Getting the Troops to the Front: British Army Mobilization Planning, 1899-1914

Amener les troupes au front. Planification de la mobilisation de l'Armée britannique, 1899-1914.

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by

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ABSTRACT.

Supervisor: Dr. B.J.C. McKercher

British Army mobilization planning is one of the more overlooked aspects of military operations during the First World War. Much research has been dedicated to the mobilization plan of Germany, commonly known as the Schlieffen Plan and even more is know about France’s Plan XVII. However, in most discussion on the British Army during the First World War, the mobilization of the force in 1914 receives one line: it proceeded remarkably well. The above statement does not fully represent the hard work and detail that went into creating mobilization plans in Great Britain.

Through the use of the War in South Africa, 1899-1902, and the mobilization of British Expeditionary Force (BEF) in 1914 as case studies, this work traces the progression of mobilization planning in Great Britain over those fifteen years. The first is by illustrating that a shift in British strategic policy occurred between 1900 and 1905, causing the Army to plan for a commitment on the Continent rather than home defence or the defence of India. This change in strategic policy was extremely important to mobilization planning because it was this policy that decided the objectives or destination of the expeditionary force.
The rest of this work examines the progression of mobilization planning in Great Britain following the War in South Africa though the Moroccan Crisis of 1905 to July 1914. Suffused by strategic debates in the upper levels of the British policy-making elite, an outline of the duties and contributions of the various officers involved in mobilization, plus the tables for entrainment, embarkation and disembarkation provide a better understanding of how mobilization was intended to occur. Mobilization planning was very important to militaries during this period of Europe's evolution, especially that of Great Britain. This study seeks to fill the gap in our knowledge surrounding the progression of British mobilization planning in the years leading to the First World War.
Amener les troupes au front. Planification de la mobilisation de l'Armée britannique, 1899-1914.
Directeur de mémoire : M. B.J.C. McKercher, Ph.D.

La planification de la mobilisation britannique est l'un des aspects les plus méconnus des opérations militaires de la Première Guerre mondiale. Le plan de mobilisation allemand, communément appelé plan Schlieffen, a fait l'objet de nombreuses recherches et le plan XVII, en France, est même davantage connu. Cependant, dans la plupart des discussions portant sur les opérations de l'Armée britannique lors de la Première Guerre mondiale, la mobilisation de la force en 1914 ne se voit attribuer qu'une ligne : elle s'est déroulée remarquablement bien. Cet énoncé ne reflète pas le travail ardu et complexe qui a été exigé pour créer les plans de mobilisation en Grande-Bretagne.

En utilisant la Guerre d'Afrique du Sud, 1899-1902, et la mobilisation du corps expéditionnaire britannique (BEF) de 1914 comme études de cas, l'auteur montre comment la planification de la mobilisation a évolué en Grande-Bretagne au cours de ces quinze années. D'abord, il décrit le changement de cap survenu dans la politique stratégique britannique entre 1900 et 1905 qui a amené l'Armée à planifier ses engagements en fonction de la défense du continent et non seulement en fonction de la défense du pays et de l'Inde. Ce changement dans la politique stratégique avait des
répercussions extrêmement importantes sur la planification de la mobilisation, puisque cette politique déterminait les objectifs ou la destination de la force expéditionnaire.

Le reste du travail porte sur l'évolution de la planification de la mobilisation en Grande-Bretagne pendant la période allant de la fin de la Guerre d'Afrique du Sud, en passant par la crise marocaine de 1905, jusqu'à juillet 1914. Derrière les débats stratégiques menés dans les plus hautes sphères décisionnelles de la Grande-Bretagne, un aperçu des tâches et de la contribution des divers officiers participant à la mobilisation, plus les tableaux d'embarquement et de débarquement utilisés, permet de mieux comprendre la façon dont la mobilisation devait se produire. La planification de la mobilisation était très importante pour les militaires à cette époque en Europe, particulièrement en Grande-Bretagne. Cette étude vise à combler les lacunes dans les connaissances entourant l'évolution de la planification de la mobilisation au cours des années menant à la Première Guerre mondiale.
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INTRODUCTION.

In Europe a system called the balance of power had been created and maintained in Europe. The balance of power was maintained by a system of alliances and treaties between the Great Powers: Germany, France, Russia, Great Britain and Austria-Hungary. On the eve of the First World War there were two distinct alliance systems. The first consisted of Austria-Hungary, Germany and Italy, while the other consisted of France and Russia. Britain was loosely associated with the alliance of France and Russia through a series of ententes signed in 1904 and 1907. Lord Lansdowne, Foreign Secretary from 1900-1905, and his successors had purposely left the question of whether Britain would involve herself in a continental conflict open.¹

On June 28, 1914, Gavrilo Princip, a Bosnian terrorist, shot and killed the Archduke of Austria-Hungary, Franz Ferdinand. A month later, in response to Serbia not meeting its demands, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia. This declaration of war resulted in Russia, France and Germany all mobilizing their armies, much in the way they had been planning for many years. On August 1, 1914, these mobilization orders laid the groundwork for military operation in a war that lasted four years and left millions dead, wounded and homeless. It was called the Great War, the war to end all wars.

On August 4, 1914, after a few days of debating, the British Cabinet finally decided to declare war on Germany. This declaration resulted in the British Army

¹ Zara Steiner in The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy 1898-1914 (London: Ashfield Press, 1969) states "the entente did not bring Britain into the European alliance system" p. 47. Also in G.P. Gooch, D. Litt, etc. British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898-1914. Vol. III (His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1928) Doc 210(a) p. 171. Grey states in a letter to Cambon, the French Ambassador to London, that the official military talks taking place between Britain and France did not commit the British to any form of action. The discussions were purely for planning purposes.
sending its, soon to be famed, expeditionary force to France. When Richard Haldane, Secretary of State for War, 1905-1912, created the expeditionary force it was composed of six infantry divisions and one cavalry division. Based mainly on Kitchener's concerns about a raid on the Home Islands while the expeditionary force was in France, it was initially decided to send only four infantry divisions and the cavalry division to France. For the army, mobilization meant the "calling out of the Army Reserve, the continuance of soldiers with the Colours who might otherwise pass to the Reserve and the embodiment and mobilization of the Territorial Force."² This process resulted in the battalions being brought up to War Estimate strength.

The British Expeditionary Force (BEF) that landed in France was in the words of the British official historian, Sir James Edmonds, "incomparably the best trained, best organized, and best equipped British Army which ever went forth to war."³ The reason for such a high level of efficiency within the British Army was the recently completed Army reforms under Richard Haldane. These reforms had enabled Britain to create a force that was designed specifically for overseas action.

Upon landing in France, the BEF took its position on the left flank of the French Army around Maubeuge and advanced towards Belgium. Along the advance, it met the German First Army at Mons. Over the course of the next four months, the BEF that left Britain in August of 1914 was slowly destroyed, and very few soldiers of the original BEF survived to the end of 1914.⁴

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Even though much of the original expeditionary force had been destroyed by the end of 1914, Britain had still achieved its pre-war strategic objectives. As will be discussed later, there had been some debate within Britain as to where to best deploy the expeditionary force. It was eventually decided that the Channel Ports in France and Belgium needed to be protected and not allowed to come under the control of a hostile power. Thus at the end of 1914, Britain was the only major power whose strategic planning was a success, the Channel ports, for the most part, were secure. Whereas, Germany had not achieved its strategic objective of successfully invaded France and France had not successfully achieved its pre-war objectives of successfully invading Germany.

Countless books and articles have been dedicated to the ensuing battle and the retreat from Mons by the British Expeditionary Force. Many works, such as John Dunloe’s *The Development of the British Army 1899-1914*, Edward Spiers’s *Haldane: An Army Reformer* and Brian Bond’s article “Richard Burdon Haldane at the War Office, 1905-1912” in *The Army Quarterly and Defence Journal* discuss many aspects of the various reforms of the British Army under Haldane’s tenure at Whitehall. However, there are no works that examine the reforms of the mobilization plans of the British Army over the same period.

The works that discuss the BEF’s actions in France during August of 1914 only glance over the entire process of mobilization. Most works mention only that the

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5 Two such works are David Ascoli’s *The Mons Star: The British Expeditionary Force 1914* (Edinburgh: Birlinn Ltd. 2001) and John Terraine’s *Mons: The Retreat to Victory* (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd. 1960).
mobilization “was remarkable in its efficiency…” or that it “proceeded remarkably well.” To make matters worse, these statements are made without even a footnote as to describe how the author reached that conclusion. Contemporary writers cannot solely bear the blame for neglecting mobilization, for even the main actors, such as Field Marshal Sir John French, the original commander of the BEF in 1914, and Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, French’s successor in 1915, fail to give much detail to mobilization in their books or diaries. Haig’s comment in his diary on August 14, 1914 was “Our mobilization and train arrangements have worked out according to plan.” In Sir John French’s book 1914, he mentions only the fact that his Headquarters staff embarked on August 14.

Despite the lack of published work concerning the mobilization plan of 1914 or the reforms to these plans in the years prior, mobilization plans were extremely important to European countries at this time and should not be neglected. The German Schlieffen Plan is a prime example of the amount of work that countries put into mobilization planning. Years were spent on revising and rewriting this plan. Many works have been written about the Schlieffen plan and its creation. Then why are there no works on the British mobilization plan? Clearly the British Army had a mobilization plan prior to 1914.

The aim of this study is to show that mobilization planning did exist in Britain in the decades leading up to the First World War and that over the period from 1899 to 1914 those plans became increasingly more intricate and well thought out. Initially, Britain

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only created mobilization plans in response to major crises. However, with the
appointment of Major-General Henry Wilson as Director of Military Operations in 1910,
this pattern changed. He began to plan for a commitment to the continent prior to any
crisis arising there. Due to his preemptive planning, the British Army was able to
mobilize in 1914 much faster than it had for the War in South Africa. This fifteen-year
interim is important because during this period the most work had been done on
mobilization planning. During the 1880s and early 1890s, some work was done on
mobilization plans, but these plans mainly focused on mobilizing the British Army for
home defence. Also, it was only after 1899 that mobilization planning looked at sending
troops beyond the British Isles.

In order to show this progression in mobilization planning, the first chapter of this
study will examine the changes in Britain’s strategic planning. This chapter gives an
outline of the progression of British strategic policy from the turn of the twentieth century
until 1906; to explain how Britain’s strategic response to a perceived threat influenced its
specific mobilization plans. The shift in strategic priorities, from being focused on the
defence of India to a greater concern with the events on the continent, had significant
implications for British mobilization planners.

The second chapter examines the War in South Africa, 1899-1902 as a case study
for Britain’s mobilization planning at the time. Although units were mobilized after the
initial expeditionary force was sent, the chapter focuses solely on the initial force because
the mobilization plans created prior to the commencement of the war were only for this
initial force. This focus keeps in line with the overall theme of the study: the
mobilization plans of Great Britain prior to conflicts or crises
The next two chapters examine mobilization planning from the end of the War in South Africa to the outbreak of the Great War. These chapters discuss the various changes to mobilization planning or lack thereof under the different Directors of Military Operations. The trend of creating mobilization plans only once a crisis occurs was maintained until Henry Wilson took over the position in December of 1910. These chapters show just how complex and time-consuming mobilization plans were when the time and required effort was put forth.

The final chapter is another case study of mobilization during August 1914. This case study is a contrast to that of the previous case study on the War in South Africa. The mobilization plan for the War in South Africa had been created only months before its implementation, as opposed to the 1914 Plan, which Wilson had been drafting for years.

The task of outlining the mobilization plans of the British Army over the period from 1899 to 1914 is made even more difficult due to the fact that no single document or British equivalent of the Schlieffen Plan was created in Britain. There is only a collection of war office memorandums and reports, such as “Mobilization Appointments” 1 April 1914 and the “Expeditionary Force Tables January 1914”, that when compiled together reveal the mobilization plans used or discussed during this period. As a result of the size and complexity of the mobilization arrangements for the British Army, no railway timetables are herein mentioned for the divisions stationed in Ireland. This lack of information was due to the fact that the only document I was able to find at the National Archives, Kew, were railway timetables for home defence of Ireland; no reports make specific reference to the embarkation or mobilization for foreign service of the divisions stationed in Ireland. An accurate mobilization plan for 1914 can be created,
from War Office files at the National Archives in Kew, for the units stationed in England, Wales and Scotland.

This analysis focuses mainly on the mobilization plans of the British Army for a continental commitment because the largest volume of primary material centered on the continent. Due to the shift in strategic policy from 1905-06, it became more and more likely that the expeditionary force would be sent to the continent if a major war broke out. Although the study focuses mainly on this one destination, it is also worth mentioning that other mobilization plans were proposed. These plans are not examined in this study because they were mainly hypothetical and academic in nature and most of the work on these plans was done only by an individual from the Department of Military Operations.

Mobilization plans were extremely important during this period. Germany and France had dedicated a very large amount of time and manpower to creating the fastest mobilization plan possible. The entire German strategy was based on defeating France before Russia could complete mobilization of her armies. Had no mobilization plan existed prior to July of 1914, it is highly doubtful that the BEF would have been at Mons on August 23 to meet the German advance. During the period of 1899-1914, mobilization planning in Britain was slowly orientated away from the defence of the colonies to focus on the balance of power on the continent; mobilization planning for Britain until 1911 was only done in response to a perceived crisis.
Chapter 1: Reorientation of British Strategic Policy.

Between 1905 and 1906 there was a major change in British strategic policy. Until this time, British strategic policy had focused on sending reinforcements to the colonies, specifically India. Following 1905, the main objectives of British strategic planning dealt with the balance of power on the continent and sending troops to fight there. This change in policy was important to mobilization planners because an army drafts mobilization plans in line with the strategic policy. During this period, the changes in strategic policy had an impact on the mobilization plans that are discussed below.

Since Napoleon, British strategic policy had focused on the defence of its colonies, especially the defence of India. During this period, Britain had the largest empire covering 12,000,000 square miles and maintained rule over 400,000,000 people.\textsuperscript{10} This fact had a very large drawback in terms of strategic planning. Although, Britain was an island and had the Royal Navy to defend its shores, not all of the colonies could enjoy the same security. Because of the size of the British Empire, its colonies shared common borders with other Great Powers, as was the case with Canada and the United States, India and Russia and Egypt and France. This created a problem for mobilization plans because the Army did not know which colonies to plan to defend and there were too many colonies to make plans for all of them.

\textsuperscript{10} Richard Burdon Haldane, \textit{Army Reform and Other Addresses} (London: T. Fisher Unwin), p. 25.
Because of these shared borders, the Royal Navy could not be relied upon to be the sole defence of the colonies. As a result, the role of the Army was such that it was required to defend and expand the various colonies around the world. The Cardwell reforms, which occurred in 1871, are best representative of this strategic policy.\textsuperscript{11} The tying of a battalion at home with a battalion serving overseas, emphasized the importance of the defence of the colonies. However, events started in 1898 to undermine this strategic outlook.

Over the course of the next seven years a number of events would cause Britain to shift its strategic focus away from India and the rest of its colonies and focus more on issues closer to home. The first of these was the introduction of the German Naval Bills, followed by the 1902 Anglo-Japanese Alliance and the signing of the 1904 Entente Cordiale with France.\textsuperscript{12} Both the signing of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and the Entente Cordiale strengthened Britain's position globally, which allowed Britain to redeploy its military resources closer to home to confront the growing threat from Germany. It was during these seven years that both Army and Navy strategic planners realized that Britain could afford to lose colonies but the rise of the German navy made them realize that they could not afford lose the home islands. The shift in strategic policy was not instant change in direction, but a gradual progression that started before 1905. The events of


1905-06 simply served as the catalyst that brought the ‘Continental strategy’ to the forefront of planning.  

During the decade and a half leading to the First World War, British strategic policy underwent a major reorientation in terms of strategic priorities. Until 1905, the policy was centred on that of colonial defence. This policy entailed the defence of the various British colonies with specific emphasis on the defence and reinforcement of India and to a lesser degree Egypt. Britain’s strategic policy changed in late 1905 to early 1906 as a result of major events altering its strategic position. The policy was shifted to defence of the home islands, which entailed a commitment to the continental balance of power and the defence of France. The catalyst that was responsible for this drastic change in defence policy was the Moroccan Crisis of 1905 combined with the timing of the 1905 elections in Great Britain.

**The Winds of Change 1898-1905**

At the beginning of the twentieth century, there was only one thought on the minds of British strategic planners and policy makers: how to send reinforcements to India. Over the course of the next five years the threat that Russia posed to the North-West Frontier slowly diminished due to agreements Britain came to with France and Japan. This decreased threat to India was offset by the increasing threat posed by Germany’s naval programme to Britain. Between 1900 and 1905, three distinct events allowed British strategic policy to shift away from the defence of India to the defence the

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13 For the purposes of this paper, it is not important when the Continental strategy completely eclipsed the India strategy. What is important is that the Continental strategy began to become the major strategy that was planned for following 1905. For more on this debate about the Continental versus the India strategy see Nicholas d’Ombrain, *War Machinery and High Policy: Defence Administration in Peacetime Britain 1902-1914* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973) and John Gooch, *The Prospect of War* (London: Frank Cass and Company Ltd. 1981).
home islands changes in foreign policy, naval concentration and the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID).

Lord Lansdowne, the Conservative Foreign Secretary from 1900-1905, decreased the various threats to Great Britain through a change in foreign policy. He was able to do this because he was from a different school of thought on foreign policy than his predecessor. Lansdowne's perspective differed from that of his predecessor because both Arthur Balfour, the Prime Minister, and he believed that Britain's position globally was weakening and that 'splendid isolationism' was at an end.\(^{14}\) These men and the group that followed them have been called 'Edwardians' to illustrate the difference in opinion on foreign affairs.\(^{15}\) The main difference between 'Victorians' and 'Edwardians', according to Keith Neilson, was that the former believed that England did not require allies to conduct its foreign policy; it was strong enough without outside help. The 'Edwardians', on the other hand, believed Britain's global position was now being challenged and Britain needed allies.

