3.1 Changes in organising the military

KEY QUESTIONS

- Why was it thought necessary to change the army during the years 1790 to 1918?
- What prompted the reforms to the Royal Navy during the years 1790–1918?
- Why were there changes to the ways in which men were recruited into the armed services?

INTRODUCTION

How the armed forces are organised

The army

The modern British army was formed during the 17th century. It was during this period, from 1790 to 1918, that the way in which armies were raised changed from a system by which influential gentlemen provided **regiments** in times of war to an expectation that the armed forces should be funded directly by the state. By the time of the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–14), Britain's armed forces were organised by the government and paid for by taxation.

The army was traditionally organised into three fighting arms and support services. The three fighting arms are infantry, cavalry and artillery, whilst support services include the engineers, medical support and **commissariat** (transport and supplies). The main organisational unit was provided by the regiment. Every soldier in the force belonged to a regiment, which had its own headquarters, administrative staff and colours. Regiments often have a rich history and unique traditions, which inspire great loyalty from those who have served with them.

The army was traditionally a force made up of volunteers. The government put a great deal of effort into persuading men to join the army. They also attempted to make the army more attractive to young men by making the conditions slightly better. It was only during the second half of the First World War, when the government was so desperate for new recruits, that men were forced to join the army.

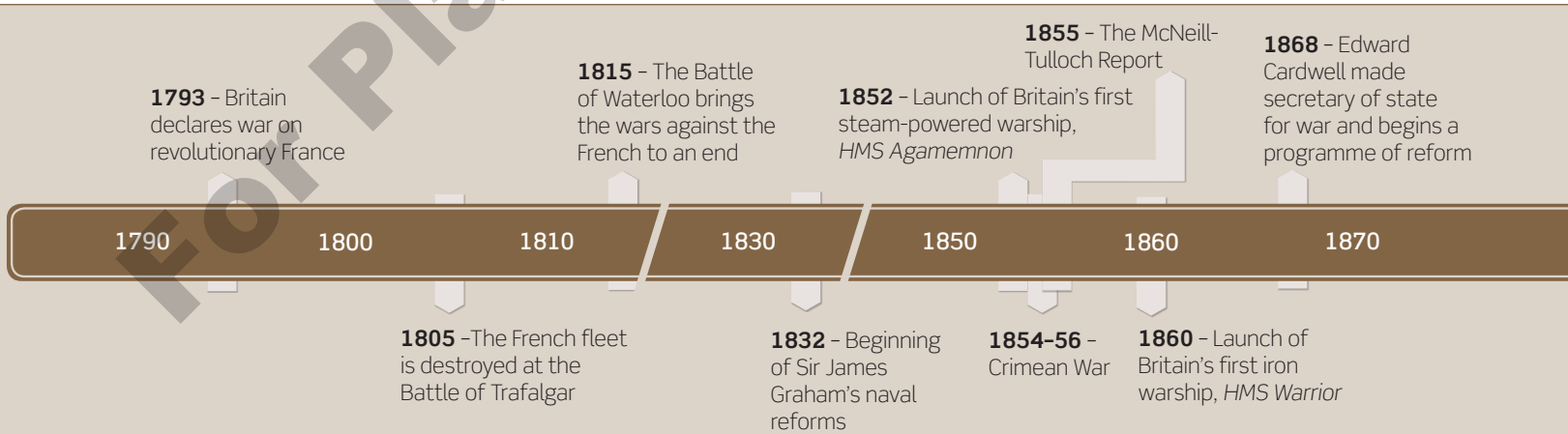
The regiment is the main tactical unit for the cavalry, i.e. the group that the soldiers fight in, but not for the other branches of the army. Infantry fight in battalions, usually between 400 and 1000 men and a regiment will have one or more battalions. Each battalion will be broken down into companies and each company into platoons. The artillery will either belong to the Royal Artillery Regiment or the Royal Horse Artillery Regiment, but the tactical unit is the battery, which usually consists of six or eight guns. Batteries are treated like separate entities and will be assigned duties

KEY TERMS

Regiment
A military unit of ground troops consisting of at least two battalions, usually commanded by a colonel. In the British army, a regiment is often linked to a geographical area.

Commissariat
The department of the army responsible for transportation and supply. During the 18th and early 19th centuries, its peacetime duties were light. When war broke out it had to be rapidly expanded and much of its activities had to be improvised. This sometimes led to breakdowns in the supply chain, which meant that soldiers did not always get the supplies they needed.

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on that basis. Cavalry regiments often fight together, though occasionally they may be split up into squadrons, particularly if they are assigned duties away from the fighting, such as guarding convoys or **reconnaissance**.

KEY TERM

Reconnaissance
The act of searching around the army in an effort to gain information as to the whereabouts and the condition of the enemy.

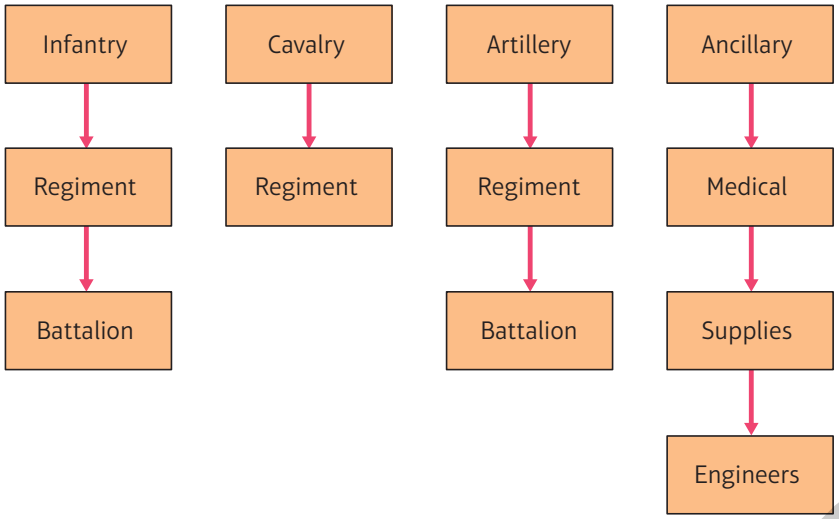


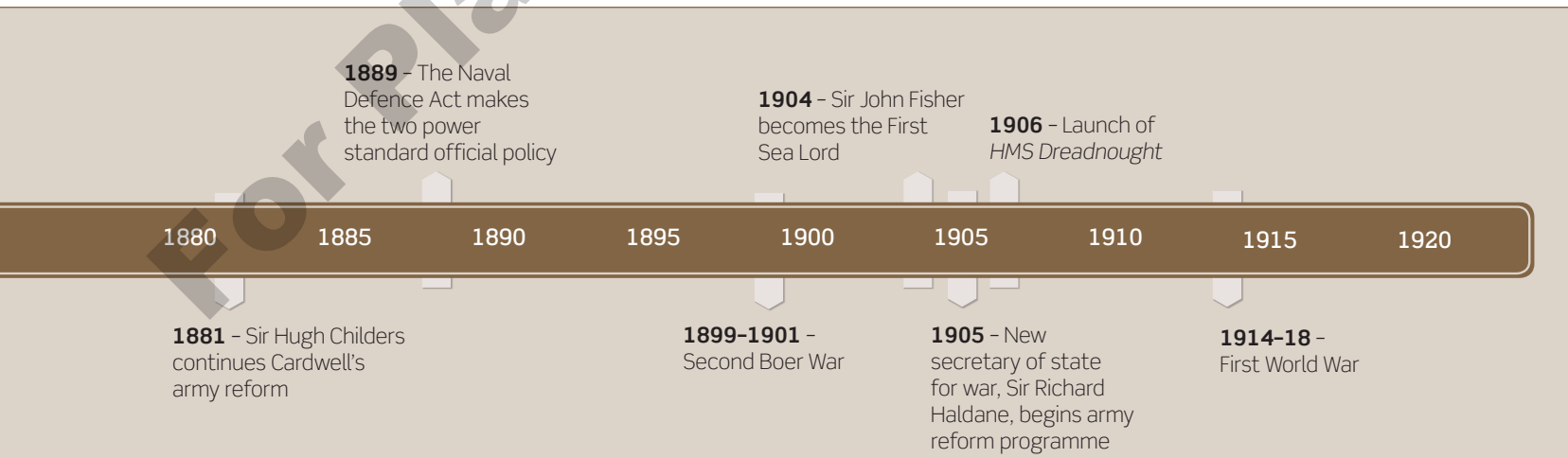
Figure 1.1 The organisation of the British army from the 1790s.

During wartime, these basic building blocks are combined together to make higher formations. Infantry battalions and cavalry regiments are grouped together to form brigades. From the 1790s onwards, brigades would be combined into divisions, which would then make up the army. Artillery could be assigned to a brigade or a division depending on the needs of the fighting and the availability of the artillery. The corps system was developed by the French wherein two or more divisions would constitute a corps and several corps would make up the army. The corps system was not adopted by the British army until the First World War.

Unit	Constituent part
Army	Division (corps from 1914)
Corps	Division
Division	Brigade
Brigade	Battalion
Battalion	Company (a group of approximately 100 men)
Company	Platoon (a group of approximately 25 men)

Figure 1.2 An overview of army organisation.

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The Royal Navy

The organisation of the Royal Navy was always much simpler than the army and remains organised in the same way even today. Its basic units are ships, which are all given the title Her (or His) Majesty's Ship (HMS), depending on who the monarch was and then a name (e.g. *Ark Royal*, *Invincible*, etc.). Even land-based training facilities are given the title HMS, even though they are not actually ships, e.g. *HMS Raleigh*. Every ship has a nominal homeport, although it might be serviced elsewhere depending on its circumstances. Ships served a similar administrative purpose to regiments in the army.

Ships are organised into flotillas, which are then organised into a fleet. Historically, fleets tended to be named after the area in which they were serving, for example the Mediterranean Fleet or the Far East Fleet. Ships were graded by size, which often defined their function, some ships being suitable for high seas deployment, others only suitable for use in coastal waters.

Like the army, the Royal Navy was traditionally a service manned by volunteers. Unlike the army, the navy was permitted at certain times to conscript seamen of the merchant navy and it was not unknown for coercion to be used to get men into the service. During the world wars, men would be drafted into the navy whether or not they wanted to join.

KEY TERM

Calibre
The size of a gun is sometimes given by the weight of the shot that it fires, such as a 17 pounder. Usually it is measured by its calibre, which means the diameter of the shell that it fires, e.g. 20mm, 4.5-inch howitzers or 16-inch naval guns.

Type	19th-century description	21st-century description
Battleship	A large warship. In the 19th century, it would be expected to carry approximately 100 guns.	A large warship usually over 30,000 tons with thick armour and primary armament being guns of 12-inch **calibre** or greater. Obsolete by the end of the 20th century.
Cruiser	Not a term commonly used in the 19th century, but describes a smaller armoured warship from around 1870 onwards.	A smaller version of a battleship with lighter armour, guns of between 6-inch and 9-inch calibre and missiles.
Destroyer	A smaller warship, whose primary aim was to sail with the fleet and protect the larger ships. The term was first coined in the late 19th century to describe a new class of smaller vessel that was capable of firing torpedoes.	A smaller warship, whose primary aim is to sail with the fleet and protect the larger ships. Capable of firing missiles and torpedoes, they are also used to escort convoys and attack submarines.
Frigate	A smaller warship built for speed and manoeuvrability rather than power. Often used for escort duties.	A smaller warship built for speed and manoeuvrability rather than power. Often used for escort duties.
Sloop	Initially, the word 'sloop' is a reference to the shape of the sail (triangular not rectangular). Often sized between a frigate and a corvette.	Smaller than a frigate and used for escort duties and anti-submarine warfare.
Corvette	The smallest vessel that can be designated as a warship.	The smallest vessel that can be designated as a warship.
Brig	A small warship with two masts and rectangular sails.	Not a term used after the age of sail.

Figure 1.3 Ships of the line.

