

**HOW WAS RICHARD HALDANE ABLE TO
REFORM THE BRITISH ARMY? AN HISTORICAL
ASSESSMENT USING A CONTEMPORARY
CHANGE MANAGEMENT MODEL**

by

SIMON GILES HIGGENS

A thesis submitted to
The University of Birmingham
for the degree of
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

Departments of Medieval and Modern History
College of Arts and Law
The University of Birmingham
September 2010

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ABSTRACT

Using a contemporary change management model as the analytical framework, this dissertation examines how Richard Burdon Haldane, the Liberal Imperialist Secretary of State for War (1905-1912), implemented lasting reform of the British Army, when his immediate predecessors, Brodrick and Arnold-Forster, had failed. It considers how political expediency, foreign policy and military strategy influenced Haldane and why his nation in arms concept did not improve the public's perception of the regular and auxiliary forces. The dissertation concludes that Haldane understood the intellectual complexities of institutional change and that lasting reform required the technical and social dimensions of it to be addressed simultaneously and as an organic whole. His understanding of Hegelian philosophy provided him with a means of synthesising numerous ideas into a viable solution and his intellectual, social and political skills provided him with the tools to implement it. Coupled with a long tenure in office and the support of first-class military advisors, who included Major General Haig and Colonel Ellison, Haldane's success was not, as he claimed, that he entered office without preconceived ideas about army reform, but that he did not announce them. By doing so, he gained the support of the reform-weary Generals in the War Office.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In facilitating my application to participate in the Higher Defence Studies Programme at the University of Birmingham and for assistance in formulating my research proposal, I give grateful thanks to Colonel (Retired) Hugh Boscowen, former Director Defence Studies (Army). For constructive advice and fruitful discussions regarding organisational change, I thank Dr Sylvie Jackson, Defence Academy of the United Kingdom. I am grateful to Professor Edward Spiers, University of Leeds who gave generously of his time to discuss aspects of my research and provide food for thought. For sage advice and avuncular support during the initial stages of my research, I am most grateful to Dr Peter Gray, University of Birmingham. Above all, I am indebted to my Supervisor, Professor Gary Sheffield, University of Birmingham who has always sparked in me a desire to learn about the profession to which I belong. He has succeeded in making me a ‘thinking’ officer.

For Johanna; my inspiration and motivation in all that I do.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

‘If you organize the British Army, you’ll ruin it’¹

In 1919, Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig addressed a copy of his despatches to ‘the greatest Secretary for War England (sic) has ever had!’² The recipient was the catalyst and driving force behind the radical transformation of the British Army from a disjointed, ill-guided and poorly equipped force to what the official historian of the First World War called ‘incomparably the best trained, best organised and best equipped British Army that ever went forth to war’.³ When Richard Burdon Haldane, the Secretary of State for War from 1905 to 1912, assumed his post, the British Army would have struggled to mobilise expeditiously for a Continental war; it was undermanned, incorrectly structured and lacked direction. Its second line, which consisted of the Militia, was restricted to home service and its third line of Volunteer and Yeomanry units lacked the transport to make it capable of action as a mobile force. Yet nine years later, six regular and fourteen auxiliary divisions were efficiently mobilised and, two weeks after war was declared, the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) was deployed in France.⁴ Thereafter, from its initial major engagement at Mons to the climactic First Battle of Ypres, the BEF fought to near annihilation but in doing so, saved Britain from possible defeat and, perhaps more importantly, bought time for the mobilisation of a citizen army.⁵ Haldane’s role in this was pivotal and this

¹ An unnamed distinguished officer in a high position at the War Office quoted in a letter from Lt Gen Sir Gerald Ellison to Lady Haig, 11 Sep 1928, Haig MSS, National Library of Scotland (NLS), Acc 3155.40q

² H.T. Baker, ‘Lord Haldane’, *Army Quarterly*, Vol 17 (October 1928), p.13

³ Brigadier General J.E. Edmonds, *Military Operations, France and Belgium, 1914* (Volume I, London: HMSO, 1925), pp.10-11

⁴ R.C. Eensor, *England 1870 – 1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936), p.525

⁵ D. Ascoli, *The Mons Star: The British Expeditionary Force 1914* (Edinburgh: Birlinn Ltd, 2001), p.X

dissertation will argue that his appointment to the War Office in December 1905 ensured that the right man was in the right place at the right time.

In the aftermath of the failed Relugas Plot, which was the scheme devised by the Liberal Imperialists to place Lord Rosebery as the Prime Minister, Haldane, the Liberal Member for East Lothian, was disappointed at not being made Lord Chancellor in Campbell-Bannerman's new government. Reluctantly accepting the post of Secretary of State for War, Haldane recalled later in his memoirs that Campbell-Bannerman informed him that 'Nobody ... will touch the War Office with a pole'.⁶ Rising to the challenge, Haldane received his Ministerial Seals of Office from King Edward VII at a time of considerable international, departmental, political and domestic upheaval. Balfour's previous Unionist government, an alliance of Conservatives and Liberal Unionists who opposed Irish Home Rule, had ended Britain's 'Splendid Isolation' by entering into an alliance with Japan and negotiating an *entente* with France to safeguard colonial interests. His two immediate predecessors, Brodrick and Arnold-Forster, had left the War Office in a state of confusion, intrigue and turmoil. They bequeathed a deficient and fragmented army which had been condemned by the Royal Commission charged with examining the Army's poor performance in South Africa. As a Minister, Haldane could not operate in departmental isolation and had to appease his Liberal colleagues' desire for 'peace, retrenchment and reform', particularly their aspiration to reduce military expenditure. Nonetheless, in a country where the Army was disliked, industrial unrest increasing, Irish civil war looming

⁶ R.B. Haldane, *Richard Burdon Haldane. An Autobiography* (Second edition, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1929 [1929]), p.173

and proceedings in Parliament reduced to a mockery, Haldane, unlike the two previous Secretaries of State for War, was able to effect lasting reform.⁷

By the end of 1905, the War Office was agitated and preoccupied by the unsuccessful reforms of successive War Ministers in Balfour's Unionist Cabinet. The first was St John Brodrick, in post from November 1900 to October 1903, who had preconceived ideas on army reform. He was a fervent believer in the Cardwell system, a means by which one of a pair of line battalions would remain at a depot in one of sixty-six territorial districts in the training and administrative role while the other battalion served overseas.⁸ He attempted reform while the Army was fighting in South Africa and, unlike his contemporaries, thought that the war had not exposed any shortcomings of it.⁹ His reforms proposed forming six self-contained Army Corps of 40,000 soldiers each, three comprising regular forces ready for immediate dispatch abroad and three comprising existing auxiliary forces for home defence. To attract sufficient numbers of recruits, the basic rate of pay was increased and service with the colours reduced from seven years to three. The reforms were expensive and increased the Estimates by nearly five and a half million pounds.¹⁰ Apart from swelling the size of the Reserve, Brodrick was unable to improve recruiting and formed only three of the six corps. A vain and sensitive man, Brodrick's personality and character were described as 'his own worst enemy'.¹¹ He troubled the Admiralty who feared a reduction of their military hegemony and upset the auxiliary forces who foresaw a reduction in funding. The Liberal Radicals viewed his militarism with contempt and the

⁷ E.M. Spiers, *Haldane: an Army Reformer* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1980), p.1

⁸ E.M. Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army, 1868 – 1902* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), p.19

⁹ Spiers, *Haldane: an Army Reformer*, p.4

¹⁰ L.J. Satre, 'St John Brodrick and Army Reform 1901-1903, *The Journal of British Studies*, Vol 15(2) (Spring 1976), pp.121-129

¹¹ Satre, 'St John Brodrick and Army Reform 1901-1903', p.131

Treasury became anxious about the increasing costs. Accordingly, he lost the support of Cabinet, Parliament and the military and, compounded by his lack of political nous and weak leadership, his reforms failed.¹² Balfour took the opportunity to replace him during a reshuffle of the Cabinet over Tariff Reform in October 1903.¹³

His replacement, Arnold-Forster, opposed the Cardwell system and accepted that costs should be reduced but, like Brodrick, entered office with preconceived ideas which he was determined to implement. Reversing most of Brodrick's reforms, he proposed dividing the Army into two elements; long and short-service. The long-service army would garrison India and the colonies and the short-service army would feed the Reserve. Abandoning the Army Corps and three year term of service, he introduced nine year enlistments and proposed that the scheme be financed by deep cuts across the auxiliary forces. The scheme encountered fierce opposition from the Cabinet, Parliament and the Army Council. In Parliament, the Militia and Volunteer representatives protested and the Militia colonels were incensed that half of their battalions would be moved into the short-service army while the remainder were disbanded. Without enjoying the support of his Prime Minister, Arnold-Forster was permitted to outline his reforms to Parliament in July 1904 but not commit the government to them. Thereafter, military reform stalled due to Balfour's unwillingness to appoint a new Secretary of State and Arnold-Forster's intransigence.¹⁴ Like Brodrick, Arnold-Forster's time in post was flawed by lack of support and that 'one of the greatest problems of Arnold-Forster had been the consistent opposition of the military'.¹⁵ With Arnold-Forster's authority emasculated, Balfour involved himself

¹² Satre, 'St John Brodrick and Army Reform 1901-1903', p.139

¹³ Spiers, *Haldane: an Army Reformer*, pp.4-5

¹⁴ Spiers, *Haldane: an Army Reformer*, pp.6-7

¹⁵ B. Poc, 'British Army Reforms 1902 – 1914', *Military Affairs*, Vol 31(3) (Autumn 1967), p.135

increasingly with military matters until the fall of his government in December 1905.

Against this background, Haldane had no choice other than to adopt a new approach to army reform.¹⁶ This perhaps answers the question why Haldane entered office declaring that he had no preconceived ideas about army reform when compelling documentary evidence, which is examined in Chapter Four, clearly suggests that he did.

A review of the publications and research covering Haldane's time in office indicates that an objective understanding of his reforms sits between two viewpoints; he was either a gifted intellect with a great capacity for original thought or 'he had the lawyer's habit of taking other men's ideas'.¹⁷ Edward Spiers' *Haldane: an Army Reformer* (1980), however, provides a balanced perspective of what he achieved. He does not provide a biography of Haldane nor detail his time in the War Office but instead examines 'the controversial and celebrated achievements of Haldane as an army reformer'.¹⁸ His meticulous and comprehensive approach to research revealed that instead of grand strategy and foreign policy being the key drivers of change, it was the economy. Spiers argued that to appease the Liberal party, Haldane's reforms could not cost any more than £28 million and that it was the 'Economy and not Europe [that] had been the *sine qua non* of Haldane's army reform'.¹⁹ While acknowledging the significance of Haldane's reforms, Spiers contested that they contained less originality of thought than previously assumed and demonstrated that he inherited a considerable number of them from his predecessors and contemporaries. Spiers instead regarded Haldane's capacity to implement reform, due to his perceptive judgement and strong leadership, as his lasting legacy. Disappointingly, Spiers failed to

¹⁶ Spiers, *Haldane: an Army Reformer*, p.7

¹⁷ P. Fraser, *Lord Esher: A Political Biography* (London: Hart-Davis MacGibbon, 1973), p.185

¹⁸ Spiers, *Haldane: an Army Reformer*, p.V

¹⁹ Spiers, *Haldane: an Army Reformer*, p.73

fully examine the influence that Haldane's semester in Göttingen in 1874 and his lifelong admiration of German philosophy had on his reforms. Andrew Vincent, however, argues convincingly that Haldane was guided by philosophy and that it provided him with a lifelong method of thinking and addressing problems.²⁰ This criticism aside, Spiers' comprehensive and detailed examination of Haldane's reforms remains a seminal study.

Haldane's autobiography offers valuable evidence as to his early influences and development. His analytical ability and questioning of first principles was much lauded and he only read first editions of books, as he considered later editions as being contaminated by those critics 'who had half-obliterated the substance by bringing it up to date'.²¹ Despite Haldane's openness regarding his relationship with his mother and his brief association with Miss Valentine Ferguson, Haldane does not reveal much about his relationship with his two most trusted political friends, Asquith and Grey. The most surprising omissions, however, are those of Colonel Ellison and Lord Esher. As Spiers argues, Ellison's imprint is clearly visible in Haldane's reforms yet he gave him little recognition, and Esher, who was one of the most influential figures of his time, received only passing references. This omission continues in Haldane's two principal biographies. The first, Major General Maurice's *Haldane: The Life of Viscount Haldane of Cloan* (1937), when discussing the reforms, merely adhered to and expanded upon the themes in Haldane's autobiography. Unable to gain access to Cabinet papers or those of Haldane's advisors, he simply reasserted the claims made by Haldane and failed to scrutinise relevant correspondence and memoirs. He ignores the contribution of others and the work lapses

²⁰ A. Vincent, 'German Philosophy and British Public Policy: Richard Burdon Haldane in Theory and Practice', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol 68(1) (January 2007), p.179

²¹ Haldane, *Richard Burdon Haldane. An Autobiography*, p.32

into a hagiography while affording ‘neither a comprehensive nor a dispassionate account of Haldane’s work as Secretary of State for War’.²² The second biography, Sommer’s *Haldane of Cloan* (1960) was published thirty-two years after Haldane’s death but a review of the Bibliography reveals that little was added from the additional primary material or secondary sources that materialised in the intervening years. As with Maurice’s biography, there is significant duplication of the autobiography and consequently Sommer offers little additional insight into Haldane. He contradicts himself in places and these errors reduce confidence in his analysis, which is compounded by the omission of any significant reference to Ellison and Esher.

Peter Fraser’s scholarly *Lord Esher: A Political Biography* (1973) contends that the basis of the reforms was the product of Ellison and Esher, not Haldane. James Lees-Milne’s *The Enigmatic Edwardian: The Life of Reginald 2nd Viscount Esher* (1986) supports this claim, adding that Balfour was also instrumental in them. Fraser argues that Esher had significant influence in ministerial affairs because of the stabilising effect his immunity from the vagaries of the electorate and the exigencies of a political party afforded him. Unfortunately, this ‘authority without responsibility’ is not fully explored and Fraser does not adequately address how Esher was so adept at influencing foreign and domestic policy.²³ He asserts that his authority came from his political reputation and multitude of social connections to influential circles but there were many at this time of whom the same could be said. Esher, however, was certainly an influential figure and Fraser convincingly argues how considerable his impact was, especially his part in the establishment of secret

²² Spiers, *Haldane: an Army Reformer*, p.26

²³ In researching this dissertation, archival material and other related research has revealed that the political manoeuvrings and far-reaching influence of Lord Esher warrant renewed examination.

staff talks between the British and French in January 1906. Esher's foresight is rightly acknowledged because it was this single event that shaped the structure of the British Army in 1914. Correlli Barnett's assertion that without Esher, British military efforts would never have risen to and met the challenges of both world wars is attributing too much influence to him and he unfairly downplays Haldane's part, whose task, he asserts, was merely 'to implement the Esher Report'.²⁴ Regardless of the origin of Haldane's reforms, they did transform the regular and auxiliary forces of the military into an instrument capable of modern warfare. It is not the purpose of this dissertation to detail and analyse the content of those reforms, but it is important to understand their significance. To achieve this, their key characteristics are summarised below and, where necessary, expanded upon in subsequent chapters.

Haldane entered office announcing that he had no thoughts on army reform and understood that his first task was to reduce costs. Any restructuring of the Army had to conform to the limits of an arbitrary but politically acceptable annual ceiling of £28 million. In order to reduce the Estimates, Haldane had to restructure a highly political organisation where there was little, if any, appetite for more reform. Military reform was unpopular and while Parliament reflected national opinion in its desire to reduce defence spending, the social groups within the Army had a strong interest in preserving the status quo.²⁵ Alerted by the Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, in January 1906 to the possibility of a German attack on France, his planning adopted a Continental perspective but did not ignore the more immediate imperial defence requirements. He did this by restoring the Cardwell system,

²⁴ C.D. Barnett, 'Radical Reform:1902-14', in A. Perlmutter and V.P. Bennett, eds., *The Political Influence of the Military A Comparative Reader* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), p.164

²⁵ M. Howard, *Studies in War and Peace* (London: Maurice Temple Smith Ltd, 1970), p.89

reverting to the old terms of service and balancing the seventy-one battalions at home with the eighty-five abroad.²⁶ Assisted by his military Private Secretary, Colonel Gerald Ellison, Haldane established a two-line army; a Striking Force consisting six infantry divisions and one cavalry division, augmented by the Special Reserve, and the Territorial Force, formed from the Volunteers, Yeomanry and remaining elements of the Militia, which could expand and support the Striking Force in times of prolonged conflict. In accepting the ‘Blue Water’ principle, a strategy of exclusive reliance on naval defences for safeguarding Britain’s home sovereignty,²⁷ the Regular Army was released from a home defence role. Haldane incorporated existing rudimentary military organisations at universities and public schools into a newly formed Officer Training Corps (OTC) which, along with the Territorial Force, would be administered by the Country Associations thereby creating a British version of a nation in arms but without resorting to compulsory service. Restricted by a cap on expenditure, Haldane’s army was the largest force that could be raised during peacetime and although a Continental threat provided it with a purpose, it neither determined its composition nor size.²⁸

Haldane’s achievements form a well-trodden historical path and there is no shortage of research and analysis detailing what he did and why. This expansive body of research, however, does not adequately detail how Haldane was able to effect lasting change and a broad search has revealed only two pieces of academic research that attempt to understand this aspect of his reforms. The first, Maud’s ‘Lord Haldane’s Reorganization of the British Army 1905-1912’ systematically analysed how Haldane approached the task and divided it

²⁶ After adjustment, there were seventy-four battalions, both at home and abroad.

