, however patriotic, if by so doing he involves others among his countrymen in suffering without inflicting corresponding injury on the enemy."²²⁸

The opponents to the V.T.C. were the minority. Newspaper editors and politicians lined up in support of the volunteers and their proposed irregular civilian resistance. A proven supporter of the concept of an armed citizenry, John St. Loe Strachey and *The Spectator* were frequent

²²⁴ *The Times*, 24 August 1914, p. 7.

²²⁵ *The Times*, 7 November 1914, p. 5.

²²⁶ *The Times*, 15 December 1914, p. 12.

²²⁷ *The Times*, 2 November 1914, p. 9.

²²⁸ *Manchester Guardian*, 13 November, p. 6.

commentators. *The Spectator* printed the text of the Hague Convention and noted the entire debate was likely moot given the German's flagrant disregard of international law.²²⁹ The *Daily Mail* invoked Britain's history of armed resistance by printing the 1801 'Preparations for Invasion', prepared for a time when it appeared French invasion was imminent.²³⁰ Of the popular newspapers, *The Times* became the political battleground over the legality of the V.T.C. and of civilian self-defence. Noteworthy commentators in *The Times*, included Nobel prize winning malaria researcher Ronald Ross, legal philosopher T. E. Holland, economist Alfred Marshall, Glasgow M. P. Henry Craik, actor Arthur Pinero, and former governor of Jamaica J. A. Swettenham.²³¹

The idea of the "Rape of Belgium" imbued nothing less than a crusaders' zeal in home defence advocates. One witness to the skirmish off Yarmouth told the *Daily Mail* that he believed "every Englishman who would gladly give his best to protect his country, his home, and loved ones from the Huns should be helped by his Government to the utmost to do so."²³² Again, H. G. Wells proved to be the most fanatical commentator. His most vitriolic diatribe came in *The Times* on 31 October. Wells vowed, should the Germans dare land:

... the raiders, cut off by the sea from their supports, ill-equipped as they will certainly be, and against odds, are so badly advised as to try terror-striking reprisals on the Belgian pattern, we irregulars will, of course, massacre every German straggler we can put a gun to. Naturally. Such a procedure may be sanguinary, but it is just the common sense of the situation. We shall hang the officers and shoot the men. A German raid to England will in fact not be fought – it will be lynched. War is war, and reprisals and striking terror are

²²⁹ *The Spectator*, 22 August 1914, p. 261-262; *The Spectator*, 25 August 1914, p. 296.

²³⁰ *Daily Mail*, 29 October 1914, p. 4.

²³¹ *The Times*, 26 October 1914, p. 9; *The Times*, 27 October 1914, p. 9; *The Times*, 28 October 1914, p. 9; *The Times*, 8 November 1914, p. 4; *The Times*, 13 November 1914, p. 9.

²³² *Daily Mail*, 5 November 1914.

games that two can play at. This is the latent temper of the British countryside, and the sooner the authorities take it in hand and regularize it the better will be the outlook...²³³

What both factions could agree on, was that it was the duty of the British government to settle the question. Since the capitulation of Antwerp, the press had been calling on the Government to clarify their policy towards the V.T.C. and the expectations placed on British civilians should the Germans invade. Repington addressed that the Government must “make up their minds whether we propose to fight on land regularly or irregularly... It is easier for a civil population, but it is also easier for the enemy, when the war is regular... In both events the public should be instructed how to act, on the coast, in the interior, in the towns, and on the farms.”²³⁴

By November, even the newspapers that had evaded the wild speculation on invasion scenarios of weeks previous were commenting on the V.T.C.’s legality and the governments’ failure to provide instruction to the populace. This included the *Daily Mail*, *The Times*, *The Spectator*, the *Daily Telegraph*, *Pall Mall Gazette* and the *Manchester Guardian*.²³⁵ The press searched for instructions on how civilians should conduct themselves in the event of invasion, or for the War Office to legitimize the V.T.C. to provide them legal protection. H. J. Tennant’s perceived inactivity was met with public scorn. *The Times* went so far as to belittle those accusing them of ‘panic-mongering’. “The real panic-mongers are those who try to suppress the frank and free discussion of the possibility presented by air attack or invasion,” a *Times* editorial argued, “We are inclined to think that even the Government have not fully grasped the temper of our

²³³ H. G. Wells, *The Times*, 31 October 1914, p. 9.

²³⁴ *The Times*, 15 October 1914, p. 4.

²³⁵ See for example: *The Times*, 3 November 1914, p. 7; *The Times*, 4 November 1914, p. 9; *Manchester Guardian*, 13 November 1914, p. 6-7; *Daily Mail*, 19 November 1914, p. 9; *Pall Mall Gazette*, 20 November 1914, p. 5; *The Spectator*, 28 November 1914, p. 735; *The Daily Telegraph*, 24 November 1914, p. 11.

people, and have burked debate on matters which are better for being ventilated.”²³⁶ These public debates led to a profound shift in public perception, Britons now believed it was the state’s responsibility to protect its citizens in every instance.

By mid-November these pleas had reached Parliament. Reconvening from recess on 11 November, home defence was an importance topic in both the House of Commons and House of Lords. Several M.P.s made appeals for the V.T.C. to receive official recognition from the War Office. Others requested that the Government publicly announce their policy towards non-combatants and invasion. The most impassioned plea came from William Wedgwood on 23 November. Just back from the front and garbed in uniform, Wedgwood announced,

All war is butchery and murder. You cannot make it civilised and decent. All you can do is to try to put an end to war altogether. To do that every man and woman in this country would have to fight if an invader landed on our shores.²³⁷

Wedgwood went on to beg that the Government to urge the British people that they should resist the German invaders in every town, lest Britons become “a disgrace to civilisation and society”.²³⁸

The Invasion Scare of 1914 and the growth of the V.T.C. presented a significant threat to the United Kingdom’s war effort. Even had the defence establishment not itself been concerned with home defence in November 1914, which it very much was, the concern over public safety in the event of invasion necessitated government action. Invasion hysteria was distracting the British people from the struggle on the Continent and revealed the deficiencies in the existing system of

²³⁶ *The Times*, 27 October 1914, p. 9.

²³⁷ Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, 5th Series, *Commons* Vol. 86 (23 November 1914) col. 863 – 865.

²³⁸ Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, 5th Series, *Commons* Vol. 86 (23 November 1914) col. 863 – 865.

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British civil-military administration. To resolve the crisis, Britain's defence establishment needed to engineer a new machinery for co-ordinating Britain's civil society with the war effort.

Chapter III – “Securing the Heart of the British Empire”: The Invasion Scare of 1914 and the creation of the British Civil Defence State

The United Kingdom’s defence establishment had watched the resurgence of the invasion question with trepidation matching that of the British public. In fact, serious doubts regarding the defence of the British Isles were raised within the defence establishment weeks before the British press began their invasion fearmongering in earnest. The shock of war and the disintegration of the United Kingdom’s war plans brought on a wave of invasion hysteria throughout the defence establishment. The British Army and Royal Navy reversed their own pre-war directives and implemented comprehensive and expensive invasion precautions at the expense of other theatres. This initial concern was wholly strategic, but as the invasion hysteria exemplified in chapter two took root across the British Isles, a marked change occurred in the British Government’s decision making. Strategic priorities began to bend to public safety in order to quell public criticism. In doing so, the United Kingdom produced its first civil defence body and changed the relationship between the state and its citizens.

The first wartime reference to possible invasion amidst the defence establishment came from C.I.D. Secretary Maurice Hankey. On 19 September 1914, Hankey circulated a memorandum examining how the month and a half of conflict had impacted the defence of the British Isles. Germany’s capture of territory was taken as insignificant, the expected fall of the Belgian Channel Ports would do little to improve Germany’s naval capabilities in the short term. Hankey surmised the main lesson was the “absolute disregard for human life by German leaders in the recent fighting. Time after time prepared positions have been captured on land in frontal attacks by sheer weight of numbers, notwithstanding terrific losses.”²³⁹ With such callousness, Hankey believed the

²³⁹ Maurice Hankey, “Attack on the British Isles from Oversea - Memorandum by the Secretary”, 14 September 1914, p. 2, TNA CAB 38/28/40.

Germans may be willing to risk their entire navy on an attempted invasion of the British Isles. Nevertheless, as the German Army was heavily engaged it was unlikely an invasion force could be assembled in September 1914.