During Lansdowne's tenure as Foreign Secretary, he and the cabinet were successful in strengthening Britain's position globally through agreements with France, Japan and eventually Russia. Lord Selborne, the First Lord of the Admiralty, outlined in a letter to the Viceroy of India, Lord Curzon, the major threats at the turn of the century to Britain's strategic position:

We have had three exceptions to our naval and insular character: in three continents we had military frontiers with great land Powers. The U.S. is great in every sense and America and Canada join frontiers; the Dutch republics were locally great and military powerful in South Africa; Russia is Russia in Central Asia. Our diplomacy ought to save us from war with the U.S., the Dutch


\(^{15}\) Keith Neilson in *Britain and the Last Tsar: British Policy and Russia 1894-1917*, p. 48, uses the term Edwardians to describe those politicians born between 1850's and early 1860's that served under Edward VII reign.
republics are eliminated, but we remain with all the difficulties and responsibilities of a military Power in Asia. That is the crux of us...It is a terrific task to remain the greatest naval Power, when naval Powers are year by year increasing in numbers and in naval strength and at the same time to be a military Power strong enough to meet the greatest military Power in Asia.\(^\text{16}\)

Selborne accurately illustrates the various strategic problems that were facing Britain at this time. It was therefore Lansdowne's job to help decrease or eliminate these threats through negotiations. As a result, Lansdowne's foreign policy began to fall into line with the strategic realities at the time.\(^\text{17}\)

British naval policy was still governed by the two-power standard. The Naval Defence Act (1889) created the two-power standard, "the minimum standard of security which the country demands and expects is that our Fleet should be equal to the combination of the two next strongest Navies in Europe."\(^\text{18}\) As a result of this policy, Britain did not possess enough ships to maintain that balance against Russia and France everywhere and maintain a large home fleet to prevent invasions. The first major development that allowed Britain to move resources closer to home was the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, signed in 1902. The reason for Britain's interest in reaching an agreement with Japan was outlined in a memorandum written by Selborne. In Chinese waters, Selborne estimated that the Royal Navy had four first-class battleships and sixteen cruisers. This force potentially had to combat a combined French and Russian fleet of seven first-class and two second-class battleships with twenty cruisers. However, the combined Anglo-Japanese fleet was composed of eleven battleships and a far superior number of cruisers. Selborne concluded that an alliance with Japan would reduce the

\(^{16}\) George Monger, *The End of Isolation: British Foreign Policy 1900-1907*, p. 110.


probability of a naval war with France and/or Russia. With the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, Britain once again had superiority in numbers over a combined Russian-French Fleet in the Far East. Thus permitting the redeployment of some of the Far East Fleet to waters closer to the home islands. This redeployment in turn brought about significant financial savings.

The British Treasury at this time was calling for significant amounts of economy from all of the services. One of the reasons that Lansdowne secured the support from the members of his party who still believed in ‘splendid isolationism’ was the savings that the Anglo-Japanese Treaty allowed the British Government to receive from the naval estimates. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Michael Hicks Beach, believed that the alliance was the only way any form of economy could be found in the Far East, while still continuing a policy of resistance towards Russia. It was this alliance that was the first step in decreasing the threat posed by Russia to Britain in the Far East and increasing its military resources closer to the home islands.

Following his achievement in helping to secure British interests in the Far East, Lansdowne turned his attention towards issues closer to home, such as home defence. During this time, one of Britain’s main strategic fears was the threat of naval cooperation between France and Russia in the Mediterranean. If this cooperation did occur, British strategic planners feared a French invasion of the home islands. This fear increased the perceived need to bring warships closer to Britain. The fear of having to face the Dual

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20 Ibid. 176.
Alliance fleet in the Mediterranean was greatly decreased after the signing of the Entente Cordiale. Although Lansdowne did not initiate the conversation with the French about a possible entente, he and others in government were quick to recognize its benefits both at home and abroad. One of these benefits is illustrated in a letter by the Earl of Cromer, the Viceroy of Egypt, to Balfour on October 15, 1903 stating that “I cannot help regarding an understanding upon all pending questions with France as possibly a stepping-stone to a general understanding with Russia...”22 The Entente Cordiale was signed April 4, 1904 and was designed only to settle colonial disputes and not interfere with the continental balance of power. But as the letter from Cromer illustrates, the British saw the potential to further decrease the threat that they were facing in the Far East from Russia. But the Entente did have one unintended side affect: that of poorer relations with Germany.

Just as Germany perceived the Entente Cordiale as being anti-German in nature, British strategic policy began to shift towards viewing Germany as the new threat.23 This was represented through the CID, who after April 1904 did not seriously view France as a threat to Britain. Because of the Entente Cordiale, British fears of an invasion by France were greatly decreased. This was reinforced by the fact that France’s ally, Russia, had endured major military defeats at the hand of Britain’s ally, Japan in the Russo-Japanese War 1904-05.24

The Royal Navy was the first service to respond to the changing strategic environment; it met the new challenges through concentration of forces in the home

22 George Monger. The End of Isolation: British Foreign Policy 1900-1907. p.137.
24 William McDermott. “British Strategic Planning and the Committee of Imperial Defence 1871 to 1907.” p.200
waters. At the turn of the century, there had been very little concentration of naval forces around the world. This was done because Britain was trying to maintain supremacy in every hemisphere. However, this became increasingly more difficult to maintain due to the growth of the European fleets. During this time there was no organized efficient home fleet. The Channel Squadron was the only naval force in home waters, but it spent up to two-thirds of a year patrolling Irish and Spanish waters leaving only the disorganized Reserve Squadron to protect Britain. Because of the rise of the German Navy, the manner in which the Royal Navy distributed its ships around the globe came under increasing attacks from strategists.

The German Naval threat, although not recognized by the Admiralty as a threat to Britain until 1902, was created by the passing of the 1898 and 1900 German Naval Laws that called for the creation of a fleet of thirty-eight capital ships. In 1907, this number would rise to almost sixty. The threat that these ships posed to the British Empire was considerably different from that of French, Russian, Japanese or American Navies. While these navies threatened various colonial possessions of Great Britain, Germany’s navy threatened Britain herself.

The Royal Navy’s response to the increasing threat to home waters was to redistribute its fleets. This was made possible by the recent agreements Britain had come to with Japan and France. As previously mentioned, the agreement with Japan had allowed Britain to bring naval resources closer to home from the Far East. Meanwhile, the Entente Cordiale had removed France as the major threat to British interests in the

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Mediterranean and Channel waters. The idea of concentration of naval forces closer to the home islands was that of Admiral Sir John Fisher, the First Sea Lord after 1904, who was one of the first to realize the threat posed to Britain by the German High Seas Fleet.

Fisher also recognized that concentrating the fleets had to be achieved without straining the international political situation. This meant that the concentration of naval forces in home waters “...had to be done unostentatiously and by slow degrees, for fear of exciting the attention of the German Admiralty and too much embroiling myself with the Admirals whose fleets had to be denuded till they disappeared.” If the Germans did notice the redistribution of naval forces closer to them, it might have sparked an incident crisis before the Royal Navy was prepared.

As early as 1902, Germany was beginning to be viewed by the Royal Navy as a major threat to home defence. A cabinet paper circulated by Selborne in October of 1902 showed this:

The more the composition of the new German fleet is examined the clearer it becomes that it is designed for a possible conflict with the British fleet. It cannot be designed for the purpose of playing a leading part in a future war between Germany and France and Russia. The issue of such a war can only be decided by armies and on land, and the great naval expenditure on which Germany has embarked involves a deliberate diminution of the military strength which Germany might otherwise have attained in relation to France and Russia.

This recognition of the German threat and the change in foreign policy was followed in 1904 by the need for Britain to concentrate its more modern ships in the Mediterranean and Home Fleets.

As a result of the shift in Britain’s foreign policy during the period of 1900 to 1905 and the changing naval threat, British strategic policy began to move away from

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defence of the colonies to that of home defence. This change was a result of the decreased threat Russia posed in the Far East because of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and the crushing defeats it faced at the hands of the Japanese. This was combined with the fact that France no longer represented a major threat to British interests following the signing of the Entente. This only left the new rising threat in the North Sea for Britain to confront. British strategic planners realized that while they were willing to lose a colony or two, they could not afford to jeopardize any part of the home islands, so they began for the first time since Napoleon to focus their strategy on the continent.

The Catalyst of Change

Despite the changes in British foreign and naval policy during the first part of the twentieth century, Germany did not begin to become the chief concern of the overall British strategic planning until late 1905 to early 1906. During these years, the Army and Navy convinced the CID of the threat posed by Germany. Also, due to the January 1906 election and lack of cabinet discussion, the new Liberal Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey and the new Liberal Secretary of State for War, Richard Haldane, were able to complete Britain’s shift to a continental strategy.

By 1905, both the Army and Navy had accepted the ‘Blue Water’ principle, which espoused that the Navy would be responsible for home defence, while the Army would be used for overseas action. This understanding occurred because Britain was an island nation and, as such, invading forces would first have to cross either the North Sea or the English Channel. The Royal Navy was the best option to stop any threat of invasion. This strategy also justified the huge sums of money that were being spent on

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the navy at the time. The role of the Army was beginning to be realized as the defence of the Channel ports. If the Channel ports in France or the Low Countries were occupied by Germany, the ability of the Admiralty to stop an invasion greatly diminished. As a result of this joint realization that Germany was the new threat to Britain, both the War Office and the Admiralty started to work with the CID on revising strategic policy.

During this time, there were a decreasing number of voices calling for a large number of reinforcements being made available for the defence of India. The Admiralty supported the concept that India required fewer reinforcements than previously planned because of the outcome of the Russo-Japanese War. This allowed, the Admiralty believed, the reinforcements previously destined for India to be used for operations closer to home. The Army’s push to have the continental strategy first recognized was brought to light by a memorandum written in 1904 by the Chief of the General Staff, General Lyttleton, titled ‘The Strength of the Regular Army and Auxiliary Forces.’ In the memorandum Lyttleton reminded the CID that there were other areas of operations that the Army must plan for besides a war with Russia. He specifically mentioned the possibility of a war with Germany. This attempt by the Chief of the General Staff was supported by the Major General Grierson, Head of Army Intelligence, who constantly argued against reinforcing India as the Army’s primary role. In the Army’s attempts to get its continental strategy recognized, it found an ally in the form of the CID secretary, Sir George Clarke.

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As one of the Army’s main supporters, Clark, with the assistance of Lord Esher, a Conservative defence expert, was able to gain greater acceptance of the Army plan. As a result of the crisis arising from Morocco in 1905, the Army’s planning finally obtained supremacy over Navy’s. During December 1905 and January 1906, the CID never met for a full committee meeting. What did occur though were four small committee meetings that included only Clarke, Esher, Ottley, Director of Naval Intelligence and French, commander of the Aldershot Command.\(^\text{35}\) These men all believed that a war with Germany was of the greatest likelihood and should be planned for. The discussions of this smaller committee were all done without the knowledge of the Cabinet.\(^\text{36}\)

Because of the CID’s involvement in the planning of the anti-German strategy, Clarke was now able to start influencing specific members of the Cabinet. Clarke approached Grey because he knew that the Foreign Secretary was currently worried about the possibility that Germany might attack France.\(^\text{37}\) It was the influence of the CID, combined with what Grey received from his own advisors that cemented the continental commitment firmly in British strategic planning.

While there was a rise in the number of men in the CID and Army who viewed Germany as the greatest threat, the most prominent example of this changing trend in personnel can be found in the high echelons of Whitehall. During the Moroccan Crisis, Grey would find himself isolated from other members of the cabinet and separated from Whitehall for half of the week; this was all due to the election. As a result, Grey was

\(^{36}\) William McDermott. “British Strategic Planning and the Committee of Imperial Defence 1871 to 1907.” pp. 263, 272.
\(^{37}\) Ibid., 267.
forced to rely on the civil servants in the Foreign office to provide him with advice and all the pertinent information and correspondence.

This reliance upon civil servants had major implications for policy. For example, prior to 1905, the major voices of dissent were Thomas Sanderson, the Permanent Under Secretary (PUS), and Lord Fitzmaurice, Lansdowne’s brother. Sanderson believed that Germany could be won over through understanding and sympathy. Also, Germany would be a useful ally if Great Britain went to war with Russia. However, Sanderson’s ideas were formed in a different time and did not accurately reflect the changes in foreign affairs. Examples of events that Sanderson ignored in creating his view of British foreign policy were the destruction of the Russian fleets at the hands of the Japanese, the advent of the Entente Cordiale and the growth of the German High Seas Fleet.

When Sir Charles Hardinge replaced Sanderson as PUS, he was far less concerned about the Empire, and increasingly concerned about the continental balance of power. Although Japan, the United States and Russia did represent a threat to Great Britain, it would have taken them years to get to the military level to actually challenge Britain again. However, Germany was much closer geographically than any of the other countries and, as such, represented a much more real threat. Hardinge also believe that friendship with France was the best way to counter the German threat and should be the centrepiece of British foreign policy in Europe.

Upon examining the internal history of the Foreign Office, one can see the steady rise in the ranks of a group of civil servants led by Hardinge and Sir Francis Bertie. This

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39 Ibid.187.
group of administrators strongly supported an anti-German stance by Whitehall, but they were also committed to strengthening relations with France and Russia. Just prior to Grey becoming Foreign Secretary, this group, through a series of promotions and transfers, was able to rise to prominence. They were given the most influential posts in Whitehall and abroad.\footnote{Briton Busch, \textit{Hardinge of Penshurst: A Study in the Old Diplomacy} (Hamden: The Shoe String Press, Inc. 1980) p. 102.} However, it was only under Grey’s leadership that these views were allowed to become British foreign policy.

In a memorandum, Hardinge outlined why he was most concerned about Germany: “It is generally recognized that Germany is the one disturbing factor owing to her ambitious schemes for a Weltpolitik and for a naval as well as military supremacy in Europe.”\footnote{Zara Steiner. \textit{The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy 1898-1914.} p. 94.} Grey was equally concerned about German ambitions when he took over the Foreign Office. Together these men were committed to finding a way to contain German ambition. In 1905, Grey told the editor of the \textit{Westminster Gazette} that the Liberal Government would not lose its understanding with France in order to get better relations with Germany.\footnote{Ibid. 94.}

Hardinge and the civil servants who belonged to the anti-German group were strongly in favour of the Entente with France and even stronger supporters of the Entente with Russia in 1907. Hardinge believed that in fostering relations with these two countries, Britain would be able to contain Germany within Europe and that Germany would pose less of a threat to British interests. This also served to strengthen Britain’s
position on the Northwest frontier of India. Hardinge believed that if Britain supported Russia in Europe, Russia would in turn would not be inclined to attack British India.\footnote{Zara Steiner and Keith Neilson. \textit{Britain and the Origins of the First World War}. p.193. This view was also shared by Grey see Gooch, G.P., Litt, D. etc. \textit{British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898-1914}. Vol. III. (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1928) Document No. 299 p. 266-8.}

The strength of the anti-German movement in Whitehall was not only noticeable to the people who worked there, but it was also noticeable to other politicians and journalists. \textit{The Economist} wrote: “The seat of the mischief is to be found in our Foreign Office and its anti-German Policy, its anti-German Ambassadors, its anti-German clerks.”\footnote{Sir Herbert Asquith, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, would even notice the anti-German nature of the Foreign Office when he became Prime Minster. In July 1911, he “told C.P. Scott of the \textit{Manchester Guardian} that he was ‘quite conscious of the anti-Germanism of the Foreign Office staff.’”\footnote{Keith Wilson, \textit{The Policy of the Entente} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). p. 50.}

\footnote{German General Election.” \textit{The Economist}, 20 Jan 1912. p. 104.}


John Morley, who took over for Grey for short periods of time, remarked that “the F.O. is too anti-German, just as not so many years ago it was too anti-French.”\footnote{German General Election.” \textit{The Economist}, 20 Jan 1912. p. 104.}

Sir Herbert Asquith, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, would even notice the anti-German nature of the Foreign Office when he became Prime Minster. In July 1911, he “told C.P. Scott of the \textit{Manchester Guardian} that he was ‘quite conscious of the anti-Germanism of the Foreign Office staff.’” The Foreign Office’s anti-German nature was spawned mostly out of a loyalty to the Ententes it had with France and, eventually, Russia.

Hardinge was able to justify the anti-German stance of the Foreign Office because he believed that the only issue Great Britain had with Germany was the naval bills; however, Britain’s future greatly rested on good relations with Russia. Hardinge was willing to sacrifice better relations with Germany in order to protect various parts of the Empire from Russia. In a memorandum written in 1909, he stated: “We cannot afford to sacrifice in any way our entente with Russia even for the sake of a reduced naval
programme." Illustrating Hardinge desire to maintain good relations with Russia at the expense of increased hostility with Germany.

When Grey entered Whitehall in December 1905, he found that his senior advisors, Hardinge, Louis Mallet, William Tyrrell, Eyre Crowe, Walter Langley and F.A. Campbell, all spoke with one voice about the threat that Germany posed to Britain. In fact, Mallet and Tyrrell pushed for Grey to become the new Liberal Foreign Secretary because they knew that he accepted the Conservative principles established by the previous regime and would not change the direction of foreign policy upon which the Foreign Office was now on. Grey would turn to Hardinge on many occasions for advice on matters, and they developed an excellent working relationship. The recent Moroccan Crisis had caused those of the Foreign Office who were not entirely committed to this policy to finally put their support behind it.