²⁷ S.E. Koss, *Lord Haldane: Scapegoat for Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), p.58

²⁸ E.M. Spiers, ‘The Late Victorian Army 1868 – 1914’, in D. Chandler and I. Beckett, I. eds, *The Oxford History of the British Army* (Second edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003 [1994]), pp.203-204

into five distinct stages.²⁹ In applying a chronological template to the process, Maud simply reiterated what was done, by whom and when. The second, Teagarden's 'Management Lessons to be Learned from the Old Contemptibles' updated Maud's findings and, in an attempt to analyse Haldane's management techniques, projected his actions onto an unspecified four-stage change organisation model.³⁰ Apart from providing a useful synopsis on the development of change management methods, Teagarden did not offer any lessons as to how Haldane was able to effect lasting reform. This research, however, will do the reverse and apply a theoretical change management model retrospectively, not to constitute a modern change management consultancy but as a synchronic framework from which to conduct historical analysis and answer the question of how Haldane implemented change. It will cut a new path in providing an alternate perspective of the Haldane Reforms and in doing so, it will not 'point out lessons, but ... isolate things that need thinking about ... History provides insights and questions, not answers'.³¹ Taking this further, military history, if applied cautiously, provides a useful tool for decisions makers and ensures that they ask the right questions. Nearly every situation will have had something similar to it occur in the past and careful study of it can provide useful prompts to those responsible for asking the questions.³² But history does not provide prescriptive lessons only 'approximate precedents'³³ and the purpose of this dissertation is to suggest what they are. It will use a change management model as a vehicle for doing so because in reforming the British Army, Haldane implemented

²⁹ P.D. Maud, 'Lord Haldane's Reorganization of the British Army 1905 – 1912', *Army Quarterly* Vol 55 (October 1947), pp.48-50

³⁰ E. M. Teagarden, 'Management Lessons to be Learned from the Old Contemptibles', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, Vol 75 (1997), pp.130-132

³¹ G. Till, *Maritime Strategy and the Nuclear Age* (London: Macmillan, 1982), pp.224-225

³² G. Sheffield, 'Military Past, Military Present, Military Future. The Usefulness of Military History', *RUSI Journal*, Vol 153(3) (June 2008), p.102

³³ A. Gordon, *The Rules of the Game: Jutland and British Naval Command* (London: John Murray, 1996), p.600

institutional change. Considering the impact of these reforms and their ramifications in 1914, it is surprising that a retrospective analysis has not been conducted previously. This would undoubtedly be of use to those today who find themselves in not too dissimilar a position to that of Haldane over a century ago. This research will address that shortfall and to understand the significance of Haldane's achievements, it is necessary first to understand what institutional change involves and why it presents such a monumental challenge.

Change is inherently muddled, complicated and involves a wide range of conflicting demands. Despite detailed planning, events rarely occur as predicted and are seldom correct in the first instance. Large-scale change causes upheaval and creates new patterns of power, influence and control. The challenge, therefore, is not only in changing an institution's strategy, structure and output, but also in addressing the expectations, perceptions and performance of the individuals within it.³⁴ Large-scale change is difficult to conceive because it deals with uncertainty and difficult to implement because consequences often arise that are unpredictable. Furthermore, individuals or groups are inherently resistant to change and institutional change can fail simply because of this resistance. Institutional change is therefore both an intellectual challenge and a process of dealing with people and uncertainty.³⁵ Leading change is critical and only through strong leadership can barriers to change be removed and the motivation provided to change shared values and behavioural norms.³⁶ But change must be deep-rooted because an institution can revert to its status quo if they are not entrenched in its culture. This is known as homeostasis, where an organisation in response to radical change, has a tendency to revert

³⁴ D.A. Nadler, *Champions of Change* (New York: John Wiley & Sons Inc, 1997), pp.3-5

³⁵ C. Carnall, *Managing Change in Organisations* (Fifth edition, Harwell: Pearson Education Ltd, 2007 [1990]), pp.3-11

³⁶ J.P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1996), p.30

to its original state. Kurt Lewin (1951) in his ‘Three-Step Change Model’ argued that a new state of equilibrium had to be moved towards and firmly established to prevent institutional homeostasis.³⁷

While change is unique to each organisation and does not always follow rigid academic models, scores of change management theories have developed over the years to help with the process. Many have been successful to varying degrees and most could provide a useful framework with which to analyse an element of Haldane’s reforms. One model, however, permits a comprehensive analysis and this is the Nadler and Tushman ‘Congruence Model’.³⁸ This dissertation neither endorses the Congruence Model nor argues that it is the only viable change model available but it has been selected specifically because it is a particularly useful tool for retrospectively analysing change and identifying why it succeeded or failed. The Congruence Model regards organisations as a system of inter-related components that operate within a larger environment.³⁹ It draws on their sociotechnical components and emphasises their interdependence. The system responds to inputs from both internal and external sources and, using its strategy, transforms them into an output. The transformation process comprises four interdependent elements, the work, the people, the formal organisation and the informal organisation and the model argues that effective change requires attending to all four components simultaneously. Furthermore, it states that every element of the organisational system must be congruent in order to achieve

³⁷ E. Cameron and M. Green, *Making Sense of Change Management* (London: Kogan Page Ltd, 2004), p.97

³⁸ The Congruence Model was developed by David Nadler, vice chairman of MMC, formerly Oliver Wyman Delta and Michael Tushman, Harvard Graduate Business School. D.A. Nadler and M.L. Tushman, *Competing by Design*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp.28-40

³⁹ J. Hayes, *The Theory and Practice of Change Management* (Second edition, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007 [2002]), p.44

better performance as a whole.⁴⁰ The concept of congruence is crucial to understanding this model. In systems, the interaction of the component parts is more important than the components themselves, therefore an organisation's overall effectiveness relies on the internal alignment of its basic parts. This is the essence of the model; the greater the congruence the more effective an organisation will be in transforming strategy into performance.⁴¹ Fundamentally, the organisation's formal structure must support the implementation of strategy but, just as importantly, the informal structure must align the work, people and culture with it.⁴² Haldane's reforms predate the Congruence Model by some ninety years but he was aware that for lasting change to occur, all the elements within an organisation had to be addressed as a whole. In his memorandum to the Army Council dated 1 January 1906, Haldane stated that

The problem of the future reorganisation of the British Army can only be considered as a whole, ... it is fatal to try to deal with the parts of which one entire force is made up, without first determining their co-ordination on the broad principles according to which they are to be fitted into one another in the scheme as a whole.⁴³

Using the Congruence Model as a framework to analyse Haldane's reforms, the dissertation is divided into three main segments: Organisation Components, Operating Organisation and Operating Environment. Chapter Two looks at the Organisation Components of the British Army; these are the elements that constitute the basic components of any organisation and include its environment, resources, history and strategy. These four components are

⁴⁰ Cameron and Green, *Making Sense of Change Management*, pp.104-106

⁴¹ Nadler, *Champions of Change*, pp.37-38

⁴² Nadler and Tushman, *Competing by Design*, pp.34-40

⁴³ Haldane MSS., NLS, Ms. 5918, pp.44-45

bequeathed by the outgoing leader of an organisation and this chapter will examine how Haldane configured his inheritance and interpreted the environment to produce a response. It will explore how Haldane balanced retrenchment with reform, Continental commitment with Imperial defence, fighting overseas with home defence, compulsion with voluntary service and foreign policy with his admiration for Germany. Chapter Three examines the Operating Organisation of the British Army. This is the transformation mechanism that takes the strategy, in the context of environment, resources and history and converts it into an output. The mechanism comprises the work, formal organisation, people and informal organisation components and it is here that congruence is essential for institutional change to succeed. This chapter will demonstrate that Haldane understood the social and technical dimensions of change and will examine how he attempted to align them. It will analyse how Haldane's keen interest in science, technology and education lead him to create the nation in arms concept. Chapter Four focuses on the British Army's Operating Environment and resistance to change. Barriers to change can stall or prevent institutional change, therefore predicting and learning to overcome them is vital if change is to succeed.⁴⁴ Haldane's leadership was critical in addressing the Army's inherent resistance and this chapter focuses on his personal and professional qualities. It also analyses his relationship with his key advisors and re-examines the debate about whether he had preconceived ideas about army reform before taking office.

⁴⁴ Nadler, *Champions of Change*, p.212

CHAPTER TWO

ORGANISATION COMPONENTS

*'It is a story of an effort made in two directions, that of averting a possible calamity and that of preparing for it should it happen'*⁴⁵

Upon hearing of Haldane's appointment, Haig remarked to his wife that he 'cannot be worse than Arnold-Forster and must have some pluck to take over the post of Secy. of War'.⁴⁶ Haldane became Secretary of State for War at a time when the War Office was still regarded as the graveyard of a promising politician's career, particularly for a Liberal Imperialist whose party was generally anti-militaristic. Many of his predecessors, such as Hartington and Campbell-Bannerman had come to the War Office unwillingly and others, including Stanhope and Arnold-Forster, left with their health affected by the stress of working there. The War Office was regarded as a ministry that endured a chaotic state of administration, over-bearing Commanders-in-Chief (C-in-C), rivalries between civilian and military advisors, a lack of reliable and independent advice and the contempt of an increasingly important Treasury whose hostility towards the military was readily apparent.⁴⁷ It was not until the debacle of the South African War that major faults at the higher levels of military administration were highlighted and addressed, particularly the lack of a professional consultative agency and the failure of communication between politicians and soldiers. Until coordination was improved, diplomacy and strategy could

⁴⁵ Haldane's Memorandum of Events 1905-1915, written Apr 1916, Haldane MSS., NLS, Ms.5919

⁴⁶ Haig to wife, 13 Dec 1905, Haig Archive, NLS, Acc 3155, 1905 letters

⁴⁷ I. Beckett and J. Gooch, eds., *Politicians and Defence: Studies in the Formulation of British Defence Policy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1981), p.VIII

never be correlated.⁴⁸ The ensuing inquests and reforms, the culmination of which was the War Office Reconstitution Committee (WORC), had, by 1905, abolished the post of C-in-C and replaced it with the new position of Chief of the General Staff, defined the duties of the members of the Army Council, established the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) and created, only on paper at this stage, a General Staff.⁴⁹ These developments strengthened the relevance and responsibilities of the civilian head of the ministry and, perhaps more importantly, provided the Secretary of State with an emerging system capable of imparting cohesive advice on strategic matters for the first time.⁵⁰ Fortunately for Haldane, this coincided with the demise of Balfour's Unionist government at the end of 1905. Hampered by a lack of political and military support, his Unionist predecessors, Brodrick and Arnold-Forster, had failed in their attempts to implement effective army reform but had succeeded in leaving a dysfunctional War Office that was divided, lacking direction and demoralised.

Arnold-Forster passed to Haldane an army that was structured for an ambiguous and unclear purpose. Nadler states in *Champions of Change* (1997) that for any organisation to operate effectively, its basic structure must have three functioning Organisational Components.⁵¹ These are its *input*, *strategy* and *output*. The *input* comprises the organisation's resources, history and environment and are bequeathed to each new leader when control of an organisation changes. The resources are those assets which have value with regards to the opportunities, demands and constraints imposed upon it. They can be tangible such as equipment and personnel or intangible such as reputation but generally the

⁴⁸ J. Gooch, *The Plans of War: The General Staff and British Military Strategy 1900-1916* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), p.28

⁴⁹ H. Kochanski, 'Planning for War in the Final Years of Pax Britannica 1889 – 1903', in D. French and B. Holden Reid, eds., *The British General Staff: Reform and Innovation 1890 – 1939* (London: Frank Cass, 2002), p.25

⁵⁰ Beckett and Gooch, *Politicians and Defence*, pp.XI-XII

⁵¹ Nadler, *Champions of Change*, p.28

organisation's finances are regarded as its key resource. An organisation's history is composed of those past events, crises and activities that have shaped the way it operates. The environment consists of all the forces, conditions and key figures operating outside the boundaries of the organisation which place demands upon it, particularly where it sits within a larger framework. Where this is the case, the impetus for major institutional change normally originates in a response to pressure imposed upon it by the external environment. The ensuing *strategy* represents the decisions made by the leader about how to configure the resources in response to the demands, constraints and opportunities of the environment, within the context of the organisation's history, to produce the output. The *output*, the ultimate purpose of any organisation, draws on the patterns of behaviour, activities and the performance of the system. When a gap exists between the organisation's strategy and its output, radical change is required if the organisation is to function effectively.⁵² This was the condition of the War Office in December 1905 and in a letter to his mother, Haldane complained that 'my predecessor has left me many embarrassments',⁵³ chief among which was an organisation that had an inconsistent strategy which did not adequately reflect the environment within which it operated. This chapter will examine how Haldane interpreted that environment and responded to the external demands placed upon the War Office in producing a suitable response.

⁵² Nadler, *Champions of Change*, pp.28-32

⁵³ Haldane to mother, 16 Dec 1905, Haldane MSS., NLS, Ms.5974, f.200

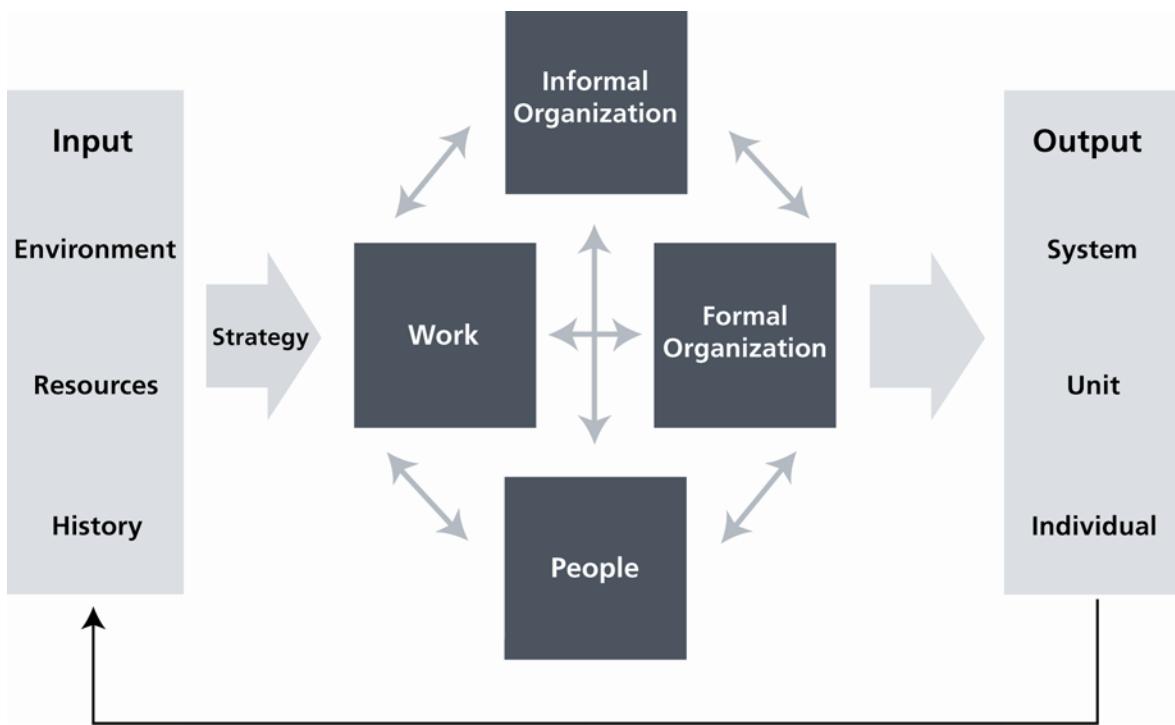


Figure 1: The Congruence Model⁵⁴

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Strategy, as shown in the Congruence Model at Figure 1, is the means by which an input is converted into an output using the technical and social dimensions of an organisation. In the case of an army, however, the output is normally predetermined along with funding and manpower levels. Furthermore, as an organ of state, the environment in which an army operates is very much influenced by the larger governmental framework and its foreign, imperial and domestic policy. For a leader of such an organisation, where the output and majority of the input are fixed, the adjustment of the organisation's strategy is the only means by which the system can convert an input into an output. Haldane, however, under