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WHY WAS IT THOUGHT NECESSARY TO CHANGE THE ARMY DURING THE YEARS 1790 TO 1918?

Improving the organisation of the army

Like other European armies, the British army experienced a peacetime lull after the wars against the French, and then a steady expansion in the latter half of the 19th century as the other armies of European and world powers expanded. There were key moments when the structure was deemed to be inefficient and in need of reform.

The regimental system

As an organising principle for a peacetime army, the regimental system was thought to be fit for purpose by many traditional military thinkers. It gave every serviceman a home barracks and enabled the army to be administered relatively efficiently. Cavalry regiments would be posted onto active service as a whole, whereas infantry regiments would release individual battalions for duty overseas.

The problem came when it proved difficult to attract new recruits. As the 19th century progressed, the career of soldiering became less and less attractive compared with manual labouring in the factories, which paid much better. Moreover, the possibility of being posted to an unpopular regiment and then spending years in the tropics put men off. In addition, Victorian sensibilities about having the 'right' sort of man for the armed forces made the recruitment of convicted criminals, which had proved such a rich source of manpower during the wars against the French, less appealing.

Another problem with the regimental system was that it was perceived as being a bastion of privilege. The purchasing of rank had been the practice since the 18th century and became increasingly regarded with suspicion, particularly by the Liberals. The idea of a **meritocracy** began to gain favour with liberal politicians and this process was accelerated when continental wars, such as the Crimean War (see Chapter 4) and the Austro-Prussian War of 1866, revealed that the British army was not the force it had been when it fought Napoleon. The success of the Prussian army with its highly professional officer corps showed up the poorer quality of British leadership. The government began to consider that advancement on merit might serve the army better.

KEY TERM

Meritocracy
The idea that people should be promoted due to their ability rather than through patronage.

Improving the way the army was supplied

Munitions

The 19th century saw a change in the way that armies were equipped. At the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, the infantry stood in long lines and volley fired Brown Bess muskets. Cavalry charged at the gallop with swords and artillery fired a mixture of solid round shot and tins or bags of smaller shot called canister. Through the century **muzzle**-loading muskets were replaced by rifles, which eventually became **breech** loading, thus reloading was much faster and the guns could operate with a much higher rate of fire. By the time of the First World War, infantry could also operate a wide array of support weapons such as small mortars, machine guns and even tanks after 1916. Cavalry had changed little but artillery had begun to experiment with different kinds of high explosive shell instead of a solid metal ball.

KEY TERMS

Muzzle
The open end of the gun barrel where the projectile comes out.

Breech
The end of the gun barrel nearest the firer.

The new weapons needed more ammunition. The Brown Bess musket, the main weapon for the infantry, might fire three bullets a minute in the hands of an expert, four in extreme circumstances. A soldier in battle might only be called upon to fire for a few minutes. Often the inside of the barrel became so fouled with burnt powder that a soldier could only fire for a few minutes before needing to clean out the barrel. Therefore, armies had time to produce bullets for themselves using mobile forges. Supplying the artillery was much the same as for the infantry on a cottage industry basis. Cavalry fired even fewer bullets and, perhaps, the most important support worker was the man who kept a sharp edge on their swords.

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Through the course of the 19th century, fire weapons improved. Breech-loading rifles needed specially made bullets in cartridges rather than the metal balls fired from muskets. The rapid increase in the rate of fire meant that they needed far more of them. The development of machine guns in the 1870s and 1880s, obviously increased the demand for bullets. Similarly, breech-loading steel cannons fired high explosive shells rather than solid balls, with an increased rate of fire. As weapon designs improved, it would become no longer possible for an army to make its own munitions, they would have to be manufactured at home in purpose-built factories.

Food and clothing

The British army in the Iberian Peninsula often resembled a group of tramps due to the poor state of their uniforms and footwear. Such was the low quality of their equipment that a prize from an encounter with the French would be the acquisition of a superior French backpack or the pair of boots from a dead cavalryman. The uniforms were so badly made that the dye ran, turning the scarlet-red army into a shade of grey-brown. Officers would usually equip themselves rather than use government issued equipment.

Uniquely among the armies during the wars against the French (1793–1815), the British did not live off the land. The British authorities realised the value of keeping the local population on good terms and so looting was prohibited and often punished severely. Local food could be purchased by the quartermaster's staff, but most of it was supplied from Britain by the navy and then transported to the army. As Wellington's campaign became more successful, the army moved further away from the coast and the supply lines became stretched. The food supply was not as secure and, from time to time, the soldiers went hungry.

The Crimean War showed the British authorities that little had changed. Observers of the British army in 1854 saw the men in a deplorable condition, without equipment, proper clothing or food. That many of them had started in poor physical condition had not helped matters. The greatest threats to the British soldier in the winter of 1854/55 were cold, hunger and disease. The cause of this was partly the extremely long line of supply through the Black Sea, the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, though often the supplies were there but it was just local inefficiency that prevented them reaching the frontline.

The expanding British Empire

In 1815, the British Empire included Canada, some islands in the West Indies and parts of India. There were also staging posts between Britain and these territories. There were small colonies in Australia and Cape Town was British, although it was seen as simply a convenient port en route to India. By the end of the 19th century, virtually the whole of India was an English possession, along with a large almost continuous strip of Africa that ran from the Nile delta to the Cape of Good Hope. Burma and Malaysia had been added to Britain's Asian possessions along with Hong Kong and Singapore. The territories of Australia and New Zealand were fully part of the Empire, though, like Canada, still with large tracts of unsettled land.

As the British Empire expanded, the need to send the armed forces to far flung parts of the world increased. Supplying the armed forces all over the world could no longer be done on an ad hoc basis, but needed a professional service with its own central administration. Much of the reforms of the later 19th century were concerned with supply and meeting the needs of a changing situation.

EXTRACT 1

From Collins, B. *War and Empire, The Expansion of Britain 1790 to 1830* (2010). This shows the numbers of soldiers in the British army on active service in different parts of the British Empire in 1832.

Total effectives of cavalry and infantry January 1832	
Great Britain	25,083
Ireland	20,077
India	18,364
Rest of Overseas	30,853
TOTAL	94,377
Overseas Distribution of Army	
Canada	2,417
Nova Scotia	2,258
Windward and Leewards Islands	4,452
Bermuda	962
Jamaica and Honduras	3,122
Gibralter	2,816
Malta	2,366
Ionian Islands	2,889
Cape of Good Hope	1,725
Mauritius	1,445
India	18,364
Ceylon	3,547
New South Wales	2,539

McNeill-Tulloch Report, 1855

The Crimean War and its problems

The Crimean War was an attempt by the western powers, Britain and France, to bolster the ailing Ottoman Empire and check Russian aggression. Fought between 1854 and 1856, it consisted of a limited campaign in the Balkans and a full-scale invasion of the Crimean peninsula with the aim of capturing the port of Sevastopol. Most of the battles happened within the first few months of the war and the rest of the war was a drawn out **siege** of the city.

KEY TERM

Siege
Action against an enemy settlement whereby the besieging army surrounds the settlement and prevents anything going in or out. Eventually the settlement surrenders due to lack of supplies or is relieved by a friendly army.

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It was Britain's first European war since the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. It was also the furthest distance from Britain that a major British force had seen action since the American War of Independence (1776–83). In the years following 1815, only the downsizing of the armed forces had been a major priority. By the 1850s, the organisational structure of the armed forces was much the same as it had been at the end of the Wars against France, though there were far fewer troops and ships available.

The enthusiasm for the new war soon dissipated. It gave way to a wave of questioning that centred around the feeling that the British armed forces were not fit for purpose. Fighting a major campaign that involved transporting all the necessary men, horses, equipment and supplies to a theatre approximately 6000 miles away by sea had highlighted very quickly the serious weaknesses in the British armed forces. These weaknesses were more to do with the supplying and transportation arrangements for the army and the way it was commanded rather than the quality of the fighting troops.

The Crimean War was the first war fought by Britain where news of what was happening was digested on a daily basis by the public at home. The new telegraph meant that short news reports could be sent to Britain from the Crimea in a matter of hours, whereas news from previous campaigns had to be carried by ship and would have taken days (or even weeks from the Crimea). Journalists adopted a slightly more personal style that drew people into the material on a more emotional level. For the first time, people at home began to sympathise with the experiences of the common soldier rather than just the outcome of the battles and the strategic situation.

The British government was alarmed by the reports of the poor conditions of the serving soldiers and also the poor leadership within the army. At the beginning of 1855, the government sent diplomat John McNeill and experienced army administrator Colonel Alexander Tulloch out into the Black Sea in order to report on how the campaign was being managed, with particular focus on the commissariat.

McNeill-Tulloch Report

At first, McNeill and Tulloch based their activities in Scutari and then went over to the Crimea. Their report was issued in two stages: the first filed in June 1855 and the second in January 1856. Each had a slightly different focus; the first looked at the condition of the common soldier with particular focus on diet and the supply of food; whilst the second was about the supply of equipment with a short update on the medical situation.

The main findings of the McNeill-Tulloch Report:

- The majorities of the casualties coming from the Crimea were the result of disease not enemy action.
- The poor health of the troops can be attributed to the lack of fresh food, particularly vegetables.
- The army was not providing all units with their full daily ration of food. The 4th and Light Divisions were particularly badly supplied.

SOURCE 1 From letters written by Somerset Calthorpe, a staff officer in the Crimea, to friends in London, published in 1857.

'On the 12th [October 1854], Lord Raglan was out the greater part of the day, making careful investigation into the interior arrangements of the different camps, especially the hospitals. There is still, I am sorry to say, a great deal of cholera in the army. The casualties from it are daily twelve or fourteen deaths, and from thirty to forty fresh cases brought into hospital. The casualties from the fire of the enemy, since our arrival at Balaklava to the present day (12th) have only been five killed and twelve wounded.'

'Today (23rd) [October 1854] the weather, as usual, is dreadful. It has now rained almost without intermission for three whole days, and consequently everything is saturated with wet. In spite of this, Lord Raglan was out yesterday and the day before riding through the camps in front of the town and visiting commanding officers of different regiments. The state of the roads is past all description, so much so that it is hard work for one's horse to carry one from here to Balaklava and back, a distance of little more than ten miles altogether. You may imagine therefore, the difficulties, which the commissariat meet with; it is as much as they ever can do to supply the troops with their rations, as it next to impossible to get the transport animals to carry up decent loads. Numbers of these die daily from over-work and the perpetual exposure to the weather; the same can be said of the cavalry horses, especially as regards the remnants of the Light Brigade, encamped near the 2nd Division.'

'Early in the afternoon I rode to the different camps [following the storm]; the ground was in a most dreadful state of slush and it was with no little difficulty that I reached the right of our position. Out of all the camps, both English and French, consisting of many thousands of tents, I don't think a dozen had stood during the gale. Everywhere the hospital marquees had been blown down, for, from their size and bulk, they are less capable of resisting the wind than perhaps any other. Our poor sick and wounded soldiers were consequently exposed to the weather, and I fear many deaths were hastened, and all had their suffering increased, by this sad catastrophe.'

- Camp kettles were often mislaid and not replaced, forcing soldiers to cook for themselves in their mess tins. It was proving difficult for soldiers to find enough wood to keep their fires going.
- The ordinary soldiers were still attending to their duties despite the poor state of their health in some cases.
- Officers were providing a good example and caring for those under their care.
- Although supplies were being brought to the supply base at Balaklava, the army was slow to distribute these supplies to frontline troops. A notable incident involving lime juice was cited. The lime juice, which was important for preventing **scurvy**, was unloaded at Balaklava on 10 December 1854, but was not distributed to the troops until the first week of February 1855.