The Moroccan Crisis was the major event that set the stage for British foreign and strategic policy to shift permanently against Germany. This crisis could not have occurred at a worse time for the British Government. The Conservative Government had resigned only weeks earlier and the newly formed Liberal Government was in the process of campaigning in the newly called election. This election resulted in Liberal Cabinet ministers being scattered throughout Britain with very little contact with each other or their departments. As a result, the civil servants of the Foreign Office and the generals of the War Office were given an unprecedented level of influence over their cabinet

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50 Ibid.188.
minister. This influence resulted in the civil servants moving policy closer to what they believed was the real threat: Germany.

Grey was no different from the rest of his fellow cabinet ministers; he was absent from Whitehall a much of the time during the election weeks. This absence resulted in him relying on his civil servants for information more so than he would have if there had not been an election. Grey's constituency was a large rural area in Northumberland that included the towns of Berwick and Alnwick. This area was a considerable distance from London, which required Grey to plan out his weeks:

I arranged to spend three days a week at the Foreign Office. Every Wednesday night I left London, getting home in good time for breakfast; the last three days of the week were given to election speeches, the paper work of the Foreign Office that followed me being done each morning. Each Sunday night I returned to London and gave the first three days entirely to the Foreign Office.\(^{51}\)

This meant that Grey was only spending half the amount of time he normally would have spent in the Foreign Office. Combined with the fact that there was a major crisis occurring at the same time means that the civil servants had considerable influence in what information reached the minister and what policies would be implemented. Grey also commented later about the time saying, "Other Cabinet Ministers were in the same position. It was of course impossible to hold any Cabinets. It was under these conditions that the first critical occasion in foreign policy came upon us."\(^{52}\) Because of the inability of the cabinet to meet, Grey and his friend Haldane were in communication with each other and for the most part decided on how do approach the current crisis.

The Moroccan Crisis threatened to tear Great Britain away from its Entente with France, which was currently weakened due to the inability to get support a paralyzed

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\(^{52}\) Ibid. 131.
Russia that was, now confronting a revolution. Haldane and Grey both understood what
would be lost if France was defeated by Germany: “If France were overrun, our island
security would be at least diminished, and he [Grey] had, therefore, in addition to his
anxiety to avert a general war, a direct national interest to strive for, in the preservation of
peace between Germany and France.” Because both Grey and Haldane could not allow
France to fall at the hands of Germany, army and foreign policy was structured around
confronting this new threat.

On January 10, 1906, Grey wrote a letter to Bertie, now the Ambassador to Paris,
recounting a conversation he had with the French Ambassador about the possibility of
British support in the war with Germany. Grey reported,

that at the present moment the Prime Minister was out of town, and that the
Cabinet were all dispersed seeing after the elections; that we were not as yet
aware of the sentiments of the country as they would be expressed at the polls;
and that it was impossible therefore for me, in the circumstances, to give a reply
to H[is] Exc[ellenc]y’s question. I could only state as my personal opinion that, if
France were to be attacked by Germany in consequence of a question arising out
of the Agreement wh[ich] our predecessors had recently concluded with the
French Gov[ernmen]t, public opinion in England would be strongly moved in
favour of France.

It was exactly this opinion of Grey’s that would form the core of the new strategic policy
of Great Britain.

The Army’s response to this new threat was to conduct unofficial talks with the
French military attaché, Colonel Huguet, about coalition operations in Northern France.

The Army, combined with Haldane, believed in the ‘Blue Water’ principle that it was the

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55 It is enough for this paper that these conversations occurred. For more on the military conversations please see G.P.
role of the navy to defend England from invasion. Because of this principle, the army believed its role lay in overseas activity. Haldane said it best in a speech before Parliament on March 8th, 1906: “We live on an island, and our coasts are completely defended by the Fleet. Our Army is wanted for purposes abroad and over-seas.”

Haldane never admitted publicly that the army was being reformed to fight on the continent, as this would not have been politically acceptable to his fellow liberals. It is clear in his speeches and in the War Office plans that Russia was no longer considered the major threat and that the army had been designed to fight in terms of continental organizations. In the same speech, during the Algeciras Conference, Haldane spoke about how Russia was no longer a threat:

A short time ago we were menaced on the North-West frontier of India by Russia. Are we menaced by Russia to-day? [Cries of ‘No.’] Have circumstance changed or have they not? Are they not different from what they were? If circumstances have changed, it is necessary to maintain that vast establishment in India, which causes us at home inevitably to incur a large expenditure in keeping up the materials from which to supply drafts for the Indian Army? The same is true of your policy in the Colonies.

India and the colonies were no longer going to receive the same level as priority as they did prior to the Moroccan Crisis.

The newly changed strategic policies did not take long to come into effect. In early 1906, Clarke wrote to General Lord Kitchener, the Commander-in-Chief in India, and informed him that the garrison in India would not be receiving the new quick-fire artillery first. Clarke gave the threat of war on the European horizon as the reason that troops at home would receive the new artillery pieces because: “For the moment the

57 Richard Haldane, Army Reform and Other Addresses. pp. 24-25.
58 Ibid. 26.
danger is in Europe & not in India." This was just one practical example of how the changes in strategic policy brought about by the Moroccan Crisis had been translated into practical terms.

Following the war in South Africa, British strategic policy had focused primarily on the defence of the colonies. The vulnerability of India to the Russian threat was gradually decreased over the next three years through Lansdowne's initiatives to reach agreements with various regional powers like Japan and the Entente with France. Both of these agreements served to strengthen British positions in the wider world and closer to home through making it less likely that France would support a Russian war with Britain and increasing the size of vessels available to Britain in the Far East. Because of changes to Britain's foreign policy, London became less concerned about the defence of India and more involved with events that were occurring on the Continent.

This change in strategic policy in turn affected the military planning for the army, as best demonstrated by the guiding principles that defined the Army's objectives. During the period from 1888 to 1905, the British Army organized itself to fulfill the requirements of the Stanhope Memorandum, named for the Secretary of State for War, Edward Stanhope. There were five objectives that the Army was to accomplish:

(a) The effective support of the civil power in all parts of the United Kingdom.  
(b) To find the number of men for India, which has been fixed by arrangement with the Government of India.  
(c) To find garrisons for all our fortresses and coaling stations, at home and abroad, according to a scale now laid down, and to maintain these garrisons at all times at the strength fixed for a peace of war footing.  
(d) After providing for these requirement, to be able to mobilise rapidly for home defence two Army-Corps of Regular troops, and one partly composed of Regulars and partly of Militia; and to organize the Auxiliary Forces, not allotted to Army-Corps or garrisons, for the defence of London and for the defensible positions in advance, and for the defence of mercantile ports.

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(e) Subject to the forgoing considerations, and to their financial obligations, to aim at being able, in case of necessity, to send a broad two complete Army-Corps, with Cavalry Division and Line of Communication. But it will be distinctly understood that the probability of the employment of an Army-Corps in the Field in any European war is sufficiently improbable to make it the primary duty of the military authorities to organize our forces efficiently for the defence of this country.  

This document shows that, during this period, the primary objective of the Army was the maintenance of the garrisons in the colonies and India and the defence of Great Britain. Also, that the possibility of sending troops overseas either to the colonies or Europe was secondary to that of the defence of the home islands. This policy of the Army had specific implications for when the Army planned to mobilise for the war in South Africa, as will be demonstrated further on.

When Haldane took over the War Office, one of his major changes to the Army was the acceptance of the ‘Blue Water’ principle. By 1906, most in Whitehall supported the role of the Army being for overseas duty. In a speech to Parliament dated March 8, 1906, Haldane discussed the change in planning: “The first thing we want is absolutely clear thinking about the purpose for which the Army exists and the principles on which it is to be organized...One principle is that of the Blue Water school...We do accept it in this sense-that the Navy itself at its present strength is capable of defending these shores from invasion.” For the Army this change in strategic policy meant that they were no longer concerned with mobilizing for the defence of Britain, a major problem brought out by the War in South Africa, and that the sole purpose of the Army

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60 Great Britain, Report of His Majesty's Commissioner Appointed to Inquire into the Military Preparations and other Matters Connected with the War In South Africa. (London: H.M.S.O., 1903) p.225.
61 The physical reforms that Haldane institutes are not part of the scope of this paper. For this paper it is only important that the role that the Army’s plays in Britain changes. For more information on the Haldane reforms see: John Dunlopes. The Development of the British Army 1899-1914 and Edward Spiers. Haldane: An Army Reformer.
now was to plan for overseas duty, whether that be the reinforcement of India or sending an expeditionary force to the Continent.

Due to Russia’s weakness in 1905, caused by its defeat at the hands of the Japanese and the resulting revolution, France was considerably more vulnerable to an invasion by Germany. At this time Britain could not allow a hostile power to occupy the Low Countries or the French Channel ports because this would greatly decrease British home security. In response to the recent vulnerability of France, members of the Foreign Office, CID and Army with the help of their respective cabinet ministers pushed British strategic policy towards a continental commitment. This change in policy was only accomplished because of timing. The Moroccan Crisis occurred at practically the same time as the British General Election, so the majority of Liberal cabinet ministers who would have opposed a continental commitment were not able to object due to the lack of cabinet meetings. This meant that British foreign and strategic policy was left in the hands of two Liberal-Imperialist cabinet ministers, Haldane and Grey, and their staffs who strongly supported a commitment to France.

Britain’s strategic policy changes had major implications for the Army’s mobilization plans. Because of the shift from the reinforcement of the colonies and India to a continental strategy, the Army had to draft new mobilization orders and reorganize the location of resources. This involved both conversations with the French Army in order to coordinate debarkation points and railway timetables, as well as the restructuring of the forces at home and the increase in the overall readiness of those forces.
Continental armies mobilized very rapidly, while, if Russia were to send troops to the North-West Frontier of India, it would take time. As a result, greater efficiency had to be created in the mobilization plans.
CHAPTER 2: Mobilizing for South Africa.

In 1899 as response to the growing tensions with the Boer Republics, the British Army started mobilization planning for an expeditionary force. Creating schemes for mobilizing Britain's Army was a relatively new development in the late nineteenth century. During that century, there were very few times when the Army was mobilized in any great size; the Crimean War 1853-56 had been the last time large formations of the British Army had been sent overseas. As a result Britain lagged behind the rest of Europe in the development of mobilization schemes.

The quick Prussian victories in their wars of unification between 1865 and 1871 had demonstrated to the rest of Europe the need to be able to mobilize Armies quickly; Britain was slow to this realization. However, starting in the 1880s, Britain began to create mobilization plans for home defence. Over the next two decades, these schemes were perfected so that a force of two Army Corps and a cavalry division could be mobilized for home defence within one month. However, Britain was a colonial empire and, as such, needed to be able to send expeditionary forces overseas to defend, conquer, or police the various colonies. This lack of preplanning for sending forces overseas was a direct result of the Stanhope Memorandum. As mentioned earlier, the primary objective of that Memorandum was home defence. This objective was followed by organizing troops for overseas duties; however, Britain did not have the resources at that time to

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organize forces for both home defence and overseas expeditions. As a result, planning to send forces overseas was not a priority for mobilization planning.

It was exactly this problem, sending an expeditionary force overseas, that the mobilization department was forced to overcome in late 1898 and early 1899. There were problems in the Boer Republics and the chances of a full-scale conflict were greatly increasing. On October 7, 1899, the order to mobilize an expeditionary force to South Africa, comprising one Army Corps and one Cavalry Division, was given. After a month and ten days, following the official order to mobilize, the expeditionary force was concentrated in South Africa. The reasons it took the expeditionary force so long to mobilize was mainly due to the lack of supplies for fighting in South Africa. Specifically, there was a lack in regimental transports, proper clothing and naval transports to send the troops to South Africa. Mobilization planning in Great Britain was a relative new innovation. As a result, planning for overseas campaigns did not get the same level of detail as home defence, which in turn meant that in 1899 the British Army was not entirely prepared to mobilize troops for a conflict in South Africa.

The Start of Mobilization Planning in Great Britain

Prior to 1886, no mobilization scheme existed in Great Britain. There was only a broad outline found in the Army List, which was a distribution list of officers on the active list of the Regular Army, the reserves, militia, yeomanry, volunteers and Royal Marines.65 This document was used by the Army to illustrate the various deficiencies in officers and troops. The lack of mobilization plans changed in 1886, when Major-General H. Brackenbury took over the position as head of the Intelligence Branch. At this time,

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65 Great Britain, Report of his Majesty's Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Military Preparations and other Matters Connected with the War in South Africa. (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1903) p. 38.
mobilization fell under the organization of intelligence. Upon taking up the office, Brackenbury found that the Army was completely unorganized and largely unable to organize itself for service at home or abroad. During his time in the Intelligence Department, he wrote three reports, entitled Mobilization reports Numbers I, II, and III. These papers found that the Army could not even send one complete Army Corps overseas and that the second Army Corps would be missing artillery, engineers and support units. The deficiencies mentioned in the report appeared so huge that they caught the attention of the Adjutant-General, Lord Wolseley, who took the matter to the Secretary of State for War, William Henry Smith, who appointed a two-man committee to examine the deficiencies in mobilization planning. This committee was composed of General Brackenbury and the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for War, Sir Ralph Thompson.

Under Wolseley's pressure, the government decided on defining the duties of the Regular Army. From 1888 to the start of the South African War, the crucial document was the Stanhope Memorandum. This focus meant that the army was primarily concerned with home defence and, as a result, the mobilization plans embodied that philosophy. During the same year as the Stanhope Memorandum, the Mobilization section was transferred from the Intelligence division to the Adjutant-General's department at Pall Mall.

The first mobilization plan was completed in 1890. By 1892, this plan was accompanied by a survey of the grounds around London and the designated locations of

68 Ibid. 247.
occupation by British units in an emergency. This early mobilization planning focused solely on the Army meeting the threat of a possible invasion of the home islands and completely ignored the task of planning for overseas operations. Finally, between August 1892 and November 1894, Mobilization Regulations were issued and revised. Further, the various district plans for defence were slowly brought in line with the overall mobilization plan. The mobilization plans were based on what the British Army had, rather than what was ideal or needed. Before the South African war, the final revision to the Army Estimates occurred in 1898.

Specifically, the Mobilization Regulations of 1898 was a scheme to mobilize a field army for service at home or in a temperate climate. In a memorandum to the Cabinet dated December 15, 1897, Lansdowne, at the time the Secretary of State for War, illustrated that although the plans existed, there was no way to test it without a major emergency. As such, there was a major deficiency in practical experience in mobilizing a large force:

It may be quite true that our organization is well adapted for general mobilization, whether for home defence or for war abroad; but we have not yet mobilized on a large scale for war, ane [sic] it may be long before we do so. For one national emergency justifying a general mobilization, we shall probably have a score of minor emergencies of the class....

We are unquestionably finding great and increasing difficulty in providing for the whole of the requirements which we have to meet. That difficulty is, I think due partly to the fact that the system has never had a fair trial, and partly to imperfections in the system itself.

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69 Great Britain. Report of his Majesty's Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Military Preparations and other Matters Connected with the War in South Africa. p. 248.
70 Ibid., 248.
73 Great Britain. Report of his Majesty's Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Military Preparations and other Matters Connected with the War in South Africa. p. 250.
This problem was brought to the forefront because the Army began to realize that it might have to send additional troops to South Africa. The lack of practical experience in mobilizing was combined with the problem that the Army was conditioned and supplied for fighting in a European climate; but South Africa was not like Europe in temperature or in the requirements for supply transportation. An expeditionary force in South Africa required local transport pulled by oxen or mules, rather than the Army's usual horse due to the terrain. These different requirements for service abroad needed to be met beforehand. As a result of this need, the Army created the 'Regulations for Mobilization of A Field Force for South Africa 1899.' The purpose of these new regulations was not to supersede the existing mobilization regulations, but to augment them so that the regulations better represented the needs of an Army sending troops to South Africa.

Mobilization planning had been a relatively new organization in the British Army during the later part of the nineteenth century. As a result, mobilization plans for Great Britain were completed for home defence by 1898, but planning for overseas expeditions were not. This lack of planning for overseas campaigns meant that as the likelihood of a war with South Africa increased, the Army had to draft possible mobilization plans rather quickly.

**Mobilization Planning for South Africa**

Practical mobilization planning, with the purpose of sending troops to South Africa, started in June 1899. Between June 17, 1899 and when the mobilization order took effect on October 7, 1899, the Mobilization Committee and section worked on solving the problem of how best to mobilize a large force to send to South Africa. This

74 'Regulations for the Mobilization of a Field Force for Service in South Africa, 1899.' WO 108/395

task was made slightly easier due to the fact that over the preceding decade, mobilization plans had been developed for home defence so that the Mobilization Committee would focus mainly on the specific needs of a force fighting in southern Africa.

The Commander-in-Chief of the Army, Wolseley, recognized the growing possibility of having to send a large number of troops to South Africa. As a result, between January and June 1899, he held a number of consultations with his staff on this subject. Wolseley met most frequently with the Assistant Adjutant-General for Mobilization, Colonel F.W. Stopford. A report titled ‘Action taken in the Mobilization Subdivision to Prepare for War in South Africa’ outlined the accomplishments during this consultative period:

(a) In consultation with other War Office branches, the organisation and composition of a field force of one Army Corps, one Cavalry Division, and Lines of Communication troops, had been worked out in all its details, and this information had been communicated to the War Office branches concerned.

(b) The necessary forms of proclamation had been drawn up and approved; mobilization placards had been decentralized to districts; and schedules (for use in the event of a partial mobilization for service in South Africa) were in course of preparation.

(c) ‘War Establishments, 1898,’ and ‘Mobilization Regulations, 1898,’ had been already published. The modifications necessary in these, to meet South African conditions of service, had been under consideration, and were nearly completed.