⁵⁴ Nadler, *Champions of Change*, p.41

the same constraints, did the reverse; using the strategy, he adjusted the output to suit the input. Political expediency demanded that he decrease the Estimates and he reduced the input first and then made the output fit the funding available. While Haldane never admitted this, claiming instead considerable credit for his foresightedness and good judgement, Edward Spiers in his insightful *Haldane: an Army Reformer* (1980) argues convincingly that this was the case. Economy and not Europe underpinned Haldane's military and strategic planning.⁵⁵

Accepting that a reduction in the Estimates was his primary motive and that any subsequent restructuring of the British Army was modelled on the resources that remained, Haldane took steps to define a clear role and purpose for it. Assuring Lord Rosebery that the business of reforming the War Office was achievable, Haldane also informed him that he had begun a thorough survey of the Army 'with a view of getting in the end a definite objective'.⁵⁶ In his first speech as Secretary of State to Parliament on 8 March 1906, he said that 'the first thing we want is absolutely clear thinking about the purposes for which the Army exists and the principles on which it is to be organised'.⁵⁷ He understood that this would take time and confided to his mother that to 'hurry would be dangerous',⁵⁸ while warning Parliament that 'to make plans in haste is to repent of them at leisure'.⁵⁹ The task of reviewing the purpose of the Army was undertaken throughout the Christmas Parliamentary recess at his family home at Cloan and at his constituency in Haddington during the January 1906 general election campaign. Haldane was assisted in this process by his newly appointed military Private Secretary, Colonel Gerald Ellison, who had been

⁵⁵ Spiers, *Haldane: an Army Reformer*, p.73

⁵⁶ Haldane to Rosebery, 19 Dec 1905, Haldane MSS., NLS, Ms.5906, f.282

⁵⁷ R.B. Haldane, *Army Reform and Other Addresses* (London: T. Fisher & Unwin, 1907), p.13

⁵⁸ Haldane to mother, 19 Dec 1905, Haldane MSS., NLS, Ms.5974, f.204

⁵⁹ Haldane, *Army Reform and Other Addresses*, p.8

recommended to him by both Esher and Sir George Clarke.⁶⁰ Haldane's reason for conducting the review in Scotland was so that he could be less accessible. Upon taking office, he was inundated with papers and letters offering suggestions as to how he should best reform the Army but he wished to consider these questions away from any interference and 'with an open mind'.⁶¹ One letter came from Arnold-Forster who made several suggestions then concluded the letter by stating that Haldane and the Liberal Party would be 'much freer than mine from all the social influences, class influences and other detestable sources of confusion with which I have had to contend'.⁶² While this statement would prove to be wrong, in that Haldane did have to face the same influences and sources of confusion, it reveals much about Arnold-Forster's character. Haldane was to succeed where Arnold-Forster had failed because he was able to withstand the influences and pressures, both subtle and obvious, that individuals placed upon him. Drawing on his philosophical and legal training, Haldane studied a problem then synthesised the rational and constructive ideas of his and others around him into a solution.⁶³ Haldane's failing in this regard was that he would later claim these ideas wholly his own and pay little or no credit to those who had assisted him.

In addition to providing impetus for reform of the War Office, the South African War also exposed the weakness of Britain's policy of 'Splendid Isolation' and was followed by six years of unprecedented diplomatic activity.⁶⁴ Britain's isolation during the war strained its international standing and the growing economic challenges presented by Russia, Germany

⁶⁰ Ellison's appointment as Haldane's private military secretary is discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

⁶¹ Haldane, *Army Reform and Other Addresses*, p.3

⁶² Arnold-Forster to Haldane, 18 Dec 1905, Haldane MSS., NLS, Ms.5906, f.271

⁶³ J. Gooch, 'Haldane and the National Army', in I. Beckett and J. Gooch, eds., *Politicians and Defence: Studies in the Formulation of British Defence Policy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1981), p.72

⁶⁴ Gooch, *The Plans of War*, p.165

and the United States, in addition to the traditional rivalry with France, encouraged the state to reconsider its traditional approach to diplomacy. As a consequence, renewed emphasis was placed upon the consolidation of empire and the removal of sources of agitation with other powers. Under these conditions, between 1902 and 1907 the United Kingdom entered into an alliance with Japan and signed ententes with France and Russia.⁶⁵ The *entente* with Russia was negotiated by the Liberal Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, in an attempt to maintain the balance of power in Europe, which he hoped would give British diplomacy greater strength and flexibility in dealing with the increasing threat of Germany's naval programme.⁶⁶

Grey, who was a close friend of Haldane and a fellow Liberal Imperialist, became Foreign Secretary at a time of transformation in the Foreign Office when a new socially homogenous group of men assumed the most important departmental positions and ambassadorial posts in Europe. Chief amongst these was Sir Charles Hardinge, the newly appointed Permanent Under-Secretary who had previously been Britain's ambassador in Russia. A lifelong diplomat, Hardinge knew most of his counterparts in Europe and was close friends with King Edward VII and his private secretary, Sir Francis Knollys. Grey and Hardinge worked well together and the Foreign Secretary relied on the invaluable and trusted advice of his chief assistant. Hardinge was convinced that German strength was a major threat to British interests and he played a key part in influencing Grey's foreign policy, which identified Britain's key strategic interest as the maintenance of the balance of

⁶⁵ C.J. Bartlett, *British Foreign Policy in the Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), pp.5-6

⁶⁶ Z. Steiner, 'The Foreign Office under Sir Edward Grey 1905-1914', in F.H. Hinsley, ed., *British Foreign Policy under Sir Edward Grey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p.23

power in Europe.⁶⁷ Grey, a risk-averse and cautious individual, placed great importance on the continuity of foreign policy and was keen to dispel the misconception that a Liberal government would upset his Unionist predecessor's *entente* with France. If the *entente* were allowed to collapse, Britain would be isolated internationally and susceptible to pressure from other powers. If, however, the *entente* was preserved, Britain would retain its new found position as the linchpin of European politics. Britain therefore needed to exert a calming influence in Paris and a restraining influence in Berlin. Against this political background and in the aftermath of the First Moroccan Crisis, which saw a rift develop in Franco-German relations, Grey met Haldane at Berwick on 12 January 1906 to discuss the possibility of a Continental conflict and authorised secret, informal talks between the Director of Military Operations and the French military attaché in London.⁶⁸ Writing to his mother that evening, Haldane, understating somewhat the severity of the situation, remarked 'I am a little uneasy about the relations of France and Germany. I hope the friction will pass away'.⁶⁹

As early as January 1905, in seeking a role for the Army, the embryonic General Staff had seized upon the opportunity presented by the *entente* to plan for the despatching of a force to the Continent. Wargaming identified that military intervention would be more effective if a British army directly supported a French army rather than conducting independent amphibious operations on the German coast but, paradoxically, it also identified that the small size and slow mobilisation of the Army would have insufficient impact on the

⁶⁷ Z. Steiner, 'Grey, Hardinge and the Foreign Office 1906-1910', *The Historical Journal*, Vol 10(3) (1967), pp.415-418

⁶⁸ T.G. Otte, 'Almost a Law of Nature? Sir Edward Grey, the Foreign Office and the Balance of Power in Europe 1905-12', in E. Goldstein and B. McKercher, eds., *Power and Stability British Foreign Policy 1865 – 1965* (London: Frank Cass, 2003), pp.77-87

⁶⁹ Haldane to mother, 12 Jan 1906, Haldane MSS., NLS, Ms.5975, f.7

outcome of the campaign. With Britain committed to an amphibious strategy and with no political commitment to the military support of France, the findings were purely hypothetical. A year later, however, when a sub-committee of the CID met to review Britain's strategic options, it was this plan for direct intervention on the Continent that was endorsed. Although this Continental strategy was never adopted as official strategy, the General Staff chose to interpret this as such and the politically sanctioned staff talks with the French in January 1906 only served to reinforce this view.⁷⁰ There is much debate as to when the General Staff adopted a Continental strategy; some historians contest that it was as early as 1904 when the shift had switched from expecting to fight a war with Russia in India to that of fighting a war with Germany in Europe to as late as August 1911 when Brigadier-General Henry Wilson convinced the CID to adopt the French version of the Continental commitment.⁷¹ What is certain, however, is that in January 1906, Haldane was requested by the Foreign Secretary to consider a campaign plan for a war against Germany in Europe and that his General Staff had already devised a plan for such an event. Both the General Staff and the diplomats had determined that Britain's next war would be with Germany.

In turning his attention to the Continent, Haldane could not ignore the needs of an empire which required an army to reinforce British troops in India and Egypt and relieve troops in the Colonies.⁷² Haldane, however, was the first Secretary of State for War who did not have to contend with the possibility of invasion. In February 1903, the CID under the

⁷⁰ W. Philpott, 'The General Staff and the Paradoxes of Continental War', in D. French and B. Holden Reid, eds., *The British General Staff: Reform and Innovation 1890 – 1939* (London: Frank Cass, 2002), pp.96-97

⁷¹ H. Strachan, 'The British Army, its General Staff and the Continental Commitment 1904-14', in D. French and B. Holden Reid, eds., *The British General Staff: Reform and Innovation 1890 – 1939* (London: Frank Cass, 2002), pp.76-79

⁷² M. Howard, *The Continental Commitment* (London: Maurice Temple Smith Ltd, 1972), p.36

chairmanship of Balfour established a sub-committee to examine this risk of invasion which quickly reached the conclusion that there was no serious threat. Having calculated that an invasion force would require at least 70,000 men, 200 boats to transport them and 72 hours to deploy, their logistics and transportation could be completely disrupted by the Royal Navy.⁷³ This verdict was viewed as a triumph by the ‘Blue Water’ school, who regarded a powerful navy as a guarantee against invasion, over the ‘Bolt from the Blue’ cohort, who feared a surprise attack by a Continental neighbour and used this as a base on which to campaign for a large, conscripted army.⁷⁴ In a speech delivered shortly after this statement was made, Balfour emphasised that Britain’s utmost difficulty lay not in defence of the nation but in overseas action. From this point onwards, the naval doctrine of command of the sea in relation to how it impacted upon overseas garrisons and home defence became increasingly accepted by those within the War Office.⁷⁵ Haldane, who had publicly sided with the ‘Blue Water’ school, based his reforms on this principle.⁷⁶ If, however, Haldane was freed from retaining an army for home defence, there were other locations that a striking force may be required. A report submitted by the Director of Military Operations to Haldane on 4 January 1906, suggested that in addition to sending up to 100,000 troops to India in response to Russian aggression, Britain might also have to send major forces to quell an uprising of Boers in South Africa, war with France, war in an alliance with France against Germany, war with the United States and a number of small colonial wars. Haldane therefore had to contend with the immediate concerns of both Continental war and defence of the Empire when devising his new scheme.⁷⁷ He had found

⁷³ Gooch, ‘Haldane and the National Army’, p.73

⁷⁴ Spiers, *Haldane: an Army Reformer*, p.3

⁷⁵ Gooch, *The Plans of War*, p.166

⁷⁶ Haldane, *Army Reform and Other Addresses*, p.17 and p.47

⁷⁷ Gooch, ‘Haldane and the National Army’, p.73

the answer to his question of what the British Army's purpose was; 'the answer was a very simple one. It was for war overseas'.⁷⁸

Despite Balfour's 1903 statement that the threat of invasion was negligible, the National Service League (NSL), an organisation founded in 1902 to lobby for the introduction of Universal Training,⁷⁹ did not relax in its efforts to change Britain's military structure. Boasting prominent members such as Lord Curzon, Lord Milner, Rudyard Kipling and Leopold Amery, the League received a fillip in 1905 when Lord Roberts resigned in frustration from the CID, due to the government's intransigence on compulsory service, and became president of the NSL. A national hero, such was his fame that he attracted significant useful media attention and under his leadership the membership of the League increased significantly. Roberts argued that Universal Training or National Service as it was also known, would, after a period of short training, provide a cohort of young men capable of defending Britain's shores. Exclusively structured for home defence, this large Continental-scale force would free the Royal Navy and Regular Army to fight overseas, reinforce the Regular Army during war and provide moral, social, economic and physical benefit to the nation. The League's strategy was to create mass support and change public opinion in addition to influencing the key military and political decision makers.⁸⁰ The majority of the League's political support came from the Unionists, but from the backbenches as the Party leaders would not adopt compulsory training as policy. The Liberal Radicals and the emerging Labour Party, which feared that Britain would become

⁷⁸ Haldane, *Army Reform and Other Addresses*, p.46

⁷⁹ Howard, *The Continental Commitment*, pp.38-39

⁸⁰ T. Stearn, 'The Case for Conscription', *History Today*, (April 2008), pp.17-18

too militaristic, were vehemently opposed and denounced the scheme as jingoistic.⁸¹

Confusingly, Roberts favoured conscription based on the Continental model above that of Universal Training to better prepare Britain for a European war.⁸² Ellison claimed that this was a view shared ‘by practically all thinking soldiers who took part in the Boer War [including], to my certain knowledge, Douglas Haig’.⁸³ Haldane, however, was not convinced that the League’s scheme was politically practicable or advisable militarily and no amount of argument changed their respective views.⁸⁴ Whether compulsory training or conscription was better suited to prepare Britain for Continental warfare, Haldane’s proposed reforms of the auxiliary forces took the wind, albeit temporarily, out of the League’s sails. The Territorial Force’s role was the same as the League’s proposed national service army; both were primarily for home defence, both would reinforce the Regular Army and both would attempt to unite army and nation.⁸⁵ In seeking his Liberal Parliamentary colleagues support for this new force, Haldane shrewdly presented it as a ‘practical test of the voluntary system so that its very existence could be interpreted as an obstacle to compulsion’.⁸⁶

Writing privately to Lord Kitchener in 1906, Esher stated that he thought Haldane’s scheme was ‘the last chance [that] will ever be given to the voluntary system. It may succeed up to a certain point ... but more than likely it will fail, and in that case, behind our garrison

⁸¹ R. Blake, ‘Great Britain: The Crimean War to the First World War’, in M. Howard, ed., *Soldiers and Governments* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1957), p.35

⁸² Universal Training differed to conscription in that once individuals were trained, they were released back into society and mobilised only in times of national emergency.

⁸³ G. Ellison, ‘Reminiscences’ *The Lancashire Lad Journal of the Loyal Regiment (North Lancashire)*, Number 54 (3) (November 1935), p.6

⁸⁴ D. Sommer, *Haldane of Cloan. His Life and Times 1856 – 1928* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1960), p.186

⁸⁵ Stearn, ‘The Case for Conscription’, p.19

⁸⁶ I. Beckett, ‘The Territorial Force’, in I. Beckett and K. Simpson, eds., *A Nation in Arms: A Social Study of the British Army in the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), p.129

Army we must have a National Army on the compulsory basis'.⁸⁷ Esher, an important confidant of Haldane but an ardent supporter of compulsion, publically supported the Territorial Force. He believed that its inevitable failure would finally convince Parliament to adopt compulsory service and, in an attempt to soften its imposition on the British public, it could be introduced at regional level and structured on the defunct County Associations.⁸⁸ A naturally cautious individual, Haldane knew that his radical ideas would run into difficulty and he sought the help of Esher. An influential and skilful courtier, he enjoyed the confidence and trust of King Edward VII and of almost anyone else of significance in public life; he was very much the '*éminence grise* of Edwardian politics'.⁸⁹ Within weeks of taking office, Haldane wanted Esher to 'organise a series of private talks [with him] at the CID Office. It is the only way of keeping ideas clear and working out large plans'.⁹⁰ These were successful and six weeks later Haldane reported to Esher that 'our ideas seem to be running on the same lines'.⁹¹ Although not a creator of original thought, Esher was an insightful judge of ideas and Haldane thought his independent position, one which was without party politics, could offer balanced judgement. More importantly, his social standing would prove most useful in smoothing tension or allaying concerns between the War Office, the auxiliary forces and the King.⁹² Esher was only too pleased to help Haldane. As will be discussed in Chapter Four, he saw it as a means of 'nobbling' him and influencing the direction of his reforms. Lees-Milne's aptly titled biography, *The Enigmatic Edwardian* (1986), neatly encapsulates the Janus-faced nature of

⁸⁷ Esher to Kitchener, 4 Oct 1906 in M. Brett, ed., *Journals and Letters of Reginald Viscount Esher Vol II* (London: Ivor Nicholson & Watson Ltd, 1934), pp.190-191

⁸⁸ Spiers, *Haldane: an Army Reformer*, p.101

⁸⁹ I. Beckett, 'HO Arnold-Forster and the Volunteers', in I. Beckett and J Gooch, eds., *Politicians and Defence: Studies in the Formulation of British Defence Policy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1981), p.48

⁹⁰ Haldane to Esher, 2 Jan 1906, Haldane MSS., NLS, Ms.5907, f1

⁹¹ Haldane to Esher, 14 Feb 1906, Haldane MSS., NLS, Ms.5907, f28

⁹² Spiers, *Haldane: an Army Reformer*, p.98

Esher's character. In 1909, for example, he formed a secret patriotic organisation called the 'Society of Islanders' which acknowledged that Germany would be the enemy in any future war and promoted a 'two keels to one' standard for the Royal Navy.⁹³ Two years later, however, in 1911 he became chairman of the British section of the King Edward VII Foundation, an Anglo-German institution in memory of the King, which provided funding to assist Germans living in Britain.⁹⁴ The German section, which did likewise for British subjects, was chaired by Albert Ballin, a friend of Haldane.⁹⁵ On one hand, Esher was attempting to better prepare the nation for war with Germany yet on the other, he was endeavouring to encourage stronger cultural and diplomatic ties between them.