KEY TERM

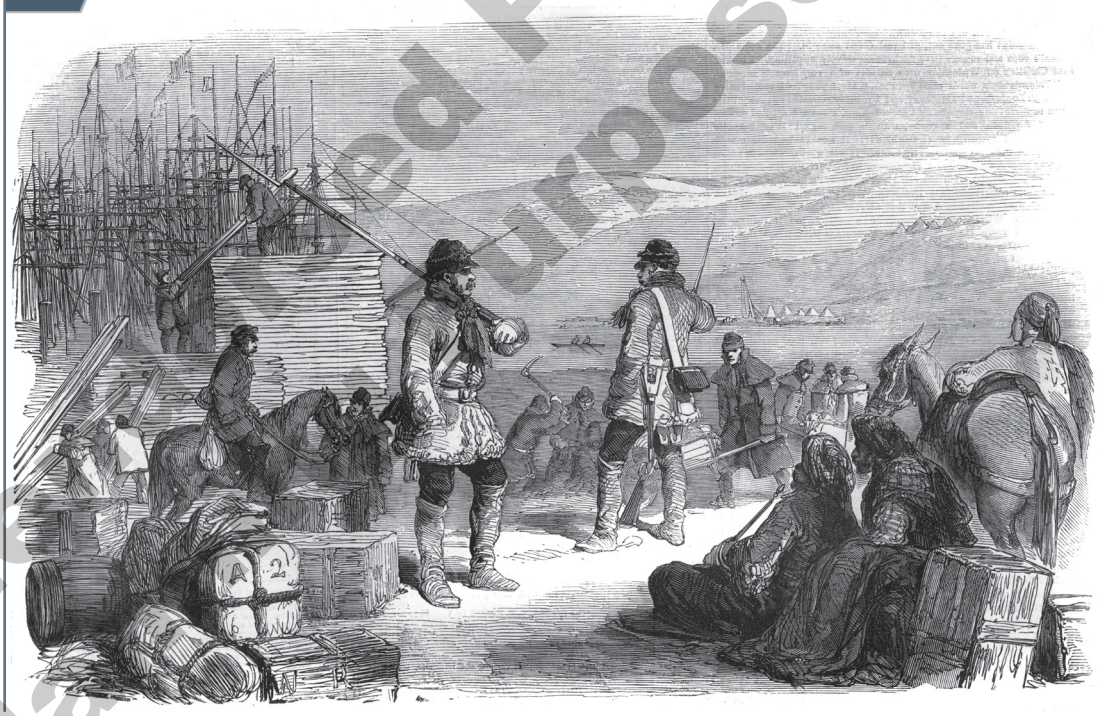
Scurvy
Disease caused by a lack of vitamin C. Scurvy was more common in the navy than the army. The forces took great pains to deliver more fresh fruit and vegetables to the servicemen.

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- There was a lack of feed for the horses, of which approximately 40 percent died during the winter of 1854/55.
- The communication between supply officer and the army command was poor, with the Commander-in-Chief having little idea of the day-to-day supply situation.
- Soldiers were having to shed their knapsacks, to enable them to move more quickly, and senior officers were not allowing them the possibility of recovering them.
- The army was short of medicine and medical supplies.
- Replacement clothing was slow to arrive at the frontline.

The main recommendations by McNeill and Tulloch were an improvement in the organisation of the army and its supply procedures. They said that the material was there, at the supply bases either at Balaklava in the Crimea or at Scutari in Turkey. What was not happening sufficiently quickly enough was the distribution to the troops at the frontline. They pointed out that disease was the main cause of casualties and that this could be prevented by giving troops a nutritious diet full of fresh meat and vegetables. They also suggested replacing the traditional rum ration with a larger quantity of porter, a dark beer that contained iron and was thought 'to build you up'.

SOURCE 2 Engraving by Robert Landells from 1855 showing the port of Balaklava. It shows how supplies were piled everywhere. Originally published in the *Illustrated London News*.



There were a few changes after the Crimea that were partly the result of the McNeill-Tulloch Report. A Royal warrant was issued in October 1858 that provided for a professional reform of the commissariat with much more of its operations being controlled directly by the army (previously it had largely been a civilian undertaking). The significant change here is that the army began to take responsibility for the ancillary services that were so necessary for its function. Prior to this, the assumption from army leaders was that the army was simply a fighting force and the extra services needed could be improvised from civilian sources. As the army grew, supplying the army became a far more complex process and began to be taken 'in-house' partly due to the McNeill-Tulloch Report. There were also some improvements to military medicine, but these were also due to the work of Florence Nightingale and the campaign led by the *Times* journalist William Russell.

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The McNeill-Tulloch Report caused a scandal when it was published. Politicians and the public had some idea of the poor conditions in the Crimea due to the Press reportings, but the report gave this information official status, which could not be ignored or downplayed by politicians. Moreover, it contained criticism, both actual and implied, of the army leadership. As a result, the army set up a board of enquiry called the Chelsea Board, which attempted to whitewash the report. Also, individuals had to conduct campaigns to defend their reputations. Raglan, the Crimean army commander in chief, was to die on campaign but others, like Sir Richard Airey, the quartermaster general (in charge of supply), came home and demanded an enquiry to clear his name.

Perhaps the main consequence of the McNeill-Tulloch Report was the shift in control of the army. Prior to the Crimean War, the Army High Command at Horse Guards had enjoyed a great deal of independence from government interference. While the duke of Wellington was alive (until 1852), he was a key figure in keeping politicians away from army business. The failings of army leadership in the Crimea, embodied in Press despatches and the McNeill-Tulloch Report, gave the government more power to play a far more central role in the management of the army than before and reforming the army became a matter for government ministers rather than the monarch or the generals.

SOURCE 3 From the first McNeill-Tulloch Report dated 10 June 1855. McNeill and Tulloch were sent by the government to produce a report on the conduct of the Crimean War.

The sufferings of the army in the course of the winter, and especially during the months of December and January, must have been intense. We have not noted all the particulars related to us, many of which were unconnected with our inquiry; but we may state, that it has been only by slow degrees, and after the frequent repetition of similar details, as one witness after another revealed the facts that had come under his own observation, that we have been able to form any adequate conception of the distress and misery undergone by the troops, or fully to appreciate the unparalleled courage and constancy with which they have endured their sufferings. Great Britain has often had reason to be proud of her army, but it is doubtful whether the whole range of military history furnishes an example of an army exhibiting, throughout a long campaign, qualities as high as have distinguished the forces under Lord Raglan's command. The strength of the men gave way under excessive labour, watching, exposure, and privation; but they never murmured, their spirit never failed, and the enemy, though far outnumbering them, never detected in those whom he encountered any signs of weakness. Their numbers were reduced by disease and by casualties to a handful of men, compared with the great extent of the lines which they constructed and defended, yet the army never abated its confidence in itself, and never descended from its acknowledged military pre-eminence.

Both men and officers, when so reduced that they were hardly fit for the lighter duties of the camp, scorned to be excused the severe and perilous work of the trenches, lest they should throw an undue amount of duty upon their comrades; yet they maintained every foot of ground against all the efforts of the enemy, and with numbers so small that, perhaps, no other troops would even have made the effort.

Suffering and privation have frequently led to crime, in armies as in other communities, but offences of a serious character have been unknown in the British army in the Crimea. Not one capital offence has been committed, or even alleged to have been committed, by a soldier, and intemperance [drunkenness] has been rare.

ACTIVITY
KNOWLEDGE CHECK

Early improvements to the army

1 How was the way that the army was organised different from the way that the navy was organised?

2 How did the expansion of the Empire affect the demands on the armed services?

3 Look at Source 2. How far does this confirm the view taken by McNeill and Tulloch?

4 Read Sources 1 and 3. To what extent does Calthorpe in Source 1 agree with the view taken by McNeill and Tulloch in Source 3?

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Cardwell's army reforms, 1868–74

Though the Crimean War had revealed significant weaknesses in the British army, not much had been done to improve the situation. After 1856, the concern shifted away from Europe and to the growing British Empire, particularly in Africa and Asia, and reforming the army did not seem important. It was to prove fit for the task of fighting small colonial wars. Moreover, the Conservatives were in power and were less inclined to make changes; many of the top generals had close connections with prominent members of the Conservative Party. Army reform reappeared on the agenda in 1868, as the government felt that the expansion of the Empire required a larger army and navy.

The election of that year brought in a new Liberal government under William Gladstone. Gladstone was young and ambitious and had a reforming manifesto. His Liberal government would pass some of the most important legislation of the century, including the Education Act of 1870, which made schooling for children compulsory; producing a better educated workforce, including men for the armed forces, was an important policy for this government. Edward Cardwell became the new secretary of state for war in 1868 and, as such, was responsible for reforming the army.

What aided Cardwell and the reformers' cause was the changing strategic situation in Europe. The Prussian army, which had fared so badly during the wars against Napoleon, was now sweeping all before them. They had beaten the Danes (1864), the Austrians (1866) and the French (1870). They were a modern professional army; well organised, well equipped and well supplied. Their system of regulars backed by reservists meant that, during wartime in 1866, they put 400,000 men in the field against the Austrians and their allies. Britain's standing army was just under 100,000, of whom 25,000 might be spread around the Empire at any one time. Britain had hardly any reservists.

The problems facing Cardwell

Part of the reason why the British army had not been reformed in the years after 1815 was that the generals did not want to change. They reasoned that the army had beaten Napoleon and was therefore still the best in Europe. The lead in this was taken by the duke of Wellington, who had commanded the army during the campaigns against the French. He served as commander-in-chief twice (1827–28 and 1842–52) and also as prime minister (1828–30), and so had a great deal of influence on other leading politicians and generals in charge of the army.

Recruitment was also of major concern to the new government. The 1850s and 1860s were a time of economic prosperity for Britain, which meant full employment. Joining the army was not an attractive option for a young man who could work in a factory and enjoy higher pay and better conditions. The minimum term for a soldier was 12 years, during which they could be sent to any part of the Empire far away from their homes and families. Army life was harsh with **flogging** and **branding** still occasionally used as punishments.

Another problem facing Cardwell was the promotion system. In European armies, promotion was largely on merit, so the better soldiers were able to advance to higher rank. In Britain, this was not necessarily the case. In the British army, officers had to purchase their next rank either from the holder if they were still alive or from the army if they were not. The cheapest rank was that of ensign in an infantry, which in 1837 would cost a young man £450 (a farm worker earned between £30 and £40 a year). This meant that a higher rank was only available to men from a wealthy family. Thus, officers were drawn from the highest social classes. During the wars against the French, a generation of talented men had bought their way to high rank at a relatively young age and it was these men – the duke of Wellington, Rowland Hill, Robert Craufurd and Thomas Picton – who led the British to their victories over the French. This, so the generals argued, was proof that the system worked. On the other hand, the Crimean War, where aristocrats such as Lord Cardigan and Lord Lucan had been less competent, had demonstrated the opposite point of view to reformers such as McNeill and Tulloch, and later Gladstone and Cardwell.

KEY TERMS

Flogging
A punishment whereby the victim is tied to a large frame and their back is whipped by a lash made from rope or leather.

Branding
Applied to persistent offenders or deserters, a mark was applied to the skin by a branding iron and then later by tattooing, usually two inches below the left armpit. The marks were either 'BC' for 'bad character' or 'D' for 'deserter'. The idea was that the mark would prevent the man from re-enlisting in the army, should he be in so desperate a state as to wish to do so.

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The Cardwell reforms

The reforms consisted of several orders that changed army practice and two major Acts of parliament. These measures changed the organisation of the army and would, in time, alter its social structure. They also made it a more appealing career for a young man. The Cardwell reforms changed the professional army while the reservists units, the militia and the yeomanry carried on as before (see Chapter 2).

Orders from the war office were aimed at changing the culture within the army and improving the experience of the ordinary soldier. Flogging in peacetime was banned in 1868 and branding abolished completely in 1871. The self-governing dominions of Canada, Australia and New Zealand were given responsibility for their own security and began to raise their own troops, thus releasing regular British soldiers. By 1871, 26,000 servicemen had returned to Britain from overseas. In 1870, an order was issued abolishing **bounty money** for new recruits. This meant that recruiting sergeants would no longer benefit financially from the recruits that they brought back and thereby would be less inclined to trick them into joining the army. In 1871, with much resistance from the generals, the purchasing of **commissions** was abolished.