Hankey reiterated the pre-war the conclusions of 1913-1914 C.I.D. Invasion Sub-Committee by stating the importance of not letting home defence detrimentally impact naval and military operations. “A raid,” Hankey stated, “intended to cause panic, or to inflict local damage, or as a trap to draw our fleets on to a minefield, cannot, even now, be dismissed as out of the question.”²⁴⁰ Hankey recommended that the fortification of the East Coast be continued and the T.F. maintain its training and readiness to combat raids. Hankey also noted that civil authorities had no guidance as to their responsibilities in the event of invasion or a raid. However, public safety was not the concern. Rather, Hankey wanted to inform the civil authorities the methods they could assist the War Office in the event of an enemy landing. The providing of local guides to troops, the felling of trees, the supply of entrenching labour and the destruction of transportation, petrol, supplies and infrastructure were listed as examples.²⁴¹ The only mention of public safety was a recommendation that grain merchants should begin stockpiling grain to prevent possible famine during an invasion.

Following Hankey’s memorandum, invasion anxiety amongst War Office officials began to build. Chief of the Imperial General Staff Sir Charles Taylor began distributing theories on German martial rationality to Kitchener in late September that were remarkably akin to those that

²⁴⁰ Maurice Hankey, “Attack on the British Isles from Oversea - Memorandum by the Secretary”, 14 September 1914, p. 4, TNA CAB 38/28/40.

²⁴¹ Maurice Hankey, “Attack on the British Isles from Oversea - Memorandum by the Secretary”, 14 September 1914, p. 7, TNA CAB 38/28/40.

would be presented in the British press a month later. Given the impending stalemate on the Continent and the German military's strict adherence to the writings of Clausewitz, Taylor warned:

A successful landing in England might be expected to have far more rapid and decisive results than an invasion of Russia, and Germany must look for decisive and rapid results. She knows that we can wear her out financially if the war drags on. Therefore, from her point of view, although the difficulties might be great and the chances of success very doubtful, the best, if not the only, chance of ultimate victory might well seem to lie in an invasion of England in the circumstances of stalemate sketched above.²⁴²

Taylor's specific apprehension over home defence was linked to the lack of trained troops in the country. The British Empire's manpower policy was disintegrating.

By September 1914, the losses of the B.E.F. had exceeded pre-war expectations, forcing Kitchener to dispatch the two Regular Army divisions initially retained for home defence. Every pre-war C.I.D. warning on the importance of maintaining a core of trained soldiery on Great Britain had been disregarded, the victim of total war. More seriously, the T.F. had also begun to be stripped of men and weapons to reinforce the B.E.F., with many Territorials requesting overseas transfer. A total of 22 T.F. battalions would be sent to France in 1914.²⁴³ T.F. units were also posted to colonial garrison duty in Egypt and India to free Regular Army units for service in France.²⁴⁴ The T.F. was supposed to consist of fourteen divisions and fourteen Mounted Brigades, but by late September, it could only count eleven understrength divisions and thirteen Mounted Brigades.²⁴⁵ Two new Regular Army Divisions, the 7th and 8th, were forming on Great Britain, but both would

²⁴² C.I.G.S. Charles Taylor to Kitchener, 23 September 1914, p. 2, TNA WO 32/5266.

²⁴³ J. E. Edmonds, *Military Operations, France and Belgium*, vol. 2 (London: MacMillan and Co., Limited, 1925), 7.

²⁴⁴ Edmonds, 2:7–8.

²⁴⁵ C.I.G.S. Charles Taylor to Kitchener, 29 September 1914, p. 2-3, TNA WO 32/5266.

be shipped to the Continent soon.²⁴⁶ Twelve New Army Divisions were also being mobilized, but like the T.F., they were poorly trained and ill-equipped.²⁴⁷ Great Britain had hundreds of thousands of men in uniform – but few soldiers.

Recognizing the impact of the manpower crisis on home defence, Asquith ordered the C.I.D. to thoroughly re-evaluate the United Kingdom's defences. The Home Defence Sub-Committee began investigating, but the Prime Minister also requested on 25 September a new sub-committee be formed, tasked with drafting instructions to local authorities on what to do if the country was invaded.²⁴⁸ The Chairman was M.P. Herbert Samuel, who had been leading efforts to resettle Belgian refugees. Other members included Edward Troup and Hankey, as well as representatives from the War Office, Admiralty, local government and the Scottish Office. The Samuel Committee first met on 28 September and had produced an interim report titled *Instructions to Local Authorities in the Event of Belligerent Operations* by 6 October.²⁴⁹ As with Hankey's earlier memorandum, the Samuel Committee was fixated with how the civil authorities could expediate military operations on Great Britain. The safety of British civilians was secondary. Two primary objectives were considered, the planned denudement of the British countryside, and the attitude of Britons in occupied territory.

²⁴⁶ Herbert H. Asquith, *Memories and Reflections, 1852-1927*, vol. 2 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1928), 57.

²⁴⁷ Edmonds, *Military Operations, France and Belgium*, 2:8.

²⁴⁸ Hankey to Churchill, 25 September 1914, TNA ADM 137/965.

²⁴⁹ Committee of Imperial Defence, "Instructions to Local Authorities in the Event of Belligerent Operations in the United Kingdom", 6 October 1914, TNA CAB 38/28/46.

Every pre-war investigation on the feasibility of German invasion had operated on the principle that if the Germans attempted invasion they would do so with the smallest and lightest equipped force possible to limit the risk of the expedition and the number of ships need to make the hazardous crossing of the North Sea. This assumption was created on the pre-war estimate of a 70,000-man sized invasion force. It also meant, should the Germans ever land on Great Britain, whether it be a small-scale raid or larger invasion, their equipment would be limited, especially in artillery, ammunition and cavalry. If the Germans hoped to achieve objectives as grand as assaulting London, they would have to requisition British supplies, particularly transportation. The Samuel Committee recognized this dilemma, deeming it imperative the Germans should not attain British supplies. Consequently, the Samuel Committee planned to implement a scorched earth policy on British soil. All transportation in the vicinity of an enemy landing, including motor vehicles, bicycles, horses and boats were to be evacuated or destroyed to prevent their seizure by the enemy. Roads, bridges, railways, power stations, telegraph stations, sluices, petrol stockpiles and piers were suggested for demolition. Despite Hankey's earlier concern over famine, cattle would be slaughtered and granaries burned.²⁵⁰ As one War Office staff officer described after the war, "at one time on the supposition of a German descent on our coasts being successful in its first stages, and it was proposed to meet this by converting a wide coastal section of England into a desert."²⁵¹

The second objective was to establish a doctrine dictating how British civilians should conduct themselves if Great Britain became a battleground. This matter proved to be much more

²⁵⁰ Committee of Imperial Defence, "Preparations by Civil Authorities for Action in the Event of a Hostile Landing – Memorandum for the Guidance of Lord Emergency Committees", October 1914, p. 5, TNA ADM 137/965.

²⁵¹ G.S.O., *G.H.Q. (Montreuil-Sur-Mer)* (London: Philip Allan & Co., 1920), 10.

controversial. Having witnessed the wholesale exodus of refugees out of Belgium and Northeast France and the chaos it wrought, it was decided Britons would be left behind in the wake of the British Army's scorched earth. The Samuel Committee intended to issue instructions requesting "no attempt be made by the inhabitants to flee from any area in which they may think that operations are likely to occur."²⁵² For Britons that fell under German occupation, they should surrender their firearms to the enemy commanders and make no attempt to fire on the enemy. These orders effectively denied the growing V.T.C. of their home defence directive, although they were not to be informed about this.

To implement these preparations, the Samuel Committee proposed the formation of new civil-military administration. The Lord Lieutenants, Lord Mayors and Chief Constables in at-risk counties would form 'Central Organising Committees' from which they would facilitate cooperation with the commander of whichever Home Command they fell under. The Central Organising Committees would also have the authority to form and coordinate with 'Emergency Committees' created at either the parish or village level.²⁵³ The Emergency Committees were charged with drafting registries of local transportation to be evacuated or destroyed, as well as lists of loyal civilians and enemy aliens. The civil authorities would not have the authority to enact their plans in the event of invasion, which continued to be the purview of the War Office. The influence of Troup and Hankey on the Samuel Committee is clear given the similarity of this scheme with

²⁵² Committee of Imperial Defence, "Preparations by Civil Authorities for Action in the Event of a Hostile Landing – Memorandum for the Guidance of Lord Emergency Committees", October 1914, p. 5-6, TNA ADM 137/965.