It is ironic that Haldane, who admired Germany, became Secretary of State for War at a time when both the Foreign Office and War Office were uniting in their purpose against that nation. Having made several good friends while studying at the University of Göttingen during 1874, in the years afterwards he returned many times on holiday to visit them and immerse himself in his passion for philosophy. When in office, these visits continued in an official manner, the most notable being the visit at the behest of the German Emperor in 1906 and the official state visit of King Edward VII in 1909. While a letter to his lifelong friend Hugo Conwentz in 1874 claiming that he wished he 'had been born a German for Germany suits me far more than here'⁹⁶ could be explained by youthful exuberance, a letter written to Conwentz thirty-three years later is perhaps a more reliable indicator of Haldane's true feelings towards Germany. Thanking him for his Christmas

⁹³ M. Humphries, 'Perfectly Secret and Perfectly Democratic: The Society of Islanders and the 'Two Keels to One' Standard 1909-1914', paper presented at the Conference for New Researchers in Maritime History, Exeter University, 13 Mar 10.

⁹⁴ *The Times*, 13 May 1911.

⁹⁵ The author thanks Michael Humphries of King's College, London for bringing this to his attention.

⁹⁶ Haldane to Conwentz, 26 Oct 1874, Haldane MSS., NLS, Ms.5901, f29

present, he concludes the letter saying ‘you know how deep my respect is for your country and how much I owe to it’.⁹⁷ Germany even pervaded his life sufficiently enough for him to name his Labrador after the Kaiser!⁹⁸ The German newspapers regarded Haldane highly and one article in 1906 declared that he was ‘a good friend of Germany, who was educated among us, and cares for us’.⁹⁹ It was this mutual admiration that would fuel the cries of his political enemies that he was a pro-German sympathiser which led to his omission from the coalition government in 1915.

Shaped primarily by the need to reduce the Army Estimates to below £28 million, Haldane’s reformed army had one clear purpose – to fight overseas. Its declared primary task was to ‘maintain the defence of an Empire which extends over twelve millions of square miles ...’,¹⁰⁰ but it would be needed to fight much closer to home. To do this, Haldane would create an Army of two lines; the regular first line of the Expeditionary Force immediately available for mobilisation overseas supported by the auxiliary second line of the Territorial Force for home defence and expansion. Advised by those closest to him that war with Germany was inevitable, yet constrained by the voluntary system, Haldane attempted to create a uniquely British solution, a ‘nation in arms’ that would draw ‘on the most fighting nation on earth’.¹⁰¹ This professional force, he hoped, would match the mass conscript armies of Europe.

⁹⁷ Haldane to Conwenz, 7 Jan 1907, Haldane MSS., NLS, Ms.5907, f137

⁹⁸ Haldane to mother, 24 Oct 1906, Haldane MSS., NLS, Ms.5976, f136

⁹⁹ Haldane to mother, 16 Apr 1906, Haldane MSS., NLS, Ms.5975, f165

¹⁰⁰ Haldane, *Army Reform and Other Addresses*, p.46

¹⁰¹ Haldane, *Army Reform and Other Addresses*, p.49

CHAPTER THREE

OPERATING ORGANISATION

*'What had to be done was to take the old-fashioned British Army and to rid it of superfluous fat, to develop muscle in place of mere flesh, and to put the whole force in proper training'*¹⁰²

Within a few weeks of becoming Secretary of State for War, Haldane had laid the foundations of his strategic role for the Army. The CID had convinced him that the danger of invasion was negligible and political developments since the signing of the *entente* in April 1904 indicated the need for an Expeditionary Force that could fight on the Continent or elsewhere.¹⁰³ These foundations, however, were laid on a base of retrenchment within the War Office. Haldane, by imposing a ceiling of £28 million for the Estimates, had set a mandatory financial limit first and then reorganised the existing forces to fulfil the strategic requirements. His political concern for economy and efficiency had underpinned strategic and military planning.¹⁰⁴ With his freedom of manoeuvre hamstrung by the Liberal party's desire for retrenchment and its aversion to compulsion, Haldane, through the War Office's 'Operating Organisation' had still to develop and shape an army that was capable of delivering an output.

Nadler asserts that the 'Operating Environment' is at the very heart of the Congruence Model because it transforms the strategy of an institution, in the context of history, resources and environment and converts it into an output. Its four major components

¹⁰² R.B. Haldane, *Before the War* (Charleston: BiblioBazaar, 2008 [1920]), p.118

¹⁰³ B. Bond, 'Richard Burdon Haldane at the War Office 1905 – 1912', *Army Quarterly*, Vol 86 (April-July 1963), p.36

¹⁰⁴ Spiers, *Haldane: an Army Reformer*, p.73

comprise the institution's work; people; formal organisational arrangements; and informal organisational arrangements. The interaction of the component parts is more important than the components themselves, therefore an organisation's overall effectiveness relies on the internal alignment of its basic parts. These four components fall under the two axes of an institution; the technical dimension which comprises the work and formal organisation and the social dimension which comprises the people and the informal organisation.¹⁰⁵ The technical or social dimension cannot be ignored during institutional change and this chapter will demonstrate how Haldane attempted to address both in his reforms.

Colonel Ellison, Haldane's private Military Secretary for three years, regarded him 'first and foremost [as] an educationist (sic)'.¹⁰⁶ Haldane, who had supported Balfour's London Universities Act of 1898 and Government Education Act of 1902 against his own party, was a proponent of higher education and was committed to the principle of educational reform. He regarded the development of the education system as a method of counteracting the more radical demands for social change and, perhaps more importantly, a means of meeting the national challenge from Germany.¹⁰⁷ Haldane was concerned about the differences in attitude regarding education between Germany and Britain, especially in technical education and research. There existed a laissez-faire attitude towards science and technology within the education, industry and business communities and he, along with other reformers, feared for 'Britain's future international security, her ability in the long term to feed and house her growing population adequately, and the value of the pragmatism

¹⁰⁵ Nadler, *Champions of Change*, pp.32-42

¹⁰⁶ G. Ellison, 'Reminiscences' *The Lancashire Lad Journal of the Loyal Regiment (North Lancashire)*, Number 56 (3) (May 1936), p.56

¹⁰⁷ G.E. Sherington, 'The 1918 Education Act: Origins, Aims and Development', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, Vol 24 (1) (February 1976), p.70

and amateurism which played such a large role in Britain's business and political life'.¹⁰⁸

But, after the landslide election victory of January 1906, education reform became absorbed within the myriad social reforms launched by the Liberal party and supported by the nascent Labour party.¹⁰⁹ As Ensor argued in *England 1870 – 1914* (1936), the House of Commons was ready with 'Radicalism and Socialism alike, released from the suppression of two decades ... [and] radiant with sudden hopes of a new heaven and a new earth'.¹¹⁰

When Haldane was appointed Secretary of State for War in the new government, he regarded army reform as part of this wider Liberal reform programme and did not view it in isolation.¹¹¹ He linked the study of the Army's organisation to that of any other scientific problem and, more importantly, to wider contemporary social issues. Addressing Parliament on 8 March 1906, he remarked that

The Army touches social questions in the closest way. The relations of capital and labour, the whole problem of education, the topic of temperance, the science of medicine, questions relating to the Empire ... and, last, but not least, the science of economy.¹¹²

Later, in the same speech, he expanded this point further linking the Army to the nation and suggesting that the solution to some of its problems had hitherto been ignored:

I think the Army problem has been studied too much apart from its social and non-military aspects, from the aspect in which it touches the life of the country, from the

¹⁰⁸ P. Cain, 'Political Economy in Edwardian England; The Tariff Reform Controversy', in A. O'Day, ed., *The Edwardian Age: Conflict and Stability 1900-1914* (London: Macmillan, 1979), p.38

¹⁰⁹ The 1906 General Election returned 53 Labour members.

¹¹⁰ Ensor, *England 1870 – 1914*, p.391

¹¹¹ Vincent, 'German Philosophy and British Public Policy', p.168

¹¹² Haldane, *Army Reform and Other Addresses*, p.4

aspect in which it touches tradition and sentiment. All this you have to bring on your side if you would solve the problem.¹¹³

Haldane, in adopting a scientific approach to change and acknowledging that wider social issues impacted upon the efficiency and output of the military, demonstrated that he understood the need to reform both the technical and social dimensions of the Army. He realised, for example, that recruitment levels were dependent upon the general state of the nation's economy and that a broader educational programme would help the Army keep pace with technological advancements on the battlefield.¹¹⁴ Constrained by a mandatory financial ceiling of £28 million and the political obligation to retain a voluntary system, Haldane's solution to the problem was to move away from the supplementation of the Regular Army in times of crisis by various categories of reserve. Instead, he envisaged an entire nation in arms but not one based on a Continental system, where compulsion fed its ranks and the army acted as the nation's school in both military and moral education, but one that was unique to Britain, drawing its number by voluntary means and rooted in traditional institutions.¹¹⁵

Haldane compared his concept of a nation in arms to that of a metal cone. The regulars would comprise 'a sharp point of finely tempered steel' backed by a second line of troops (the Special Reserve) and reinforced ultimately by a broad base of support and expansion (the Territorial Force). He asserted that the reorganisation would elevate the status of military service, improve the efficiency of the auxiliary forces and provide a method of military expansion through the development of rifle clubs and school and officer cadet corps. This, he asserted, would weld the nation and Army together, conscious of the

¹¹³ Haldane, *Army Reform and Other Addresses*, p.39

¹¹⁴ Vincent, 'German Philosophy and British Public Policy', p.168

¹¹⁵ Howard, *Studies in War and Peace*, p.90

demands of imperial defence. In promoting this concept, Haldane was not only trying to reform the Army but also the public's attitude towards it. He had perceived during the South African War that the conduct of war and the Army's role in it required both social consent and political cohesion. A Liberal Imperialist, he had supported the military effort in South Africa but was fully aware of the fervour and angst evoked in the majority of his Liberal colleagues and in those elements of society who were vehemently against the war. By creating a nation in arms, he hoped to avoid a repeat of such feelings and bitter divisions.¹¹⁶ Worried that his Liberal colleagues may consider it too militaristic, Haldane assured them that the decentralised Territorial Force would be governed by elected people in County Associations. These territorially based organisations, comprising representatives from business, industry, trade unions and town councils would control the day-to-day running of their county's units and be responsible for administering them.¹¹⁷ He guaranteed that 'no war would be entered upon without the full consent of the people. A nation under arms in that fashion would be a nation under arms for the sake of peace and not for the sake of war'.¹¹⁸

When Haldane took office, a contemporary claimed that 'the military forces of the Crown could be described, without exaggeration, as a chaotic assemblage of fragments incapable of mobilisation'.¹¹⁹ The military's first line, the Regular Army which was based on a Continental Army Corps system, was under-resourced, under-manned and lacked the requisite commanders and staff for war. The Militia, which formed the second line and was

¹¹⁶ E.M. Spiers, 'The Regular Army in 1914', in I. Beckett and K. Simpson, eds., *A Nation in Arms A Social Study of the British Army in the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), p.38

¹¹⁷ K.W. Mitchinson, *England's Last Hope: The Territorial Force 1908 – 14* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p.2

¹¹⁸ Haldane, *Army Reform and Other Addresses*, p.31

¹¹⁹ Baker, 'Lord Haldane', p.13

drained by the Regular Army in peace to make up shortfalls, was under no obligation to serve abroad during war. The third line comprised the Volunteers and Yeomanry and vied with the Militia for the best recruits. The Volunteers existed at battalion level only and were distributed around the country without any regard for military necessity. The three lines had no clearly defined functions, were disparate and, in time of crisis, were not a reliable means by which the Regular Army could be expanded.¹²⁰ Haldane foresaw the social difficulties in reforming these traditional institutions, reporting in his autobiography that

These heterogeneous corps had histories and traditions and people who had been associated with and were devotedly attached to them. To break with tradition and weld their substance into something quite novel was likely to be a very serious undertaking.¹²¹

Haldane attempted to create order out of this ‘chaotic assemblage’ in two ways; reinvigorating the War Office and transforming the fighting forces. The Royal Navy’s hegemony in the defence establishment had seen the Admiralty brought into close cooperation with the CID, which ‘contrasted with the most childish jealousy and obstruction of the War Office and General Staff’;¹²² an organisation and staff which Haldane inherited in December 1905. In the aftermath of the Army’s poor performance in South Africa, successive Unionist Secretaries of State for War had set out on paths of reform to overhaul the Army’s organisation. Reorganisation, as a word, became banal and misunderstood in the years that followed, creating as many proposals as it had meanings.

¹²⁰ Baker, ‘Lord Haldane’, pp.13-14

¹²¹ Haldane, *Richard Burdon Haldane. An Autobiography*, p.192

¹²² N. d’Ombraim, *War Machinery and High Policy Defence Administration in Peacetime Britain 1902 – 1914* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), p.10

Arnold-Forster, who had previously served in the Admiralty, came to the War Office in 1903 with his own preconceived ideas of reform which were based on reductions of the Army's presence overseas. These ideas conflicted with those of a new breed of professional soldier in the General Staff who were attempting to create a modern army which would put it on an equal footing with its Continental neighbours. These 'thinking soldiers' had grown impatient of the inefficiency of the old British Army, which was content to maintain support for an amphibious strategy and remain subordinate to the Royal Navy both in strategic role and in the nation's affection. While Strachan and Gooch dismiss his assertion that the War Office adopted a Continental strategy as early as 1906,¹²³ d'Ombrain correctly paints a picture of the abysmal state of affairs in the War Office, where the Secretary of State and his disjointed military advisors openly bickered and 'marked a truly dismal interlude in the history of the British Army'.¹²⁴

Haldane placated this group as soon as he was in office by informing them that he had no preconceived ideas of reform and that he wanted time to listen to their advice and consider what reforms were necessary. By February 1906 he received their support for the cessation of his predecessor's reforms and he purged the Army Council of those he considered to be opposed to reform.¹²⁵ Divulging to Lord Rosebery, the Liberal Imperialists' patriarch, his initial thoughts upon taking office, Haldane reported 'I have eliminated from the Council one man who was better for the field than for the office and brought in Sir Wm Nicholson – an acute brain – but not a very easy man. Still I need him badly.'¹²⁶ Haldane had removed General Herbert Plumer, who would later command the British Second Army in Flanders

¹²³ Strachan, 'The British Army, its General Staff and the Continental Commitment 1904-14', p.76; Gooch, *The Plans of War*, p.289

¹²⁴ d'Ombrain, *War Machinery*, p.50

¹²⁵ Spiers, *Haldane: an Army Reformer*, p.74

¹²⁶ Haldane to Rosebery, 19 Dec 1905, Haldane MSS., NLS, Ms.5906, f.282

for two years and achieve an overwhelming victory at the Battle of Messines in June 1917.