In addition to administrative reforms, Cardwell was able to secure further funding for an expansion of the army. In August 1870, parliament voted an extra £2 million to pay for another 20,000 troops. This was partly a show of support by the Liberal majority for Cardwell's initiatives, but also a reaction to the success of the Prussian army on the continent. The new Germany had changed the balance of power in Europe and people had serious concerns about the threat of invasion from the continent. A novella published the following year ('The Battle of Dorking' by George Chesney) reflected the fear that there could be an invasion of Britain by a 'German speaking army'.

A move back to a regional regimental system was partly inspired by the Prussian model. The successful German army was built on localised regiments based in a geographical area. Captain C.W. Wilson of the British army wrote a powerful memorandum about the bravery of the Prussian soldiers at the Battle of Spicheren in 1870 (see Source 4).

SOURCE 4

Memorandum written by Captain C.W. Wilson to his superiors in 1870. He had just witnessed the performance of the Prussian army during the Battle of Spicheren.

> To the system of localizing the regiments and corps of the North German Army in time of peace. It also follows from this arrangement that the generals and their staff know the character of the officers they have to work with in time of war; and the men in the same regiment are fellow townsmen or villagers, and know that their conduct in battle will form the subject of many a home conversation on their return.

One of Cardwell's first reforms was the Army Enlistment (Short Service) Act of 1870, which changed the conditions under which men joined the army. Rather than enlist for 12 years, soldiers were able to serve for six years in the regulars and then serve six years in the reserves. While in the reserves, they would receive 4 pence a day and be expected to attend a short period of training every year. In the event of war, they would re-join the regular army for the duration of the war or till the end of the service period. When the 12-year period ended the men were free to negotiate with the army should they wish to serve for longer. Twenty-one years' service carried with it a pension.

The Regulation of the Forces Act (1871) put an end to general service and sought to more closely link each regiment with an area. General service was the principle that once a man joined the army, he could be assigned to any unit the army saw fit and posted to anywhere in the world. The Act provided for each foot regiment, each assigned to a geographical area such as a county, to have two regular battalions. At any time, one would be posted overseas while the other would be at home. The home battalion could serve as a reinforcement pool for the other during wartime or the battalions could switch places. There would also be two reservist battalions (three in Ireland) linked to the regiment that would undertake training with the home battalion. Soldiers would now potentially serve half their time in their local area.

KEY TERMS

Bounty money
Money that was paid to the recruiting sergeant for every new recruit he brought to the army.

Commission
Promotion to the next rank of an officer. For example, a lieutenant would be commissioned as a captain and a captain would be commissioned as a major.

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Issue	Reform
The practices of flogging and branding discouraged men from joining the army.	Flogging was abolished as a punishment during peacetime in 1868. Branding was abolished altogether.
Recruiting sergeants, encouraged by the prospect of bounty money, used dishonest means to get men to join the army. These means often included getting the recruits drunk or lying about their conditions of service.	Bounty money was abolished in 1870.
The minimum term of service was 12 years. To get a pension, 21 years' service was needed. Many saw this as too long a commitment to make.	The Army Enlistment Act (1870) allowed men to serve half of their 12-year term in the reserves.
Men were afraid of long postings overseas, particularly in tropical areas. In parts of Africa and the West Indies, many British soldiers died of disease or returned to Britain severely weakened by it.	The Regulation of the Forces Act (1871) abolished general service and linked regiments more closely to a geographical area. Men could then choose which regiment to join and would expect to serve no more than half of their time overseas.
Promotion could only be secured if a man had enough money to pay for his commission. Thus, only wealthy men were able to become senior officers. Sometimes this enabled talented men to gain a high rank at a young age, but in other cases wealthy men of lower quality could gain senior positions.	The purchasing of commissions was abolished in 1871. After this, promotion would be awarded on merit.

Figure 1.4 Summary of the Cardwell reforms.

The effectiveness of the Cardwell reforms

Cardwell's reforms altered the legal framework by which the army was managed. Whilst regulations can be changed overnight, culture, which is immersed in habit, takes much longer to change. Thus, the British army of the 1870s, though governed by new rules, behaved in much the same way as the army of the 1860s and earlier.

The recruitment problem, which was the main driving force behind the reforms, was resolved in the mid-1870s as the British economy began to slow down and the economic prosperity of the mid-19th century came to an end. This meant that unemployment grew and the prospect of a secure position within the army became more attractive. Moreover, during the 1870s, the army was not overstretched, with only a short and successful campaign in South Africa in 1879 and a war in Afghanistan (1878–80), which was mostly fought using colonial troops, to break the rhythm of regular duties. In the 1890s, when the army was under pressure in North Africa and India, bounty money was reintroduced, though this time it was payable to the soldier, not to the recruiting sergeant.

Although certain punishments had been abolished, other aspects of the soldier's conditions had not been addressed. Soldiers' pay was still low. A private could expect to earn the same as a rural labourer but less than that earned by a manual worker in a city. Moreover, almost three-quarters of a soldier's pay would be claimed back by the army as 'stoppages' – money to pay for all the food, fuel and clothing used by the soldier. Thus, while the country was enjoying a strong economy and full employment, soldiering was not an attractive profession. When the country was going through a recession, the security it provided made it more appealing.

Despite clamours for the reintroduction of the purchasing of commission when a Conservative government was re-elected in 1874, the measure was not brought back. The structure for a meritocracy remained, though in practice the social strata of the army remained much as it had been before the reform. The advantages of a wealthy background, a private education and a university degree meant that officers were still largely drawn from the upper and upper-middle classes. It would not be until the First World War, when the army grew into a force of millions, that the advancement of lower-middle and working-class men into the officer ranks became possible on a wide scale. Even then, after 1918, when the army reverted to its peacetime establishment, the social divide was still apparent.

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EXTEND YOUR KNOWLEDGE

The Childers Reforms, 1881

In some instances, the Regulation of the Forces Act proved difficult to put fully into effect. Many of the army's infantry regiments only had one battalion. This meant that they either had to raise a second battalion from scratch or co-operate with another regiment. Such were the fierce feelings of regimental pride that the idea of co-operating or amalgamating with another regiment was an anathema. Thus, many regiments carried on with their one battalion. Moreover, tradition in some areas of the country meant that the prescribed numbers of **militia** battalions were inconsistent (for example, the 25th Regiment of Foot had three militia battalions whereas the 35th Regiment of Foot only had one).

After the Liberals were re-elected in 1880, Hugh Childers, the new secretary of state for war, set about remedying this situation. By General Order 41/1881, the old numbering system was abolished and regiments were given new titles, often connected with an area of the country. For most regiments, this meant amalgamating with another regiment and, in some cases, both would have to relocate to another part of the country. For example, the 63rd (West Suffolk Regiment) and the 96th (formerly the 'Queen's Own Germans' but which had been raised in Manchester in 1824) were combined into the Manchester Regiment. They inherited two local militia battalions. In other places, the new arrangements were far neater, such as in Essex were the 44th Regiment of Foot (East Essex) and the 56th Regiment of Foot (West Essex) were combined into the new Essex Regiment.

There was a sense of unease at the new measures throughout the army. Some regiments fought successfully to have their traditional names retained instead of a geographical one. Old units, such as 'The Buffs' from Kent or the 'Black Watch', were allowed to retain their titles and the 'royal' units were allowed to keep this distinction in their titles. The five guards regiments were exempt from these reforms and carried on as before with three regular battalions each. The Rifle Brigade (formerly the 95th) and the Kings Royal Rifle Corps (formerly the 60th) were the only regiments without geographical affiliation and had depots throughout the kingdom though they both had their headquarters at Winchester.

For some regiments, this displeasure at the reforms turned into protest. On hearing of their amalgamation with the 92nd Regiment of Foot (Gordon Highlanders), the 73rd Regiment of Foot (Stirlingshire) paid to construct a monument in Malta where they were serving. The Gordon's, for their part, held a mock funeral to show their displeasure at the proposals. Some other regiments staged a prolonged campaign to return the colour of their facings to the traditional ones. For example, the Buffs from 1890 were allowed to replace their white facings with their old buff coloured ones.

KEY TERM

Militia
Part-time reserve soldiers. The militia maintained home security in local regions, and could be called up for war.

Haldane's army reforms, 1905–12

As the 19th century ended it was clear that warfare was changing. New technology had increased the firepower available to armies and was to have a massive effect on the nature of tactics. Also, the traditional three strands of service – the infantry, the cavalry and the artillery – were soon to be added to by a much more diverse organisational structure, as units took on far more specific roles. Different units had different weapons, like machine gun sections and mortar sections and, in 1912, an air corps. Ancillary services such as medical care needed to respond to the changes in medicine, whereas new transport technology meant that motor vehicles needed fuel and spares. Bright coloured uniforms were phased out, to be replaced with clothing that served to keep the man hidden rather than simply being a mark to show which side he was fighting on.

Lessons of the Second Boer War

For the British army, the lessons of the Second Boer War (1899–1902) were hard to digest. A regular army representing the largest and potentially most powerful Empire on earth had been outclassed by a group of irregulars, who were mostly farmers. The ability of the Boers to use the terrain to their advantage, their speed of moment and their ability with new long range rifles had tormented the slow moving British columns.

The British army had proved cumbersome and inefficient in South Africa. The systems that the government believed would allow the army to fight anywhere in the world had not proved up to the task. Supply networks were inefficient, equipment sub-standard and ordinary soldiers were in a poor physical condition. In the end, the British won the Second Boer War through sheer weight of numbers and a brutal scorched earth policy.

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The Expeditionary and Territorial Forces

War minister, Richard Burdon Haldane, (1856–1928) instituted important reforms from 1905 to 1912. The main strand of Haldane's reforms was the reorganisation of the British army into two parts. One was a fully professional force (the Expeditionary Force) that would be used for deployment overseas. It was envisaged that this would be continental Europe as tensions were rising between France and Germany and people feared that there would be a European war. For home defence, all the part-time volunteer units would be reorganised into the Territorial Force, which would be used for home defence in the time of war.

At the time of its creation, the expeditionary force was prepared to intervene on the continent in support of France against Germany, which is what it did in 1914. Though the possibility of a European war was the rationale for its creation, the size of the force was determined by the budget limitation of £28 million. Its strength was to be six infantry divisions with all their support units, one heavy cavalry division and two light cavalry brigades organised into three corps. This entailed merging some existing units and disbanding others entirely. Now that the army had a very specific purpose, all units surplus to that purpose were disbanded, including some artillery batteries, often with outdated weapons and overseas garrisons, from colonies like Egypt.

For the purposes of home defence, the army was to rely on its reservist and volunteer strength. The old difference between yeomanry units (men who had never served with the regular army) and militia (reservists who had) was abolished as all became part of the new Territorial Force. This was created in 1907 by the Territorial and Reservist Forces Act. The new force was different from the previous reserve units as it had its own support services (supply, medical, engineer and artillery units) and thereby could be used independently from the regular army. Its paper strength was 312,000 men, though, by September 1913, it had reached only a complement of 236,000. The army was still seen as a poor career option and there continued to be better paid jobs in industry.

The Officer Training Corps

After the Boer War, many cadet groups were set up in order to teach boys and young men the skills needed to become an army officer. Most of these were based at universities and public schools. Seeing an opportunity, Haldane combined these groups into the national Officer Training Corps (OTC). It was divided into two separate 'divisions', the upper division based at the universities and the lower division at schools.

The corps was organised from the war office. Individual groups were given grants by the government and Army Order 178 gave the corps a standard set of regulations. By 1914, 20,000 schoolboys and 5000 undergraduate students had enrolled in the OTC.

Imperial General Staff

The Boer War had shown how difficult it had been to co-ordinate the different parts of the war effort in South Africa. Local forces were often organised in an ad hoc fashion and fought their own war for their own aims. For example, colonial light horse units, such the Canadian Scouts, who fought for the British often took little notice of the British generals and did their own thing and rather baulked at traditional military discipline. Security in the Empire was very much an improvised matter at a local level and this was seen as a problem by the government in London.