²⁵³ Committee of Imperial Defence, "Preparations by Civil Authorities for Action in the Event of a Hostile Landing – Memorandum for the Guidance of Lord Emergency Committees", October 1914, p. 1-3, TNA ADM 137/965.

the proposals both men put forth before the war, although Hankey in his memoirs would take the lion's share of the credit.²⁵⁴

On 7 October, the C.I.D. met for its first wartime meeting. It was dominated by discussion of the Samuel Committee's report and home defence. Asquith recorded that the mood over invasion was tense, but mainly academic:

Everybody agreed that nothing of the kind was likely to occur at present, which is just as well, as during the next fortnight we shall have fewer Regular troops in the country than has happened for years.²⁵⁵

Indeed, by mid-October, only four battalions of trained Regulars were still stationed in Great Britain.²⁵⁶ Not since the 1899 "Black Week" of the Second Boer War, when a series of defeats forced the British Army to dispatch almost every professional soldier in the United Kingdom to South Africa, had Great Britain been so unprotected.²⁵⁷ The C.I.D. had in part been established to ensure such a situation never occurred again. It failed.

Most of the recommendations in the Samuel Committee's report were approved on 7 October. As was common in the politics of home defence in the pre-war period, the main dispute concerned how much the British public would be informed of these official decisions. Herbert Samuel suggested that instructions should be drawn up and the Committees formed, but the public not informed until invasion was imminent or had already occurred. Edward Grey and Churchill

²⁵⁴ Hankey, *The Supreme Command 1914 - 1918*, 1:216–17.

²⁵⁵ Asquith, *Memories and Reflections*, 2:52–53.

²⁵⁶ Hankey, *The Supreme Command 1914 - 1918*, 1:219.

²⁵⁷ Under Secretary of State for War George Wyndham admitted how great a failure this had been to the House of Commons on February 12th, 1900. Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, 4th Series, *Commons*, Vol 78 (12 February 1900), cols. 1261-1277.

disagreed. Grey argued the implementation of these measures took precedence, even at the risk of publicity, while Churchill felt the more faith should be placed in the British public, given how little panic had occurred during mobilization.²⁵⁸ The Prime Minister agreed with Samuel – the British public would not be informed of these measures. Nevertheless, the Central and Emergency Committees were to be clandestinely organized. Hankey and Arthur Balfour, who had been present at the C.I.D. due to his home defence experience and to provide unofficial representation to the Unionist Party, were selected to coordinate with the Home Office, Scottish Office and the county Lord Lieutenants on forming the committees.

The Cabinet made one noteworthy alteration to the Samuel Committee's recommendations. The War Office had requested that in the event of an invasion, civilians should be instructed to remain in their homes. They feared that evacuating civilians would block roads, slowing the movement of British troops. The Cabinet shrewdly recognized that given the increasing public terror toward the Rape of Belgium, it was unlikely this order would be followed if given. Moreover, abandoning Britons to the 'Hun' would be politically disastrous. The decision was made to allow Britons to evacuate and have the Emergency Committees plan evacuation routes.²⁵⁹ A new precedence had been set – military necessity was to be subordinate to public safety.

As this civil machinery was established, the investigation of the feasibility of German invasion continued. The comprehensive C.I.D. Invasion revaluation ordered by Asquith was finished on 15 October 1914. Again, like so many reports before, it stated invasion improbable.

²⁵⁸ Committee of Imperial Defence, "Minutes of the 129th Meeting – Home Defence Sub-Committee", 7 October 1914, p. 1-2, TNA ADM 137/965.

²⁵⁹ Hankey, *The Supreme Command 1914 - 1918*, 1:217.

Nevertheless, the military manpower situation in Great Britain was grim and the stakes nothing less than the whole of the Allied war effort. The report stated:

So great and so paramount, however, is the importance of securing the heart of the British Empire that the War Office cannot take the responsibility of running any risks. If Great Britain were successfully invaded it might be impossible to continue the war. All the supplies of our armies and many of those of our Allies would cease... Even a successful landing and a campaign of two or three weeks in Great Britain would be a terrible shock to our prestige...²⁶⁰

Dauntingly, several of the assurances against successful invasion put forth in previous invasion inquiries had been disproven by the war. Hankey's earlier concern over the unexpected effectiveness of frontal infantry attacks was again stated. Other new factors included the higher than expected expenditure of ammunition, the massive casualties of the B.E.F. and the unexpected importance of aircraft, especially German Zeppelins. The C.I.D. also noted that given the newfound attritional nature of the conflict, industrial targets such as munitions factories in North England, were now considered more of a viable target than they would be in a short conflict.²⁶¹

It all depended on whether the Germans would be able to find enough troops to launch a successful invasion. The C.I.D. noted the Germans had already shown their capacity for rapidly withdrawing divisions from the line and then reengaging them elsewhere, particularly during the Battle of the Aisne. Given the increasing deadlock on the Continent it was likely the Germans would be able free up several hundred thousand troops over the winter of 1914/1915. Additionally, the Germans had far more commercial shipping available in their ports than expected. They had

²⁶⁰ Committee of Imperial Defence, "Invasion – Notes by the Secretary, prepared by direction of the Prime Minister", 15 October 1914, p. 6, TNA CAB 38/28/48.

²⁶¹ Committee of Imperial Defence, "Invasion – Notes by the Secretary, prepared by direction of the Prime Minister", 15 October 1914, p. 2, TNA CAB 38/28/48.

289 ships that could transport, totalling upwards of one million gross tonnes.²⁶² Hankey estimated that if every ship was employed, the Germans could transport six army corps, consisting of roughly 300,000 men.²⁶³ The C.I.D. concluded the Germans would not employ such a force but did raise the pre-war estimate of a maximum invasion force of 70,000 to that of 135-160,000 men.

Reliable intelligence on German intentions and capabilities was unavailable. Expecting a short conflict, the British had withdrawn their intelligence networks from Germany just before war was declared.²⁶⁴ The intentions of German grand strategy, the number of available German troops and even the location of German armies was hazy. Only scattered intelligence arrived through neutral nations, some of which were exact copies of those being reported in the press.²⁶⁵ The example of a Russian bureaucrat writing to the British consul in St. Petersburg to report on invasion hearsay from Germany, is just one of dozens of dubious sources.²⁶⁶ Despite the untrustworthiness of these sources, such reports still generated concern. Just as the press was postulating on the aims of the German 'March to Calais', by late October, War Office intelligence was reporting the Germans intended to capture Calais to attempt invasion:

Everything seems to point to a determination to reach Calais at all costs and thence attempt an invasion of England. There is no doubt that heavy howitzers are being prepared for the purpose... Such reports as have been received to date seem to point to a landing on the

²⁶² Committee of Imperial Defence, "Invasion – Notes by the Secretary, prepared by direction of the Prime Minister", 15 October 1914, Appendix I, TNA CAB 38/28/48.

²⁶³ Maurice Hankey, "Attack on the British Isles from Oversea - Memorandum by the Secretary", 14 September 1914, p. 3, TNA CAB 38/28/40.

²⁶⁴ Hiley, "The Failure of British Espionage against Germany, 1907-1914," 884.

²⁶⁵ "Invasion Telegrams", November 1914, TNA ADM 137/965.

²⁶⁶ Charles de Shoomovsky to A. W. Woodhouse, 20 October 1914, TNA ADM 137/965.

South Easterly portion of England – Kent and Sussex. Barges filled with sand are reported freely, the apparent object being to block up the mouth of the Thames.²⁶⁷

Given the shortage of trained manpower in Great Britain, the C.I.D. concluded the period of danger would likely continue until early 1915 and therefore all possible preparation against invasion should be made until then.

November saw the height of the Invasion Scare of 1914 within Britain's defence establishment. The patient and rational re-examination of national defence ceased. Extreme measures were taken. This escalation occurred because unbeknownst to the British people, the Royal Navy was in a desperate situation. The concern of the weeks previous had been limited to the War Office and Cabinet, but by early November, the Admiralty too became beset with terror. After a U-Boat was supposedly sighted in Scapa Flow on 17 October, Admiral Jellicoe fled with the Grand Fleet to Loch Swilly, on the northern coast of Ireland while new submarine defences were constructed.²⁶⁸ For the next two weeks, the North Sea had effectively been abandoned by the primary fleet of the Royal Navy. Historian A.J.P. Taylor described this period as "For many months, Great Britain and the Channel were defended only by the shadow of Nelson's name. This proved effective."²⁶⁹ While Taylor's words may be poetic, they do not capture the keen anxiety gripping the Royal Navy at the time.

The pervading sense of anxiety was made worse by the news of the destruction of the Royal Navy squadron under Rear Admiral Christopher Cradock off the coast of Chile on 1 November.

²⁶⁷ Excerpted in Hiley, "The Failure of British Espionage against Germany, 1907-1914," 886.

²⁶⁸ John Jellicoe, *The Grand Fleet 1914 - 1916 - Its Creation, Development and Work* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1919), 142–46.

²⁶⁹ A. J. P. Taylor, *War By Time-Table - How the First World War Began* (London: Macdonald & Co Ltd., 1969), 118.