Plumer's misfortune was that he was the only member of the Army Council who had seen merit in Arnold-Forster's reform proposals.¹²⁷ Two months later, Haldane told Esher that 'you will be glad to hear that I have practically settled things for Douglas Haig. We want Haig badly, (1) he has brains, (2) he is a cavalry man (sic)'.¹²⁸ Furthermore, after Arnold-Forster's procrastination, Haldane constituted the General Staff in September 1906, having amended the draft Army Order to assuage Esher's concerns over the Chief of the General Staff's role in making staff appointments. He also extended the General Staff to the commands and districts where, as a general rule, only those individuals who had passed Staff College (psc) would serve as staff officers.¹²⁹

Haldane had revitalised the Army's brain and surrounded by a core of forward thinking, professionally-minded psc officers, he set about reorganising the Army's body. He benefitted by having at his disposal a cohort of highly intelligent and capable staff officers, which included Haig, Nicholson, Grierson, Hamilton and Wilson, all of whom made or enhanced their reputations in his administration.¹³⁰ His reforms provided a role of significance for the 'Continental School' who were content to approve reductions overseas in order to establish the Expeditionary Force at home.¹³¹ Haldane had succeeded where Arnold-Forster and Brodrick had failed; he had won the support of his military officials and the organisation he was attempting to reform. Writing to Lord Knollys, private secretary to King Edward VII, Esher commented that 'after twenty-five years of experience of War

¹²⁷ I.F. Beckett, 'Selection by Disparagement' in D. French and B. Holden Reid, eds., *The British General Staff: Reform and Innovation 1890 – 1939* (London: Frank Cass, 2002), p.54

¹²⁸ Haldane to Esher, 19 Feb 1906, Haldane MSS., NLS, Ms.5907, f.30

¹²⁹ Spiers, *Haldane: an Army Reformer*, pp.122-124

¹³⁰ Bond, 'Richard Burdon Haldane at the War Office 1905 – 1912', p.40

¹³¹ d'Ombrain, *War Machinery*, p.12

Ministers, I can truthfully say he is most popular with senior officers ... [and that] the Officers of the Army realise he is their friend; he has not worried them, and he has supported them.¹³²

To transform the fighting force into one that could implement its new strategic role, Haldane's technical reforms created two fighting lines, each with clearly defined functions. The Striking Force, or Expeditionary Force as it became known, was based on six self-sufficient divisions, each with their own cavalry, transport, medical support and supply services, and a cavalry division, all capable of rapid mobilisation and concentration. The Special Reserve, which replaced the Militia, was designed to supplement the Expeditionary Force in certain specialist areas upon mobilisation but was primarily to cover wastage during the first months of a prolonged conflict.¹³³ Returning to the Cardwell system of paired battalions, Haldane reorganised the home-based battalions into large divisions which were capable of adjusting rapidly from conditions of peace to participation in war.¹³⁴ Spiers, however, regards this as a short-sighted decision based not on the likely nature of a future Continental war but on previous tactical experience in South Africa where the Army had operated in smaller units and also on the need to unify the structures of the home army and army in India 'should the two ... ever be required to act together'.¹³⁵ Conversely, Hew Strachan states that the Army Corps concept was rejected because its adoption would have constrained the Army to preparing for one contingency only, Continental warfare.¹³⁶ Whereas the large conscript armies of Europe were based on the Army Corps system,

¹³² Esher to Knollys, 26 Jun 1908, *Journals and Letters of Reginald Viscount Esher Vol II*, pp.324-325

¹³³ Baker, 'Lord Haldane', p.14

¹³⁴ Spiers, *Haldane: an Army Reformer*, p.82

¹³⁵ Spiers, *Haldane: an Army Reformer*, pp.82-83

¹³⁶ H. Strachan, 'The Continental Commitment 1904 – 1914' in D. French and B. Holden Reid, eds., *The British General Staff: Reform and Innovation 1890 – 1939* (London: Frank Cass, 2002), p.90

Britain's Army reverted to large divisions in order to fulfil their Imperial obligations, while its senior planners on the General Staff were planning and preparing for a Continental War. An uncertain future does not afford the military planner certainty and the resultant adaptable and flexible force held ready to deal with it is expensive; Haldane's reorganisation of the formal structure of the Regular Army was an attempt to balance these two irredeemable demands.

Haldane's second line was the Territorial Force which would both support and expand the Regular Army in war and contained fourteen infantry divisions and fourteen cavalry brigades, complete with supporting arms. Organised on the same model as the Regular Army but administered by the new County Associations, the Territorial Force would promote military values in schools and universities by encouraging physical activity, drill and rifle shooting. Upon mobilisation, the Territorials would garrison ports, replace regular garrisons, provide home defence against enemy raids and, after six month's training, be ready for overseas service. The need for political compromise, however, in February 1907 blurred Haldane's vision because his Liberal colleagues opposed the idea of overseas commitment and the role of the force was changed to primarily that of home defence with volunteers being permitted to serve overseas if they had taken the Imperial Service Obligation.¹³⁷ In the years leading up to the First World War, the relationship between the Regulars and Territorials was an uncomfortable one with each being suspicious of the other.¹³⁸ There was opposition by some War Office staff to funds being allocated to the stay-at-home Territorials, when in their view the nation's greatest need was for an effective

¹³⁷ By 1914 only 7% of the Territorial Force had taken the Imperial Service Obligation, from I. Beckett, 'Territorial Wars', *History Today* Vol 75(302) (June 2008), p.22

¹³⁸ I. Beckett, 'Territorial Wars', *History Today* Vol 75(302) (June 2008), p.22

Expeditionary Force.¹³⁹ In his 1914 essay ‘Naval and Military Situation’, Esher summed up this uneasy relationship by claiming that ‘the Regular soldier thinks of the Territorial Force as an athlete thinks of a lame brother’.¹⁴⁰ This uneasy relationship was fuelled by concerns reported in the newspapers regarding the efficacy and value of the Territorial Force. Such articles were seized upon by the National Service League who challenged the Territorial Force’s ability to defend Britain against land attack.¹⁴¹ This criticism endured until the Territorial Force demonstrated its value in August 1914.

Managing the politics of change is vital in ensuring that the interests of various groups involved with it are considered. Change should not eliminate an institution’s politics but instead find ways of harnessing and understanding them in order to predict the outcomes of any action or intervention.¹⁴² Haldane, realising that those with long traditional links to the Militia, Yeomanry and Volunteers might prove resistant to change, established the Territorial Force Committee in order to ensure that the interests of all the auxiliary forces were considered. But the committee, as Esher reported to the King, comprised a large majority of persons who hold or have held commissions in Your Majesty’s *Regular* (Esher’s italics) Army, and whose prejudices may be reasonably assumed to be favourable to the Regular, when brought into accidental conflict of interest with the Auxiliary Forces.¹⁴³

Unsurprisingly, this large, unwieldy and polarised committee could not reach general agreement and it disbanded without producing a report, but it did, however, provide a

¹³⁹ Gooch, ‘Haldane and the National Army’, p.82

¹⁴⁰ Viscount Esher, *The Influence of King Edward and Essays on Other Subjects* (London: John Murray, 1915), p.193

¹⁴¹ Mitchinson, *England’s Last Hope*, p.1

¹⁴² Carnall, *Managing Change in Organisations*, pp.324-325

¹⁴³ Esher to Edward VII, 27 May 1906, *Journals and Letters of Reginald Viscount Esher Vol II*, p.167

forum in which contention could be discussed.¹⁴⁴ In a concession to the Yeomanry and Volunteer colonels, who baulked at the idea of being administered by County Associations, Haldane abandoned the wholly elective nature of the County Associations and placed them under the control of the Army Council who would directly appoint the lord lieutenant, chairman and vice-chairman allowing co-opted members to come from local employers and workers.¹⁴⁵ Additionally, to placate the Unionist-dominated House of Lords, he excluded the Militia from the Territorial Force and provided them with the option of enlisting into the Special Reserve.¹⁴⁶ These compromises, coupled with the political concession to revert the second line's role to that primarily of home service, weakened Haldane's nation in arms which would struggle to reach full strength in the years leading up to the First World War.

In reforming the Yeomanry and Volunteers, Haldane dealt with the individualistic beliefs and traditions of the nineteenth century where each unit was regarded as the property of the Commanding Officer (CO). Each unit received a government grant towards maintenance and training but it was often supplemented with funds from the CO's own pocket thereby affording him autocratic powers. To remove this propriety notion, Haldane placed each unit under the financial control of the County Association but he separated the functions of training and administration from each other, directing the administrative grant to the County Associations and the training grant to the chain of command. The idea of separating command and financial functions was wholly novel and Haldane expended considerable personal effort in convincing those individuals who opposed his reforms to

¹⁴⁴ Barnett, 'Radical Reform:1902-14', p.167

¹⁴⁵ Mitchinson, *England's Last Hope*, p.8

¹⁴⁶ Spiers, 'The Late Victorian Army 1868 – 1914', p.204

change their mind.¹⁴⁷ Writing to Esher, he reported his success in converting nine lords lieutenant to the cause in that ‘they came suspicious and I think there is no doubt that they have gone away with wholly new views and [are] keen’.¹⁴⁸ Haldane also travelled the length and breadth of the country to speak at rallies, dine with Volunteers or present prizes at newly formed Territorial units. Travelling by train, he would often not get home until the small hours and this process continued for some eighteen months until the Territorial and Reserve Forces Bill passed through Parliament in June 1907. Attending several engagements each week took its toll and he complained to his mother that ‘last night I again dined with Volunteers – I am rather weary of it, but it has to be done’.¹⁴⁹ By this, Haldane understood that the route to reform lay in changing the Volunteer CO’s mind-set which would impact positively upon his unit’s culture.¹⁵⁰ If the CO supported reform, so would his unit.

With his nation in arms, Haldane also endeavoured to address the public’s attitude towards the Army in an attempt to improve recruitment. Attracting sufficient numbers of recruits to offset the wastage caused by desertion, discharge and death was a persistent problem, particularly under the voluntary system. Previous attempts to augment numbers by increases in pay, improved allowances and preferable terms of service and a reduction in physical standards failed to attract sufficient numbers.¹⁵¹ Additionally, initiatives to increase the quantity and quality of recruits failed because of the profound contempt with which society viewed a military career. Consequently, the Army did not broaden its social

¹⁴⁷ G. Ellison, ‘Reminiscences’ *The Lancashire Lad Journal of the Loyal Regiment (North Lancashire)*, Number 55 (3) (February 1936), p.9

¹⁴⁸ Haldane to Esher, 15 Sep 1907, Haldane MSS., NLS, Ms.5907, f.201

¹⁴⁹ Haldane to mother, 8 Feb 1907, Haldane MSS., NLS, Ms.5977, f.55

¹⁵⁰ Carnall, *Managing Change in Organisations*, p.37

¹⁵¹ E.M. Spiers, *The Army and Society* (London: Longman, 1980), p.35

composition and continued to draw the majority of its recruits from the lower working classes.¹⁵² The officer class was also drawn from a narrow social pool and were nearly all the product of public schools. It was assumed that by the time an officer cadet reached Sandhurst or Woolwich,¹⁵³ he had already gained the necessary social and moral qualities required of an officer and gentleman. It was almost impossible for someone who had not passed through this system to become an officer, although there were exceptions.¹⁵⁴ An exclusive educational background, a commitment to country pursuits, loyalty to institutions, a gentlemanly ethos, amateurism, self-confidence and physical courage were the qualities required of an officer and these were all associated with the middle and upper classes.¹⁵⁵

Haldane's plans to increase both officer and soldier numbers on paper appeared relatively simple but their adoption was distinctly harder. There was a shortage of senior commanders and staff officers, the cavalry lacked mounts, the artillery had insufficient gunners to man all of their pieces and the Aldershot Corps was undermanned to the point that it could not deploy.¹⁵⁶ Haldane required an additional 4,000 first line officers and 6,000 second line officers to fill posts in the new Regular and Territorial forces. The OTC, a scheme designed by the War Office to offset this shortfall, subsumed the existing school and university corps and placed branches at selected schools and universities. Officially

¹⁵² Spiers, *The Army and Society*, p.49

¹⁵³ Sandhurst trained officers that were heading for the cavalry, infantry, Army Service Corps and Indian Army while Woolwich trained officers destined for the Royal Engineers and Royal Artillery.

¹⁵⁴ One notable exception was Field Marshal Sir William Robertson who enlisted into the 16th (The Queen's) Lancers in 1877 and was commissioned into the 3rd Dragoon Guards in 1885. Ann Robertson, discovering that her son had enlisted, wrote 'I would rather bury (sic) you than see you in a red coat'. Quoted in V. Bonham-Carter, *Soldier True The Life and Times of Field Marshal Sir William Robertson 1860 – 1933* (London: Frederick Muller Ltd, 1963), p.5

¹⁵⁵ K. Simpson, 'The Officers', in I. Beckett and K. Simpson, eds., *A Nation in Arms A Social Study of the British Army in the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), pp.64-65

¹⁵⁶ Poe, 'British Army Reforms 1902 – 1914', p.136

funded, the War Office imposed more rigorous training and cadets who completed the approved training qualified for certificates that would reduce the period of further training should they join the Special Reserve.¹⁵⁷ This inducement proved unappealing; by 1912, of the 18,000 who had completed service in the OTC, only 283 had joined the Special Reserve.¹⁵⁸ Fears of invasion, an interest in the military, patriotic duty and a desire to join friends and family in social and recreational activities appealed to a small proportion of the population, but attitudes towards part-time soldiering, like those towards regular service, had markedly limited appeal.¹⁵⁹ By 1913 the Territorial Force was sixteen percent below strength mainly due to a widespread perception that being a Territorial soldier came at significant personal cost. The potential loss of income while at weekend and summer camp, the travel costs to weekly drill nights and the cost of an occasional meal all contributed towards the Territorial Force being 51,000 under strength in 1914.¹⁶⁰

In order to increase the Army's appeal, and ignoring Arnold-Forster's advice that he 'should leave the remedy to nature; things will get right in time',¹⁶¹ Haldane returned to the Cardwellian terms of service and subsequently enjoyed a net growth of manpower. He did, however, benefit from his predecessors' legacies; Brodrick had created surplus in the Army Reserve and Arnold-Forster's terms of service ensured low wastage in the latter years of Haldane's administration.¹⁶² Haldane attempted to improve the quality of the recruits, not solely through increases of pay and improvements to the soldiers' living quarters, but by

¹⁵⁷ Spiers, *The Army and Society*, pp.278-279

¹⁵⁸ Spiers, 'The Regular Army in 1914', p.42

¹⁵⁹ Spiers, *The Army and Society*, p.280

¹⁶⁰ Mitchinson, *England's Last Hope*, pp.62-68

¹⁶¹ Arnold-Forster to Haldane, 11 Dec 1905, Haldane MSS., NLS, Ms.5906, f.271

¹⁶² Spiers, *Haldane: an Army Reformer*, pp.143-144

the further development of a movement he had witnessed when visiting units. He told Parliament that

All through the Army there is distinct evidence that a social movement has set in ...