This report was to be the foundation for the mobilization plans for South Africa. The report outlined the important information, such as composition of force, notifications of departments and creation of official documents. As a result of these conclusions, the various departments involved in mobilization could make the necessary preparations prior to the mobilization order being issued. Also, the departments were operating under

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77 Ibid. 18.
the same expectations and conclusions for the mobilization force possibly being sent to South Africa.

Following the Commander-in-Chief’s consultative phase, the Mobilization Committee was established and held its first meeting on June 17, 1899. The members of the Committee included, General Sir Evelyn Wood, the Adjutant General, Lieutenant-General Sir G.S. White, the Quarter-Master-General, General Sir H. Brackenbury, Director-General of Ordnance, Colonel Sir W. Everett, from the Intelligence Division, Major-General W. Salmond, the Deputy Adjutant-General, as well as others. The collection of department heads that were members of the Mobilization Committee illustrates that the British Army wanted a very practical plan that could be implemented. As a result of the high-ranking members of this Committee, it was able to reach decisions quickly. This committee had all the department heads that would be called upon to act during mobilization. Thus, a mobilization plan was quickly formulated.

On its first meeting, the Mobilization Committee was given a note from the Lansdowne, dated June 13, 1899, outlining the purpose of that committee:

Although there is no present intention of reinforcing the troops now in South Africa, we should see to it that those already there are in a thoroughly efficient state as to stores, equipment, and transport. This question should be at once taken up. In regard to transport, I am under the impression that we have nothing but regimental transport, and that even this does not exist for a part of the force. I do not suppose it is necessary to provide transport, or at all events much transport, for the battalions which form the garrison of the coaling station at Cape Town, or for the half battalion which belongs to Mauritius, but the rest of the force ought to be reasonably mobile.

Besides this, there are questions as to the sufficiency of our personnel in regard to Army Service Corps and Engineers, and of our matériel in regard to commissariat supplies, and medical stores and transport. But the transport question is the most
urgent—'What do we want, where, and at what probable cost, and within what
time, can we get it?'

The committee determined the exact amount of supplies and transport they believed was required for an expeditionary force of one Army Corps and one Cavalry Division. The committee reported that a supply park containing seven day’s worth of supplies for the entire force in South Africa was required. In order to move this supply park, it required between 4,000 and 6,200 mules depending on the mules’ food source.

The Permanent Under-Secretary for the War Office, Sir Ralph Knox, gave his description of the Mobilization Committee recommendations: they “were in the direction of preparations, some of which were approved and some were not approved, because at the time it was thought matters had not advanced sufficiently far, and there was not much money available to carry out some of those recommendations.” For the Army, the problem of money was chronic when it came to trying to obtain resources for the possible campaign in South Africa. This point will be illustrated in detail further on.

On July 13, 1899, a newly created special committee titled ‘The Commander-in-Chief’s Committee to consider questions relating to Operations in South Africa’ augmented the Mobilization Committee. On September 8, it changed its name to the ‘Army Board for Mobilization.’ The main purpose of this Board was to ensure that the various departments of the War Office worked together on the military preparations needed for operations in the Boer Republics and to advise the Secretary of State.

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80 Ibid. p. 3.
82 Great Britain, Appendices to the Minutes of Evidence Take Before the Royal Commission on the War in South Africa. p. 18.
In early August, Lansdowne issued a memorandum outlining a proposed mobilization timeline. In his example, he assumed that on September 1 the Proclamation was in accordance with the Reserve Forces Act of 1882. The next day, the Queen in Council would declare a great emergency, which allowed the Army to call up its reserves. The reserves were required to report to the colours within ten days of the order in council. Between September 14 and October 1, the infantry units were to mobilize followed by the supporting units. Under Lansdowne’s theoretical mobilization, it would take the Army one month from the proclamation for the infantry units to be ready embark on transports for overseas action.

Lansdowne’s theoretical mobilization was done under the assumption that the whole force had the proper clothing and equipment. Another assumption was that the ships required to transport the troops would be ready at the same time as the infantry. According to the plan, the first infantry battalion would land in Durban within four weeks after embarking in Great Britain, followed closely by the rest of the units. This time line meant that, theoretically, it would take Britain two months to mobilize and deploy troops to South Africa. Under this proposed plan, it was assumed that the troops would be given the proper local transport and animals upon arriving. This assumption means that the British Army did not have the necessary resources to fully equipped their expeditionary force and planned to have the supplies ready by they time the force reached the South Africa. However, the assumption was eventually proven false once the mobilization order was actually given.

On August 18, 1899, the Commander-in-Chief’s committee released tables outlining the composition of the field force that was destined for South Africa in the event of a conflict taking place. These tables were circulated to all the general officers commanding districts that were to be affected by this mobilization. Through this report, the committee came to the conclusion that the intended expeditionary force could not be safely dispatched to South Africa without its units being severely strengthened by the Army Reserves.\textsuperscript{85}

In a memorandum for the Cabinet, Lansdowne outlined the required supplies and the cost for these various items. In his opinion, it would be impossible for Britain to mobilize an Army Corps and a cavalry division and deploy them to Natal in under four months. There existed, as mentioned earlier, serious deficiencies in supplies such as clothing and local transport. Lansdowne itemized a list of all the needed equipment and supplies as well as the costs associated with each item (see Table 2.1). He maintained that if the Army were to have these supplies prior to mobilization, the expeditionary force would be able to deploy a month quicker.\textsuperscript{86}

Table 2.1: Supplies Required for an Expeditionary Force sent to South Africa, August 1899.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Charges</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purchase of Clothing</td>
<td>£20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase equipment for Maxims</td>
<td>£950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase saddlery</td>
<td>£4,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase hospital equipment</td>
<td>£22,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fittings for sea transport of horses</td>
<td>£13,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase of mules and oxen</td>
<td>£694,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase vehicles and harness</td>
<td>£161,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of supply depots, Natal</td>
<td>£176,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{85} Great Britain. Appendices to the Minutes of Evidence Take Before the Royal Commission on the War in South Africa. p. 18.

\textsuperscript{86} Lansdowne Memorandum. 'Memorandum by the Marquess of Lansdowne.' [National Archives, Kew] CAB 37/50/50 pp.2-3.
Conversion of vehicles to mule and ox-draught

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>£</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conversion of vehicles to mule and ox-draught</td>
<td>4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>1,097,250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continuous Charges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>£</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forage for 14,000 mules at 1s, a-day</td>
<td>21,000 per mensem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wages of civilians drivers, leaders, and conductors</td>
<td>35,000 per mensem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>56,000 per mensem</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CAB 37/50/50 pp.2-3.

However, in August, when the report was issued, the Cabinet was unwilling to approve such a large additional sum to the Army Estimates for a conflict that as far as they were concerned might not occur. As a result of the Cabinet’s unwillingness to approve extra funding for specific supplies and equipment required for campaigning in South Africa, the Army was destined to take longer to mobilize.

On September 22, 1899, the crisis with South Africa had finally reached the point where the Cabinet was willing to authorize the release of additional funds to the Army in preparation for operations in the Boer Republics. The Cabinet released £600,000 for immediate acquisition of the needed supplies and transport. This amount was just over half of the original amount Lansdowne had set out as the minimum requirement to bring the expeditionary force up to complete readiness. However, the Army was not given permission to requisition the needed supplies and transport until September 30, thus delaying the potential mobilization of British forces further. This delay in ordering the needed supplies resulted in British troops being sent to South Africa without the appropriate kit and transport. It was only once they were in South Africa that they received the proper vehicles and animals. This was quite different than the mobilization plans for home defence. Under those mobilization plans, troops did not leave their areas

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87 Great Britain. Minutes of Evidence Take Before the Royal Commission on the War in South Africa Volume I. p. 42.
of mobilization without being entirely equipped. Afterwards, the units would proceed to the concentration area. As will be demonstrated later, the British troops that were sent to South Africa did not have all their kit at their mobilization centres; in fact they received the missing pieces of kit and transport at their concentration areas. This lack of supplies and transport at the mobilization points resulted in the force not being prepared for combat until a much later date.

In roughly nine months, the British Army was able to take the existing mobilization plan for home defence and use it as the foundation for sending an expeditionary force to South Africa. During the planning period, the various mobilization committees were able to identify and quantify the various needs of a force being sent overseas and provide a rough outline for the time required; however, the Army was soon to learn that there were many delays. These delays ultimately resulted in more time being required to mobilize and send troops to their concentration points in South Africa.

**Putting the Plan into Action**

The British Army’s scheme for mobilization was far more complex than those of its counterparts on the continent. This complexity was a result of Britain’s vast empire and the need to garrison it effectively. As a result, specific units were not always assigned to a brigade or division. Instead, units currently in Britain were assigned to particular stations upon mobilization being ordered. On October 7, 1899, the first step in the mobilization plan began.

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89 Ibid. 41.
At 11:35 am, a telegram was sent to the War Office stating that the Queen in Council at Balmoral had signed the Royal Proclamation. This proclamation signaled the start of the mobilization orders. The order named 9 October the first day of mobilization, with the 17 being the last day reservists could rejoin the colours. Mobilization, along with the plans for Home Defence, was done automatically. During this period, roughly 25,000 first class reservists responded to the call, which represented approximately ninety-eight percent of the overall first class reservists in Britain. Of that ninety-eight percent, ninety-one percent were found to be fit for overseas service. At this time, the expeditionary force was to be composed of one Army Corps and one Cavalry Division. The force that embarked for South Africa was composed of eight regiments of cavalry, four horse artillery batteries, twelve field artillery batteries, three batteries of howitzers, thirty two battalions of infantry and eight companies of mounted infantry.

Embarkation of the expeditionary force began on 20 October 1899 and, with the exception of one cavalry regiment that had sick horses, was completed by 17 November. The reason for the long delay in embarkation was because the War Office did not communicate with the Admiralty until 20 September about the details of the expeditionary force and the Admiralty was not given authorization to requisition shipping
until the 30th of the same month. The Assistant Adjutant-General for Mobilization, Colonel Sir Fredrick Stopford, was told by the Admiralty "that they could not embark the force under a month from the day when the ships were ordered; they could embark some of the force in a fortnight, but having to get ships and fit them with horse fittings and so on caused delay." This delay meant that embarkation was not complete until forty-one days after the order was given; a considerably longer period than Lansdowne had anticipated.

By the end of November 1899, the initially mobilized expeditionary force was entirely embarked and beginning to reach its concentration areas in South Africa. The completion of the mobilization plan raises the question: how successful was the plan in meeting its objectives? Following the war, many of the officers involved with the plan remarked that the plan had been successful. For instance, the Assistant Quartermaster-General, Mobilization Division, Colonel P.H.N. Lake, remarked that "no letter or query asking for further instructions about those [mobilization] regulations arrived after my coming to London. I believe that General Officers Commanding found those regulations fully sufficient to inform them on every subject on which they wanted." That opinion came from an officer involved in the mobilization in Great Britain.

In order to judge the level of success the mobilization plan achieved during the South Africa war, an analysis of the entire process must be done. General Buller, in South Africa, stated that there was a considerable period of time passing after war was declared before British troops would be able to march on Pretoria. Buller was referring to the

99 Ibid. 49. There are additional comments to the same effect found in Brigadier-General Stopford's questions.
100 Great Britain. Minutes of Evidence Take Before the Royal Commission on the War in South Africa Volume I. p.508.
lack of supplies and transport available to his forces in South Africa upon concentration. A good example was the fact that there was a lack of Khaki uniforms for the soldiers. As a result, they were sent to the Boer Republics in their red serges and were to receive the proper kit sometime after concentration. The units mobilized for South Africa were also sent abroad without all the necessary regimental transport. This lack of regimental transport meant that the troops would not be able to advance far from the concentration points because they were likely not be kept in supply. The regimental supply was responsible for bringing the regiment/battalion its water, food and additional ammunition. Soldiers only carried with them one day’s emergency rations. These deficiencies in transport and military supplies illustrate just how unprepared Great Britain was to mobilize a large number of soldiers for overseas duty.

Admittedly, the mobilization plan was successful in that soldiers and reservists were mustered, embarked and reached concentration points in South Africa; however, how long did it take and how effective would they have been if called upon to fight right away? As illustrated previously, a large number of the troops concentrating in South Africa could not participate in active campaigning due to the lack of logistical support. In terms of length of time it took to mobilize the forces, it took just over forty-one days to embark one Army Corps and one Cavalry Division, and these were not entirely complete formations. The calling up of reserves and mobilizing the regular troops took thirteen days. Then, they waited up to another month for sea transport to be ready to carry them south of the equator. If the test of a mobilization plan is to get the troops together and

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101 'Proceeding of the Army Board for Mobilization Purposes' [National Archives, Kew] WO 32/7887
get them from point A to point B, then the mobilization plan for South Africa was very successful; however, there is more involved in mobilizing a force for war then getting from point A to point B. Therefore, the British mobilization plan for South Africa was not very successful and required a lot of improvement.

When the War in South Africa started in 1899, mobilization planning was a relatively new innovation in Great Britain. The Army had only started mobilization planning for Home Defence since 1886. These plans were finally completed and revised twelve years later. It was only as the crisis in the Boer Republics appeared to be getting worse, in 1899, that the British Army started to turn its mobilization section to the possibility of sending a large force to Southern Africa. Over a period of nine months, the mobilization section, in concert with various mobilization committees, attempted to find the best way to use the resources at hand in Britain.

The Mobilization Committee and the ‘The Commander-in-Chief’s Committee to consider questions relating to Operations in South Africa’ worked to establish tables that outlined the various troops that were required for overseas duty and their respective mobilization points. As early as August 1899, the Secretary of State for War, Lansdowne recognized that the army was not equipped to fight in a climate such as South Africa. As a result, he outlined over a million pounds worth of additional supplies and transport that were required if a force was to fight in the Boer Republics. However, the army was only given about half of the funds requested at the end of September, basically eliminating any possibility of acquiring the needed materials prior to the mobilization order being given.
The mobilization order finally came on October 7 1899. Forty-one days later, the entire force, consisting of one Army Corps and one Cavalry Division, was embarked and on its way to South Africa. The main reason for the delay was the lack of sea transport initially made available to the army by the Admiralty. Some units of the expeditionary force found themselves in South Africa without any regimental transport and some units were even sent into the field in their serge.

Although some of the officers in the mobilization section viewed the mobilization of the expeditionary force for South Africa as a success, it was anything but. The troops were mobilized and sent to South Africa, but the question of efficiency needed to be addressed. During the Franco-Prussian War, Prussia had been able to mobilize over 1,183,000 men and transport 462,000 men to the French border, all within eighteen days. That number was over quadruple the number of British forces mobilized for South Africa. Over the next decade and a half, the British Army attempted to increase the efficiency in its mobilization planning. With the shifting priorities in strategic policy, the Army no longer had to plan for home defence; instead, it had to plan for sending a larger force overseas.

CHAPTER 3: The Rebirth of Mobilization Planning in Britain.

Between 1905 and 1914, British army mobilization planning centred on the new strategic policy of fighting on the Continent. Following the War in South Africa, mobilization planning was relatively quiet. There were in fact no Army Estimates published until 1907, which had been one of Britain's key components in its plans to mobilize for South Africa.\(^{104}\) The revival of mobilization planning for the British Army was a result of the increasing tension arising over Morocco, coupled with the newly signed Entente Cordiale. As a result of these events, Britain brought its mobilization planning in line with its recently changed strategic policy and began planning operations for the continent against Germany.

Shortly before the Moroccan Crisis, the British Army began to consider the possibility of operations on the continent. During the period between 1900 and 1905, there was only one paper discussed by the CID regarding the possibility of actions against Germany. The report, dated February 23, 1904, and tabled by the Intelligence Department of the Army was entitled ‘Military Resources of Germany and probable method of their employment in a war between Germany and England.’\(^{105}\) The War Office augmented this report in September 1905 with a report by the General Staff that looked at the possibility of fighting Germany with and without France. The report

\(^{104}\) Lyttelton to Haldane, 11 Mar, 1907, [National Archives, Kew] WO 32/7077.

\(^{105}\) Memorandum by the Intelligence Division 'Military Resources of Germany and probable method of their employment in a war between Germany and England.' 23, Feb. 1904. CAB 3/1
likened a war between Germany and England to a battle between an elephant and a whale, both very large creatures either on land or at sea, but neither very powerful outside of their element. The General Staff believed that Britain could do little against Germany on land without help, just as Germany could do nothing against Britain at sea without help.  

However, the General Staff believed that “in alliance with France the possibilities of active military intervention are doubtless greater.” During the period of the Moroccan Crisis, the responsibility for planning operations on the continent fell to the Director of Military Operations (DMO), Major-General James Grierson.

In 1906, however, Major-General Ewart replaced Grierson. The new DMO dedicated even less time on creating mobilization tables, embarkation/disembarkation tables and railways timetables and revising the already existing mobilization scheme. The reason for this almost neglect of mobilization planning was due to a preoccupation with wide sweeping reforms to the army that were beginning to occur. These reforms changed many aspects of the already existing institution. The one major accomplishment that occurred during Ewart’s four years at the Department of Military Operations was the reinstatement of the War Estimates.

British mobilization planning was given a jolt of life when, in December 1910, Major-General Henry Wilson took over the position of DMO. Under Wilson’s leadership, mobilization planning was given priority. A huge number of tables were completed and revised annually. As will be shown, he took into his confidence the General Managers of the railways because he knew they were the best to create the railway timetables. Wilson was the first DMO to dedicate a great deal of time and effort

106 War Office Memorandum, “British Military Action in Case of War with Germany” [National Archives, Kew] WO 106/46
to mobilization planning and, as a result, Britain had a complete mobilization plan by 1914.

Between 1905 and 1914, the Department of Military Operations had three different DMOs. This change in leadership resulted in varying interest in mobilization planning. Grierson only started to create the mobilization plan in 1905 due the crisis resulting from Morocco. Ewart neglected mobilization planning for the most part because he was preoccupied with helping implement the new army reforms. Mobilization planning was only given priority and completed once Wilson succeeded Ewart.