The Battle of Coronel was a major blow to morale and demanded an overwhelming response. Just a few days later, two powerful battlecruisers, the *Invincible* and *Inflexible*, would be dispatched to destroy the German East Asiatic Squadron, and a third, the *Princess Royal*, sent to guard the Panama Canal.²⁷⁰ The absence of these ships, along with the loss of the battleship *HMS Audacious* to a mine on 27 October, meant in November 1914, the margin of British naval superiority in the North Sea was thinner than at any other point in the war.²⁷¹

A conference was called on 2 November at the Admiralty to address the Royal Navy's strategy. The news of the Battle of Coronel had yet to arrive, so the main topic was how best to tighten the economic blockade of Germany and remedy the precarious naval situation in the North Sea. Those present included the Prime Minister, Jellicoe, Churchill and the newly reinstated First Sea Lord Admiral John Fisher; Prince Louis of Battenberg having been ousted for the crime of having German heritage. Concerns were voiced over the continued traffic of neutral ships supplying Germany and providing the opportunity for the Germans to disguise their North Sea minelayers. The decision was made to make the entire North Sea hostile territory. This declaration would allow the Royal Navy to place further restrictions on North Sea traffic. On 5 November, the Admiralty publicly announced, "that the whole of the North Sea must be considered a military area."²⁷²

The decision to militarize the North Sea had many facets, but the risk of German amphibious attack was a contributing factor. Churchill was so convinced the Germans would

²⁷⁰ Goldrick, *Before Jutland*, 181–82.

²⁷¹ Corbett, *Naval Operations Vol I*, 239–40.

²⁷² Corbett, 247–48.

attack, that a secret order was issued on 2 November and transmitted to all captains based in the British Isles:

The Commanding Officers of His Majesty's Ships meeting with enemy transports, which there is a reason to believe are carrying troops to British Territory, are enjoined to sink them at once by torpedo or gun fire... No parley with, or surrender by, a transport on the high seas is possible.²⁷³

Ordering Royal Navy officers to sink ships in the process of surrender was technically a war crime, tantamount to the Germans' later policy of unrestricted submarine warfare. Churchill was most likely influenced by Kitchener's demand that the Royal Navy make the targeting of enemy transports a priority.²⁷⁴ An earlier draft of the order had been more extreme, warning that "officers will be held responsible that the enemy gains no advantage by any exercise of humanity."²⁷⁵ The Admiralty later distributed a memorandum justifying their orders. Since there had been reports of fake surrenders by the German Army on the Continent and the fact that the German naval signal for "Close to Torpedo Range" happened to be a white flag, it was justifiable to sink surrendering ships.²⁷⁶ Regardless of the jurisprudence, the order indicates the seriousness with which the Admiralty was taking the possibility of an enemy landing.

Seriousness only furthered by the action off Yarmouth on 3 November. As German battlecruisers lay off the English coastline, the Grand Fleet was forty-eight hours away from being able to interfere with any major German attack on the coast and its commander was still in London.

²⁷³ Admiralty, "Treatment of Enemy Transports," 2 November 1914, TNA ADM 116/1351.

²⁷⁴ Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, 43.

²⁷⁵ Admiralty, "Treatment of Enemy Transports," 24 October 1914, TNA ADM 116/1351.

²⁷⁶ Admiralty, "Admiralty to Commander-in-Chiefs, Flag Officers, Senior Naval Officers, Captains, and Commanding Officers of H.M. Ships and Vessels", December 1914, TNA ADM 116/1351.

This threat was enough to alarm First Sea Lord John Fisher, the Navy's most steadfast officer. Before the Great War, Admiral Fisher had been the most vehement opponent of the 'Bolt from the Blue' theory, inferring that even the mere mention of reassessing home defence as nothing less than an attack on the prestige of the Royal Navy. It speaks volumes that upon his return to the Admiralty in November 1914, he too was influenced by the Invasion Scare of 1914.

Believing that an invasion was imminent, Admiral Fisher and Churchill threw the Royal Navy into invasion preparation. Experts reported that tides on Great Britain's East Coast would best suited a German landing on either 17 November and 20 November. Admiral Jellicoe agreed and brought the Grand Fleet back to the North Sea to be ready to combat the German High Seas Fleet. The C.I.D. had predicted the Germans would likely attempt to seize a British port to disembark their invasion force. To prevent this and restrict German navigation the first blackouts of British towns had begun along the East Coast in September.²⁷⁷ Just as the Samuel Committee was planning for the vast denudement of the British countryside, the Royal Navy began exhaustive efforts to render every commercial and strategic port along the East Coast useless.²⁷⁸ Piers and port infrastructure were rigged for demolition, and block ships prepared to be sunk in harbours. Jellicoe was the lone voice in the high command to propose transparency. "It therefore appears to me," Jellicoe wrote, "that the nation should be informed of the altered circumstances and that the

²⁷⁷ Admiralty, "Extinction of lights on East Coast of England and Scotland in Wartime", 6 September 1914, TNA ADM 1/8393/308.

²⁷⁸ For detailed records about the prepared demolition of British ports, see "Anti-Invasion, Volume II, Disabling East Coast Ports, 1914-1915", TNA ADM 137/966; "Anti-Invasion, Volume III, Disabling Thames and South-East Coast Ports, 1914-1915", TNA ADM 137/967.

necessary steps be taken immediately to meet the new conditions.”²⁷⁹ Despite his pleas, the Government ministers continued their silence throughout November

The Royal Navy also began a major redeployment of naval units to defend the East Coast. A redistribution of forces precipitated by ‘invasion panic’ was exactly what Royal Navy officers had feared before the war, but it was carried out regardless. This plan began with the repositioning of over two dozen antiquated pre-dreadnought battleships to East Coast ports.²⁸⁰ The Admiralty also reallocated half a flotilla of destroyers from the Grand Fleet to coast defence, displeasing many officers who felt the combat effectiveness of the Grand Fleet held precedence.²⁸¹ Just as in the pre-war period, many officers felt these scattered forces were too exposed and ineffective. Rear-Admiral Roger Keyes, the commander of the Eighth Submarine Flotilla testified “we have not a sufficient force of submarines to meet invasion in every possible locality”.²⁸² Even the Admiralty seemed to realize this. If invasion came, the coastal flotillas and pre-dreadnought battle groups were ordered to “proceed without further orders to attack the raiding force regardless of its

²⁷⁹ Jellicoe to Secretary of the Admiralty W. Graham Greene, 14 November 1914, in A. Temple Patterson, ed., *The Jellicoe Papers - Selections from the Private and Official Correspondence of Admiral of the Fleet Earl Jellicoe of Scapa*, vol. 1 (London: Navy Records Society, 1966), 89–92.

²⁸⁰ Churchill to Jellicoe, 12 November 1914, in Patterson, *Jellicoe Papers*, 86–88.

²⁸¹ Admiralty to Commander-in-Chief, 16 November 1914 in Winston S. Churchill, *The World Crisis: Volume I: 1911-1914* (London: Thornton Butterworth Limited, 1923), 485–468.

²⁸² Roger Keyes to Chief of the War Staff, 1 November 1914 in Halpern, Paul G., ed. *The Keyes Papers - Selections from the Private and Official Correspondence of the Admiral of the Fleet Baron Keyes of Zeebrugge*. Vol. 1. London: Navy Records Society, 1972, 49.

strength”.²⁸³ They were to sacrifice themselves to even an overwhelming superior force to buy the Grand Fleet precious time to mobilize.

The British Army implemented similarly comprehensive defences. Lord Kitchener ordered the mobilization of 300,000 half-trained men along the East Coast, with a further 120,000 in reserve.²⁸⁴ Additional artillery pieces were also dispatched to expected landing sites.²⁸⁵ Trenches and barbed wire were strewn along possible landing beaches, with a focus on regions around the Thames, Humber and Medway estuaries. Tens of thousands of coastal V.T.C. members lent their assistance.²⁸⁶ Even the archaic Martello Towers, forts built to defend Great Britain against Napoleon’s armies, were reoccupied by the British Army.²⁸⁷ Placing men in forward positions along the coastline as Kitchener and the commander of the Central Force, General Ian Hamilton, were doing contradicted previous orders. Pre-war plans stated if the enemy succeeded in the landing in force, the Central Force would defeat them in a decisive battle well inland, hence the importance of Samuel Committee’s scorched earth policy along the coastline.²⁸⁸ Instead, Kitchener intended to meet the enemy on the beaches.

²⁸³ Admiralty, “Orders in the Event of Raid or Invasion”, 16 November 1914, p. 3, TNA ADM 137/1971.

²⁸⁴ Mitchinson, *Defending Albion: Britain’s Home Army 1908 - 1919*, 80–81.