Better education, better conditions, a great improvement, I think, in the zeal and earnestness of the officers; and the South African War has been a stimulating influence among our officers; all these things are combining to improve the social level of the Army.¹⁶³

Haldane wanted to develop this movement by returning the soldier to society better educated, with useful skills and more able to find employment.¹⁶⁴ He desired the Army to be more progressive and, drawing on his lifelong interest in education, he introduced a number of plans to provide soldiers with vocational training and education. However, financial constraints, trade union concerns and apathy on the soldiers' part prevailed and the schemes petered out by 1908.¹⁶⁵ Having noticed a 'scientific spirit among the officers in the Army' he questioned 'why should there not be a BSc degree in the science of war?',¹⁶⁶ Haldane thought that this would make the Army an attractive career option while improving the overall quality of the officer. All aspects of an institution's operation, he thought, needed trained minds and the Army was no exception¹⁶⁷ His establishment of a course for administrative officers at the London School of Economics, of which he was co-founder, was one such example.¹⁶⁸ The blossoming scientific spirit and professionalism within the Army was reflected in the increase of formal schools and training courses covering various military sciences. Amateurism had begun the very slow process of losing

¹⁶³ Hansard, Army Recruiting, House of Commons Debate, 2 May 1906, Vol 156 cc653-655

¹⁶⁴ Spiers, *Haldane: an Army Reformer*, p.144

¹⁶⁵ Teagarden, 'Management Lessons to be Learned from the Old Contemptibles', p.129

¹⁶⁶ Haldane, *Army Reform and Other Addresses*, p.36

¹⁶⁷ Vincent, 'German Philosophy and British Public Policy', p.168

¹⁶⁸ Spiers, *Haldane: an Army Reformer*, p.151

its primary status within the officer corps and military leadership was beginning to be accepted as a demanding and sober profession that demanded relentless research and study.¹⁶⁹

The Army's experience in South Africa and the protracted emergence of professionalism within the officer corps had a marked effect on training. Training became a cumulative process, starting with individual training in the winter, progressing through sub-unit, unit and formation level training up to divisional manoeuvres in late summer. Training was more comprehensive than before the South African War and larger in scale. The war had highlighted the dangers of fire zones swept by long-range small calibre rifles and tactics were developed to counter this. Combined arms operation, concealment, extended formations and flank attacks were trialled and developed to produce the doctrine known as fire and manoeuvre.¹⁷⁰ Low-level exercises, where seizing the offensive remained the essence of training, were often conducted without orders from officers to engender the use of initiative within the ranks.¹⁷¹ As the new Army took shape, a spirit of enthusiasm spread throughout the ranks. Competition between battalions and regiments fuelled this enthusiasm and the annual exercises afforded units and formations the opportunity to experiment with and showcase their newly acquired skills.¹⁷²

Ellison stated that 'over and over again in his memoranda, Mr Haldane emphasized that at long last, the Nation and the National Army were identical'.¹⁷³ This was wishful thinking

¹⁶⁹ Poe, 'British Army Reforms 1902 – 1914', pp.136-137

¹⁷⁰ Spiers, 'The Regular Army in 1914', p.47

¹⁷¹ Spiers, *The Army and Society*, p.282

¹⁷² Poe, 'British Army Reforms 1902 – 1914', p.136

¹⁷³ G. Ellison, 'Reminiscences' *The Lancashire Lad Journal of the Loyal Regiment (North Lancashire)*, Number 57 (3) (August 1936), p.102

because the small, professional force that mobilised in 1914 was not more representative of the whole of society. Both officer and soldier were drawn from narrow elements of it but they had developed a pride in their profession. The Army had learnt from their experiences in South Africa and, in adapting new tactics and procedures, had applied those lessons in peacetime training.¹⁷⁴ While Haldane had failed to significantly change the social composition of the Army, he had nurtured its nascent professionalism. Professionalism demanded the peacetime development of skills that were essential in war. It required the instruction of tactical and training skills relevant to the new conditions of warfare and relied upon their regular practice at all levels of command. Above all, the Army's professionalism required the organisational framework and determination which was presented by the Haldane reforms.¹⁷⁵

Haldane understood the technical and social dimensions of institutional change and recognised that he had to reform both if it was to be effective. The technical dimension of his reforms saw him address the structure of the fighting forces and, just as importantly, the structure of the War Office. In providing impetus to the growing spirit of science and professionalism within the Army, training became more realistic and manoeuvres in peacetime practised the skills and methods required in war. In attempting to reform the social dimension of the Army he had to also improve the public's perception of it. His vision of a nation in arms, one that was unique to Britain, was the means by which he would feed the second line without resorting to conscription while also improving the quality of the recruit. He failed to fully realise his nation in arms concept because he could not change the public's perception of the military; full or part-time military service was not

¹⁷⁴ Spiers, 'The Regular Army in 1914', pp.56-57

¹⁷⁵ Spiers, *The Army and Society*, p.284

an attractive proposition. The problem with the Army ‘from the aspect which it touches the nation’ would not be resolved until November 1914, when its ‘sharp point of finely tempered steel’ had finally lost its edge.

CHAPTER FOUR

OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

‘He comes, he smiles, he conquers.’¹⁷⁶

In June 1912, when Haldane was appointed Lord Chancellor, he bequeathed to his successor, Colonel John Seely, an ordered, motivated and efficient governmental department and an army that was capable of rapid mobilisation and deployment. It was Haldane’s vision that had created this situation and it was through his character and leadership that he drove through his reforms. Nadler states that ‘no single factor has more influence in changing an organisation’s operating environment than the ... behaviour of its leader’.¹⁷⁷ To understand why, the operating environment has to be understood.

In any large-scale organisational change, maintaining a healthy balance between the concerns of the people within the organisation and the new strategy and structure is always the hardest aspect to implement. Changing direction and purpose can be relatively quick but changing values, beliefs and behaviour consumes much more effort, time and determination. The operating environment concerns the needs of the people and implies that a direct relationship exists between the way the people work and relate to those around them and how they interact with the organisation. This relationship is often overlooked and there is a tendency for an organisation’s ‘hardware’, its work and formal arrangements, to overshadow the ‘software’, its people and informal arrangements. Values, beliefs and behaviour are pivotal to an organisation’s strategic success and an organisation must

¹⁷⁶ A remark in a letter dated 5 Oct 1906 from Repington to Esher commenting upon Haldane’s ability to change the minds of those opposed to his reforms by sheer strength of character and charm. Esher Archive, Churchill College, ESHR 10/27

¹⁷⁷ Nadler, *Champions of Change*, p.37

address the software as well as its hardware. Failure to do so will see the creation of obstacles to change, many of which will be unforeseeable, and because resistance is so common, learning to overcome them is crucial to leading change at every level.¹⁷⁸ Most barriers will be economic, bureaucratic or political and surmounting them requires guile, energy and effort. Without highly motivated behaviour, these barriers could stall transformation or reduce it to a crippling pace.¹⁷⁹ Furthermore, changing an institution is an undertaking that takes many years. Continuity of leadership in this area is essential and a leader who can think in the long term is invaluable. A leader's determination to see the fulfilment of a plan will ensure that new procedures are grounded in the institution's culture thereby preventing homeostasis. Whereas structures and systems are management tools, the culture of the operating environment is the domain of leadership.¹⁸⁰

Haldane understood that he needed time in post for his reforms to take effect and that they would impact upon the values, beliefs and behaviour of those within or associated with the Army. In his maiden speech as Secretary of State for War on 8 March 1906, he appealed for time to implement his reforms and lay a solid foundation on which future reforms could be built. He did not want to

... meddle rashly with the complicated organisation on which [the] military policy depends [and] find when the swing of the pendulum brings in another set of Ministers, perhaps with different ideas, and perhaps under some popular impulse,

¹⁷⁸ Nadler, *Champions of Change*, pp.198-212

¹⁷⁹ J. P. Kotter, *A Force for Change. How Leadership differs from Management* (New York: The Free Press, 1990), p.61

¹⁸⁰ Kotter, *Leading Change*, pp.143-148

that you return to the old state of things with a new avalanche of expenditure, and things are worse than they were before.¹⁸¹

In his second speech to Parliament on 12 July 1906 he suggested that

... whether we disband soldiers of the Line, or discharge workmen from factories because munitions of war have not to be made to so great an extent, or whether we should reduce staffs, we ought to do it as gently as possible, so as not to allow the individual to suffer more than we can possibly help.¹⁸²

From the outset, Haldane understood that he needed time to put in place the Army's new hardware but was equally mindful of the software that was crucial to its efficient operation. This chapter will focus on Haldane's character and his relationship with his military staff, political colleagues and wide circle of influential acquaintances and how they influenced and shaped his reforms. It will demonstrate that Haldane relied on his intellect, philosophy and social skills to remove barriers to change and convince reluctant converts to support his reforms. It will also examine his interest in military affairs and re-examine whether he had ideas about army reform before taking post.

Haldane was an amiable and genial individual who accepted his misfortunes and learned to stand by them. The death of his onetime fiancée, Valentine Ferguson in September 1897 was, perhaps, the most painful of his sufferings and in his autobiography he commented 'that my love for her, though it failed, had brought to me not loss but great gain. For it enlarged the meaning and content of life for me'.¹⁸³ Thereafter Haldane grew closer to and relied more on his mother, to whom he wrote daily when they were apart, and to alleviate his obvious loneliness, he embroiled himself in his work, philosophy and wide circle of

¹⁸¹ Haldane, *Army Reform and Other Addresses*, p.6

¹⁸² Haldane, *Army Reform and Other Addresses*, p.70

¹⁸³ Haldane, *Richard Burdon Haldane. An Autobiography*, p.119

friends. Haldane relished entertaining and his dinners were sumptuous feasts where his friends, who included the Fabian Socialists Sidney and Beatrice Webb, enjoyed his generous hospitality. Such frequent extravagance had an effect on Haldane's health with his weight and pallid complexion later diagnosed as the symptoms of diabetes, from which he occasionally endured attacks of temporary blindness. Guests invited to his dinners included some of the most notable figures of the literary, social, political, military and legal circles in which he moved.¹⁸⁴ But he also used these dinners to conciliate opposition to his reforms. An irascible and unconvinced old Militia Colonel declared that, having just endured one of the Haldane's sumptuous and soporific lunches, 'he felt exactly like a calf well licked over by a Boa Constrictor as a preliminary to deglutition'.¹⁸⁵

Current historical understanding is that Haldane did not pay much attention to or take a great interest in military affairs before taking post. Correlli Barnett stated that 'Haldane brought no prior military knowledge and no set scheme of reform into office'.¹⁸⁶ Spiers argues that 'from the opposition benches ... Haldane may have viewed army reform as of less importance than he subsequently cared to remember [and] ... disinterest (sic) in army reform merely acknowledges that he was in the mainstream of Liberal opinion.'¹⁸⁷ But Haldane was not in the mainstream of Liberal opinion; he was a Liberal Imperialist. From 1899, the 'Limps' as they were called by their critics, attempted to balance support of the war effort in South Africa while maintaining their Liberal identity and in doing so openly disagreed with their pro-Boer Radical colleagues and caught the attention of the

¹⁸⁴ Koss, *Lord Haldane: Scapegoat for Liberalism*, pp.10-11

¹⁸⁵ L. Amery, *My Political Life Vol I England before the Storm 1896 – 1914* (London: Hutchinson, 1953), p.212

¹⁸⁶ Barnett, 'Radical Reform: 1902-14', p.164

¹⁸⁷ Spiers, *Haldane: an Army Reformer*, p.45

Unionists.¹⁸⁸ Simultaneously balancing a political career with life at the Bar, Haldane demonstrated a mastery of the technicalities of explosives in a high profile legal case which,¹⁸⁹ coupled with a chance encounter with the Secretary of State for War, Lord Lansdowne, led to him being appointed a member on the Explosives Committee in May 1900. The committee, chaired by Lord Rayleigh, was raised to decide upon the optimum smokeless propellant for the Army and during the four years Haldane was associated with it, he came into contact with many of the nation's leading sailors and soldiers.¹⁹⁰ He enjoyed their company, telling his mother that 'last night I dined among soldiers – with the Ordnance Club – of which I am one of the few non-soldier members. I think I am well rooted in the affections of both the Army and Navy'.¹⁹¹

It is safe to assume that Haldane's military knowledge increased while serving on the committee and Haldane's biographer, Sir Frederick Maurice, claims that during this period 'he was coming more and more to the conclusion that one of the main causes of our failures in South Africa was defective [army] organization'.¹⁹² In a speech to his constituents at Haddington on 4 October 1901, Haldane called for a 'powerful navy ... [and] a small army – one extremely efficacious and capable for foreign service which would be mobile ...'.¹⁹³ While Spiers is perhaps too quick to dismiss Haldane's attitude to army reform as naval bias,¹⁹⁴ the speech, in effect, outlined the reforms that he would introduce five years later. Leo Amery in his memoirs *My Political Life* supports Maurice's claim. Amery, who was

¹⁸⁸ Koss, *Lord Haldane: Scapegoat for Liberalism*, p.22

¹⁸⁹ In this case dealing with the patent for a slow-burning propellant, Haldane first appeared for Noble against the Crown and then for the Crown against Maxim.

¹⁹⁰ F. Maurice, *Haldane 1856 - 1915: The Life of Viscount Haldane of Cloan* Volume 1 (London: Faber & Faber 1937), pp.104-111

¹⁹¹ Haldane to mother, 24 Jun 1905, Haldane MSS., NLS, Ms.5973, f.213

¹⁹² Maurice, *Haldane 1856 - 1915*, p.111

¹⁹³ 'Mr Haldane MP at Haddington', *Scotsman*, 5 October 1901, p.10

¹⁹⁴ Spiers, *Haldane: an Army Reformer*, p.41

editor of *The Times History of the South African War*, was a founding member of ‘The Coefficients’, a dining club established by the Webbs in 1902, which comprised leading social reformers of the Edwardian era. Commenting upon the benefits of being a member, Amery claimed that it had ‘brought me into close association with the Liberal Imperialist leaders Grey and Haldane. In them I found men genuinely concerned at the military deficiencies revealed by the [South African] War and ready to play their part as constructive critics’.¹⁹⁵ Haldane was indeed willing to play his part; in a letter to Ian Hamilton written in November 1904, Amery reports that ‘Haldane tells me that he and some other Liberal have been devoting a good deal of attention to military affairs recently, and if the extreme Little Englanders can only be kept in check the Liberal regime at the War Office may not be so hopeless after all’.¹⁹⁶

In February 1905, with Balfour’s Unionist government coming to the end of its political life and the Liberals expected to win power, Clarke wrote to Haldane outlining his concerns regarding a Liberal government’s stance on national defence, enclosing a paper detailing how it could ‘devote itself in grim earnest to retrenchment and reforms of the public finances’.¹⁹⁷ The paper proposed ten areas of cuts in the Army, four of which can be seen in Haldane’s reforms implemented two years afterwards.¹⁹⁸ Later that month, Lord Roberts asked to see Haldane because he had discovered that he had visited Mary Strachey, wife of the *Spectator* editor, to discuss ‘... a subject which I have much at heart viz: some kind of

¹⁹⁵ Amery, *My Political Life Vol I*, p.197

¹⁹⁶ Amery to Hamilton, 24 Nov 1904, Amery Archive, Churchill College, AMEL 2/5/3

¹⁹⁷ Clarke to Haldane, 6 Feb 1905, Haldane MSS., NLS, Ms.5906, ff.145-147

¹⁹⁸ The four proposals adopted by Haldane were: practical acceptance of ‘Blue Water’ principles; efficiency rather than quantity; a reduction in size of the Regular Army but a more efficient force; regeneration of the Militia with liability to serve abroad.

Universal Training'.¹⁹⁹ Roberts believed that Haldane was of the same opinion. Haldane, however, understood that compulsion was politically unacceptable in peacetime and would later refuse to countenance it as Secretary of State for War, an appointment that he was forewarned about by Esher. Walking together along the banks of the River Dee in October 1905, Esher explained that it was unlikely that Haldane would get the Woolsack but would instead get the War Office when the new Liberal government formed. Esher, reporting the matter to his son, stated that 'Haldane takes very sensible views about the Defence Committee, which is a good thing'.²⁰⁰ Eight days later, Haldane had expressed to Esher that he 'favoured making the [CID] more "technical" and "expert" and less political'.²⁰¹

Haldane's 'blushing bride'²⁰² response to the Army Council who pressed him for an outline of his reforms when taking office, is frequently used to demonstrate that he knew nothing of military reform. This was certainly not the case. Haldane was undoubtedly interested in military affairs and had ideas from as early as 1901 about army reform. By October 1905 he was already thinking about how he wanted to proceed when in post and, *pace* what has been written, he evidently did not go to the War Office without any military knowledge or preconceived ideas about army reform. The evidence in support of this claim has been too readily dismissed by historians such as Barnett, Fraser and Spiers, who instead attribute Haldane's success to the lack of preconceived ideas before taking office.²⁰³ The 'blushing virgin' comment should instead be used to demonstrate that he was a shrewd politician who

¹⁹⁹ Roberts to Haldane, 25 Feb 1905, Haldane MSS., NLS, Ms.5906, f.158

²⁰⁰ Esher to Maurice Brett, 6 Oct 1905, *Journals and Letters of Reginald Viscount Esher Vol II*, pp.115-116

²⁰¹ Esher to Balfour, 13 Oct 05, *Journals and Letters of Reginald Viscount Esher Vol II*, p.117

²⁰² 'I was a young and blushing virgin just united to a bronzed warrior, and that it was not expected by the public that any result of the union should appear until nine months had passed', Haldane, *An Autobiography*, p.183

²⁰³ Barnett, 'Radical Reform:1902-14', p.164; Fraser, *Lord Esher: A Political Biography*, p.185; Spiers, *The Army and Society*, p.265

understood the concerns and apprehensions of the Army and War Office staff. Having witnessed Brodrick's and Arnold-Forster's much lauded preconceived ideas fail when in office, he very sensibly declared that he had no such ideas and that he instead was going to listen to his advisors. In doing so, he gained the support of his generals.

Haldane undoubtedly entered office at a time favourable for army reform and benefitted from the work of those before him. The long-term effects of the Cardwell Reforms, coupled with the healthy shock provided by 'Black Week' during the initial stages of the South African War, had resulted in higher standards of education and military training which in turn saw the officer class develop a more professional spirit. Bond suggests that Haldane, a life-long campaigner for the improvement of education, was the ideal Secretary of State for War to nurture and encourage this new spirit.²⁰⁴ But it was not easy. Writing to Countess Haig in 1928, Lieutenant General Sir Gerald Ellison outlined the problems faced by Haldane upon taking office. He had to contend with three main military difficulties. First, the older school of thought, which objected to too formal and too rigid a type of organisation for the Army, favouring instead an improvisational style of command and control. Second, the younger school of thought who realised the necessity for reform but failed to understand how swinging and far ranging the changes would need to be to effect real efficiency. Finally, there were the vested interests of the existing organisation of the Regular Army, Militia, Yeomanry and the Volunteers who were certain to resist any changes to their status and organisation.²⁰⁵ But before Haldane attempted to create order, he took stock of the situation and learnt about the institution he had just inherited. Furthermore, he surrounded himself with capable advisors and placated the senior officers

²⁰⁴ Bond, 'Richard Burdon Haldane at the War Office 1905 – 1912', p.40

²⁰⁵ Ellison to Lady Haig, 11 Sep 1928, Haig MSS, NLS, Acc 3155.40q

in the War Office. Updating Rosebery about progress in the War Office, Haldane wrote that ‘My first task has been to get the Generals on good terms with each other. As they are no longer on deadly terms with the Secretary of State this has not been difficult ...’,²⁰⁶

Writing the same day to his mother, Haldane reported the tone in the War Office had changed and that ‘the Generals have shaken hands and are all writing together to carry out my scheme’.²⁰⁷ Carnall argues in *Managing Change in Organisations* (1990) that for change to succeed, a leader must know his organisation, have a wide range of contacts and enjoy a good working relationship with those around him.²⁰⁸ By the time Haldane returned to London in February 1906, he had achieved this.