To improve this situation, Haldane created the Imperial General Staff to oversee all strategic matters in the Empire. This meant that all local units (the South African army, the Australian and New Zealand army corps, the Indian army, etc.) would need to be reorganised along the lines of the new British expeditionary force. Though the Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS) would have some authority over imperial forces, local governments and local commanders had the right to veto. It was important for the British government to keep the more advanced colonies as full members of the Empire whilst maintaining their rights as self-governing dominions. In practice, during both world wars, dominion troops played a major part in the efforts of the British Empire.

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A Level Exam-Style question Section C

How far do you agree with the view that Haldane's reforms were the most dramatic reforms of the British army between 1790 and 1918? (20 marks)

Tip

You may wish to consider the idea of 'dramatic' and give this a definition. Then you can make a judgement based on this.

ACTIVITY
KNOWLEDGE CHECK

Cardwell's and Haldane's reforms

1 Why was Cardwell able to push his reforms at this time?

2 Of all the issues facing Cardwell, which do you think was the most important to tackle?

3 **a)** Why might Cardwell's reforms make the army a more attractive career option for young men?

b) What problems did Cardwell face in putting his reforms into practice?

4 What developments inspired Haldane's reforms? Fully explain your answer.

5 How far were Haldane's reforms a continuation of Cardwell's reforms?

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WHAT PROMPTED THE REFORMS TO THE ROYAL NAVY DURING THE YEARS 1790–1918?

By 1815, the Royal Navy was the most powerful maritime force in the world. The defeat and virtual emasculation of the French and Spanish navies at the battle of Trafalgar in 1805 had left Britain unrivalled. While other continental powers poured their efforts into their land armies, Britain maintained its focus on naval power, particularly as its overseas Empire expanded.

Reduction in the size of the navy after 1815

KEY TERM

Congress of Vienna
Diplomatic conference that decided on the peace settlement to end the French Wars in 1815.

As the **Congress of Vienna** in 1815 ushered in a new era of peace in Europe (or so they hoped), it was clear that armed forces from all of the former combatants would have to be reduced. The question for all governments was how much of their previous capacity would they require for this new situation. For the British, how this question related to the Royal Navy was of paramount importance.

The role of the Royal Navy after 1815 was to change dramatically. Firstly, there was no other navy of any significance left in the world to fight and so the protection of Britain itself was no longer a priority. What was important was to police the trade routes of the world and protect British commerce, ensuring the security of the growing British Empire. Also, Britain had abolished the slave trade in 1807 and so the Royal Navy was tasked with enforcing this ban, in both British and international waters.

Very quickly, most of the battleships that had fought Napoleon were de-commissioned. They were put to other uses such as prison hulks, guard ships or floating supply depots. By 1817, there were only 13 battleships still on active duty from a navy that during the wars could boast over 100 battleships. The main strength of the Royal Navy was in frigates, sloops and brigs, which could operate with impunity around the world. The battleship strength was left in European and Mediterranean waters as a reminder to the other powers of Britain's naval dominance.

The navy was reorganised into squadrons to ensure that the world was adequately covered. These were stationed in: North America; South America; the West Indies; the Western Mediterranean; the Eastern Mediterranean; West Africa; Cape Colony; and the East Indies. The presence of these squadrons in the world's hotspots was often enough to see British wishes prevail. The Royal Navy had become a seaborne police force and a means for political persuasion.

Examples of 'gunboat diplomacy' were plenty during the 19th century. Algiers (1816) and Acre (1840) were both bombarded by the navy as retaliation for acts thought to be against British interests. In 1827, to bring a more favourable balance of power in the Mediterranean, the Ottoman fleet was destroyed at the battle of Navarino. In other instances, simply the presence of the Royal Navy was enough to influence events. The Portuguese were persuaded of the wisdom of accepting Brazilian independence by the presence of a British fleet anchored in the Tagus. During the wars of liberation in Latin America, the mere presence of the Royal Navy prevented the Spanish and Portuguese ships from operating freely and thereby helped the revolutionaries.

EXTEND YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Gunboat diplomacy

Gunboat diplomacy is the use of naval forces anchored strategically to pose a veiled threat while discussion between diplomats are taking, or have taken, place. It is often enough for the side with the warships to win the argument and get their own way.

As the world's leading naval power in the 19th century, Britain used gunboat diplomacy as a means of persuasion in many cases to promote their ideas of free trade and democratic liberal regimes. For example, in 1850 a British subject, David Pacifico was attacked in Athens. A British fleet was soon on the scene with orders to bombard the city unless Pacifico was given compensation. Pacifico was very quickly compensated by the Greek government. On a larger scale, Britain used the naval threat during the Opium Wars against China to open up China's port to international trade.

The shift from sail to steam

Though the first steamships included in the Royal Navy were commissioned as early as the 1820s, the transition from sail to steam was a slow process. The deeply conservative sea lords were suspicious of the new power source, thinking it unreliable compared to the tradition methods of sail and oar. In 1828, a request was made for a new steamer to take the mail from Malta to the Ionian Islands. This request was dismissed in no uncertain terms by Lord Melville, the first Lord of the Admiralty who declared that 'the introduction of steam was calculated to strike a fatal blow to the naval supremacy of the Empire'.

It was Melville's successor, Sir James Graham, who oversaw the first operational steamships. *HMS Medea* was a small battleship propelled by a steam-driven paddle and *HMS Gladiator* was a larger battleship with the same means of propulsion. Upon leaving office, Sir James remarked that in the event of war a further ten steamers should be built. Britain was not at war and steamships were an expense that the peaceful government was not quite prepared to withstand.

It was also thought that steamships were only suitable for ancillary tasks such as moving supplies or as tugs for larger ships. Moreover, the steam-powered paddle that propelled the boat was thought to be vulnerable to enemy fire and being in the middle of the ship prevented it from firing a full broadside. It wouldn't be until the 1850s that the Royal Navy would begin a programme of building steam-powered battleships, using a screw propeller rather than a paddle with quick firing cannon, which fired out to a much greater range from a turret situated on deck.

It was the French who first began introducing steam engines and screw propellers to their frigates in the early 1840s. Worried that the French had stolen a march, the Royal Navy began adding steam to their frigates in 1845, but the transition to a fully steam-powered navy would take virtually until the end of the century. The navy's first steam-powered battleship, *HMS Agamemnon,* was built in 1852 but still had full sail rigging. Britain's first steam-powered battleship without rigging was *HMS Devastation* in 1873.

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SOURCE 5 From a report by Sir Baldwin Walker, surveyor of the British navy, prepared for the Board of the Admiralty in 1858, which was unpublished.

I beg to call their Lordships' attention to a subject of the highest importance, not only as regards the maintenance of the supremacy of the British Navy, but even the safety of the country; although, as I have frequently stated, it is not to the interest of Great Britain, possessing as she does, so large a navy, to adopt any important change in the construction of ships of war, which might have the effect of rendering necessary the introduction of a new class of very costly vessels, until such a course is forced upon her by the adoption by foreign powers of formidable ships of a novel character, requiring similar ships to cope with them, yet it then becomes a matter not only of expediency, but of absolute necessity. This time has arrived. France has now commenced to build frigates of great speed, with their sides protected by thick metal plates, and this renders it imperative for this country to do the same without a moment's delay. Having anticipated for some considerable time past that such a step as this would become necessary, the attention of my department has been directed to the preparation of designs, and the mode of construction of vessels of this novel character, and the design forwarded herewith, which was prepared several months ago, will show the general character and size of the vessels, which it is considered should be built as soon as possible to meet this emergency.

From wood to iron

The problem that ship designers had with steam engines was their weight and the weight of the coal that was needed to power them. Wooden hulls could only carry their equivalent weight and so wooden ships were limited to a small size of steam engine. In order to carry a powerful steam engine and have the range to patrol the Empire, steamships needed to have iron hulls. At first, there was a transition when ships were built with wooden hulls but with iron sheets on the outside. These were called ironclads. The French started building ironclads in 1858 and the Royal Navy responded with the first fully iron warship, *HMS Warrior,* launched in 1860.

Another reason to move to iron warships was the increasing size of the guns. Armstrong-Whitworth had designed a revolutionary new cannon in the late 1850s, which was much larger than earlier guns and therefore needed a larger ship to carry it. The *Warrior* was equipped with Armstrong-Whitworth 110 pounders. As iron warships got bigger so did the guns. They became so big that they needed to be mounted in on-deck turrets rather than below deck. This brought an end to the full broadside.

Another effect of the new guns was the extent of the damage that they could do to wooden hulled ships. The new high explosive **shells** could rip gaping holes in wooden ships which hitherto had only to withstand the impact of solid shot. The only defence against these new shells was to give the ships protective armour in the form of iron sheets attached to the outside of the hull.

KEY TERM

Shell
A metal case filled with explosive and fired by a gun, usually of larger calibre. It is designed to explode on impact causing extra damage as fragments of the shell case fly in all directions.

SOURCE 6 *HMS Warrior*, the first iron battleship used by the Royal Navy, launched in 1860. Artist unknown.



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ACTIVITY
KNOWLEDGE CHECK

Early reforms to the navy

1 What challenges faced the Royal Navy during the 19th century?

2 Why would certain admirals be reluctant to switch from sail to steam?

3 Read Source 5. Why do you think this report remained unpublished?

4 Study Source 6. How far does this prove that the admiralty listened to the advice in Source 5?

Graham's reforms, 1832

New ships and gunnery

In the years following the wars against the French, naval investment had been into the smaller types of vessel. The Royal Navy in 1830 was able to call on a handful of large battleships with 120 or 80 guns, but most battleships carried 74 or 60 guns. The largest number of vessels were frigates, which carried 46 guns, a number of 26-gun frigates and some smaller sloops and brigs. When Sir James Graham became First Lord of the Admiralty, he reversed this policy and began a systematic programme of refitting existed ships and building new battleships. He believed that the Royal Navy had been reduced too far and that Britain's position as a world power depended on it being stronger.

Graham also felt that the art of gunnery had been neglected since Trafalgar. He issued an order that all crews at sea or in harbour should perform an exercise that was related to gunnery in order to improve their skills and ensure that they would be ready for combat, should the need arise. Graham also set up a permanent school of gunnery and commissioned a ship, *HMS Excellent*, based at Portsmouth, for that particular purpose.

In charge of *HMS Excellent* was Captain Sir Thomas Hastings. He believed that what was needed was a much simpler and standardised system for naval gunnery rather than seamen on different ships having a slightly different way of operating their guns. This way, both serving seamen and those in the naval reserve could be transferred to any ship of the line and immediately be effective. Clear routines of loading and firing a single round were encouraged rather than **double and triple shotting**.

KEY TERM

Double and triple shotting
The practice of putting more than one projectile in the cannon. This reduced the velocity of the shot when the cannon was fired and it was felt by those on the naval board that the repeated rapid firing of a single projectile was a more effective practice.

Promotion

The end of the French Wars and a reduction in the number of vessels meant that there were a large number of officers and not enough ships for them to serve in. The naval list was a list of captains who were still on active service with the navy and, by 1830, it had over 800 names on it. The First Sea Lord would, from time to time, promote worthy young officers, who would become captains and join the bottom of the naval list. Captains without a ship to command were put on half pay. It was perfectly possible for some captains to move up to the rank of admiral and retire without having been to sea in the meantime.

What made matters worse and caused much discontent within the service was the promotion of men of rank and influence over the heads of experienced serving officers. Moreover, it was not a clear-cut system by which captains on the list would obtain their commands. Captains who had been waiting for some time for a ship to become available could find themselves superseded by a younger captain who had influence in high places.

To reduce this pressure on the highest ranks, Graham introduced a regulation that set out a minimum amount of service an officer had to have in order to move up the ranks. Before being considered for the rank of commander, an officer must have had two years' experience at sea as a lieutenant. This did not solve the problem of the long naval list or the unfairness of patronage, but it did ensure a certain amount of professional experience for those becoming commanders and captains.