²⁸⁵ Committee of Imperial Defence, “Secretary’s Notes of a War Council held at 10 Downing Street”, 25 November 1914, p. 2, TNA CAB 22/1.

²⁸⁶ Osborne, *If the Kaiser Comes*, 78–85.

²⁸⁷ Foley, *Essex in the First World War*, 29.

²⁸⁸ Moon, “The Invasion of the United Kingdom,” 491 – 492.

If the coastal battle was lost, only then would the British Army fall back on London. A series of defensive positions ringing the city, retired by Asquith's budget cuts seven years previous, were reactivated in late October and orders given to construct an immense trench line to shield the northern and southern approaches to the city.²⁸⁹ Initially these were a series of 'stop lines' at key junctions, but construction continued in earnest into 1915, making an unbroken line of defences along the north and south. The London Defences were finished in 1916, largely due to the efforts of thousands of London volunteers who gave their free Sundays to work on the defences.²⁹⁰ Although not as extensive as those constructed when invasion seemed imminent during the Second World War, the beach defences and the London Defences were the most visible manifestations of the Great War for many Britons in 1914-1915.

20 November came and passed without incident. Admiral Fisher, seemingly having regained his 'blue water' sensibilities, wrote to Churchill, "Let us entreat and urge Kitchener to send a hundred thousand men AT ONCE to Flanders..."²⁹¹ Fisher made the same appeal at the War Council on 25 November, saying the troop deployment had been "valuable as a dress rehearsal".²⁹² Other evidence indicates Fisher continued to believe the Germans would attempt invasion until December.²⁹³ Nevertheless, the Admiralty largely regained its confidence in its

²⁸⁹ Norman Longmate, *Island Fortress: The Defence of Great Britain 1603-1945* (London: Hutchinson, 1991), 444–45.

²⁹⁰ *The Volunteer Force and the Volunteer Training Corps During the Great War - Official Record of the Central Association Volunteer Regiments*, 11–12.

²⁹¹ Churchill, *The World Crisis: Volume I: 1911-1914*, 451.

²⁹² Committee of Imperial Defence, "Secretary's Notes of a War Council held at 10 Downing Street", 25 November 1914, p. 2, TNA CAB 22/1.

²⁹³ Moon, "The Invasion of the United Kingdom," 525 – 526.

ability to defend the coast by early December. Yet, the home defences remained in place. A momentous change had occurred, the British Government's preoccupation with home defence was no longer primarily motivated by professional analysis of the feasibility of a German landing but was beginning to react to the British public's reaction to the Invasion Scare of 1914.

As the armed services fortified Great Britain in November, the British public continued to spiral into hysteria. The widespread fearmongering in the press, the growth of the V.T.C. and public criticism of the Government's silence was becoming embarrassing. The two men capable of diagnosing the extent of the United Kingdom's feverishness were Maurice Hankey and Arthur Balfour. As the two travelled across the country establishing the civil defence machinery recommended by the Samuel Committee, they met with politicians and Lord Lieutenants across England and Scotland. Many voiced frustration at the Government's schemes. The Duke of Norfolk, representing East Sussex's Emergency Committees, complained of the "unwisdom and impossibility" of the Government's policy of secrecy.²⁹⁴ Other common criticisms across the country included the lack of government guidance on the legality of the V.T.C.

In 1905, Arthur Balfour had given assurances that if Great Britain was ever invaded, Britons had nothing to fear. undefended towns would not be attacked by the invaders, for it "would raise the indignation of the invaded population to white heat", shock the world and provoke reprisals.²⁹⁵ Now faced with the brutality of modern warfare, Balfour had correctly predicted the public reaction to the Rape of Belgium. However, he was erroneous in thinking this would deter

²⁹⁴ Duke of Norfolk to Colonel Edward Frewen, 26 October 1914, in Keith Grieves, ed., *Sussex in the First World War* (Sussex: Sussex Record Society, 2004), 60.

²⁹⁵ A. J. Balfour, "Appendix I – Notes by the General Staff on Mr. Balfour's Memorandum (C.I.D. Paper 34-A.) of 1905 on the Possibility of a Raid by a hostile Force on the British Coast", 1915, p. 330, TNA CAB 16/28A.

further conflict. The Germans had yet to launch an attack on British soil, but Britons had already been raised to ‘white heat’. Balfour recognized the threat invasion anxiety posed to the British war effort and became the leading advocate for the expansion of civil defence measures to stabilize the homefront. In a memorandum distributed on 9 November, Balfour stated that while some of the Lord Lieutenants were rapidly forming Central Organising Committees, others were hesitant lest they inflame panic. Balfour reported:

When this has come to my knowledge I have explained that, though the Government were anxious to avoid public discussion of a kind which might produce a panic, they would certainly not approve of any delay in carrying out their scheme. The fact that this would make strict secrecy impossible was not to be regarded as a sufficient justification for postponement. I ought to add that, in the opinion of a good many of the gentlemen who talked the matter over with me, a carefully worded public statement would tend to allay, rather than excite, public anxiety.²⁹⁶

Balfour acknowledged the importance for government engagement and called for further action on three main issues. First, a policy towards the V.T.C. irregulars needed to be formed. “The [Samuel] Sub-Committee recommended a strict policy of non-resistance”, Balfour reminded, “The Cabinet have cut out this recommendation, but have put nothing in its place. It is of great importance that this omission should be remedied without delay.”²⁹⁷ Secondly, Balfour addressed the importance of restructuring British martial law. Finally, the Central Organising and Emergency Committees needed on guidance on the two former issues as well as suggested methods on how to quell the public hysteria. Balfour identified the Committees as needing guidance on questions of compensation, secrecy and the extent of the scorched earth campaign.

²⁹⁶ A. J. Balfour, “Instructions to Local Authorities in the Event of Belligerent Operations in the United Kingdom”, 9 November 1914, p. 1, TNA CAB 38/28/52.

²⁹⁷ A. J. Balfour, “Instructions to Local Authorities in the Event of Belligerent Operations in the United Kingdom”, 9 November 1914, p. 3, TNA CAB 38/28/52.

In the next weeks, the British Government would implement measures to address each issue. Beginning on 19 November, the Central Association Volunteer Training Corps and V.T.C. groups affiliated with it were recognized as a part of the British armed services.²⁹⁸ Lord Desborough was recognized as President of the CAVTC and General Sir O'Moore Creagh, who had already been associated with the CAVTC, made the War Office's representative. The terms of recognition were engineered to mediate the British defence establishment's concerns over the existence of the Volunteers, namely that it may siphon manpower or attention from the Regular Army, while simultaneously leashing the V.T.C. to War Office control. First, men who were technically eligible for regular service could join the V.T.C. but must pledge in writing to join the Regular Army if specifically asked to do so.²⁹⁹ As recruiting officers were given free reign to inspect V.T.C. units, the V.T.C. went from being a drain on manpower to a pool of useful recruits, especially as physical requirements began to change. Over the course of 1914 and 1915, an estimated one million men went from the ranks of the V.T.C. to regular service.³⁰⁰ Other terms bound the V.T.C. to the War Office without unduly burdening the war effort. The V.T.C. was to receive no public funding, weapons or supplies. No uniforms or badges of rank that could be misconstrued as those of Regular Army or Territorials were to be worn. The only standardized uniform provided would be a red armband inscribed with the letters "G.R.". Eventually, a proficiency badge embroidered with the symbol of Bellona, the Roman Goddess of War, was also

²⁹⁸ War Office to Lord Desborough, 19 November 1914, TNA WO 161/105.

²⁹⁹ War Office, "Revival of the Volunteer Force 1914-1918", 1920, p. 1, TNA WO 199/3235.

³⁰⁰ Percy Harris, "Memorandum on the Volunteer Movement", July 1917, p. 4, TNA WO 161/105.

offered.³⁰¹ These measures, it was stated, would provide the V.T.C. nominal legal protection, although many Volunteers would continue to lobby for equality of status with the Regular Army.

The press was largely supportive of the public recognition for the V.T.C. *The Spectator* wasted no time or column inches in self-aggrandizing its role in the recognition of the V.T.C. “*The Spectator* for the last fifteen years may be said without any undue boasting to have specialized in what we term the non-professional side of national defence.”³⁰² A lone criticism came from Arthur Conan Doyle who disliked the terms of recognition. He felt the clause necessitating V.T.C. members pledge to serve in the Regular Army would deter married men, who otherwise would not join the Regular Army, from joining the V.T.C.³⁰³ Furthermore, this recognition did not settle whether the Volunteers would be allowed to engage the Germans in the event of invasion.³⁰⁴ Conan Doyle and *The Spectator* pressed for further specifics on how the V.T.C. would be employed in the event of invasion. “To cut the matter short,” *The Spectator* stated, “there is, we are convinced, a real if a somewhat humble place for the Home Guards in our system of military defence.”³⁰⁵ It would take several weeks for the War Office to respond to these appeals.