Haldane’s military Private Secretary, Colonel Gerald Ellison, was recommended to him by Clarke and Esher. Ellison had served as Secretary to the War Office Reconstitution Committee, or the Esher Committee as it became known, which was appointed by Balfour in November 1903.²⁰⁹ The committee’s task was to investigate and propose changes in the War Office organisation.²¹⁰ Working with considerable alacrity and unity, the committee issued its third and final report in March 1904. In sum, the reports recommended that the CID be given a full time secretary and permanent staff, the separation of command, administration and policy making within the War Office, the abolition of the Commander-in-Chief post and its replacement by a policy making Army Council and a suitable General Staff with clear functions in peace and war. Balfour endorsed the committee’s findings and accepted that they had to be implemented swiftly. Earnestly involving himself with the

²⁰⁶ Haldane to Rosebery, 19 Dec 1905, Haldane MSS., NLS, Ms.5906, f.282

²⁰⁷ Haldane to mother, 19 Dec 1905, Haldane MSS., NLS, Ms.5974, f.204

²⁰⁸ Carnall, *Managing Change in Organisations*, p.45

²⁰⁹ Lord Esher, Sir George Clarke, the Governor of Victoria and Sir John Fisher, the C-in-C of the Portsmouth Dockyard, formed the three man committee.

²¹⁰ Dwin Bramall and Bill Jackson, *The Chiefs: The Story of the United Kingdom Chiefs of Staff* (London: Brassey’s, 1992), p.35

strategic matters of the CID, Balfour was less interested in its administration and failed to force through the changes in the War Office. At the same time, the newly formed Army Council, led by the ineffectual Sir Neville Lyttelton, hesitated over the structure, pay and duties of the General Staff which, much to Esher's frustration, was still not formally created by the time Haldane took office in December 1905.²¹¹

Esher had found in Ellison someone who he thought could influence the Secretary of State for War and progress his own ideas on military reform. Writing in his journal in December 1905, Esher stated that he

saw Haldane and had a long and most satisfactory talk. He professes that he is ‘willing to be nobbled’ by our Committee! Today I telephoned ... Ellison and asked him if he would like to be Haldane’s private secretary ... Of course nothing could indicate more clearly the ‘nobbling’ of Haldane by our Committee!²¹²

The next day Esher wrote to his son reporting that Haldane liked Ellison and will, I think, take him. He told me that he proposed to rely on Clarke and me but I take these assurances a little ‘cum grano’ as he is a manager of men! ... Then talked about plans, and I urged him to complete WO organisation, 1st Army Corps; and next year to begin to think about estimates and the militia.²¹³

It is not surprising that Haldane listened to Esher’s advice; he had, after all, been involved with army reform since the Elgin Commission²¹⁴ and had the ear of the King. By thinking that he could ‘nibble’ him, however, Esher had discounted Haldane’s intellect and

²¹¹ Spiers, *Haldane: an Army Reformer*, pp.2-4

²¹² Esher Archive, Churchill College, ESHR 2/10, f.62

²¹³ Esher to Maurice Brett, 11 Dec 1905, *Journals and Letters of Reginald Viscount Esher Vol II*, p.127

²¹⁴ The Royal Commission, chaired by Lord Elgin, was raised in September 1902 and tasked with examining the performance of the British Army during the South African War.

philosophical logic and ignored his own observation in that he was ‘a manager of men’.

Haldane’s greatest intellectual asset was his philosophical grounding. Having studied philosophy at Edinburgh University, during which time he spent a semester at Göttingen University in 1874, he approached army reform by applying general business principles and bringing order into administrative chaos.²¹⁵ When studying in Germany, Haldane immersed himself in its literature and Goethe, Lotze and Hegel left profound impressions on him. John Muirhead, the British Idealist philosopher, regarded Haldane to be one of only a few individuals who had mastered Hegelian philosophy at such a relatively young age and apply its principles (thesis, antithesis and synthesis) in all areas of his later professional career. His philosophical approach was based upon an adaptable method of problem solving but one set against an historical context. In solving a problem, he identified the leading areas and its historical framework of that particular mode of human experience and the ideational analysis of it would lead to policy solutions. Here, if the balance was struck between a clear conceptual vision of the organising ideas and the way in which they structure experience in a specific sphere, it would lead to a balanced and efficient entirety, or whole. This can clearly be identified in Haldane’s reforms where his central theme was to analyse the Army as an ‘organic whole’ and thus identify the main organising ideas which were implicit in that area of human experience, in this case the perceived logistic and strategic failures of the South African War. He did this by establishing early what the purpose of the Army was and the principles required for organising it. Having identified those principles and what contradicted them, the direction of policy became clearer. This included the acceptance of the ‘Blue Water’ principles and its associated view that a large home-based army was no longer needed and recognition that the defence of the Empire or a future Continental conflict would require a highly trained

²¹⁵ Bond, ‘Richard Burdon Haldane at the War Office 1905 – 1912’, p.34

and deployable force.²¹⁶ In his autobiography, Haldane asserted that his philosophy guided him throughout his career and

led me to the belief in the possibility of finding rational principles underlying all forms of experience and to a strong sense of the endeavour to find such principles as a first duty ... [as] it helps to bring together the apparently diverging views of those with whom one has to deal.²¹⁷

Haldane's philosophy gave him a way of analysing problems, provided a method of thinking and clearly guided him throughout his time in office.²¹⁸

As a Liberal Imperialist, Haldane understood that he was in a difficult political situation upon entering office. Gaining a landslide Liberal victory in the General Election of January 1906, the majority of the ruling party, who were opposed to the recent South African War, demanded retrenchment and feared European military jingoism. Their cry was 'Back to Army Estimates as before the South African War' which in reality meant a reduction of approximately £9m from the 1906/07 Estimates.²¹⁹ He also had to placate the Conservatives who, by holding the ruling majority in the House of Lords, could delay or even halt the progress of his reforms as they passed through Parliament. But Haldane was a skilful politician and his reforms were passed with relatively little friction. He appeased the Radicals by reducing expenditure and not resorting to compulsion and he satisfied the Unionists, who numbered just 132 Conservatives and 25 Liberal Unionists,²²⁰ and Liberal Imperialists by creating an efficient army that was capable of rapid mobilisation. He could not, however, conciliate the supporters of compulsory service, in particular Lord Roberts

²¹⁶ Vincent, 'German Philosophy and British Public Policy', pp.159-168

²¹⁷ Haldane, *Richard Burdon Haldane. An Autobiography*, p.352

²¹⁸ Vincent, 'German Philosophy and British Public Policy', p.179

²¹⁹ Ellison to Lady Haig, 11 Sep 1928, Haig MSS, NLS, Acc 3155.40q

²²⁰ Ensor, *England 1870 – 1914*, p.386

who in possessing the prestige of being the country's greatest living soldier, carried substantial political clout. Haldane and the more progressive serving officers around him realised that compulsion was impossible politically and the resultant exchange of pamphlets, articles and speeches between both camps lasted until the First World War.²²¹

This somewhat simplified synopsis of Haldane's political success does not reveal the true extent of the guile with which he steered his reforms through the Parliamentary process.

Complaining to Esher that he was being pushed too hard to deliver his reforms, he stated that what he had 'to manage is the House of Commons and this requires a great deal of thought'.²²² A Member of Parliament for twenty years before achieving ministerial office, Haldane had learned how to manage the House of Commons with his involvement with educational reform, especially Balfour's London Universities Act of 1898 and Government Education Act of 1902. He appeared proud when admitting to Rosebery that 'you know nothing of the Arctic and Polar condition into which that House gets when I have had it in hand for five hours, and the icy atmosphere has driven its quorum into wintry slumber'.²²³ By inducing a stupor among sitting members, resistance was minimised and his reputation for long, boring speeches was 'sufficient to touch off a minor stampede to the tea-room'.²²⁴ His reedy voice, excessively long speeches, halting delivery and reliance upon typewritten text, became a useful tool. Haldane did, however, know how to flatter and win over the House. His first speech as Secretary of State for War was politically very adroit and he made every attempt to both appease or even preempt his critics and satisfy his supporters. He was humble, candid, and graceful in acknowledging his predecessors' efforts and he

²²¹ Blake, 'Great Britain The Crimean War to the First World War', pp.34-35

²²² Haldane to Esher, 18 Oct 1906, Haldane MSS., NLS, Ms.5907, f.108

²²³ Haldane to Rosebery, 13 Mar 04, Haldane MSS., NLS, Ms.5906, f.77

²²⁴ Koss, *Lord Haldane: Scapegoat for Liberalism*, p.14

appealed to the better side of each Member's human nature in seeking support for his reforms. The speech drew particular praise from the Prime Minister, Campbell-Bannerman, who told Haldane that it was 'not only a splendid speech but an historical speech'.²²⁵ Haldane had secured tacit all-party support for his reforms and, in a political environment where other social reforms were considered more pressing, he was afforded considerable time and latitude to develop his plans. He was also able to draw on the surreptitious assistance of his friend Balfour, by now the leader of the Opposition, who, through his interest in strategic matters, army reform and fear of invasion, had 'bequeathed a collection of ideas, reforms, advisers and institutions to Haldane ...',²²⁶

Haldane's legal profession and connection with Germany brought him into close contact with King Edward VII, who he came to regard 'like an old friend'.²²⁷ In 1901 he was honoured by the King with a Privy Councillorship and in the months leading up to the collapse of the Balfour government he was frequently invited to Windsor Castle. Upon hearing about Campbell-Bannerman's Cabinet in December 1905, the King was said to be delighted that Haldane, along with Asquith and Grey, took office in a government where he thought their moderate position would provide a suitable counterbalance to those holding more extreme views.²²⁸ The King was to play a vital role in the raising of the Territorial Force and gave impetus to its recruiting by speaking to all lords lieutenant at Buckingham Palace in 1907, where he instilled in them the national importance of the scheme and the need to support it. The King also presented colours to newly formed Territorial units at Windsor Castle and, in attending reviews the length and breadth of the country, took a

²²⁵ Haldane to mother, 9 Mar 1906, Haldane MSS., NLS, Ms.5975, f.105

²²⁶ Spiers, *Haldane: an Army Reformer*, pp.187-188

²²⁷ Haldane to mother, 6 Feb 1905, Haldane MSS., NLS, Ms.5973, f.41

²²⁸ Koss, *Lord Haldane: Scapegoat for Liberalism*, pp.31-33

partisan political stand in displaying royal support for the embryonic scheme.²²⁹ Indirectly, the King was also responsible for providing Haldane with his most trusted and capable advisor, Major General Douglas Haig.

Haig became friendly with the Royal Family, in particular the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII), through his brother-in-law's yachting activities. This connection was strengthened when Haig married Dorothy Vivian, a lady-in-waiting at the court of King Edward VII.²³⁰ It can be safely assumed that Haig met Esher, who was a royal confidant, in or around court no later than March 1903.²³¹ In November 1903, Haig wrote to Esher to congratulate him on his appointment to head the WORC and, showing considerable wisdom, offered him prescient advice about the perils of military reform:

I feel sure that success will result if you can only get a fair chance and have your ideas put into practice before any other method of reform is started! ... Schemes seem to be hastily taken up without due consideration of where the ultimate effects will be, and then quickly another scheme is started to cover the short-comings of the former one.²³²

Writing to Esher after the Commission's final report was published, Haig interestingly reveals that he is 'glad that you found Ellison of value. I have always had the highest opinion of him and am so pleased that he got a chance at last'.²³³ It would appear that Haig had prior experience of Ellison, perhaps from South Africa.

²²⁹ Bond, 'Richard Burdon Haldane at the War Office 1905 – 1912', p.41

²³⁰ D. Scott, ed, *Douglas Haig Diaries and Letters 1861 – 1914* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2006), p.5

²³¹ The Esher Archive contains a letter from Haig dated 21 Mar 1903.

²³² Haig to Esher, 26 Nov 1903, Esher Archive, Churchill College, ESHR 10/24

²³³ Haig to Esher, 23 Mar 1904, Esher Archive, Churchill College, ESHR 10/24

Through their time at the royal court, Esher and Haig had become friends and, accompanied by their wives, spent time together in the days before the newlyweds returned to India.²³⁴

With Balfour's government in turmoil and Esher becoming increasingly frustrated that his scheme for the General Staff was stalling, it is reasonable to assume that they discussed how to progress army reform in the next government and what part Haig could play in the War Office. This is hinted at in a letter to the Viceroy of India, Earl Minto, in the closing months of 1905:

You ask me about 'the General Staff' and 'what part I am to play in it and when'. I personally have heard nothing officially about taking any part in it yet ... I heard from [General] French two weeks ago that he hoped matters would soon be resolved for me to come home.²³⁵

This letter implies two points. First, Earl Minto, who had been in India since November 1905, knew of a plan to put Haig in the War Office. Second, French, whose military staff included Esher's son Maurice, was facilitating Haig's return. A letter early in the New Year, however, ends any doubt that Esher was involved in securing his services. In it Haig tells Esher that 'I am most deeply grateful to you for what you have done in the matter of getting me to replace Hutchinson. If the appointment were offered to me I should of course be delighted to accept it ... '²³⁶ In March 1906, on behalf of the Secretary of State for War, Esher wrote formally to Haig offering him the post of Director of Military Training.²³⁷ Such was their relationship, that when writing to Esher just before leaving India, Haig tells him '[I] will take the first opportunity of coming to see you – in fact I would rather delay

²³⁴ In a letter to Esher dated 16 Aug 1905, Haig thanked him for the 'delightful afternoon we spent with you on Sunday.' Esher Archive, Churchill College, ESHR 10/25

²³⁵ Scott, *Douglas Haig Diaries and Letters 1861 – 1914*, p.245

²³⁶ Haig to Esher, 11 Jan 1906, Esher Archive, Churchill College, ESHR 10/26

²³⁷ Esher to Haig, 2 Mar 1906, Haig Archive, NLS, Acc 3155, 1906 Diary

seeing anyone at the War Office until I have seen you ...'.²³⁸ Haig arrived in the United Kingdom on 1 June 1906 and met Haldane for the first time eight days later at General French's Aldershot headquarters. With Haig now on Haldane's staff, Esher had put in place a progressive officer who sympathised with his views on army reform and undoubtedly would have thought that he had again 'nobbled' the Secretary of State. While this is both an important consideration regarding the origins of Haldane's reforms and a demonstration of how influential Esher had become, of more importance is the fact that he had inadvertently put in place what Nadler calls an 'Operational Leader'.²³⁹ Nadler considers the Operational Leader's function to be critical during institutional change. As the Change Leader's second-in-command, he is responsible for shaping the environment and motivating people to work and behave in ways that support the change agenda. The Change Leader initiates change and the Operational Leader consolidates it and to achieve this they must remain in post simultaneously for a prolonged period. Ideally, the Operational Leader should be appointed no earlier than a year after the change process has begun.²⁴⁰

Prior to Haig's arrival in the War Office, Haldane was struggling to garner support for his Territorial Force among the many heterogeneous groups it affected. Writing to Lady Haig, Ellison reported that 'Haldane's chief difficulty was in knowing where to turn for advice'.²⁴¹ To affect change, Haldane realised that he would have to take a stronger line, which would undoubtedly be unpopular and therefore needed a durable, charismatic individual to implement them. He found these qualities in Haig who proved to be an

²³⁸ Haig to Esher, 2 May 1906, Esher Archive, Churchill College, ESHR 10/26

²³⁹ Nadler, *Champions of Change*, p.280

²⁴⁰ Nadler, *Champions of Change*, pp.280-281

²⁴¹ Ellison to Lady Haig, 11 Sep 1928, Haig MSS, NLS, Acc 3155.40q

indispensable Operational Leader and his ‘influence and active assistance, both in framing policy and elaborating details of organisation were quite invaluable’.²⁴² Haig was not reticent in providing advice and such was his overall impact in the War Office that Ellison thought without him

Mr Haldane would have been hard put to it to elaborate a practical scheme of reorganisation in the first instance, or to drive the scheme through to its logical conclusion ... Haig was quick to grasp the essential points of any given situation, and once he had made his mind what ought to be done, he looked neither to the right nor to the left but drove straight ahead to the ultimate end he had in view.²⁴³

Although Haig arrived in the War Office only six months after the change process started, opposed to Nadler’s suggestion of at least twelve months, both he and Haldane did hold their posts for a prolonged period and did see the fruits of their labours. When Haig returned to India in October 1909, the Regular Army and newly created Special Reserve and Territorial Force were at an embryonic phase of their development but the critical work had been completed and the reforms had been cemented in the foundations of the nation’s psyche. In Haig, Haldane had found, or more precisely, was given ‘the staff officer of his dreams’.²⁴⁴

Haldane was a product of the environment in which he operated. Belonging to a wide-ranging, immensely influential and complex social network, Haldane would have undoubtedly been influenced by other member’s views, positively or otherwise. That is not

²⁴² Ellison to Lady Haig, 11 Sep 1928, Haig MSS, NLS, Acc 3155.40q

²⁴³ Ellison to Lady Haig, 11 Sep 1928, Haig MSS, NLS, Acc 3155.40q

²⁴⁴ J.K. Dunlop, *The Development of the British Army 1899 – 1914* (London: Methuen, 1938), p.306

to say that he did not welcome them or was unaware of why he was being ‘nobbled’. Politically savvy, his knowledge and understanding of philosophy, which he declared his ‘herz-studium’ [life-long passion],²⁴⁵ guided him throughout his career and gave him the means to analyse divergent views, synthesise them and then formulate policy. More importantly, however, his philosophy taught him to examine the whole, not just its constituent parts. As discussed in previous chapters, this ultimately was the key to his success.