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Supply

One of Graham's most important reforms was the abolition of the Naval Office and Victualing Board and the placing of these civil departments under the control of the navy. Before Graham, the supply and overall administration of the Royal Navy had been undertaken by government departments, which were not part of the navy. This had meant that, in some instances, the readying of ships for active service could be a slow and cumbersome affair.

Under the revised system, five principal officers would be in charge of a certain area. These were: surveyor of the navy; accountant-general of the navy; storekeeper-general of the navy, controller of the victualing; and medical director-general. These were to be overseen by a member of the Board of the Admiralty, as selected by the First Lord of the Admiralty.

One of the clear advantages of this new system was that all the principal officers worked at the admiralty and so communication was much quicker. Personal conversations could take the place of endless written correspondence and the internal bickering of rival government departments, which often led to procrastination, could be avoided.

In addition to these administrative changes in Whitehall, Graham extended the widening of Royal Navy control to the dockyards and victualing yards. The rank of civil commissioner was abolished to be replaced by serving naval officers. An admiral was appointed to oversee the biggest yards at Plymouth and Portsmouth with captains appointed to the others. Having a naval officer of experience in charge of the yards gave rise to much greater efficiency in servicing and resupplying ships.

A Level Exam-Style Question Section C

To what extent do you agree that Graham's reforms illustrate all the pressing issues affecting the Royal Navy during the period 1790 to 1918? (20 marks)

Tip

Make it clear what the pressing issues were, how they changed and the extent to which Graham's reforms addressed them.

Fisher's reforms at the admiralty, 1904–10

The changing role of the navy

During the 19th century, the population of Great Britain and Ireland grew from 10 million to over 40 million. At the same time, growth in the agricultural sector did not keep pace with the growth in population. The main employment for people in Britain was no longer farming but manufacturing. What this meant was that Britain was no longer self-sufficient in food and had to rely on imported food to feed itself.

In 1846, parliament repealed the Corn Laws. This meant that British wheat farmers were no longer protected against cheap foreign imports. From this time, the amount of imported foodstuff grew rapidly. This was not a problem, as Britain was the manufacturing powerhouse of the world and could more than pay for the food imports. The problem with the reliance on food imports was not economic but strategic.

It had long been the role of the Royal Navy to protect Britain from seaborne invasion. Since the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805, the dominance of the Royal Navy had meant that this had not been likely but the possibility continued to inform naval strategic planning. Britain's reliance on food imports changed all this. In a major war, an invasion was no longer the greatest threat. A naval **blockade** could stop the food getting through from abroad. This would mean that Britain would starve and be forced to surrender. Preventing a blockade and keeping the country supplied had become the Royal Navy's chief concern.

KEY TERM

Blockade
Preventing material being moved into a defined area, usually by force. During the First World War, Britain successfully blockaded Germany and denied it access to many important items and raw materials.

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The two power standard

In 1889, the Naval Defence Act formally adopted the two power standard (an unofficial aspiration of naval strategists since 1770), a principle to which the Royal Navy had to work. The two power standard stated that, at any time, Britain's naval strength should be at least equal to its two biggest rivals. Throughout the 19th century, this aim was attainable as the continental powers such as France, Germany and Russia were far more concerned with the state of their armies rather than their navies, and the USA was not developed enough to pursue an aggressive foreign policy.

As the 20th century began, Germany, only unified in 1871, posed a new threat to British naval supremacy. The German Kaiser was a keen sailor and wanted a fleet to match that of Britain's. Germany had a larger population and more industrial capacity. As they were almost starting from scratch, all the ships that they intended to build would be modern ones. Many of the vessels used by the Royal Navy were old and no longer fit for purpose.

German naval expansion was given the go-ahead by the German government in 1898. It was estimated by the Royal Navy that, by 1906, the German Imperial Navy would be the second largest in the world. The Germans themselves, notably the secretary of state for the German navy, Admiral Von Tirpitz, estimated that if the German fleet was two-thirds the size of the Royal Navy then it would beat them. The German navy could concentrate its force in German waters and achieve local superiority, whereas the Royal Navy needed to maintain a presence all over the world. This led to a race between the two powers to build warships, which has been cited by historians as one of the causes of the First World War.

EXTEND YOUR KNOWLEDGE

The Influence of Seapower Upon History: 1660 to 1783 by Captain Alfred T. Mahan

This was a book published in 1890 by the American naval officer and academic Alfred Mahan. It was read by naval strategists all over the world and had a great influence on strategic thinking in the run up to the First World War.

The book explains how all great empires needed to be a major power on the seas. Mahan cites examples such as how the Roman defeat of Carthage had started with a turnaround in fortunes in the naval war or how Portugal and Spain had lost their empires due to a critical weakening in their naval power. The message could not be clearer: if you want to become a world power, get a strong navy.

Kaiser Wilhelm in Germany read the book repeatedly. Moreover, it was not only the Germans. The Japanese took its lessons on board and were soon challenging the Russians in East Asia.

This book did not cause the naval race of the early 20th century, but it gave it intellectual credibility and was used by naval strategists to justify to governments a more aggressive programme of shipbuilding.

Jackie Fisher

Fisher was a career naval officer, whose early career included captaining the modern battleship *HMS Inflexible* before he was transferred to the naval gunnery school at Portsmouth, *HMS Excellent*. As superintendent of Portsmouth between 1892 and 1894, Fisher supervised the construction of the latest warships and as Third Sea Lord, he was responsible for the building of the first modern destroyers in the late 1890s.

SOURCE 7 From Admiral Sir Cyprian Bridge, 'Fifty Years Architectural Expression of Tactical Ideas', published in 1911. Admiral Bridge had served as a fleet commander in Australia and the Far East before retiring in 1904.

It was taken for granted that we could not stop our enemy from coming to any point at which he wished to arrive, and that all we could do was to get behind our fortifications and under their shelter fight him as well we could. That this would mean abandoning the sea to an opponent with its prodigious consequences seems not to have been understood. The waters in which our fleets were wont to anchor were studded with armour-clad forts... Standing on the defensive was, as it were, in the air, and the prevailing sentiment governed the conception of what a man-of-war ought to be. If she could be made so, she was to be impenetrable by an enemy's projectiles. Somebody heard, or dreamt that he had heard, the Navy crying to the naval architect; 'for God's sake keep out the shells!' It was not seen that there was a reasonably effectual method of keeping an enemy's shells from entering any part of the ship, unarmoured or armoured, viz. by overwhelming him with the fire of your own guns... So, in individual ships, armour was given greater powers of resistance, while guns decreased in number.

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Fisher was fascinated by technology and saw that new innovation in weapons, ship design and aviation would transform the nature of naval warfare. He also saw that Britain needed to be at the forefront of this leap forward. Detesting war, he believed that the best way to keep the peace of the world was for the Royal Navy to be in an unchallengeable position, and this meant new designs and a new programme of building.

In the late 1890s and early 1900s, Fisher was given an active command, that of commanding officer of the Mediterranean Fleet. He was recalled in 1902 and made Second Sea Lord and then First Sea Lord in 1904. He retired in 1910, but was recalled in 1914 and served again as First Sea Lord until 1915.

His major achievement as Second Sea Lord was a reform of officer training. It had been traditional for the officer class to be divided into two groups: engineers or commanders. Officers who were designated for command looked down on engineer officers, a state which caused some friction within the service. Fisher insisted that these officers should be educated together until they were 22 years old. This meant that officer cadets would all have to study history, navigation and seamanship, which was previously only studied by future commanding officers, along with mathematics, engineering and science, which had previously only been studied by engineers.

During his time at the admiralty, Fisher brought in officers whose technical expertise he valued. He made gunnery expert John Jellicoe, director of naval ordnance, and Reginald Bacon, inspecting captain of submarines. Henry Oliver was asked by Fisher to form a school of navigation and the post of inspector of target practice was created for Percy Scott, a gunnery expert from *HMS Excellent*, whose invention of new rangefinders increased the effective distance of naval gunnery to over five miles.

Balancing the budget

Fisher became First Sea Lord at a time when the government wanted to see cuts to defence spending. Boldly, Fisher sold off 90 ships and put a further 64 in reserve. He said that these old vessels were 'too weak to fight and too slow to run away'. The crew from these ships would be free to be transferred to some of the new ships being built or would serve in the reserve. Fisher accepted that the re-equipping of the navy might see it fall behind the two power standard.

Fisher also created the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve in order to augment the Royal Navy Reserve. This meant that Britain had a large reserve to call on in times of war and the ships placed in reserve could soon be made ready for war. The Royal Fleet Auxiliary was also created with the task of supplying the fighting ships with coal and supplies.

The fleets were also reorganised under Fisher. The strength of the Mediterranean Fleet was reduced from 18 battleships to 12 and the five battleships stationed near China were recalled to Britain. The South Atlantic Fleet was abolished. The Channel Fleet was moved to Gibraltar and renamed the Atlantic Fleet and the Home Fleet became the new Channel Fleet. This was backed-up by the Reserve Fleet, which was stationed in the Thames. All the newest ships were assigned to the Channel Fleet or the Atlantic Fleet. This reorganisation saved some money but it also revealed the strategic priority for the Royal Navy – keeping Germany in check.

The effect of the Russo-Japanese War

In 1904 and 1905, the Japanese challenged the might of the Russians in the Far East and won. The naval encounters of this war sent a clear message to naval strategists all over the world. It was that future naval encounters would be won by long range gunnery and therefore it was paramount to have the biggest guns and more of them.

Fisher had already begun a programme of new building. He believed that the way to ensure naval supremacy was with submarines. He believed that submarines would render the battleship obsolete. 'What is the use of battleships as we have hitherto known them?' he asked. 'NONE! Their one and only function – that of ultimate security of defence – is gone – lost!' The building programme also included battlecruisers, often as large as battleships and as heavily armoured but much faster. Fisher, however, understood that battlecruisers alone would not be the answer to Britain's security needs.

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HMS Dreadnought

HMS Dreadnought was the first in a new breed of modern battleship. Fully loaded, it displaced over 20,000 tons, which made it over 2000 tons heavier than its closest rival. Older models had been armed with a mixture of large and medium guns, but *HMS Dreadnought* was armed with ten 12-inch guns, which could fire armour piercing shells to a range of 18,000 yards. What made the ship particularly special was that it was the first battleship to be powered by steam turbines, which gave a top speed of 21.6 knots, far quicker than any other large ship in the world.

KEY TERM

Deflection shooting
Aiming at a place somewhere ahead of a moving target. This is so that by the time the projectile arrives, the target will have moved to meet it.

Another key aspect of *HMS Dreadnought's* design was the technical innovations. It had new devices for calculating gunnery that took into account the speed and direction of the target. This enabled the gunnery officer on board to make accurate predictions for **deflection shooting**. Stations were created for a large number of observers, all of whom would send continuous information to the bridge. Once launched in 1906, *HMS Dreadnought* made every other warship in the world obsolete.

SOURCE 8

From an article about the Navy League Annual, published in *The Spectator*, 12 November 1910. The Navy League was a pressure group that had the aim of pressuring the government to increase or maintain spending on the navy. *The Spectator* is a magazine that has articles on current affairs and is still being published today.