In his memorandum on the implementation of the Samuel Committee’s recommendation, Balfour had also pressed the government to resolve the existing legal problems with the United Kingdom’s martial law. This was remedied on 27 November. The Defence of the Realm Act

³⁰¹ *The Official Regulations for the Volunteer Training Corps* (London: The Central Association Volunteer Training Corps, 1916), 62–63.

³⁰² *The Spectator*, 12 December 1914, p. 832 – 833.

³⁰³ *The Times*, 3 December 1914, p. 9.

³⁰⁴ *Manchester Guardian*, 25 November 1914, p. 8.

³⁰⁵ *The Spectator*, 12 December 1914, p. 832 – 833.

(DORA) received an overriding amendment from its 8 August incarnation. The armed services were now bestowed with sweeping powers across the United Kingdom, many of which were quickly enforced to limit invasion anxiety. Section 1(c) empowered the armed services to “prevent the spread of false reports” that could harm the war effort.³⁰⁶ This clause was quickly invoked to limit the amount of fearmongering within the press over a possible invasion. On 10 December, two journalists were detained for publishing false stories. The first for reporting there were German ships off the South Coast and the second for claiming the Germans had broken through the Allied lines to the Pas de Calais.³⁰⁷ Additional changes included Section 1(e) which authorized the armed services by any means to “prevent assistance being given to the enemy or the successful prosecution of the war being endangered”. Regulations attached this clause provided legal authority to preparations of the Central Organising Committees. It allowed the military and naval authorities to requisition all buildings and supplies for defence, order their evacuation or destruction if necessary, as well as to use all public and private land for the construction of fortifications.³⁰⁸ On reporting of these new powers, the *Daily Mail* directly labelled them as “Defence Against Invasion”.³⁰⁹ Military Rule had come to the British Isles, and the Invasion Scare of 1914 had helped bring it to pass.

As per Balfour’s appeals, the Samuel Committee’s recommendations were further amended on 27 November, and supplementary instructions distributed to the Central Organising

³⁰⁶ Alexander Pulling, ed., *Defence of the Realm Manual*, 4th ed. (London: His Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1917), 1-5.

³⁰⁷ Pennell, *A Kingdom United*, 120.

³⁰⁸ *The London Gazette*, 1 December 1914, p. 10165 – 10166.

³⁰⁹ *Daily Mail*, 1 December 1914, p. 8.

Committees. These orders stipulated “absolute uniformity in applying the instructions is impossible, and a large discretion must be left to the local Emergency Committees.”³¹⁰ This instituted a bottom-up system of civil defence, with the central government providing guidance but the Emergency Committees choosing how best to apply them given local conditions. An additional amendment was made to the scorched earth policy to lessen the public’s suffering. Although cattle and large grain stockpiles continued to be marked for evacuation or destruction, the wholesale destruction of food stores was scaled back in invaded areas.³¹¹ The supplementary instructions also stated the “policy of the Government is to encourage every man to take his part in the present struggle.”³¹² The Emergency Committees would become recruitment agencies. This clause also meant that if the Germans did land in Great Britain, the V.T.C. would be permitted to act as combatants. General Ian Hamilton even later admitted the V.T.C. “might be of military value in emergency.”³¹³ However, those who had not joined the V.T.C. prior to a possible German landing would not be allowed to take up arms against the Germans.

Finally, the power of discretion with regards to the publicity of instructions for British civilians was also left to the Lord Lieutenants, although the C.I.D. requested that statements only

³¹⁰ Committee of Imperial Defence, “Supplementary Instructions to Lord-Lieutenants in the Event of Belligerent Operations in the United Kingdom”, 27 November 1914, p. 1, TNA CAB 38/28/53.

³¹¹ Committee of Imperial Defence, “Civil Population and Hostile Landing”, 20 January 1915, p. 2, TNA ADM 137/965.

³¹² Committee of Imperial Defence, “Supplementary Instructions to Lord-Lieutenants in the Event of Belligerent Operations in the United Kingdom”, 27 November 1914, p. 2, TNA CAB 38/28/53.

³¹³ Committee of Imperial Defence, “Minutes of the 132nd Meeting”, 23 February 1915, p. 6, TNA CAB 42/1/41.

be given to local newspapers.³¹⁴ Despite this, reports inevitably spread to the national press by late November. Many articles stressed the newfound attention being paid to public safety. As per the bottom-up organization of the committees, some were more transparent than others. Many simply announced that committees were forming, while others voiced specifics. The Hull Emergency Committee proposed the construction of new evacuation roads and requested citizens volunteer their motor-cars.³¹⁵ A Central Organising Committee of Norfolk announcement declared:

... an emergency committee formed to perfect an exhaustive scheme to minimise the effect of an invasion and to safeguard the populace. These things are common knowledge, and before long the inhabitants will be informed of the part they will be expected to place under the emergency scheme, but far from causing any panic the preparations have only provoked one comment – that they are simply common prudence.³¹⁶

Although somewhat vague, this was the typical statement that was issued. The Lord Lieutenants of Norfolk, Northumberland and Essex made similarly vague statements on 15 December.³¹⁷ The decision of the Emergency Committees to not give specifics to their constituencies would prompt criticism of the bottom-up system. Just as *The Times* printed the abovementioned announcements on the morning of 16 December, grimmer news was developing on the East Coast.

While invasion never arrived in strength, it did arrive in spirit. “For the first time in many centuries”, *The Times* later declared, “the coast of England has been directly and seriously attacked.”³¹⁸ On 16 December, out of the morning fog, German battlecruisers closed on the

³¹⁴ Committee of Imperial Defence, “Supplementary Instructions to Lord-Lieutenants in the Event of Belligerent Operations in the United Kingdom”, 27 November 1914, p. 2, TNA CAB 38/28/53.

³¹⁵ *Daily Mail*, 25 November 1914, p. 7.

³¹⁶ *Daily Mail*, 3 December 1914, p. 9.

³¹⁷ *The Times*, 16 December 1914, p. 5.

³¹⁸ *The Times*, 17 December 1914, p. 9.

Yorkshire seaside towns of Whitby, Scarborough and Hartlepool and began an indiscriminate bombardment. 137 men, women and children were killed. The first civilian and military deaths by enemy action on the British Isles in hundreds of years. Only one of the three towns, Hartlepool, was a defended port and therefore a legitimate military target for bombardment. This bombardment embodied for many Britons proof that the Germans sought the destruction of British civilization.³¹⁹

Although there was isolated ridicule of the failure to sink the German raiders, much of the press absolved the Royal Navy and pressed for more reinforcements to be shipped to the Continent. With this the East Coast Raids proved a boon to British propaganda, and for the rest of the First World War “Remember Scarborough” would be placed alongside pleas to ‘Remember’ Belgium, and later Nurse Edith Cavell and Kitchener.³²⁰ Despite this united front, there was one criticism of Government their failure to organize civil defence. No official bomb shelters existed on the coast. *The Times* continued to pressure for the publication of official and precise instructions on the realities of invasion.³²¹ The failure to do so had already seemingly cost lives. *The Times* reported a greater loss of life in Scarborough because civilians hesitated fleeing to cellars while under fire, thinking the risk of falling debris worse than being in the open streets.³²² This criticism spurred

³¹⁹ Gregory, *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War*, 55–57.

³²⁰ Susan R Grayzel, *At Home and Under Fire: Air Raids and Culture in Britain from the Great War to the Blitz* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 23–25.

³²¹ *The Times*, 17 December 1914, p. 9.

³²² *The Times*, 18 December 1914, p. 10.

action and on 2 January 1915, the Home Office published the United Kingdom's first civil defence directives on bombardment from sea or air.³²³

The Yorkshire Coast Raids enflamed invasion panic across the British Isles. During the bombardment itself, many civilians believed the barrage preceded a German landing, a rumour that quickly spread to neighboring communities on 16 December.³²⁴ Days after the bombardment, a false alarm that the Germans were landing on the beach sparked hundreds of Scarborough residents to flee into the countryside.³²⁵ The situation was tense enough for the War Office to cancel Christmas leave for all troops in the United Kingdom.³²⁶ Despite this public pressure, the professional concern over invasion continued to subside. The primary military concern over home defence, the lack of trained manpower, was being progressively alleviated as the T.F. and New Army acquired further training and armament in the new year. British naval supremacy over the Germans was also improving, aided by a crucial intelligence victory.

In the first month of war, Australian authorities seized a German cargo ship in Melbourne. Inside were intact German nautical codebooks, which were sent to London.³²⁷ They were joined there by even more valuable German naval codebooks, that were seized by the Russian Navy from

³²³ Home Office, "War Office Precautions for Bombardment", 2 January 1915, TNA ADM 137/965.