²⁴⁵ Haldane to mother, 6 Jul 1874, Haldane MSS., NLS, Ms.5927, f.41

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

***'The future will not disclose its secrets'*²⁴⁶**

Haldane was almost certainly given the appointment of Secretary of State for War by Campbell-Bannerman as a rebuke for his part in the failed Relugas Plot.²⁴⁷ As the minister of a government department that was regarded as the grave of many a promising political reputation and one which no one ‘will touch ... with a pole’,²⁴⁸ many of Haldane’s pacifist Radical Parliamentary colleagues would have undoubtedly assumed that he would not remain in office long, let alone implement any military reforms.²⁴⁹ In keeping with tradition, his Unionist predecessor had added his name to the War Office’s burial plot. Arnold-Forster’s attempts to implement reform failed because he lacked Cabinet support and invoked the resistance of the Army, which regarded his proposals too revolutionary and, furthermore, was tactless in his dealings with senior officers.²⁵⁰ Haldane, however, possessed the skills and personal characteristics that Arnold-Forster lacked. Independently minded and a master of political intrigue, he had a first-rate intellect, trained in philosophy and law. Revelling in hard work, his intellect gave him the ability to swiftly identify the crux of a problem and his philosophy provided him with the means of addressing it. An educationalist, he incorporated advances in technology, education and management into his

²⁴⁶ Haldane’s concluding sentence of his Memorandum of Events 1905-1915, written Apr 1916, Haldane MSS., NLS, Ms.5919

²⁴⁷ Conversation between Professor E Spiers and S Higgens at the University of Leeds on 4 Nov 2009

²⁴⁸ Maurice, *Haldane 1856 - 1915*, p.157

²⁴⁹ A.J. Morris, ‘Haldane’s Army Reforms 1906-8: The Deception of the Radicals’, *History* Vol 56(186) (February 1971), pp.17-18

²⁵⁰ Blake, ‘Great Britain: The Crimean War to the First World War’, p.33

reforms and maintained a close interest in developments abroad, particularly those in Germany. His wide social network contained most of the country's ruling elite whom he lavishly entertained at home with his sumptuous dinners.²⁵¹ He was a founding member of the Coefficients, a hugely influential dining club, whose other members included Milner, Amery, Maxse and Repington,²⁵² all influential politicians or journalists who harboured strong opinions about army reform. Haldane possessed the intellectual, political and social skills required to effect change but was also particularly adroit at handling human situations. He was, however, not without fault. As Esher commented, he liked to be 'all things to all men',²⁵³ and he compromised too readily on key issues regarding the Territorial Force, Militia and County Associations, which, in effect, emasculated his nation in arms concept.²⁵⁴ Haldane took the lion's share of the credit for his reforms while in reality he depended heavily on the work of his professional advisors, whom he would later fail to acknowledge or thank.²⁵⁵ His political naivety regarding his relationship with Germany would ultimately lead to his removal from public office in 1915, albeit temporarily, but this admiration had not manifested into pro-German sympathies, an accusation unfairly levelled by his enemies. Notwithstanding these faults, in June 1912, when he became Lord Chancellor, Haldane passed the War Office to his successor with his political reputation very much alive. What started in December 1905 as a punishment posting ended over six years later with Haldane taking 'his place as one of only two really great and successful War Ministers in the last hundred years' [1860 – 1960],²⁵⁶ the other being Cardwell. He had created an expeditionary force, which was capable of deploying to

²⁵¹ Barnett, 'Radical Reform: 1902-14', p.164

²⁵² Sommer, *Haldane of Cloan*, pp.71-72

²⁵³ Esher to Morley, 16 Aug 1906, *Journals and Letters of Reginald Viscount Esher Vol II*, p.174

²⁵⁴ Spiers, 'The Late Victorian Army 1868 – 1914', p.204

²⁵⁵ Gooch, 'Haldane and the National Army', p.82

²⁵⁶ Blake, 'Great Britain: The Crimean War to the First World War', p.34

Europe within fifteen days and relied on a simple yet effective two-line system to support and expand it.²⁵⁷ Haldane's talents and personal qualities were pivotal to its creation and he proved that he was very much the right man to be appointed Secretary of State for War.

Nadler and Tushman argue that institutional change can only succeed if all its component parts are in balance, or congruence; the higher the degree of congruence, the more effective an institution becomes.²⁵⁸ Haldane demonstrated that he understood this in his speech to Parliament on 8 March 1906 where, using the analogy of an obese patient whose leg could be amputated to save bulk, he argued that while this 'may get down his weight ... [it] will not do him any good'.²⁵⁹ He realised the dangers of reforming the Army piecemeal and approached his reforms by first understanding the nature of the problem before devising a solution to deal with the organic whole. His five weeks in Scotland at the end of 1905 and beginning of 1906 afforded him the opportunity to do such and, drawing on his mastery of Hegelian philosophy which provided him with a method of problem solving set against an historical context, he formed his own solution about how to shape the British Army and provide it with a focus. Contrary to historical orthodoxy, he was certainly not a 'blushing virgin just united to a bronzed warrior',²⁶⁰ as he approached this task with a degree of military knowledge and ideas about army reform. He entertained the views of those close to him, especially Esher and Ellison and read Clausewitz, Schellendorf and du Picq to understand the foundations on which the Continental armies had been grounded.²⁶¹ Having analysed and considered these views, his solution was a synthesis of them all but was one that was politically, militarily and socially acceptable. The solution was his version of a

²⁵⁷ Barnett, 'Radical Reform: 1902-14', p.167

²⁵⁸ Nadler and Tushman, *Competing by Design*, p.28

²⁵⁹ Haldane, *Army Reform and Other Addresses*, p.5

²⁶⁰ Haldane, *Richard Burdon Haldane. An Autobiography*, p.183

²⁶¹ Sommer, *Haldane of Cloan*, p.168

nation in arms, a uniquely British concept which, taking heed of the Operating Environment had to rely on the voluntary system to fill its ranks. It addressed the regular and auxiliary forces and balanced both the technical and social axes of its Operating Organisation while responding more coherently to the external forces affecting the Organisation Components, particularly the need to mobilise rapidly in defence of the Empire or in support of France in a war against Germany. Paramount was the need to reduce expenditure and he achieved this by cutting surplus and decreasing the size of the Army until costs fell below £28 million; the nation in arms was then modelled on what was left. This was the key to his success. Opposed to the more traditional method of designing an ideal solution which was then compromised by accepting reduced capability in order to make it affordable, Haldane did the reverse. He compromised at the very beginning thereby ensuring what was created from the remaining resources was affordable and capable of achieving its purpose. By reducing the Estimates as a matter of political expediency, he also garnered the tacit support of his Radical colleagues. Coupled with the support of Balfour, his friend and Conservative Leader of the Opposition, who recognised in Haldane the commitment to cement his own earlier reforms, he placated both sides of the House making the passage of his reforms through the Parliamentary process somewhat easier.

Haldane realised that the support of his generals in the War Office was essential if his reforms were to be successful. Having witnessed Brodrick and Arnold-Forster enter office with preconceived ideas on army reform, which annoyed the generals and consequently failed, he sensibly announced that he had no such ideas. His ‘blushing virgin’ response to the Army Council is cited too often and too readily by historians as proof that Haldane had no knowledge of the military or an understanding of its organisation. This, however, was

the action of a very shrewd politician who knew how to manipulate and manage people. In announcing that he had no preconceived ideas, he immediately allayed the fears of the generals who had endured two sets of attempted reforms in the preceding five years, thereby gaining the support of the Army Council. Having purged the ‘old school’ from the War Office, Haldane surrounded himself with progressive, ‘thinking’ officers who, in the main, had attended Staff College. These officers, who had fought in South Africa, were nearly all ‘Continentalists’ and supported Haldane’s reforms because his proposal to form a Striking Force to fight overseas, albeit publicly justified for the defence of the Empire, suited their planning for fighting a Continental war. Led by the ‘arch-intriguer Viscount Esher’,²⁶² support for the reforms also came from those who wanted to introduce conscription. They predicted that the final test of the voluntary system would inevitably fail and force the government to adopt compulsion. Haldane knew that his reforms would meet with barriers to change and he tackled them by design, compromise, persuasion, intrigue and charm. While Brodrick and Arnold-Forster ignored this factor, Haldane understood that institutional change could not take place without the support of those it affected.

Haldane was aware that lasting change takes time. While his ‘blushing virgin’ speech was a political ploy to placate the generals, the announced nine-month gestation period after his union with the ‘bronzed warrior’ was a clear indication that he was not going to rush his reforms. He remained in post long enough to review the problem, design a solution then implement it. The continuity of his tenure placed significant responsibility on him to ensure that his reforms were successful; in effect, he owned the problem and could not move on until it was solved. He expended a considerable amount of time, energy and effort

²⁶² Mitchinson, *England’s Last Hope*, p.2

in gathering public and military support for his reforms to ensure that they would become deeply embedded within the nation's culture. While his reforms and efforts did little to improve the wider public's perception of the British Army, they did succeed in galvanising support and in doing so, prevented institutional homeostasis. This continuity in post afforded Haldane the time to review, plan, implement and nurture change but, most significantly, time to complete the whole process. His intellect, philosophical logic and understanding of both the science and practicalities of institutional change, meant that in leading a governmental department that was responsible for army reform, he was appointed to the right place.

In addition to being talented, Haldane was also fortunate with the timing of his appointment and here 'luck plays as much a part in a war minister's reputation as in a general's'.²⁶³ The failings of the British Army in the opening sequence of the South African War had triggered a swathe of reforms in the War Office, which subsequently removed the confused and chaotic processes by which military advice was produced for the Cabinet. Replaced by the CID and provided with a secretariat by the Esher Committee, Haldane entered office at a time when these reforms were reaching culmination. Formally constituting the General Staff shortly after taking office, Haldane would become the first Secretary of State for War who had at his disposal a system that was created to provide the political head of the War Office with coherent military advice. Despite their intrigue in the Relugas Plot, the Liberal Imperialists were given key appointments in Campbell-Bannerman's Cabinet; Grey became Foreign Secretary and Asquith became Chancellor of the Exchequer and then Prime Minister in April 1908. These key appointments, which influenced and impacted upon Haldane's reforms, were filled by his long-term friends and political collaborators.

²⁶³ Gooch, 'Haldane and the National Army', p.71

Haldane benefitted from their support in Parliament where they personally intervened to ensure the reforms passed through the legislative process successfully.²⁶⁴ Grey's appointment to the Foreign Office coincided with the appointments of a new group of diplomats into the key departmental and ambassadorial appointments throughout Europe. This group regarded Germany's growing military strength as a major threat to British security and persuaded Grey to review Foreign Policy.²⁶⁵ Grey, in turn, urged Haldane to examine the feasibility of sending the Army to the Continent in support of France in a war against Germany. While the formal unification of foreign and defence policy would be sanctioned in later years, this impetus provided the embryonic General Staff in the War Office with focus and a purpose for the Army. With home defence now the preserve of the Royal Navy, the requirement to keep an Expeditionary Force ready to fight overseas was publicly justified for defending the empire.

Haldane benefitted from the nascent spirit of professionalism growing among the more progressive element of the officer corps. These 'thinking' soldiers had become impatient with the inefficiency of the Army and wanted to put it on equal footing with those on the Continent. Ellison was one such officer and with Esher thinking that he had 'nobbled' Haldane by securing him as his private Military Secretary, he had in fact provided Haldane with a very capable and loyal staff officer who understood the political problems regarding compulsory military service.²⁶⁶ Esher was also instrumental in returning Haig from India to work for Haldane in the War Office. Haig was at the forefront of those who saw an

²⁶⁴ C. Hazlehurst, 'Asquith as Prime Minister, 1908-1916', *The English Historical Review*, Vol 85(336) (Jul 1970), p.518

²⁶⁵ Steiner, 'Grey, Hardinge and the Foreign Office 1906-1910', p.418

²⁶⁶ G. Ellison, 'Reminiscences' *The Lancashire Lad Journal of the Loyal Regiment (North Lancashire)*, Number 54 (3) (November 1935), p.6

urgent need for the Army to become more professional and his progressive attitude coupled with his ability to command respect, allowed him to plan for and implement Haldane's reforms across all levels of the Army. The mobilisation of the BEF in 1914 bears testimony to this.²⁶⁷ No other officers provided Haldane with such sterling support and when Dunlop commented that 'Haig provided Haldane with the staff officer of his dreams' he also recognised that Ellison should be added to the list of people who provided invaluable service to the nation, but was 'a man to whom history has perhaps paid scant tribute.'²⁶⁸ Seventy-two years later, Ellison's contribution still receives scant attention and archival material suggests that much more could be gleaned about the Haldane reforms if he were afforded serious historical attention.

In the aftermath of the collapse of Balfour's Unionist government, and at a time of considerable foreign, political, domestic and military upheaval, the War Office needed a Secretary of State for War who could balance the conflicting demands placed upon him and exploit the opportunities presented by the changing domestic and international situation. Such a minister would need to interpret that environment and design a suitable response that was consistent with strategy while balancing the sometimes conflicting demands of its technical and social components. The confluence of events in late 1905 and early 1906, presented an opportunity for radical reform of the Army, an opportunity that may have been missed if a suitable Secretary of State for War had not been appointed in time. Appointing Haldane in December 1905, Campbell-Banner unknowingly seized that opportunity and in doing so appointed him at the right time.

²⁶⁷ G.J. DeGroot, 'Ambition, Duty and Doctrine: Douglas Haig's Rise to High Command', in B. Bond and N. Cave, eds., *Haig: A Reappraisal 80 Years On* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Military, 1999 [2009]), pp.48-49

²⁶⁸ Dunlop, *The Development of the British Army 1899 – 1914*, p.306

Haldane entered office with an interest in military affairs and notions about army reform. With the exception of the Territorial Force, his reforms were shaped around the ideas of others; ideas which he actively solicited. He benefitted from both circumstance and the actions of those in post before him and he faced an army that was reluctant to attempt another series of reforms. Yet Haldane succeeded where Brodrick and Arnold-Forster had failed. He had the necessary qualities and attributes required to implement institutional change and arrived in the War Office at a time of significant upheaval in domestic, political and international affairs, events which demanded army reform. Upon taking office, Haldane, that ‘manager of men’,²⁶⁹ was bequeathed a jigsaw puzzle whose parts were ‘awaiting the arrival of someone to fit them together.’²⁷⁰ Haldane succeeded where his predecessors had failed because he put all of those pieces together, in the right order and at the right time. While the future did not disclose its secrets to him, the past has revealed that in solving the whole puzzle, Haldane proved to be the right man, in the right place, at the right time.

²⁶⁹ Esher to Maurice Brett, 11 Dec 1905, *Journals and Letters of Reginald Viscount Esher Vol II*, p.127

²⁷⁰ C. a C. Repington, *Vestigia: Reminiscences of Peace and War* (London: Constable, 1919), p.259

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