**Early Planning for the Continent, 1905-06**

As a result of the Moroccan Crisis, steps were taken by the British Army to create plans for rendering military assistance to France. The problem of creating an expeditionary force and a mobilization plan for that force was done in complete secrecy and was purely hypothetical in nature. Planning for the expeditionary force was made easier on January 15, 1906, when Major-General Grierson received permission from Sir Edward Grey, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and Richard Haldane, the Secretary of State for War, to enter “into communications with the French Military Attaché here for the purpose of obtaining such information as you require as to the methods in which assistance could in case of need be best afforded by us to France and vice versa.” Though being able to communicate with the French Military Attaché, Grierson was able to create a much more practical aspect to his otherwise hypothetical plans.

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108 Address by Major-General Sir Percy Radcliff [National Archives, Kew] WO 106/49A/1
The force that Grierson intended to use for the expeditionary force consisted of two army corps and four cavalry brigades. The first army corps was to be composed of troops stationed at Aldershot, as laid down in the Field Army Tables. The second army corps was to be more of a collection of various units from around the United Kingdom. The second army corps’ headquarters was to mobilize at Southampton and consisted of the 4th, 5th and 7th infantry divisions, as shown in the Field Army Tables. The total composition of the proposed expeditionary force was: 3,561 officers, 101,345 other ranks and 52,632 horses. This force brought with it: 324 artillery pieces, 22 1-pound quick-fire guns, 124 machineguns, 5,588 four-wheeled wagons and 975 two-wheeled wagons. This constituted a considerably larger force than what had been originally planned for South Africa in 1899.

The first stage in Grierson’s mobilization plan was to place the coastal defences of the United Kingdom on a war footing. This order meant that the garrisons of the various fortresses and ports around the United Kingdom would mobilize and prepare for the possibility of invasion. This part of the mobilization, according to a War Office letter dated 25 January 1905, was to be completed within four days of the mobilization order being given. The final day for mobilizing units for home defence was the first day that units of the expeditionary force were expected to be mobilized.

On the fourth day of mobilization, the corps cavalry for the 1st Army Corps and various support units, such as the headquarters for the advanced forces, engineers and railway control establishments, were expected to have completed mobilization. Days five through to seven saw more support units, such as supply units, bakery sections, veterinary

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110 War Office Memorandum 1905 by Major-General Grierson “Mobilization of the Forces” [National Archives, Kew] WO 106/49C
111 Ibid.
sections, advanced remount depots and ordnance depot units mobilized. The purpose of mobilizing most of the units belonging to the lines of communication was to ensure that the infantry divisions were properly supplied in the field. The infantry and cavalry divisions would have found it increasingly difficult to advance without proper logistical support lines established behind them.

On the eighth day of mobilization, Grierson planned that the 1st Cavalry Brigade was to have completed mobilization. The following day the 1st and 2nd Divisions were ready to embark. The tenth mobilization day saw the 3rd Cavalry Brigade, 3rd and 7th Divisions plus the Corps troops for the 1st Army Corps complete mobilization. The 2nd Cavalry Brigade was ready on the twelfth, followed by the 4th Cavalry Brigade, 4th and 5th Divisions and Corps Cavalry for the 2nd Army Corps on the fourteenth day. The final two days of mobilization, the fifteenth and sixteenth, saw the remaining Corps Troops for the 2nd Army Corps and the hospital and medical stores complete the process.112 Once the troops were fully mobilized, they were entrained and sent to the various ports for embarkation. During this period in mobilization planning, unlike in later years, train timetables were created without the input of the directors of the various railway companies that were to be used for entraining the soldiers. All the movements by units from their place of mobilization to the ports of embarkation were the responsibility of the Director of Movement and Quartering (DMQ).113

The English ports that were designated for embarkation were Dover, Folkestone, Southampton and Queenstown. The movement of the troops overseas was a collaborative

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112 War Office Memorandum 1905 by Major-General Grierson “Mobilization of the Forces” [National Archives, Kew] WO 106/49C
113 Ibid.
effort between the DMQ and the Admiralty, who worked out the various timetables and plans together. These plans were kept at the office of the DMQ.114

The Admiralty estimated that they required fourteen weeks to prepare enough transports to carry the expeditionary force to France. The Army believed that this length of time was rather excessive to gather the required naval transport.115 This problem over the time required to gather enough transports was a source of friction between the War Office and the Admiralty. In 1905, Grierson played a war game based on the assumption that Germany would invade France through Belgium. According to his findings from this war game, British troops would need to be in Belgium by the twelfth day of mobilization in order to have an impact on the war. Any later and the force’s impact on the war would be negligible.116

This problem of transports was not a new one. Prior to the start of the South African War in 1899, “the War Office asked the Admiralty how long would it take to provide transport for 49,000 men and 7,900 horses. The answer was 4 to 5 weeks.”117 This timeline was obviously far too long given the fact that according to Grierson’s war game, if Britain was to be of any real help to the French, it needed to have 125,804 men and 60,368 horses at the Belgian frontier on day twelve. This gap between the Admiralty’s time estimates and that of the Army would be something that was dealt with over the following years.

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114 War Office Memorandum 1905 by Major-General Grierson “Mobilization of the Forces” [National Archives, Kew] WO 106/49C
115 War Office Memorandum, ‘British Military Action in Case of War with Germany’ [National Archives, Kew] WO 106/46
117 Address by Major-General Sir Percy Radcliff [National Archives, Kew] WO 106/49A
These plans were about the extent of Grierson’s mobilization planning during late 1905 and early 1906. As with the war in South Africa, the Moroccan Crisis had found Britain unprepared again, for the possibility of mobilizing troops as part of an expeditionary force. As a result of this lack of planning, the British Army was forced to create a rushed mobilization plan for a possible war with Germany in support of France. If anything, Great Britain had taken a step backwards in terms of creating mobilization plans; no War Estimates had been issued since 1898, along with very little mobilization planning in general. This lack of planning slowly improved over the years leading to 1914. In October 1906, Ewart replaced Grierson as DMO. Ewart’s tenure as DMO did not include many significant changes to the mobilization plans of Great Britain. He was more concerned with the current army reforms; however, there were some improvement in the plans to mobilize a British expeditionary force.

**The years before Wilson, 1906-1910**

During the period of 1906-1910, there was very little work done to improve the mobilization plans that Grierson had created. This lack of progression in mobilization planning was a result of the far-reaching Army reforms during this period. This statement does not mean that Ewart completely ignored mobilization planning during his tenure as DMO, it simply did not receive the same priority level it had under Grierson or that it would under Wilson.

During Ewart's time as DMO, the British Army underwent significant reform under Haldane. The specifics of his reforms are not of particular importance to this analysis; only the result is crucial. By the time he finished, Haldane had created an expeditionary force that consisted of six infantry divisions, one cavalry division, army
troops and line of communication troops. The strength of the field army was set at 6,494 Officers and 160,260 men. Haldane was able to implement these changes because he won over the hearts and minds of the soldiers, specifically the General Staff, to his reforms. These reforms not only required Ewart’s attention in helping implement them, but Ewart was also responsible for ensuring that the mobilization plans reflected the newly reformed Army.

Shortly after taking over the office, Ewart found that the original scheme that Grierson had created was no longer an accurate representation of British resources and organization as a result of the recent and on going Army reforms. British mobilization planning was also made more complicated when Paris informed London that there had been changes to French mobilization plan. Because of these changes to French plans, the British area of concentration, ports of disembarkation and railway transport had all been affected and required revision.

One of the few revisions that Ewart pursued was the reduction in size of the expeditionary force. He replaced the two Army Corps with the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 5th Divisions, and he added two mounted brigades to the Army Troops. This decrease in the size of the expeditionary force was largely a result of fears in Britain that the Territorial Forces could not defend Britain effectively against a raid without the support of the Regular Army. The concern about a potential attack on the home islands illustrated that although the Army officially accepted its role as one used overseas and not for home defence, fear made some officers feel the need to keep some regular units at home.

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120 War Office Memorandum dated 6 Nov. 1911 signed by General William Nicholson CIGS. “Action taken by the General Staff since 1906 in preparing a plan for rendering military assistance to France in the event of an unprovoked attack on that power by Germany.” [National Archives, Kew] WO 106/49A/1
Also during the first part of his time as DMO, Ewart approached the Admiralty unofficially about providing enough transports to carry the expeditionary force to the continent. The creation of embarkation tables was made considerably easier with the assistance of the Admiralty. One of the defects in the mobilization plans of this time was the lack of railway timetables. The Army feared that they could not trust the managers of the railway companies with this sensitive information, so no railway timetables were drafted during this period.\textsuperscript{122}

The revised scheme was completed in mid-1907 and was ready to be communicated to the French Military Attaché, Huguet. Just prior to releasing the revised mobilization plans to the French, Sir Neville Lyttelton, the then Chief of the General Staff, wrote a memorandum to the Foreign Office asking permission to do so. On July 26, 1907, the memorandum was given to the Foreign Office stating that the mobilization plans were for proposed action and that the scheme was nonbinding for the British Government; it showed only how the plans had been made in view of the situation in 1906 and the army reforms of 1907.\textsuperscript{123}

On December 3, 1908, the revised scheme was finally laid before the 'Military Needs of the Empire' sub-committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence. This sub-committee was presided over by the Prime Minister, Asquith. The members of the committee included, the Marquess of Crewe, Lord President of the Council, Haldane, Reginald McKenna, First Lord of the Admiralty, Hardinge, Foreign Office Permanent Under-Secretary and Admiral Fisher.\textsuperscript{124} This sub-committee comprised all the key

\textsuperscript{123} War Office Memorandum dated 6 Nov. 1911 signed by General William Nicholson CIGS. "Action taken by the General Staff since 1906 in preparing a plan for rendering military assistance to France in the event of an unprovoked attack on that power by Germany." [WO 106/49A/1
\textsuperscript{124} Ibid.
individuals for deciding British foreign and military policy. On March 23, 1909, the sub-committee agreed that the decision to send the Army abroad to help defend France against a German invasion or to rely solely on a naval option rested with the Government of the day. However, they did decide that:

In view of the possibility of a decision of the Cabinet to use military force, the Committee have examined the plans of the General Staff, and are of opinion that, in the initial stages of war between France and Germany, in which the Government decides to assist France, the plan to which preference is given by the General Staff is a valuable one and the General Staff should accordingly work out the necessary details.\textsuperscript{125}

This decision shows that those responsible for British foreign and defence policy recognized the necessity to continue the Army’s planning for a conflict on continent in support of France.

During this period of mobilization planning, the British government made a number of assumptions concerning a war between Germany and France, upon which their subsequent mobilization plans were based. These assumptions were outlined in a 1910 War Office memorandum entitled ‘Memorandum on the Employment of a British Force of 4 Divisions and 1 Cavalry Division on the Continent in Cooperation with France Against Germany.’\textsuperscript{126} The War Office assumptions dealt not only with the actions of other European countries, but also actions to be taken by Britain and its armed forces. The first part of the memorandum classified the assumed actions of the other European countries into two types; the first dealt with the level of hostility towards Germany and France by the other European powers; the second dealt with countries that Britain


\textsuperscript{126} War Office Memorandum “Memorandum on the employment of a British Force of 4 Divisions and 1 Cavalry Division on the continent in cooperation with France against Germany.” [National Archives, Kew] WO 106/49C
believed would remain neutral if a war broke out between France and Germany and not likely to mobilize troops along common borders with France and Germany.

The first of these assumptions was that Russia would mobilize a portion of its army and place it on the German border. In response to this potential threat, Germany would leave two army corps and a cavalry division on that frontier. This action by Russia would aid France by drawing a significant force of the German Army away from the German-France border. The second assumption was that Austria-Hungary would remain neutral, barring any hostile action by Russia. The final assumption predicted that Italy was likely to be hostile towards France and, as a result, France would need to leave two army corps along the Franco-Italian border.

The first of the second group of assumptions was that Switzerland would remain neutral in any conflict; however, it would also resist any violation of its territory with all the force it could muster. The second assumption was that Belgium would declare neutrality and that any violation of its territory would be met with formal rather than active resistance. The third assumption dealt with the neutrality of Holland. If Dutch neutrality were violated, the report speculated that Holland would immediately declare war on the aggressor. The final assumption mentioned in the report stated: “That the remaining Powers will remain neutral unless Belgian neutrality is violated. In the latter event their action is unlikely to go beyond a formal protest.”

All these assumptions combined left the War Office with the opinion that the conflict would be limited solely to France, Germany, Great Britain and, possibly, Belgium.

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127 War Office Memorandum “Memorandum on the employment of a British Force of 4 Divisions and 1 Cavalry Division on the continent in cooperation with France against Germany.” [National Archives, Kew] WO 106/49C
The above-mentioned assumptions were important to the overall planning for mobilization. Planners needed to be aware of all the potential threats to France and the resources of both France's and Germany's allies, as well as how those allies would act if a war between France and Germany did break out. By being aware of the actions of the other countries, the War Office was able to plan its actions accordingly.

The rest of the report discussed the actions that were to be taken by Britain if hostilities broke out. The first point discussed was that H.M. Government believed that on the outbreak of hostilities the Navy could secure the line from Dover to Calais. This action was to be done in order to allow for safe transport of the expeditionary force to the Continent. Upon the Navy securing the Channel, the expeditionary force, consisting of four divisions of Infantry, one cavalry division and support troops, would immediately be embarked and transported to the continent.128

The memorandum estimated the size of the various armies that would potentially be involved in the conflict. It estimated that Germany would field an army consisting of twenty-one Army Corps, composed of two divisions each, supplemented by ten cavalry divisions. This force's total strength was an estimated 909,000 men. France would field an army consisting of eighteen Army Corps of three divisions each and eight cavalry divisions for a total of 866,000 men. However, the French were to be augmented by a British expeditionary force consisting of four divisions of infantry and one cavalry division for a total of 87,500 men. Therefore, the combined forces of Britain and France would have numerical superiority in a war with Germany, but only if the British forces were to make it to the continent in time to play an active role.

128 War Office Memorandum "Memorandum on the employment of a British Force of 4 Divisions and 1 Cavalry Division on the continent in cooperation with France against Germany." [National Archives, Kew] WO 106/49C
Due to the disparity in size of the continental armies and the British one, the War Office assumed that the expeditionary force would play only a secondary role in the fighting. In terms of planning, the British Army needed to fit into the French plans for war, not act independently. The German field force was nine times the size of the British. As a result of this fact, the British Army chose to study the war plans of both France and Germany to determine the scheme for the employment of the expeditionary force. Through discussions with the French General Staff, the British were able to ascertain that the French war plans, at this time, were based on a defensive strategy. On the other hand, Germany’s war plans were based on taking the offensive as quickly as possible.

Between 1906 and 1910, the most significant development for mobilization planning was the reintroduction of War Estimates in 1907. This year was the first time that such estimates were published since 1898. This event carries much significance because the War Estimates had been critical in the mobilization planning for the War in South Africa. In fact, this document had acted as the centrepiece of the British mobilization planning.

In a War Office memorandum dated March 11, 1907, the Chief of the General Staff (CGS), General N.G. Lyttelton, outlined why it had taken so long to issue an updated version of the War Establishments. He blamed the lack of Estimates on the period of unending and constantly changing reforms that had plagued the British Army since the Boer War:

This unsatisfactory condition in the past has been largely due to attempts at tinkering at certain units without a full consideration of the effect on the

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129 War Office Letter to Secretary of State for War, Richard Haldane from CGS, General N.G. Lyttelton. [National Archives, Kew] WO 32/7077
establishments as a whole; for instance extra guns, ammunition and men were added to the Artillery without the additional men and wagons required for carrying their supplies being added to the Transport and Supply columns; new machine gun equipment was issued to the Cavalry before the extra transport required for its carriage had been provided, and so on.\textsuperscript{130}

This constantly changing environment for the Army was a result of the fact that over a three year period, 1903-1905, there had been three different Secretaries of State for War, all with their own ideas on how best to reform the army. As a result of the frequent change in ministers partial reforms were completed, only to be dropped because a new Secretary of State had different ideas. This changing political environment was difficult for the Army to keep accurate information on its formations and size of formations, as the Chief of the General Staff pointed out.

One of Lyttelton's most important points in the memorandum was that the War Estimates not be allowed to lapse again and should be printed on a regular basis. This statement opened up the questions of when the Estimates were best to be issued. A memorandum by Sir Edward Ward, dated September 10, 1907, outlined how the War Estimates were to be changed. The changes in both the War Estimates and the Field Service Manuals were to be issued annually at the beginning of the financial year, the 1 April. If a department wished to propose a change to the War Estimates, which required financial considerations, the proposal needed to be given to the CGS before 1 July. However, if no money was required for proposed changes it could be handed in as late as 1 February.\textsuperscript{131}

\textsuperscript{130} War Office Letter to Secretary of State for War, Richard Haldane from CGS, General N.G. Lyttelton. [National Archives, Kew] WO 32/7077
\textsuperscript{131} War Office Memorandum No. 537 dated 10 Sept. 1907 signed General Edward Ward “Changes in War Estimates” [National Archives, Kew] WO 32/7077
The War Estimates were published every April and in theory took effect from that date; although, the actual changes were not effective until July of each year. Every alteration in the War Estimates meant that plans dealing with the concentration of the expeditionary force had to be changed. Depending on the size of change in the Estimates, a considerable amount of time could be spent by the members of the DMO staff revising various mobilization orders and plans. The General Staff estimated that if any large changes had to be made to the mobilization plan it would take at least a month to update. This length of time resulted in Britain being potentially unable to react quickly to open hostility on the continent, as was required by its mobilization plan.  