³²⁴ Pennell, *A Kingdom United*, 132.

³²⁵ Longmate, *Island Fortress: The Defence of Great Britain 1603-1945*, 442.

³²⁶ Pennell, *A Kingdom United*, 211–12.

³²⁷ Robert K Massie, *Castles of Steel - Britain, Germany and the Winning of the Great War at Sea* (New York: Random House, 2003), 314.

a beached German destroyer in the Baltic.³²⁸ A special intelligence department was established within the Admiralty to use these codebooks to intercept and decode German wireless traffic. What came to be known as ‘Room 40’ would prove to be an intelligence coup for the Royal Navy and established a new tradition of British cryptanalysis. It could provide intelligence as to German naval movements, and thus lessen the Admiralty’s primary fear in the North Sea theatre. Indeed, both the Royal Navy and the Home Army had been informed by Room 40 the Germans were going to attempt some form of operation against the East Coast on 16 December.³²⁹ The failure to intercept or destroy the German raiders was condemned as a communication failure, unlikely to be repeated. The necessity of such heavy home defences was further nullified by the late December capture of a 1911 German report assessing Great Britain’s defences.³³⁰ Evidently the Germans greatly overestimated the formidableness of Great Britain’s coastal fortifications and were unlikely to attempt an attack. However, the Admiralty could not reveal either of these developments to public. The home defences remained in place, and the C.I.D. continued to develop its civil defence protocols and machinery. The perceived threat now outweighed the actual one.

The distribution of evacuation and safety instructions increased throughout January and February 1915. The Home Office instructions on bombardment was one of the few examples of a central government proclamation during this time. Either the Central Organising Committees or Emergency Committees chose how best to distribute instructions. The Chichester Emergency

³²⁸ Nicholas Hiley, “The Strategic Origins of Room 40,” *Intelligence and National Security* 2, no. 2 (1987): 262–64.

³²⁹ Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow: The Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, 1904-1919 - Volume II The War Years: To the Eve of Jutland*, 2:134.

³³⁰ Admiralty, “German Report on British Defended Ports”, 30 December 1914, TNA ADM 137/965; Gooch, *The Prospect of War, Studies in British Defence Policy 1847 - 1942*, 15.

Committee plastered the region in notices on invasion instructions. The notice declared invasion “MOST IMPROBABLE” but every precaution was necessary. Civilians in outer towns were instructed to travel to larger cities, avoiding major roads and bringing along three days of emergency supplies, where they would then be evacuated out of the county. Private owners of cattle and motor-cars were to evacuate immediately or destroy their possessions. Under no circumstance, civilians not enrolled in a V.T.C. should attempt resistance.³³¹ Leaflets and placards with similar instructions were distributed by the mayor of Great Yarmouth in February 1915.³³² Comparatively, the Emergency Committee in Great Leighs, Essex held lectures on evacuation, but stopped short at distributing paper copies, believing it would cause panic.³³³

On 7 January 1915, a fervent debate in the House of Lords erupted over the organization of the Central Organising Committees and their work. The Duke of Rutland, the same peer who had attacked the existence of the V.T.C., turned his fury towards the Government. He attacked the ad-hoc and bottom-up development of the anti-invasion civil defence policy and demanded the creation of a centralized authority for home defence. He was joined in the call for more government transparency and better coordination by the Marquess of Crewe, Earl Curzon of Kedleston, the Earl of Durham and Lord George Harris. The Earl Curzon went so far to declare,

The poor people at Scarborough who went out into the streets at eight o'clock on the morning of December 16 had no time to go to the police and ask for the address of the chairman of the emergency committee.³³⁴

³³¹ Notice Prepared by the Chichester Emergency Committee, 1915, in Grieves, *Sussex in the First World War*, 58–59.

³³² Frank Meeres, *Norfolk in the First World War* (Chichester: Phillimore & Co. Ltd., 2004).

³³³ James Munson, ed., *Echoes of the Great War: The Diaries of Reverent Andrew Clark* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 46, 49.

³³⁴ Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, 5th Series, *Lords* Vol 18 (7 January 1915) col. 300 – 301.

Earl Curzon went on to make specific requests for the Government to designate further duties for the V.T.C. and for policy on the evacuation of coastal penitentiaries. Lord Harris, believing in the resoluteness of the British people, had already announced to his constituency the plans for the scorched earth policy. He wished to go further, having prepared a “voluminous manifesto” of civil instructions, but the Home Office had heavily censored it.³³⁵

The House of Lords debate, and the continued public apprehension over invasion in the wake of the Yorkshire Coast Raids, sparked further government action. The bottom-up approach of civil defence was to continue, but at Hankey’s urging a new sub-committee was created to settle civil aspects of home defence.³³⁶ The planned evacuation of invaded areas was further investigated. For the first time, the actual evacuation point of possible British internal refugees was considered. Britons fleeing from coastal counties inland would require aid, something the Lord Lieutenants sought clarity on. It was settled that it “will be the duty of the Government to mitigate the hardships of the population consequent on removal” and the Emergency Committees were informed the central government would reimburse all evacuation and refugee cost.³³⁷ This also necessitated the further extension of the emergency committees and inland counties were given permission to begin organizing.³³⁸ Additionally, as per Earl Curzon’s desires, the C.I.D. also discussed whether felons would be evacuated with the rest of the population. The felons would be left in their cells.

³³⁵ Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, 5th Series, *Lords* Vol 18 (7 January 1915) col. 305 – 310.

³³⁶ Committee of Imperial Defence, “Civil Population and Hostile Landing – Memorandum by the Secretary,” 20 January 1915, TNA ADM 137/965.

³³⁷ Committee of Imperial Defence, “Minutes of the 132nd Meeting”, 23 February 1915, p. 2, TNA CAB 42/1/41.

³³⁸ Committee of Imperial Defence, “Minutes of the 132nd Meeting”, 23 February 1915, p. 7, TNA CAB 42/1/41.

The safety of women was a particular concern to the C.I.D. Much of the reaction to the Rape of Belgium focused on the German's brutality towards Belgian women and establishing procedures for the safety of British women was a priority of the Emergency Committees. The Archbishop of Canterbury contacted the C.I.D. to request that girls' schools, particularly orphanage girls' schools, be prioritized for evacuation, lest they become "the special prey of the libertine raider."³³⁹ The C.I.D. decided that this should be done as far as practicable. Furthermore, the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies met with Hankey to request that women be placed on the Emergency Committees. The suffragettes suggested the establishment of women's sanctuaries in the event of invasion. Asquith approved, and a memorandum was circulated to the Central Organising Committees that permitted women to join.

One of the final noteworthy developments of the Invasion Scare of 1914 can be found in a War Office memorandum titled *Civil Population and Hostile Landing*. Its intent was to consider questions of action "considered necessary for military purposes" and those "not necessary for military purposes, but considered advisable for humanitarian or other reasons".³⁴⁰ The War Office stated its position that while military authorities needed authority over the Home Office and the Emergency Committees, constant military supervision was unnecessary. The Emergency Committees and Lord Lieutenants "shall have the power necessary to enable them to carry out the orders of the military authorities."³⁴¹ This position marked a reversal from the Samuel

³³⁹ Committee of Imperial Defence, "Civil Population and Hostile Landing – Memorandum by the Secretary," 20 January 1915, p. 3, TNA ADM 137/965.

³⁴⁰ War Office, "Civil Population and Hostile Landing", 22 February 1914, p. 1, TNA CAB 42/1/38.

³⁴¹ War Office, "Civil Population and Hostile Landing", 22 February 1914, p. 2, TNA CAB 42/1/38.

Committee's instructions that the Committees were limited to only planning, while the military authorities would implement the schemes. However, the Emergency Committees' mandate had grown considerably, from scorched earth to civil defence. Evidently, the War Office felt it was no longer their purview and should be the Home Office's responsibility. The United Kingdom was to have a dedicated, albeit inexperienced, civil defence department, independent of the armed services.

The spectre of invasion began to lessen amongst British society by late February 1915, although it would not completely vanish. At the beginning of the Invasion Scare of 1914, Britain's defence establishment considered 'securing the heart of the British Empire' a military and naval matter, the extreme measures taken by Asquith, Kitchener and Churchill demonstrate this. However, by the Invasion Scare's end, the national defence of the British Isles had been expanded to entail civilian morale and public safety. The development of the Emergency Committees and the civil defence regulations, particularly the planned evacuation of civilians, as the invasion threat transitioned from a feasible to perceived threat indicates that the British public's reaction to the Invasion exemplified in Chapter Two had become the driving force of government action. The modern homefront had been born.