> [It is] conveniently arranged, brought up to date, and contained in a handsome and well-illustrated volume, which has grown in size from year to year without increase in price. Already the Annual has established itself as one of the best books of reference on naval subjects, and its circulation should be large. Although Mr. Burgoyne declares himself to be an amateur, and makes no claim to technical training, he has for many years past devoted close attention to the study of naval matters at home and abroad. His book on Submarines, published some years ago, was a valuable compilation of material which had been widely scattered in numerous publications, and it contained many items of information not previously available. In this Annual Mr. Burgoyne shows the same qualities as in his earlier work,—untiring industry in the collection of facts, intelligence in their tabulation and analysis, a popular style of writing, shrewd common-sense, and a desire for fairness which cannot fail to impress readers, even when they differ from his conclusions. Of the three hundred pages in the volume, the editor contributes, or is responsible for, two-thirds; but Part IL contains ten papers by other writers, of whom all but two write under their own names. These papers are naturally of unequal merit and authority; they are all interesting and brief. Admiral Sir S. Eardley-Wilmot writes on 'Manning the Navy', Commander Crutchley on 'The Mercantile Marine and Imperial Defence', Mr. Fiennes on 'Great Britain and the Smaller Powers'; other authors deal with various features of the naval problems of the day. 'The Future of the Russian Fleet' is discussed by M. Portugaloff, vice-president of the Russian Navy League, who declares its present position to be 'heart-breaking,' and indicates that real progress in its reconstruction can only be secured by improved administrative and financial methods. He advocates the development of torpedo craft for coast defence, and regards as futile the attempt 'to create active battle squadrons with the means in hand.' It is an open secret that the present naval weakness of Russia is a serious factor in the relative standing of the Dual and Triple Alliances. France has wakened up under the administration of the present Minister of Marine, but in her case also the financial provision made for naval purposes is small as compared with that embodied in German Naval Laws. The fresh activity in naval construction displayed by Austria promises to make the relative situation even worse. These points are not over-looked in France, but as yet there has been no practical movement to re-establish the naval standing of the Republic. Parliamentary discussion of the subject is now pending.

The naval arms race

The effect of the launch of *HMS Dreadnought* was felt all over the world. At once, other navies began to react. In 1908, the Germans began the construction of nine dreadnoughts. Britain countered by increasing the rate that they built the new battleships. By 1914, Germany would have 17 dreadnoughts to Britain's 29, with the French having also completed ten, the Russians four and the Austrians three.

The Liberal government of the time was not enthusiastic about the naval arms race, but it felt that it had no choice but to build more and bigger ships. The Orion class of super-dreadnought displaced 22,000 tons and was armed with 13.5-inch guns. In 1912, a new order for a Queen Elizabeth class battleship was placed; a vessel that displaced 27,000 and was armed with 15-inch guns. The Navy League was a prominent pressure group that lobbied the government to maintain naval spending, which enjoyed wide public support. In the end, it was the Germans who blinked first. Seeing that their primary aim was the defeat of France on land, they stopped their dreadnought programme and focused more of their resources on the army.

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ACTIVITY
KNOWLEDGE CHECK

Graham's and Fisher's reforms

1 What do you think Graham was aiming to do with his reforms in 1832?

2 What factors caused Jackie Fisher to push through his reforms?

3 Read Source 7.

a) To which issue is Admiral Bridge referring?

b) What is his opinion on this particular issue?

c) How far does the development of British battleships indicate that this opinion was listened to?

4 Read Source 8. To what extent does this source reveal the aims of the Navy League?

EXTRACT 2 From Barbara Tuchman, *The Guns of August* (1962).

In the vehement opinion of [Admiral] Sir John Fisher, British action ought to be predominantly naval. He doubted the military capacity of the French, expected the Germans to beat them on land, and saw no purpose in ferrying the British Army over to be included in that defeat... Its plan to fight in France was, in Fisher's opinion, 'suicidal idiocy', the War Office was remarkable for its ignorance of war, and the Army should be administered as 'an annex to the Navy.

EXTRACT 3 From Norman Davies, *Europe: A History* (1996).

Military strategy and tactics, as always, were based on the lessons of recent wars. The Franco-Prussian War and the Boer War had proved the vulnerability of infantry attack. The solution was thought to lie in three areas – in the use of massed artillery as the primary offensive arm against battlefield positions, in the use of railways for the rapid deployment of attacking forces, and in the use of cavalry for encirclement and pursuit. On the Eastern Front these assumptions did not prove ineffective. But in the West, where fortified trench-lines came into being, it took thousands of abortive operations before the superiority of the concrete blockhouse over the high-explosive shell was even suspected. Despite the manifest advantages of defence over attack, generals were slow to revise their assumptions.

EXTRACT 4 From David Stevenson, *1914–1918: A History of the First Word War* (2004).

European leaders were familiar with the notion that military preparations could deter aggression: for many years after 1870 the Germans believed their army strong enough to do so. It was not yet a commonplace, however, that hostilities would be so destructive that no one would win... All the same, most European armies concluded from their observations of the Russo-Japanese War that infantry could capture trenches protected by barbed wire and machine guns, provided their morale was resilient. General staffs understood that a European war would be extremely bloody and unlikely to be short, but they concealed their misgivings from their political masters.

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THINKING HISTORICALLY Change (8a, b & c) (II)

Judgments about change

If two professionals were asked to track a patient's health over time, one might approach this task by measuring heart rate, weight and cholesterol, while the other professional might assess the patient's mental well-being, relationships and ability to achieve their goals. Both are valid approaches, but result in different reports. What is true in this medical case is true in historical cases. Measuring change in something requires: (a) a concept of what is being assessed (e.g. 'What is "'health"?', 'What is an "economy"?'); (b) judgements about how this should be measured; and (c) judgements about what denotes significant change from temporary and insignificant fluctuations.

Historians have differed in their accounts and judgements of the factors shaping events leading up to the First World War in 1914, and the impact of changes in technology and diplomatic alignments on those events.

Read Extracts 2, 3 and 4 about the outbreak of war and then answer the questions below.

1 Do all three accounts agree that military and political authorities were aware of changes affecting future warfare?

2 Do all three accounts agree in the chronology of change? In other words, do they see change happening at the same time and at the same pace?

3 Do all three accounts agree in characterising change in military thinking as follows?

a) Rapid.

b) Slow.

c) Non-existent?

4 Do the historians concur in their views of how attitudes to war were changed (for example, in attitudes towards the role of the army)?

5 Generalising from these examples, to what extent do historians' judgements about change depend upon what historians decide to look at and how they decide to measure change?

WHY WERE THERE CHANGES TO THE WAYS IN WHICH MEN WERE RECRUITED INTO THE ARMED SERVICES?

Recruitment during the wars against the French, 1793–1815

The wars against France put a massive strain on the manpower resources of Britain. Ships of the Royal Navy needed to be crewed and battalions in the field needed keeping up to strength. For political reasons, it was important that Britain continued to fight with volunteer forces rather than rely on conscripted men like the continental powers were forced to do. This was mainly because voters would not support a government that would introduce **conscription**. As a result of the shortages, dubious methods were used, some of which were illegal and some of which came mightily close.

KEY TERM

Conscription
When a government forces men to join the armed forces, usually during times of war.

The press gang

The 'press' was a colloquial term for the practice of impressment used by the navy that entailed forcing someone to join a ship as a member of the crew. It was common practice, particularly during times of war, to augment the manpower of the navy with other sailors, who could legally be 'pressed' into service. Any seafarer could be taken at any time and assigned to a warship. Landsmen could also be pressed in desperate times, though captains naturally preferred experienced seamen.

The romantic notion of gangs roaming the streets late at night hitting drunkards over the head and dragging them off to sea was the exception rather than the rule. Gangs would patrol coastal areas and look out for seafarers. There were tell-tale signs that a man had been to sea, particularly the way he walked, bow legged with a rolling gait, and the hard leathery skin on his tanned and weather-beaten face. Once approached by the press gang, the man would know that the game was up and go peacefully.

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Most of the men pressed for service in the Royal Navy were taken from merchant ships at sea. This was legal as long as the navy captain replaced the man taken, either immediately or when they arrived in port. Often, however, the captain would choose the best and most experienced sailor from the merchantman and only replace him with a landsman or a poor quality sailor. Merchant captains, wise to the navy's practices, would sometimes drop off their best crew members in Ireland before approaching home waters or even construct elaborate hiding places for their most prized crewmen.

During the wars against France, the authorities augmented the press gangs with a quota system. This forced each county to provide a set number of volunteers based on the size of the county and number of seaports. If the counties could not find enough men to fill their quota, they offered criminals the possibility of serving out their sentences in the navy. These men were often poor physical specimens and too many in one crew would reduce the warship's efficiency.

The recruiting sergeant

In every army regiment, there was a recruiting sergeant. Usually an old hand who was approaching the time when he would be physically unfit for active service, but whose eloquence and experience was thought to be worth using to persuade men to join the regiment. Prestigious regiments, like the Guards or the Household Cavalry, had little difficulty filling their ranks, but for the less-fashionable units it was a struggle to maintain a constant supply of recruits to fill the ranks.

Unlike the navy, there was no lawful way that a man could be pressed into the army. If recruiting a free man, the recruiting sergeant would have to use all manner of persuasion, including plying the potential recruit with alcohol in order to get him to agree to join up and physically take the **king's shilling**. Tall tales of faraway places and great adventures would entice naive and disaffected young men, as would the promise of well-paid steady employment – recruiting sergeants would often reveal the total pay for a private without mentioning that 'stoppages' would reduce that pay by almost 80 percent.

Criminal courts were often a good source of new recruits, as recruiting sergeants would offer to pay men's fines if they joined up. That fine would then be deducted from the recruit's pay and so soldiers who were criminals might not get paid for years. Judges were happy to conspire with recruiting sergeants as it removed the criminal from the local area. Some men were even saved from the gallows on the proviso that they joined the army. Alcoholics were also a group willing to serve as part of the daily ration was rum or gin.

KEY TERM

King's shilling
A symbolic coin, the taking of which was a legally binding indication that a man had volunteered to serve in the army.

SOURCE 9 Opening scene from *The Recruiting Serjeant*, a short comic opera by Charles Dibdin and Isaac Bickerstaff, 1788. Short operettas of this type would often comment on issues that were deemed to be important at the time.

Recruiting Serjeant: All gallant lads, who know no fears,
To the drum head repair;
To serve the king for volunteers,
Speak you, my boys, that dare.
Come, who'll be a grenadier?
The listing money down,
Is three guineas and a crown,
To be spent in punch and beer.
Countryman: Adds Flesh! I'll go with him.
Mother: Oh no!
Wife: Dear Joe.
Countryman: Adds Flesh! I'll go with him.
Actor 2: Oh no!
Countryman: Adds flesh, but I will
So hold your tongue still
Nor mother, nor wife
Through they strive of their life,
Shall baulk at my fancy to be so.
Recruiting Serjeant: Come beat away a royal march.
Rub, rub, rub a-dub;
Rub, rub, rub a-dub;
Of no poltroons, I come in search
Who cowardly sneak,
When the tongues of war speak:
But of nobles souls, who death dare stand
Against the foes of old England

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The end of impressment

The problem of impressment was that it fleshed out the armed forces with unwilling men who served under duress. The successes of the French Revolutionary armies had shown Europe that enthusiasm for the cause led to high morale and good performance. Ideally, Britain wanted professional armed services filled with volunteers who genuinely wanted to serve. Moreover, the authorities felt that an army of pressed men needed to be kept under control by punishment. Increasingly throughout the 19th century, public sensibilities became less and less willing to accept flogging or branding, as they were seen as barbaric, and political pressure became greater for them to be abolished.

Though impressment into the navy remained legal until the 20th century, the practice was not continued after 1815. In the years after the end of the wars with the French, the problem was too many seamen, not too few; battleships were decommissioned, their crews were released for other service, only officers were retained and those not on active duty were put on half pay. Ordinary seamen who were not needed were simply dismissed. As the century progressed, a continued stream of recruits filled the required places and there was no need to force men to join the navy.

There were, perhaps, several reasons for the improvement in the recruiting situation. Firstly, the Royal Navy was seen as the most successful branch of the British armed forces. The popular idea that Britain ruled the waves made the navy an attractive proposition for a young man wishing to joined the armed forces. Also, the terms and conditions were better in the navy than in the army. Pay was higher and seamen were given fixed terms of service and a pension. Expanding trade meant a much larger merchant navy, which made a larger pool of sailors who might be willing to transfer to the Royal Navy.