The concern over revising War Estimates and mobilization plans was addressed in a memorandum by Major Duff of the General Staff, ‘War Estimates 1909-1910.’ Duff pointed out that July was the most likely month of the year that the mobilization plans might be put into effect. Yet it was around this month that the changes to the War Estimates and mobilization plan were implemented. He believed that changes occurring at this time could result in considerable confusion if war was to break out. Duff pointed out that fall and winter were the least likely months that a war would break out and spring and summer the most probable. As a result of this conclusion, he suggested that the War Estimates should not take effect until three months after being approved. The date Duff recommended for the changes taking effect was the 1 October. The General Staff eventually approved this date. 

Ewart's tenure as DMO was not one of wide scale change to the mobilization plan. Most of his time and energy had been dedicated to the changes made under what

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133 Ibid.
would be later called the Haldane reforms. This explains why, after 1907, the mobilization plans were not altered in any major way except for the changes required by the changing War Estimates. But the one important development that did occur during Ewart's tenure was the reintroduction of those Estimates. Between 1898 and 1907, no War Estimates had been issued. This deficiency meant that there was no concise document outlining the various formations of the British Army. This long pause in mobilization planning came to a halt when Wilson took over the position of DMO in December of 1910.

**The Wilson Years, 1910-1914**

Over the next three and a half years, Wilson would dedicate most of his energy to refining the existing plan and coordinating with the French General Staff. The DMO put his goal of creating an efficient expeditionary force ahead of many common practices found in the War Office. One of the areas, as a department head, Wilson tended to overlook was that of departmental responsibilities. Wilson took over various responsibilities that previously did not belong to his department. These responsibilities were transferred to the Department of Military Operations because Wilson believed that they were critical to mobilization planning. One new responsibility assumed by Wilson was that of rail transport for the expeditionary force. This disregard for established departmental responsibility was just one of the ways Wilson showed his deep passion for creating well-organized mobilization plans.

When Wilson became DMO, he unearthed the existing mobilization plans. These plans; however, were purely academic, paper-based plans. No practical steps had been

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taken to make them a reality. Wilson found that no railway timetables existed for when the force was either in Britain or in France. Moreover, the Quarter-Master General, Major-General J.S. Cowans, would not touch the problem of mobilization.\footnote{Address by Major-General Sir Percy Radcliff [National Archives, Kew] WO 106/49A/1}

Shortly after taking over as DMO, Wilson prepared a memorandum, dated 12 January 1911, for the Chief of Imperial General Staff, Sir William Nicholson. Wilson outlined what he believed to be the present state of the mobilization plan. He stated that whether the mobilization plan called for an expeditionary force consisting of six divisions of infantry, one cavalry division, army troops and lines of communication units, or the same force minus two infantry divisions, it was far from complete so that the force was not ready to take the field.

Wilson gave a number of reasons why the expeditionary force was not physically able to deploy overseas. The first deficiency was the lack of any mobilization dates for divisions or units of the force. The specific reason that Wilson gave for this lack of mobilization dates was the incomplete state of the arrangements to bring the supply of horses to the War Establishment level.\footnote{Letter from Wilson to CIGS Nicholson dated 6 Jul 1911. [National Archives, Kew] WO 106/49C}

The second major deficiency was the lack of planning surrounding what to do once troops were fully mobilized. There had been no arrangements previously made to move the troops to the mobilization centres, to the ports or to the concentration areas in France. Specifically, Wilson mentioned the deficiency in railway planning: “the detailed arrangements for which are considered of first class importance in France and Germany, though in this country they have received but scant attention.”\footnote{Ibid.} This deficiency was a
major problem for the British Army; to move any amount of soldiers quickly required the use of trains. This problem was something that Wilson endeavoured to complete.

The final problem, in Wilson’s eyes, was the lack of staff work and arrangements at the various ports of embarkation. The expeditionary force numbered around 100,000 men, not to mention horses. As such, if the Army planned to move that large number of soldiers through any British port, a large amount of planning was required to ensure that the process was completed quickly and without confusion. As a result of the lack of embarkation planning and lack of railway timetables, the Army was unable to work out definitive plans with the Admiralty for the transportation of the expeditionary force across the Channel.\(^{138}\)

During February of 1911, Wilson had completed his first major task: the completion of the embarkation tables. He completed the tables for a force consisting of four infantry divisions, one cavalry division and lines of communication troops. These tables were communicated to the Director of Naval Transports. While creating the embarkation tables, Wilson changed the ports of embarkation; now, he only used Southampton as the port of embarkation for troops leaving from England.\(^{139}\)

The following month, Wilson wrote an updated memorandum for the CIGS discussing the problem of employing the expeditionary force to a “civilized country” and in a “temperate climate”. Wilson believed that he had been able to “fix with considerable precision the place at which and the time when our troops must be present in order to take part in an engagement which, without in any way being final, may very likely be decisive


in the war under consideration." However, for the army to participate in this potentially decisive battle, Wilson determined that this expeditionary force had to be at the port of embarkation no later than noon on the twelfth day of mobilization for troops embarking from England and the eleventh day for troops embarking from Ireland.

Because of the changes that Wilson had already made to the existing mobilization plan and the future reforms, the mobilization timetable were accelerated. The table below illustrates the differences between the Grierson mobilization timetable and Wilson's accelerated dates.

Table 3.1: Revised Embarkation Schedule.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Dates of Embarkation</th>
<th>Old Dates (1907-1910)</th>
<th>Start</th>
<th>Finish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cavalry Division</td>
<td>Start</td>
<td>8th</td>
<td>14th</td>
<td>7th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Division</td>
<td>Start</td>
<td>8th</td>
<td>9th</td>
<td>4th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Division</td>
<td>Start</td>
<td>10th</td>
<td>11th</td>
<td>4th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Division</td>
<td>Start</td>
<td>12th</td>
<td>13th</td>
<td>5th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Division</td>
<td>Start</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>6th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th Division</td>
<td>Start</td>
<td>13th</td>
<td>17th</td>
<td>5th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th Division</td>
<td>Start</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>6th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Army Troops</td>
<td>Start</td>
<td>10th</td>
<td>15th</td>
<td>7th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L of C</td>
<td>Start</td>
<td>4th</td>
<td>10th</td>
<td>1st</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(a) all units except the Divisional Ammunition Column embark by the 10th
(b) only a few units remain over from 12th day to embark 13th.


This chart shows that Wilson was able, in theory, to have almost all the units of the British Expeditionary Force embarked by the twelfth day of mobilization. Also, he was able to increase the size of the expeditionary force to six infantry divisions from the original four, not to mention that the force was able to start embarking at an early date.

Some of the lines of communications units were to start embarking on the first day. This

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contrasted with Grierson’s plan where units were not embarking until the fourth day of mobilization and the last date of embarkation being the seventeenth day of mobilization.

At the end of 1911, Wilson wrote again to the CIGS, describing the existing situation regarding mobilization planning:

I am under the impression that our arrangements for mobilization have been greatly improved of late years. We have been and still are in a transitional state as regards horse supply and the substitution of mechanical for animal transport. There is no doubt a shortage of officers and in some services a shortage of personnel but we are doing our best to make good these shortages.\(^{141}\)

During the span of a year, Wilson had been able to take the skeleton mobilization plan and begin to create a much more complete mobilization plan. This achievement was done despite changes to the logistical units, the introduction of mechanical transport was relatively new, and deficiencies both in terms of officers and horses.

The deficiencies, with respect to mobilizing a force, were highlighted in a report submitted to the DMO by Colonel Harper, Mobilization Officer (1), dated April 1, 1913. Harper outlined a number of key areas that were deemed deficient in 1912. The first major deficiency was that of regular officers. At the time of the report there was a shortage of over 2,000 regular officers based on the existing mobilization plan. Harper believed that under the current system it was impossible to create a scheme that would fill the establishment to the required numbers.\(^{142}\) The shortage of manpower was not only one faced by the officer corps but also by the regular soldiers. Almost all of the regular army units required a substantial number of reservists to bring the unit to full strength. Table 3.2 illustrates the extremes that the units of the expeditionary force required to

\(^{141}\) Letter from CIGS to DMO dated 1 Dec. 1911 [National Archives, Kew] WO 106/49C
\(^{142}\) Letter to Wilson from Colonel Harper dated 1 Apr. 1913. [National Archives, Kew] WO 32/7109
meet their full War Estimate. These numbers were reflective of the requirements if mobilization occurred on February 1, 1913.

Table 3.2: Proportion of reservists required to complete to War Establishment on Mobilization.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formation</th>
<th>Formation average</th>
<th>Best Unit Average</th>
<th>Worst Unit Average</th>
<th>Artillery Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cavalry Division</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>6th Dragoon Gds</td>
<td>4th Dragoon Gds</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Division</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>2nd Munster Fus.</td>
<td>1st Cameron</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Division</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>Irish Guards</td>
<td>Ox &amp; Bucke</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Division</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>1st Lincoln</td>
<td>2nd R. Irish R.</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Division</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>1/R1 Warwick Regt</td>
<td>1/s Wales Borders</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th Division</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>Connaught Rangers</td>
<td>2/Manchester Rgt.</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th Division</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>2/York &amp; Lanc. Rgt.</td>
<td>1/Shrope L.I.</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2: Proportion of reservists required to complete War Establishments on Mobilization. [National Archives, Kew] WO 32/7109

Upon mobilization most units would have at least fifty percent of their strength filled by reservists. This number was considerably high; it also led to the possibility of causing mobilization to take longer than scheduled. Reservists had to leave their jobs and report to their units, which takes time, unlike regular soldiers who were already at their places of mobilization.

Another area that was not meeting the requirement for mobilization was the supply of horses. The recent introduction of a new system for obtaining horses upon
mobilization would, if allowed to continue, meet the Army’s requirement. The new system allowed for the simplified registration of horses for the artillery, the increased size of the peace establishments and the introduction of heavy draft horses for the supply trains. The situation was also helped by the introduction of mechanical transport, which allowed for a decrease in the number of horses required by the Army Service Corps. Although the situation was improving, there was still a large deficiency in the number of horses, as illustrated by the ‘Remount Statement 1912-13.’ This document showed that there was a severe shortage of horses. For example, the 1st Division was missing over 1,800 horses, a huge number especially for an infantry division. This meant that artillery and supply units were significantly short of horses. As a result, the division was less likely to advance rapidly.

The final major deficiency was that of horse fittings. To transport the large number of horses across the Channel, sea transports had to be equipped with horse fittings. At the time of the memorandum, there was a report by commercial experts examining the problem. It was estimated that to ensure the Army had enough fittings for its horses, an expenditure of £36,000 was required. Of that amount, £7,500 had already been allotted in the Army Estimates. This sum for the expeditionary force going to Europe was considerably smaller than the additional supplies needed by the expeditionary force that had been sent to South Africa in the Boer War.

The reports make it appear that there were a great many deficiencies in the British mobilization planning during this period. This assumption could not be farther from the truth. Admittedly, there were shortages in terms of manpower and horses, but when

143 Letter to Wilson from Colonel Harper dated 1 Apr. 1913. [National Archives, Kew] WO 32/7109
144 “Remount Statement 1912-13.” [National Archives, Kew] WO 33/600
compared to years prior and the deficiencies that existed in planning, shortages appear to be nothing significant.

During Wilson’s tenure, much work was done in the area of sea transport. In 1913, the Admiralty had finished drafting a census of shipping in British ports. The role of the census was to determine the age, number and size of ships in British ports at any given time. This average was important to ascertain whether or not enough ships available in port for the British Government to requisition for transporting the expeditionary force to France (see Table 3.3).146 A similar report was published in early 1914.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Port</th>
<th>18th Dec</th>
<th>30th Jan</th>
<th>20th Feb</th>
<th>20th March</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liverpool</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southampton</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glasgow</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Admiralty Memorandum “Memorandum as to the Ports of Fitting of Expeditionary Force Transports, and Statement of result of Test.” Signed Herbert Savory, Director of Transports, 2 May, 1914. [National Archives, Kew] WO 106/49B/2

The findings of these reports were that there was enough shipping to carry the expeditionary force to the continent.147 This finding meant that the troops could be carried to the continent without much difficulty, thus leaving the problem of disembarking once the forces were in France.

The ports that the troops disembarked from were code named Port B, Port C and Port R. Port B was Boulogne; Port C was Havre and Port R was Rouen.148

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146 “Mobilization Requirements; Conference of Military Members held 10\textsuperscript{th} April 1913 in CIGS room” [National Archives, Kew] WO 32/7109
147 Admiralty Memorandum “Memorandum as to the Ports of Fitting of Expeditionary Force Transports, and Statement of result of Test.” Signed Herbert Savory, Director of Transports, 2 May, 1914. [National Archives, Kew] WO 106/49B/2
and Fletcher Report, dated February 1913, explored the French Channel ports. It found that “the chief port of disembarkation and the main base was Havre with Rouen as a subsidiary base and Boulogne as a temporary base for use during the concentration period only.” The report ruled out the possibility of using Calais due to the level of exposure it had to attack by German submarines and light craft.

The picture below gives a rough idea of what the War Office had envisioned with the selection of the ports of disembarkation. Due to the size of the expeditionary force, one French port was not large enough to disembark the entire force. As a result, three ports were used, which formed a triangle. From these ports the units marched inland to a concentration area (see Map 3.1)

Map 3.1: Diagram of Disembarkation ports and lines of communication.
Source: “Explanatory note to accompany the diagram showing the composition and disposition of troops on the lines of communication, W.F. scheme.” [National Archives, Kew] WO 106/49C

\[149\] Address by Major-General Sir Percy Radcliff [National Archives, Kew] WO 106/49A/1
The two main ports form a triangle with the third serving as a support port. By using three ports, the British would be able to land more forces on the continent at any one time and they would be able to stay relatively concentrated. There was a lot of work done on putting together the embarkation and disembarkation tables for the expeditionary force. Due to the fact that the Army had to deal with the Admiralty’s Director of Naval Transport to find sea transports for its units, the process of creating these tables took longer than if the Army had created them by themselves.

The creation of railway timetables was another area where the Army had to look beyond itself to create these tables effectively. When the expeditionary force was either in Britain or France, its main mode of transportation was railways. The creation of railway timetables also required collaboration with outside parties. For the tables being used in the United Kingdom, Wilson decided to include in mobilization planning process the managers of the large railway companies. Under Grierson and Ewart, the railway managers were purposely excluded from the mobilization process because these DMOs felt that the managers were a security risk; however, Wilson recognized the necessity of having the men involved in the mobilization process who ran the railways on a regular basis. Through having the railway managers involved, Wilson was able to get more accurate information regarding the capabilities of the various rail lines in the United Kingdom.

In 1912, to allow for better cooperation between the General Managers of the railway companies, an Executive Committee was appointed. This committee was composed of all the General Managers whose railways were required for mobilization.
The function of this committee was to control and manage all the railways during mobilization.¹⁵⁰

An example of how useful the managers of the railway companies were to the mobilization plan was illustrated in a meeting in March 1911. At the Director of Movement and Quartering room, the DMO met with Sir Charles Owens, the General Manager of London & South Western Railway. Owens expressed to everyone present that he was confident that his railway line could run up to seventy trains a day into the Southampton Docks. The actual number of trains that were to be used would depend entirely on the number of soldiers that are ready to detrain and embark.¹⁵¹

Under the current mobilization plans, the infantry would embark on the fourth, fifth, and sixth days of mobilization. This would mean an average of forty trains a day would be used. The remainder of the fighting troops would be transported by rail on the seventh to twelfth days of mobilization. For days seven through to eleven an average of sixty-eight trains per day were to be used, with roughly thirty-four on the twelfth day. The busiest area for entraining was the area around Aldershot. On the busiest day, the average number of trains leaving Aldershot would be about thirty.¹⁵²

A problem that confronted the mobilization planners was one that affects anyone involved in coalition warfare: creating joint timetables. The British would rely on the French for rail transport while on the Continent. This reliance meant that the British had to work with the French to create railway timetables, and that these tables were subject to change every time the French changed their mobilization plans. In December 1911, the

¹⁵¹ War Office Memorandum “The Progress of the Scheme for the dispatch of the Expeditionary Force during the half-year ending June 30th, 1911.” [National Archives, Kew] WO 106/49C
¹⁵² Ibid.
British communicated to the French General Staff details of what they thought the train movements from the disembarkation ports to the area of concentration should be.\(^{153}\)

On September 27, 1912, Major Cameron and Captain Ommanery met with Commandant Barbier, of the French General Staff, at the French Embassy to discuss railway transport arrangements. Barbier recommended that as of noon on the ninth day of mobilization, a commission be appointed to list all the troops available for railway transport starting on the eleventh day. The troops most likely to be ready for this date were those previously left behind, troops that landed on the eight day of mobilization, or troops that whose landing was assured by 1800 hours on the ninth day.\(^{154}\)

This recommendation did not correspond with what the British planners had envisioned. The British scheme was based on the fact that whole of the troops that left Southampton on the ninth day of mobilization had to be transported forward two days later. The first group of ships leaving Southampton were not destined to arrive at Le Havre or Boulogne until 1800 hours on the ninth, and the second wave was to arrive early on the tenth. British planners were able to get Barbier to concede to their mobilization timetable.

The problem of coordinating troop transportation by train was not the only problem confronting British and French planners; once the troops were concentrated in France, they needed to be supplied. Some of the troops were concentrated before all the lines of communication troops were on the continent. As a result, Britain had to rely on France providing some of the necessary supplies and transporting British supplies to the concentration area for the expeditionary force.

\(^{154}\) “Notes on a conversation with Commandant Barbier.” [National Archives, Kew] WO 106/49B/6
The first supply train carrying British supplies was to leave Boulogne around the fourth day of mobilization. This train was to head to Amiens, where the expeditionary force was concentrating. At Amiens, there was only one day’s worth of rations because of the short time frame army was operating under. From the seventh to the tenth days, the British General Staff relied on receiving from the French the following supplies (see table 3.4).