Conclusion and Epilogue

Intermittent and localized invasion scares would arise until the end of the First World War, but none would rival the breadth and significance of the Invasion Scare of 1914. Those early months of the war saw the highest frequency of discussion about home defence in British society. Lacking censure, the British press had free reign to postulate on invasion, more so than at any other period. This unmatched publicity produced corresponding concern amidst the defence establishment with approximately half of all central government documents on invasion created during the First World War were drafted between September to December 1914.³⁴²

The beginning of the Great War is often portrayed as a turning point in history, but this is not the case when discussing the British fear of invasion. Continuity can be drawn between the historic British fear of invasion and the Invasion Scare of 1914. The fear of invasion was how the British people conceptualized warfare and it was a primary objective of the British armed services. The Invasion Scare of 1914 was the logical result of the decades of invasion literature and Government theorizing on the feasibility of German invasion. The unexpected shock of the brutality of total war provided the final factor for the British people and government to briefly turn from the very real violence on the Western Front to this perceived, albeit imaginary, threat.

The varied reactions of the British people and government during the Invasion Scare of 1914 indicate the central role that these anxieties played in British civil-military relations. Various politicians, citizen journalists and the defence establishment had predicted this outcome in the pre-war period. The failure to better inform or involve the British people in the national defence of the British Isles was a mistake that facilitated the rise of the Volunteer Training Corps and the hysteria of the Invasion Scare of 1914. The British Government's creation of the Emergency Committee

³⁴² Moon, "The Invasion of the United Kingdom," 535.

system exemplifies the changing perception of the wartime relationship between the state and civilians. Moreover, its creation shows the importance that Britain's war effort paid to the British Isles as both a theatre of war and as the 'homefront'.

The threat of invasion against the British Isles remained a constant preoccupation of the United Kingdom's war effort during the First World War. Measures were taken to ensure the manpower crisis of 1914 would not be repeated. As early as January 1915, the War Office was denying reinforcements to the B.E.F. in favour of home defence requirements.³⁴³ Chief of the Imperial General Staff Sir William Robertson would later state that home defence manpower requirements would be prioritized over all other theatres until 1918.³⁴⁴ This shift would become a point of contention between the United Kingdom and its allies later in the war.³⁴⁵ Furthermore, it has been argued that following the 1916 Easter Rising and 1917 Russian Revolution, the Home Army was maintained to police civil dissent.³⁴⁶ Whatever the influence of these new factors, a strong home army would be maintained in the United Kingdom until 1918, nominally to protect the country against invasion.³⁴⁷ This begs further examination to illuminate how the continued fear

³⁴³ Kitchener to Sir John French, 9 January 1915, TNA CAB 22/1.

³⁴⁴ Sir William Robertson, *Soldiers and Statesmen, 1914-1918*, vol. 2 (London: Cassell and Company Ltd, 1926), 8.

³⁴⁵ David R Woodward, "Did Lloyd George Starve the British Army of Men Prior to the German Offensive of 21 March 1918?," *The Historical Journal* 27, no. 1 (1984): 241–52; Elizabeth Greenhalgh, "David Lloyd George, Georges Clemenceau, and the 1918 Manpower Crisis," *The Historical Journal* 50, no. 2 (2007): 397–421.

³⁴⁶ Brock Millman, "British Home Defence Planning and Civil Dissent, 1917-1918," *War in History* 5, no. 2 (1998): 204–32.

³⁴⁷ The Home Army would eventually be stripped of troops to reinforce the B.E.F. to facilitate the British Hundred Days Offensive. See, Longmate, *Island Fortress: The Defence of Great Britain 1603-1945*, 448.

of invasion, and the militarization that came with it, influenced the British experience of the First World War.

Not only would tremendous resources be spent protecting the British Isles, the fear of invasion would also influence the war aims and grand strategy of the United Kingdom. The Admiralty would spend the duration of the war contemplating methods to place the Royal Navy on a more decisive footing.³⁴⁸ Churchill became fixated on seizing one of the fortified islands in the Heligoland Bight. If a decisive action could be obtained or an advance position seized, the threat to the British Isles would be abated. Naval opinion was initially against the idea. A conference of the Grand Fleet on 27 September 1914 unanimously decreed an offensive too risky.³⁴⁹ Despite this, by December, Churchill was advocating an amphibious assault to the War Council. The operation would require 20,000 men, but Churchill stressed an advanced base would provide a new line of defence and boost morale.³⁵⁰ Additionally, over the course of late 1914, Churchill had been corresponding with B.E.F. commander Sir John French concerning a joint army-navy amphibious assault against the German held Belgian coastline.³⁵¹ Churchill's amphibious schemes eventually came to form the basis for the ill-fated Gallipoli Offensive.

³⁴⁸ Morgan-Owen, "Cooked up in the Dinner Hour? Sir Arthur Wilson's War Plan, Reconsidered," 893–904.

³⁴⁹ Admiralty, "Conference on Board "Iron Duke" – Report by the Commander-in-Chief", 27 September 1914, p. 1, TNA ADM 137/1939.

³⁵⁰ Committee of Imperial Defence, "Secretary's Notes of a War Council held at 10 Downing Street", 1 December 1914, p. 2-3, TNA CAB 22/1.

³⁵¹ Andrew A. Wiest, *Passchendaele and the Royal Navy* (London: Greenwood Press, 1995), 7–12, 18–26.

Nevertheless, the temptation to clear the German Army off the Belgian coastline endured. The occupation of the Channel Ports, even before they gained strategic importance as U-Boat bases, was reprehensible to the British people. The perceived threat needed to be removed. As Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey informed Sir Francis Bertie, the British Ambassador to France, on 9 December 1914:

I would point out to the French Government that the people of this country realize the Belgian coastal positions are now held by Germany as a menace to Great Britain. They would, therefore, regard any losses entailed by an active offensive taken by our troops against these coastal positions as fully justified. British public opinion will even demand the menace should be removed...³⁵²

The seeds of future Flanders bloodletting had been sown.

As the First World War advanced, new terrors began to menace the British homefront. The first aerial attack on the United Kingdom occurred on Christmas Eve, 1914. A lone German warplane dropped several bombs near Dover Castle, inflicting superficial damage. The first Zeppelin raids began in January 1915, soon developing into a common occurrence along the south-east coast and in London. The definition of home and civil defence began to shift from the fear of invasion to air-raid precaution, and the civil defence apparatus birthed during the Invasion Scare of 1914 shifted roles as well. The emergency committees facilitated the construction of air raid shelters and blackouts, while V.T.C. members began to assist local fire brigades in search and rescue.³⁵³ Just as the zeppelin menace was defeated, they were replaced by Gotha Bombers. Approximately 4,700 British civilians would be killed or wounded by German strategic bombing during the First World War and the phenomena would come to dominate the popular memory of

³⁵² John Terraine, *The Road to Passchendaele - The Flanders Offensive of 1917 A Study in Inevitability* (London: Leo Cooper, 1977), 9–10.

³⁵³ Mitchinson, *Defending Albion: Britain's Home Army 1908 - 1919*, 113–14.

the British homefront and the development of civil defence.³⁵⁴ However important as aerial warfare is to British memory, if the Invasion Scare of 1914 is representative of anything, it is that just as the British had to address the new horrors of industrial warfare, they needed to do the same with their more deep-rooted fears.

The Invasion Scare of 1914 was just one of many reactions to the first months of butchery that would come to be called the First World War. Despite its persuasiveness, it never dominated the British nation's complete attention. Invasion hysteria never captured the same headlines that the momentous clashing of Europe's empires did. Reports of German invasion preparations or the forming of Emergency Committees could easily be lost within newspaper pages bursting with the tales of individual bravery, of collective butchery and the ever-rising casualty lists. As months turned to years and places such as Loos, Gallipoli, the Somme, Passchendaele and Amiens came to dominate British memory, the shores of Great Britain seemed insignificant compared to the fields where so much British blood had been shed. As the sky and not the sea proved the true menace to the innocent, the horrors of reality overtook those of the imaginary. The Invasion Scare of 1914 was buried under years of trauma. Nevertheless, for hundreds of thousands of V.T.C. members and boy scouts, of new recruits, of citizens of seaside towns like Yarmouth, Scarborough, Hartlepool, and Whitby, along with thousands of other Britons, the Invasion Scare of 1914 was their introduction to the carnage of total war.

³⁵⁴ For works on the development of civil defence protocols during the First World War and how it became ingrained in the popular memory of the First World War see, Terence H. O'Brien, *Civil Defence* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1955), 7–13; Grayzel, *At Home and Under Fire: Air Raids and Culture in Britain from the Great War to the Blitz*, 20–92.

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