The single issue that faced the authorities was that a large-scale war would necessitate the rapid expansion of the navy. To provide for this eventuality, the Royal Naval Reserve was created in 1859. This was manned by existing merchant seamen and fishermen, who were given gunnery training for one month every year. In 1862, officers from the merchant navy were also included. In the time of war, the reserve could be drafted into the Royal Navy.

Impressment into the army was actually illegal after 1780, though forms of dubious recruitment were used throughout the wars against the French. After 1815, the authorities were so much on the side of the recruit and public opinion so much against the forcing of men to join the army that all volunteers had to be willing.

Recruiting volunteers

Maintaining the armed forces at full complement after 1815 purely on the basis that men had to volunteer was no problem for the navy, but a perennial problem for the army. They both, however, used much the same methods of encouragement.

Specialist recruiters

The recruiting sergeant still existed and still toured the country, but was limited to the geographical area that they regiments covered. Recruiters in towns had a much easier task than those in the countryside and, towards the end of the 19th century, recruiters would often have their own office, open to the public, at the regimental headquarters. For the navy, press gangs were replaced by specialist recruiting officers. They would also use the power of persuasion to encourage men to join up.

The print media

As the literacy rate increased, printed material became a much better way for the armed forces to reach people. Newspaper adverts would be read by hundreds of thousands of people and the regiment could select which publication would be best suited to reaching their target audience. Army regiments, for example, would use the local press far more than the national press as they would be targeting an audience in their vicinity.

Posters had been used during the wars against the French, though their usage increased as the century went on. Technology meant that it was cheaper to produce colour posters and add attractive images. By the First World War, hundreds of different recruitment posters had been designed and used.

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SOURCE 10 Victorian recruitment poster for the Royal Munster Fusiliers produced in 1890.

ROYAL MUNSTER FUSILIERS.

101st. (1652) 104th.

The CORK, LIMERICK, KERRY, and CLARE REGIMENT.

YOUNG MEN, between the ages of 18 and 25 years, wanted for this distinguished Regiment, which took an active part in establishing our Indian Empire.

FORT WILLIAM
FORT BUDGE BUDGE
CALCUTTA
CHITPORE
CHANDERNAGORE
FORT KUTWAH
SEERPORE
BHEERPORE
SUAN
MANJEE
KUTWAH
MOORSHEDABAD
GHERRIAH
OODWAH NULLAH
MONGHEER
PATNA



ARNEE
CUDDALORE
CHUNAR
KULPEE
WANDIWASH
PORTO NOVO
POLLILORE
VERACUNDALOOR
VELLORE
BUDDLE KA-SERAI
NUJUFFGHUR
NARNOUL
GUNGEREE
PUTIALLEE
MYNPOORIE
UMBEYLA

RECRUITING FOR THE ROYAL MUNSTER FUSILIERS ON ST. PATRICK'S DAY.

Good prospects of Promotion for intelligent and well-conducted men. Height, 5-ft. 4-in. and upwards. Chest Measurement, 33-in. and upwards. Weight, 115-lbs. and upwards.

Every recruit receives Clothing, Kit, Rations of Bread and Meat, Lodging, Bedding, Fuel and Light, Medical Attendance, and Education Free, in addition to pay.

The use of a Library and Recreation Room, Gymnasium, and opportunities to take part in outdoor games (Cricket, Football, &c.) are among the advantages enjoyed by soldiers.

For full particulars as to Pay, Pension, Service, Messing, Duties, Privileges, &c., please see handbills, which can be had from the Recruiting Officer or Recruiters at Cork, Mallow, Kinsale, Strand Barracks Limerick, Tralee, or Ennis; or from Pensioner Recruiter

INFORMATION REGARDING THE ARMY OR MILITIA CAN ALSO BE OBTAINED AT ANY POST OFFICE.

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN.

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY J. J. KELLNER & CO., 33, KING WILLIAM STREET, AND 139, UPPER THAMES STREET, LONDON, E.C.

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Terms and conditions

Many of the reforms to the armed forces during the period 1790 to 1918 were designed to encourage men to join up. The abolition of punishment, the linking of regiments to a local area, the end of general service and a pension after 21 years' service (20 in the Royal Navy) all aimed to make an army or navy career a more attractive proposition. The introduction of medals for service and valour showed a change in the view of servicemen by the authorities and recognition for their contribution.

The general view of a man in uniform also changed. Soldiers and sailors became seen as respectable and servicemen were proud to wear their uniforms in public. They had a direct association with the growth of the British Empire and were the physical symbol of an increased feeling of national pride. Music hall songs from the period, such as 'All the Nice Girls Love A Sailor' or 'Soldiers of the Queen' also encouraged and embodied this change.

Recruitment and the economy

Perhaps the most effective recruiter into the armed forces over the centuries has been poverty. The 19th century enjoyed the most unprecedented economic boom in Britain's history and this put pressure on the army to improve recruiting techniques. At different times, economic downturns made it easier to recruit, but it made politicians uncomfortable that the supply of soldiers was dictated largely by economic factors.

It also meant that certain areas struggled perennially, whereas others enjoyed a steady stream of recruits. Poverty in Ireland meant that the Irish regiments were almost always up to strength, as were those based in cities. Regiments from rural areas found that their recruiting pool was dwindling as more and more families moved from the countryside to the cities to find work in factories.

SOURCE 11 From the Annual Report of the Inspector General of Recruiting for 1891 quoted in French, D. *Military Identities*, published in 2005. The change from a mainly rural to a mainly urban population caused problems for some of the rural regiments as their potential pool of recruits became relatively smaller.

> In almost every rural district in the British Isles the population has decreased in the last decade; whilst in the towns in which any manufacture on a large scale has been established the numbers of the inhabitants have increased to an astonishing extent. To such a degree has this depopulation of rural districts taken place, in some regimental recruiting areas, that it has become impossible for them to furnish from their own resources the requisite number of recruits.

Recruitment and the First World War

The scale of the First World War changed the nature of recruitment. It was clear from the onset that the professional British Expeditionary Force would not have the necessary manpower to make a significant contribution, and so a massive recruitment drive was undertaken in the last months of 1914 and the first few months of 1915. Soon the British and Commonwealth forces numbered millions compared to the professional force of just over 100,000. The authorities used every conceivable tactic to galvanise public support in order to swell the ranks.

As part of an initiative in September 1914, each town was asked to provide a battalion of men for the war effort. These became known as the 'Pals' battalions. It became a matter of civic pride and the larger cities raised several battalions, while some smaller towns were very proud to provide men for the struggle. Schools also raised battalions of former pupils and some sports raised their own battalions made up entirely of sportsmen.

The Pals battalions played an important role in the summer offensive in 1916, which became known as the Battle of the Somme. Some Pals battalions were in the thick of the fighting and suffered dreadfully. The 11th Battalion East Lancashire Regiment (Accrington Pals) fought at Serre and suffered fearfully. Over 80 percent of the battalion was either killed or wounded. Seeing that the effect on a local area of such casualties could be devastating, the authorities ended the use of Pals battalions. The government had already accepted that conscription would be the only way to fill the army's need for new recruits.

The introduction of conscription, 1916

Recruitment problems in 1915/16

As the First World War dragged on, the French army became increasingly unable to match the Germans for numbers of new recruits. Stalemate in the east, followed by the Russian surrender, released more and more German troops for service on the Western Front. The only way for the Allies to counter this was for Britain to deploy more men into France and Belgium. It was felt, by the generals and the government, that a British and Commonwealth force of 70 divisions was needed to stop the Germans enjoying an overall advantage.

In September 1915, Lord Derby was placed in charge of a scheme to encourage men to enlist. Every man aged 18-41 was asked to promise to join up if they were needed. In the end, only half of single men and 40 percent of married men were willing to do so. One of the conditions of the scheme was that single men would be called before married men, and so there was a flurry of weddings in the first months of 1916. Without the numbers that the government had hoped for, they felt there was only one option left, which was **conscription**.

Though there was much opposition to the principle of conscription, most MPs felt that circumstances warranted it. The Military Service Act was passed with a vote of 403 to 105 on 29 January 1916, which allowed for the calling up of single men. In May, this was extended to married men by the Second Military Act.

SOURCE 12 Part of the Military Service Act, January 1916. This Act introduced conscription for the first time in British history.

> Certificates of exemption.
>
> 2.—(1) An application may be made at any time before the appointed date to the Local Tribunal established under this Act by or in respect of any man for the issue to him of a certificate of exemption from the provisions of this Act—
>
> (a) on the ground that it is expedient in the national interests that he should, instead of being employed in military service, be engaged in other work in which he is habitually engaged or in which he wishes to be engaged or, if he is being educated or trained for any work, that he should continue to be so educated or trained; or
>
> (b) on the ground that serious hardship would ensue, if the man were called up for Army Service, owing to his exceptional financial or business obligations or domestic position; or
>
> (c) on the ground of in health or infirmity; or
>
> (d) on the ground of a conscientious objection to the undertaking of combatant service;
>
> and the Local Tribunal, if they consider the grounds of the application established, shall grant such a certificate.
>
> The Local Tribunal may allow all application to be made after the appointed date in any case in which it is shown to their satisfaction that the failure to make the application within the required time has arisen owing to the absence of the applicant abroad, or owing to any other cause which appears to the tribunal to afford a reasonable ground for allowing the application to be so made.

Unendorsed Proofs For Planning Purposes Only

Conscription did not produce the vast numbers the government had hoped for, but did keep up a steady stream of fresh recruits. Within months, there were 750,000 applications for exemption, most of which were upheld by the authorities. Men in key industries such as munitions, the mining sector, teachers and clergymen were all exempted. Also, conscription was not enforced in Ireland due to unrest and the threat of revolution. Despite this, 1.1 million men were drafted into the armed forces in the first year. By the end of the war, 2.5 million men had been called up through conscription.

A Level Exam-Style Question Section C

How far do you agree with the opinion that there was more continuity than change in the way that servicemen were recruited between 1790 and 1918? (20 marks)

Tip

Think about the global themes for recruitment over the period and see how significant the changes were. You should then be able to make a judgement about the question.

ACTIVITY
KNOWLEDGE CHECK

Recruitment to the armed services

1 Why do you think the authorities stopped forcing people to join the armed forces as the 19th century wore on?

2 What different methods did the authorities use to persuade men to join the armed forces?

3 Why did the government resort to conscription in 1916?

4 Read Source 12. Why do you think the government had to make provision for exemptions to conscription?

ACTIVITY
SUMMARY

Changes in organising the military

1 a) Draw two large timelines on a single piece of A3 paper, one for army reform and one for naval reform. Leave a large space in between them.

b) Then connect individual moments from one line to the other. Annotate the connection with an explanation of similarity or difference between the reforms to the two services.

2 Make a list of the top five changes to the armed forces from the period 1790 to 1918. Give reasons for your choices.

3 'The armed services were a far better prospect in 1913 than in 1813.' How far do you agree with this statement?

WIDER READING

Hawes, J. *Englanders and Huns*, Simon and Schuster (2014)

Knight, R. *Britain Against Napoleon: The Organization of Victory, 1793–1815*, Allen Lane (2013)

Macmillan, M. *The War That Ended Peace: How Europe abandoned peace for the First World War*, Profile Books (2013)

Rees, R. and Stewart, G. *The Experience of Warfare in Britain 1854–1929*, Pearson (2008)

Stevenson, D. *Armaments and the coming of war: Europe, 1904-1914*, Oxford University Press (1996)

Thompson, J. *The War at Sea 1914–1918*, Imperial War Museum /Sidgwick & Jackson (2005)

Trustram, M. *Women of the Regiment: Marriage and the Victorian Army*, Cambridge University Press (2008)

Wilson, B. *Empire of the Deep: The Rise and Fall of the British Navy*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson (2013)

http://www.army.mod.uk/structure/structure.aspx

www.kingsownmuseum.plus.com/haldane.htm

cwrs.russianwar.co.uk/cwrs-crimtexts-mcneill-tulloch-mntrept01.html

Unendorsed Proofs For Planning Purposes Only