Table 3.4: Rations required by expeditionary force in France during mobilization.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day of Delivery</th>
<th>Boulogne</th>
<th>Le Havre</th>
<th>Rouen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of rations for men</td>
<td>Number of rations for horses</td>
<td>Number of rations for men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: War Office Memorandum signed by DMO dated 19 Jul 1913. [National Archives, Kew] WO 106/49A/1

These supplies were a considerable sum, but required to keep the troop disembarking from their sea transports feed.

During Wilson’s tenure as DMO, mobilization planning focused mainly on creating timetables to ensure smooth transport of the troops and smooth transitions between different modes of travel. Wilson was able to decrease the time needed to mobilize an expeditionary force and send it to the continent. Under his plan, the expeditionary force was to be embarked for France by the twelfth day of mobilization, a drastic decrease in time required compared with that of his predecessors.

Mobilization planning in the interwar years, between the War in South Africa and the First World War, was the work of a select group of individuals. This planning had all
but been forgotten until the start of the Moroccan Crisis in 1905. Then, as before 1899, the British Army worked quickly to solve the problem created by this crisis and draft mobilization plans. This pattern of drafting mobilization plans only during crises seemed to be the standard for British mobilization planning. This statement is true even following the Moroccan Crisis. In December of 1910, this pattern of neglect stopped upon the appointment of Wilson as DMO. He spent the next three and half years drafting entraining tables, embarkation and disembarkation tables, timelines and more. These actions by Wilson were the first time the DMO really took the initiative and planned for a conflict prior to a crisis occurring.
Chapter 4: The 1914 Plan.

The years prior to the First World War can be called the renaissance of mobilization planning in Great Britain. As DMO, Wilson had spent the years before 1914 creating a mobilization plan that would be used if Britain went to war with France against Germany. Upon taking up this office, Wilson found that no true mobilization plans existed. Although the concept of mobilization planning did exist, there were no practical plans drawn up. Wilson dedicated himself to decrease the time required to mobilize Haldane’s newly created expeditionary force. As illustrated in the previous chapter, Wilson created embarkation tables with the Navy, entrainment tables with the General Mangers of the Railways, and mobilization tables for the various units of the expeditionary force. One of the reasons Wilson was able to create a mobilization in such realistic detail was due to his inclusion of civilians and other departments in his planning.

In August 1914, all of Wilson’s hard work finally paid off; the British Army successfully mobilized for a conflict on the continent. Unlike previous wars and conflicts, Britain entered the crisis with a mobilization that could be immediately implemented. This chapter examines the mobilization plan of the British Army as it stood before war was declared on August 4, 1914. The sheer detail of many of the mobilization timetables is far too much information to be given justice in this analysis.

155 The reason the word ‘true’ was used in this sentence was because when Wilson took over as DMO there were not mobilization tables, railway or embarkation tables. All that truly existed was an idea of sending British troops to the continent.
As a result, for the purposes of this chapter, the focus on mobilization will be on the infantry divisions and cavalry division.

**General Mobilization**

One of the major lessons that the British Army had learnt as a result of the War in South Africa was the need to be prepared. This lesson was not learned overnight, but in the decade between the end of the War in South Africa and the beginning of the First World War it became apparent that the Army recognized this need. One of the physical manifestations of this lesson learned was the creation of the ‘War Book’ in 1912. The purpose of this book was “to set out in chronological sequence, so far as is possible, the steps which have to be taken when war is threatened or determined upon and the action which it will involve on the part of branches.”

This book clearly outlines the steps that were to be taken during the ‘Precautionary Period’ and the ‘General Mobilization Period’ by the various departments at the War Office. Upon the order of the Precautionary or General Mobilization Period, all the department heads at the War Office had to consult the War Book and read their duties. This planning document set out the responsibilities and expectations of all the major positions in the War Office. For example, the following was the instructions to the Mobilization Officer 1(a) during the War Stage:

> During mobilization it may be expected that any alterations necessitated in the order of embarkation of units of the Expeditionary Force, owing to delay in mobilization or to a failure of the railway arrangements will be referred to M.O.1 (a), as the subsection responsible for the concentration of the Expeditionary Force and for co-ordination of our plans with those of the allied military authorities.

This amounted to only a small portion of the instructions for the Mobilization Officer 1(a). The War Book gave instructions for the Departments of: the Secretary, the Chief of

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Imperial General Staff, the Adjutant-General, the Quartermaster-General, Master-General of the Ordnance, the Civil Member, the Finance Member, the Military Secretary and Staff and the Military Aeronautics Directorate. These departments were key in the mobilization of the expeditionary force. Therefore it was important that they should understand what they were required to do during the Precautionary and General Mobilization stages.

The War Book was also important for the mobilization plan of 1914 because it outlined the necessary steps for general mobilization. It stated that the arrangements regarding a general mobilization were for the “possibility, imminence or declaration of war with a first class European Power which would entail the complete mobilization of the whole of the Naval and Military Forces of the Crown.”\textsuperscript{158} For the purposes of the Army, a general mobilization meant the “calling out of the Army Reserve, the continuance of soldiers with the Colours who might otherwise pass to the Reserve and the embodiment and mobilization of the Territorial Force.”\textsuperscript{159} This action was only to be taken if it was perceived by the government that there was an imminent national danger or great emergency.

The actual process that had to be undertaken to issue the general mobilization order was quite extensive. Once the Cabinet had reached the opinion that mobilization was necessary, the Prime Minister would seek the approval of the King. After the Royal permission had been granted, the permanent heads of the various departments were informed of the situation. In order for a general mobilization to take effect, seven orders had to be issued:

\textsuperscript{159} Ibid. p. 24.
i) A Proclamation approved by the King in Council calling out the Army Reserve on permanent service and embodying the Territorial Force.

ii) A Proclamation, approved by the King in Council, continuing soldiers in Army Service.

iii) A proclamation, approved by the King in Council, embodying the Militia.

iv) A Proclamation, approved by the King in Council, calling out the Militia Reserve on permanent service.

v) An Order in Council empowering the Government to take possession of railroads.

vi) An Order by the King, countersigned by a Secretary of State, authorizing general or field officers of the Regular Forces to issue requisitions of emergency for the impressments of animals, vehicles, and vessels for inland water transport.

vii) An Order by the King, countersigned by a Secretary of State, authorizing general or field officers of the Regular Forces to issue billeting requisitions.\(^{160}\)

Following these seven orders, the Army would start its mobilization. The General Post Office telegraphed all postmasters to inform them that the mobilization order had been given. As a result, the postmasters were meant to specially treat the notices that were in green envelopes marked 'Mobilization.' In response to the mobilization order being given, all telegraph delivery and transmitting offices, except town sub-offices, were open twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.\(^{161}\) These actions were taken to expedite informing the reservists that the mobilization order had been given. Following these stages in the mobilization process, soldiers were to begin reporting to their various mobilization points.

The War Book was intended to be revised annually, like the War Estimates. This revision schedule meant that the British Army recognized the need for constant revision and updating of material dealing with the possibility of a mobilization. This action allowed the British Army more flexibility in responding to threats because the necessary initial steps were already outlined in these documents. If the need arose, the Army could


\(^{161}\) Ibid. p. 26.
simply revise the documents rather than having to write whole plans from scratch, like
during the War in South Africa and the Moroccan Crisis of 1905.

The task of mobilizing any size of force can be a daunting one, especially without
the proper people and plans in place. The ‘War Book’ had outlined the specific
responsibilities of the departments, but the question of who would fill those appointments
was left to another book titled ‘Mobilization Appointments.’ This book outlined the
responsibilities of the General and mobilizing officers during mobilization. ‘Mobilization
Appointments’ was different from the ‘War Book’ in that it centred on the officers of the
various formations of the expeditionary force, and not with departments at the War
Office. In addition to outlining the various responsibilities of the officers involved in the
mobilizing of the expeditionary force, the ‘Mobilization Appointments’ outlined: the war
appointment, the allotment, the name of the officer allotted to the position, the place of
reporting and the date of reporting. The document contains 125 pages of positions,
appointments and dates of reporting for almost every officer position in every unit.162
This book allowed for the British Army officers to know exactly when and where they
needed to be upon mobilization.

The task of all the General Officers who were given the ‘Mobilization
Appointment’ Book was to ensure that every officer, warrant officer, non-commissioned
officer and enlisted man was medically inspected and fit for duty. The responsibility of a
unit’s mobilization officer (MO) was to supervise the mobilization of his units. He was
to ensure that all the necessary steps were taken by the unit to complete its mobilization
on time. His duties were outlined in ‘Instructions for Officers detailed to mobilize
Headquarters Units formed on Mobilization.’ Once the mobilization of a headquarters or

162 "Mobilization Appointments" 1 April 1914. [National Archives, Kew] WO 106/49A/9
other unit was complete, but prior to the unit leaving its mobilization place, the commanding or mobilizing officer sent a telegram to Secretary of State for War listing the rank and name of everyone that mobilized with the unit. In addition, he dispatched another telegram listing all those that did not report for mobilization. Once the units had completed mobilizing, they would entrain to be transported to their embarkation port.

The three documents mentioned here the War Estimates, the War Book and the Mobilization Appointments served as the framework for Wilson's mobilization plan. These documents allowed the entire force to know what their duties were and what was expected from them upon mobilization. Through revising the documents annually, Wilson ensured that all the officers were constantly apprised of the changes to the Army. This way, if a crisis arose, Wilson did not have to quickly revise and reissue these documents: the documents were already revised and in the hands of the people who needed them. This was a huge improvement over previous mobilization plans. In addition to the War Book, War Estimates and Mobilization Appointments, Wilson created mobilization, entrainment and embarkation timetables. During his tenure he was constantly revising these timetables to make them more efficient and to get the troops to the front the quickest.

1914 Accelerated Timetables and Mobilization

One of Wilson's strengths as DMO was that he constantly was revising and updating. This process of improvement ensured that the mobilization plan was always representative of the actual expeditionary force. The mobilization tables were based on

stations and barracks not specific units.\textsuperscript{164} For example, if a regiment was moved from Aldershot to Ireland, it would no longer mobilize with Aldershot divisions but with the Irish divisions. It was easier to create the mobilization tables for the British Expeditionary Force because the system relied on permanent features such as stations. This permanence resulted in the same mobilization tables being able to be reused and resulted in time being saved that was dedicated to revising these tables.

When it came to mobilizing, all units were not able to mobilize at their peace stations. Some units even had their mobilization equipment stored at a different location. Upon receiving the notification that the general mobilization order had been given, the unit had to report to its place of mobilization. If the unit’s peace station and place of mobilization were different, mustering at the mobilization place involved time to travel between the two locations. This time resulted in it taking longer for the unit to be ready to entrain and embark to France. The table below outlines the various peace stations, place of mobilization and place where its units’ equipment was stored. Although some formations were quite spread out, for the purpose of this table, the location of the headquarters for each of the brigade was used for the location of the brigade (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1: Location of British Force in Britain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formation</th>
<th>Peace Station</th>
<th>Place of Mobilization</th>
<th>Mobilization Equipment at</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cavalry Division</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headquarters</td>
<td></td>
<td>Aldershot</td>
<td>Aldershot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Cavalry Brigade</td>
<td>Aldershot</td>
<td>Aldershot</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Cavalry Brigade</td>
<td>Tidworth</td>
<td>Tidworth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Cavalry Brigade</td>
<td>Curragh</td>
<td>Curragh</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Cavalry Brigade</td>
<td>Canterbury</td>
<td>Canterbury</td>
<td>Canterbury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1st Division</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headquarters</td>
<td>Aldershot</td>
<td>Aldershot</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Infantry Brigade</td>
<td>Aldershot</td>
<td>Aldershot</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Infantry Brigade</td>
<td>Blackdown</td>
<td>Blackdown</td>
<td>Aldershot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Infantry Brigade</td>
<td>Bordon</td>
<td>Bordon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2nd Division</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headquarters</td>
<td>Aldershot</td>
<td>Aldershot</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Infantry Brigade</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>London</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th Infantry Brigade</td>
<td>Aldershot</td>
<td>Aldershot</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th Infantry Brigade</td>
<td>Aldershot</td>
<td>Aldershot</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3rd Division</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headquarters</td>
<td>Bulford</td>
<td>Bulford</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th Infantry Brigade</td>
<td>Tidworth</td>
<td>Tidworth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th Infantry Brigade</td>
<td>Devonport</td>
<td>Devonport</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th Infantry Brigade</td>
<td>Portsmouth</td>
<td>Portsmouth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4th Division</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headquarters</td>
<td>Woolwich</td>
<td>Woolwich</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th Infantry Brigade</td>
<td>Shorncliffe</td>
<td>Shorncliffe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th Infantry Brigade</td>
<td>Colchester</td>
<td>Colchester</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th Infantry Brigade</td>
<td>Dover</td>
<td>Dover</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5th Division</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headquarters</td>
<td>Curragh</td>
<td>Curragh</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13th Infantry Brigade</td>
<td>Dublin</td>
<td>Dublin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1914 was no different than the previous three years under Wilson’s tenure as DMO, in so far as he was able to accelerate formations mobilization timetables. As mentioned earlier, Wilson changed the mobilization plans based on the belief that if Britain was to play any major role in a war between France and Germany, Britain’s forces needed to be mobilized and on the continent by the twelfth day of mobilization. Wilson had already greatly decreased the necessary time to ready the expeditionary force, yet in 1914 he was able to decrease the time needed for a large number of units to mobilize.

The following charts outline the new timetables for various units of the Aldershot, Irish, Eastern, Western, Southern and Northern Commands:  

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165 Source for all the following tables: War Office Memorandum “Acceleration of dates of mobilization for 1914.” [National Archives, Kew] WO 106/49C
### Table 4.2: Aldershot Command Revised Timetable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Place of Mobilization</th>
<th>Day of Mobilization 1913</th>
<th>Day of Mobilization 1914</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cavalry</td>
<td>No. 1 Cavalry Field Ambulance</td>
<td>Aldershot</td>
<td>7th</td>
<td>6th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavalry</td>
<td>Field Squadron</td>
<td>Aldershot</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>6th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.T.</td>
<td>Army Troops Train, advanced portion</td>
<td>Aldershot</td>
<td>4th</td>
<td>2nd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st, 2nd, 3rd</td>
<td>3 Squadrons Divisional Cavalry</td>
<td>Longmoor</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>&quot;A&quot; Field Artillery Brigade</td>
<td>Aldershot</td>
<td>8th</td>
<td>7th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>&quot;B&quot; Field Artillery Brigade</td>
<td>Aldershot</td>
<td>9th</td>
<td>8th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.T.</td>
<td>No. 20 Field Ambulance</td>
<td>Aldershot</td>
<td>11th</td>
<td>10th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. of C.</td>
<td>Nos 1 &amp; 4 Reserve Parks</td>
<td>Aldershot</td>
<td>11th</td>
<td>10th</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 4.3: Irish Command Revised Timetable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Place of Mobilization</th>
<th>Day of Mobilization 1913</th>
<th>Day of Mobilization 1914</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>15th Infantry Brigade &amp; No. 4 Section 5th Signal Co.</td>
<td>Belfast, Holywood, Londonderry, Mullingar</td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>4th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>16th Infantry Brigade &amp; No. 2 Section 6th Signal Co.</td>
<td>Fermoy, Tipperary, Limerick</td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>4th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>Divisional HQ, remainder HQ Divisional Artillery</td>
<td>Cork, Mallow</td>
<td>7th</td>
<td>6th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>Divisional HQ, remainder HQ Divisional Artillery</td>
<td>Curragh, Newbridge</td>
<td>7th</td>
<td>6th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>&quot;B&quot; Field Artillery Brigade</td>
<td>Dundalk</td>
<td>9th</td>
<td>8th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>No. 2 Section, Divisional Ammunition Column</td>
<td>Dundalk</td>
<td>9th</td>
<td>8th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>Divisional Ammunition Column, less Heavy portion No. 4. Section</td>
<td>Various</td>
<td>10th</td>
<td>9th</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 4.4: Southern Command Revised Timetable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Place of Mobilization</th>
<th>Day of Mobilization 1913</th>
<th>Day of Mobilization 1914</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>&quot;C&quot; Field Artillery Brigade</td>
<td>Bulford</td>
<td>10th</td>
<td>8th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>Heavy Battery &amp; Ammunition Column</td>
<td>Fareham</td>
<td>9th</td>
<td>8th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. of C.</td>
<td>Nos. 2, 3, 5 &amp; 6 Reserve Parks</td>
<td>Hilsea &amp; Devonport</td>
<td>11th</td>
<td>10th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. of C.</td>
<td>&quot;A&quot; &amp; &quot;B&quot; Fortress Companies R.E.</td>
<td>Devonport &amp; Cosport</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>4th</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.5: Western Command Revised Timetable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Place of Mobilization</th>
<th>Day of Mobilization 1913</th>
<th>Day of Mobilization 1914</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>No. 18 Field Ambulance</td>
<td>Burscough</td>
<td>11th</td>
<td>10th</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.6: Eastern Command Revised Timetable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Place of Mobilization</th>
<th>Day of Mobilization in 1913</th>
<th>Day of Mobilization in 1914</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>Divisional HQ, remainder</td>
<td>Woolwich</td>
<td>7th</td>
<td>3rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10th Infantry Brigade &amp; No2 Secn 4th Signal Co</td>
<td>Shorncliffe &amp; Gravesent</td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>3rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11th Infantry Brigade &amp; No 3 Section 4th Signal Co.</td>
<td>Colchester</td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>3rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12th Infantry Brigade &amp; No 4 Section 4th Signal Co.</td>
<td>Dover &amp; Chatham</td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>3rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Squadron Divisional Cavalry</td>
<td>Weedon</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HQ Divisional Artillery</td>
<td>Woolwich</td>
<td>7th</td>
<td>3rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;A&quot; Field Artillery Brigade</td>
<td>Colchester</td>
<td>7th</td>
<td>3rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;C&quot; Field Artillery Brigade</td>
<td>Woolwich</td>
<td>9th</td>
<td>3rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HQ Divisional Engineers</td>
<td>Woolwich</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>3rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;B&quot; Field Company</td>
<td>Woolwich</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>3rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No 11 Field Ambulance</td>
<td>Colchester</td>
<td>10th</td>
<td>3rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4th Signal Co. HQ &amp; No. 1 Section</td>
<td>Woolwich</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>3rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Divisional Train, remainder</td>
<td>W. Croydon, Sh'cliffe, Colchester, Dover</td>
<td>7th</td>
<td>3rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;B&quot; Field Artillery Brigade</td>
<td>Shorncliffe</td>
<td>7th</td>
<td>6th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Heavy Battery &amp; Ammunition Column</td>
<td>Woolwich</td>
<td>9th</td>
<td>7th</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Divisional Ammunition Column</td>
<td>Various</td>
<td>11th</td>
<td>7th</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. 10 Field Ambulance</td>
<td>Chatham</td>
<td>7th</td>
<td>6th</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. 12 Field Ambulance</td>
<td>Shorncliffe</td>
<td>10th</td>
<td>6th</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Other Units</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5th Cav Bde</td>
<td>Field Troops R.E.</td>
<td>Chatham</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th &amp; 6th</td>
<td>2 Squadrons Divisional Cavalry</td>
<td>Norwich</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>Heavy Battery &amp; Ammunition Column</td>
<td>Woolwich</td>
<td>10th</td>
<td>8th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.T.</td>
<td>No. 19 Field Ambulance</td>
<td>W. Croydon</td>
<td>11th</td>
<td>10th</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The only alteration to the existing tables for the Northern Command was to the Headquarters of the 5th Cavalry Brigade. The advanced portion of the HQ was required to mobilize on the second day and the remainder had to be ready by the sixth day. These tables clearly show Wilson’s and the British Army’s commitment to decreasing the time it took to mobilize the expeditionary force. For example, a large number of units in the Eastern Command had their date for completed mobilization changed from the seventh to the third day of mobilization. The difference was that under the new schedule the units would be in France by the time the units under the old schedule were entraining.

**Entrainment**

The introduction of trains into mobilization plans was one of the reasons for the increase in the speed with which a country could mobilize its army. Although Britain was an island, rail transport was still a very necessary mode of transportation for a quick mobilization plan. British troops were scattered around the British Isles and needed to be concentrated and taken to their port of embarkation. This action was accomplished through railways. Upon the general mobilization being given, the Mobilization Officer 1(a) notified the Quartermaster General (2) of the order. The Quartermaster General in turn warned the General Managers of the railways, comprising the Executive Committee, to prepare to put into action their pre-arranged programs for the movement of troops on their rail lines.\(^{166}\)

The railway timetables were drawn up to cover from the first day of mobilization to the last. These tables were made out by six Commands: Aldershot, Irish, Southern, Northern, Eastern and Western. Included in the tables were the trains for collection and distribution of horses. The officers responsible for movement of the trains from their

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\(^{166}\) War Book for the War Office” 1914 [National Archives, Kew] WO 33/688 p. 29.
respective mobilization centres to their port of embarkation was the MO (1) and the Quartermaster General (2). These officers worked in conjunction with the London & South Western Railway, known as the ‘Secretary Railway.’ It liaised with the other railway companies on the Executive Committee to ensure all the troop movements by rail was unhindered by the use of different companies lines.167

The Mobilization Officer (1) was responsible for creating all the tables showing the entire expeditionary force arranged into trainloads including the day of entrainment and their final destination. It was from these tables that the Executive Committee worked out the specific timings to ensure maximum efficiency and to ensure that no collisions resulted.168 Once the trains arrived at the embarkation port, the soldiers would detrain and either stay at the rest camp or embark on to their respective sea transport.

On the first day of mobilization only Lines of Communication (L. of C.) units were mobilized, No. 1 and No.14 Depot units of Supply. The second day of mobilization saw an increase in the number of L. of C. units entrain for Southampton. The third day saw the start of the major formations entrain: the Headquarters and Divisional Trains for the Cavalry Division, 1st, 2nd and 3rd Divisions. The Cavalry, the 1st and the 2nd Divisions all entrained at Aldershot, the 4th Division entrained at Bulford.169

Scheduled on the fourth day were the 6th and 4th Brigades from the 2nd Division and the 2nd and 3rd Brigades from the 1st Division. The following day the remainder of the 1st and 2nd Divisions entrained, the 1st and 5th Brigades respectively. Also on the fifth day the 7th, 8th and 9th Brigades of the 3rd Division entrained at Devonport, Portsmouth.

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167 Address by Major-General Sir Percy Radcliff [National Archives, Kew] WO 106/49A/1
168 Ibid.
169 WO 106/49B/3, WO 33/665 All the information in the following paragraphs dealing with the entrainment timetables came from this source. For a more detailed examination of the entrainment schedule for the above-mentioned forces including train numbers and times of departure and arrival see the Appendices.
and Plymouth. The sixth day saw the entrainment of the 18th Brigade for the 6th Division. The seventh day of mobilization was a major day in terms of volume of traffic. It was the main day for cavalry entrainment, the entire division was entrained at cities around Great Britain. The eighth to eleventh days were scheduled for the entrainment of the division's artillery as well as another large portion of the L. of C. troops and the Army Troops (A.T.).

The twelfth day of mobilization was the last day for the major fighting formations to entrain. During that day, the 10th, 11th, 12th Brigades of the 4th Division were scheduled to move. There were some entrainment tables created for after the twelfth day; the only units scheduled during this period were the remainder of the formations already sent or the last bit of the L of C formations that were not immediately necessary for the general advance of the expeditionary force.

The above railway timetables do not include the 5th or 6th Divisions because these units were stationed in Ireland and required their own entrainment schedules. For the formations that were mentioned above, their final destination was Southampton. This destination was chosen because it was the main port for the embarkation of soldiers; other ports were used for supplies and equipment.

**Sea Transport**

Immediately upon the mobilization ordering being given, the Divisional Naval Transport Officer was given a list of the suitable vessels for transporting troops that were in port in Great Britain. The owner's of the vessels, which were required by the Army for transport, were sent a telegram of the Royal Proclamation that basically stated that the
British Government required the use of the owners ship for a national emergency or, in this case, general mobilization. Afterwards the ship owners either agreed to loan their vessels to the Admiralty or they were requisitioned for service. The Admiralty supplied and paid the owners of the vessels with coal or another form of fuel. The individuals that owned the various ships that were required for transport were required to still operate their ships during this time. The Admiralty did not provide any additional crews.\footnote{Interdepartmental Conference. “Charter Party-Expeditionary Force” 19 March 1914. [National Archives, Kew] WO 106/49B/2}

The main port for embarkation in 1914 was Southampton. Vessels required for transporting the expeditionary force to the Continent, which were not found at Southampton, were ordered by telegraph to report to the port the evening before the day of embarkation. If the ships were required to be fitted for horses or vehicles, they were required to be at Southampton four days prior to embarkation. That way the ships were ready by the time soldiers and horses reached the port.\footnote{Interdepartmental Conference “Instructions for Divisional Naval Transport Officer Southampton.” 15 May 1914. [National Archives, Kew] WO 106/49B/2}

Due to the time required to fit a ship for horses, artillery or wagons, it was decided to use cattle ships wherever possible for horses. This decision was made because these ships already had stalls aboard ship that would accommodate horses for transport. As a result, less time was required to fit non-cattle ships with fitting. As a precaution, there were 2,000 sets of portable Horse Stall Fittings stored at Southampton. This number was deemed to be sufficient for any deficiencies in cattle ships. The decision to store the horse fittings in Southampton allowed for the immediate preparation of ships upon mobilization in that port, thus a potential time saver.\footnote{Ibid.} The mobilization plan depended on the ships being ready for embarkation as soon as the soldiers were. That
was a major lesson from the South African War. Where it had previously taken forty-one days for the troops to embark, now most of the units could be ready within two weeks.

Fittings were not only required for transports carrying horses and artillery; troop transports also required some specific fitting. These fittings, however, did not require as much time to install. Each of the transports carrying infantry or cavalry units had to have: two sets of gun slings, four bale slings for carts and two wagon slings. These fittings were supplied by the government and kept by the Board of Transport.¹⁷⁴

At Southampton, for the purpose of embarkation, eight berth stations were created. “A ‘berth station’ comprised the sheds and quays grouped together as a unit capable of dealing with one troop train at a time.”¹⁷⁵ The berth stations were the means by which troops were loaded on to the various sea transports. The transports were required to berth by 2300 hours for the next day’s embarkations.

The transports were under the instruction of the Divisional Naval Transport Officer, who was wholly responsible for all the arrangements on the wharves for embarkation. He was also responsible for the supply of boats, lighters, tugs and pilots for the various ships, and he issued instructions to the Harbour Officials and Masters of the ships. In Southampton, the Naval Transport Officer was the person in charge of making sure embarkation ran smoothly.¹⁷⁶

In order to deal with the sheer volume of men that were traveling through Southampton a rest camp was created near the town. The camp was designed to handle a division, roughly 19,000 men and 7,000 horses. In terms of volume, the two largest days

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¹⁷⁵ Ibid.
¹⁷⁶ Ibid.
of embarkation at Southampton were the fourth and seventh days of mobilization. The fourth day saw 20,900 men and 1,600 horses embark and the seventh saw 8,800 men and 7,700 horses.  

Once the troops were embarked upon their respective ships, the voyage to their disembarkation port took between seven and eighteen hours. Upon arrival at the disembarkation port, whether Le Havre, Rouen or Boulogne, the officer commanding the troops on board and all officers commanding units would receive orders from the Military Landing Officer. These orders included those for disembarkation, the situation of the rest camp for troops proceeding to the front, allocation of quarters for troops staying in port and any special instructions for the unit.

Each formation varied as to which disembarkation port it used, and some divisions even had its brigades and artillery disembark at different ports. The 1st Infantry Division’s Headquarters and 1st, 2nd and 3rd Infantry Brigades all disembarked at Havre, whereas the divisional artillery landed at Boulogne. The 2nd Infantry Division’s Headquarters (HQ) and 4th Infantry Brigade landed at Le Havre, but the 5th Brigade and divisional artillery disembarked at Boulogne, and the 6th Brigade at Rouen. For the 3rd Division, its HQ and the 9th Brigade land at Le Havre, the 7th Brigade and artillery landed at Rouen and the 8th Brigade disembarked at Boulogne. Le Havre was the intended port of disembarkation for the divisional HQ, 11th, 12th Brigades and the divisional artillery; the 10th Brigade was scheduled for Boulogne. The 5th Division was planned to have all of its formations disembark at Le Havre. The 6th Division had the HQ, 16th, 17th Brigades

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178 “Instructions for Entrainment and Embarkation (short voyage) For units of the Expeditionary Force in Great Britain. Part II.” [National Archives, Kew] WO 106.49B/1/1
and artillery scheduled for disembarkation at Le Havre and the 18th Brigade at Boulogne. Finally, the Cavalry Division, the most spread out, had its divisional HQ and the 1st and 3rd cavalry brigades disembark at Le Havre, the 2nd cavalry brigade land at Boulogne, the 4th cavalry brigade at Rouen and Le Havre and the divisional artillery land at Boulogne and Le Havre. Because the brigades belonging to each division did not disembark at the same port, the units had to entrain to travel to the concentration point. From the concentration point, the divisions would advance to the front. Following disembarkation the ships were to return to Southampton for further service; however, if the vessels were no longer required as transport they were to report to their place of fitting to be unfitted. If the ships were not originally fitted, they were to return to their original port.

Once in France

After disembarking the troops were to make their way to the rest camps, which were just outside the ports. Once the troops had reached their respective rest camps, an advance party was to report to the place of entrainment. The advance party consisted of an officer, three non-commissioned officers and an interpreter. The officers commanding the units submitted to the Base Commandant their request for transport for equipment to the entraining station. A unit’s stay at the camp depended on when they landed in France. Typically, units that landed after the sixth day of mobilization did not remain at the camp for longer than twenty-four hours before entraining. Prior to the sixth day of mobilization it depended on available transport and concentration of forces.

There were four different types of railway wagons that the troops and supplies used while the expeditionary force was in France. The first type and most uncommon

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179 Disembarkation Tables [National Archives, Kew] WO 106/49B/5
180 Instructions for Entrainment and Embarkation (short voyage) For units of the Expeditionary Force in Great Britain. Part II.” [National Archives, Kew] WO 106.49B/1/1 p. 4.
was third class coaches. These coaches could seat eight men per compartment and accommodate sixty-four men per coach. Next was the most likely form of troop coach: the fitted goods wagons. The capacity of these coaches varied, therefore, the number of troops allotted to each coach was marked on the outside. The usual capacity of this type of wagon was either thirty-two, thirty-six or forty men. These coaches usually had benches available for the men to sit on. The third type of wagon was the horse wagon, which held eight horses in two rows of four. The central space in the wagon was for saddlery and forage. In each of these wagons were two soldiers to ensure the horses were settled during the trip. The final wagon type was for vehicle trucks. These wagons accommodated three axels, sometimes four. Through the use of a side-loading ramp from the platform or ground, the trucks were loaded onto the train. The entire journey, depending at which port the soldiers and supplies landed, was estimated to take ten to twenty hours.\[181\]

The railway service on the continent was completely manned and controlled by the French. The expeditionary forces railway movements went according to the plan that had been worked out during peacetime between the two military staffs. The British railway officers only acted as intermediaries between the British troops and the French authorities.\[182\] Except for the advance parties of the various units, the main formations

did not leave the ports of disembarkation until zero hour on the seventh day of mobilization.183

When the troops began to be moved forward, they passed through Amiens and Busigny in order to detrain in Maubeuge, Busigny and Hirson, forming a triangle. The controlling body that regulated the movement of the British forces each day was called the ‘Commission de Ligne.’ Special timetables were created for the mobilization period for both the northern system and the railway system of Le Havre-Rouen. Based on these tables, the French had to supply the British with sixty trains a day to meet the needs of the expeditionary force’s timetable. The general principle guiding them was that British units would entrain the day after they had disembarked.184 Upon completing concentration, the expeditionary force would advance along a line determined by the Commander of the Army based on the situation at hand.

No mobilization plan is without its flaws. Importantly, it was impossible to practice the plan completely during peacetime. Therefore, it was impossible to know if the plan was to work when the order came to mobilize. What was certain; however, was that in 1914, Britain was the most prepared it had been to mobilize an expeditionary force in decades. There were standing documents updated and reproduced each year like the War Estimates and the Expeditionary Force Tables. Wilson had taken into his confidence the General Managers of the major railway companies to aid him in creating railway timetables because they were best able to outline timetables due to their expertise. Under

Wilson’s tenure as DMO greater planning was done in cooperation with the French General Staff. This planning allowed for there to be no discussion upon the outbreak of the war between the two General Staffs as to where best to employ and concentrate the British expeditionary force. This planning had all been done prior to the outbreak of hostilities. On August 4, 1914, Britain declared war on Germany. As a result, Wilson’s mobilization plan was implemented and wheels were set into motion to land the British expeditionary force in northern France.
Chapter 5: August 1914.

When the July Crisis began in 1914, it was the first time Britain had a mobilization plan prepared prior to the start of the crisis. The British Army had hurriedly created a mobilization plan for the War in South Africa in 1899 and the 1905 Moroccan Crisis. What had made the mobilization planning different for 1914 were the efforts of the current DMO, Wilson. He had spent three and half years creating the plan that was implemented in August of 1914.

Helmuth von Moltke the Elder’s maxim that in war no battle plan survives after first contact with the enemy was a very true statement about British mobilization during August 1914. Wilson had outlined in extreme detail the time of entrainment, the time of embarkation, the train numbers and dates for all formations of the expeditionary. The one problem with having all these plans predetermined was that Britain had not officially committed itself to the military defence of France. There had been the Entente Cordiale and military conversations between the two General Staffs, but these were, formally, noncommittal. This lack of commitment meant that should Britain choose to join a war against Germany, the means of this action could only be decided by the Government of the day.

How does one measure the effectiveness of a mobilization plan? In the case of the War in South Africa, the British Army was mustered into fighting formations and
traveled to South Africa where it engaged the enemy. Was that not a successful plan?
The argument that was put forward in the chapter on the War in South Africa argued that
although the mobilization plan did get the troops to the front, it did not do it in a quick
manner or with the necessary equipment to commence hostilities. However, the
mobilization plan that was implemented in 1914 was everything the plan in 1899 was not.
The 1914 plan was completed long before the anticipated crisis. In the time it took the
British Army in 1899 to embark, the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) of 1914 could
have mobilized, embarked and concentrated nearly three times. The BEF was also
equipped with all the necessary equipment that was deemed necessary prior to the war.
There were no units that went to France in their serges or without regimental transport as
the units had in 1899. Therefore, the mobilization plan of 1914 was an extremely
efficient and effective mobilization plan.

The Crisis Begins

Following the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand by Bosnian
Nationalists, a crisis developed that eventually ensnared the whole of Europe. As a
result of the crisis, the first military step Britain took was to send a wire to General
Horace Smith-Dorrien, the commander of Southern Command. The telegram was sent on
July 27, informing Smith-Dorrien that hostilities had broken out between Austria-
Hungary and Serbia and that there was a distinct possibility of Britain being involved in a
European War. The telegram instructed him to guard all vulnerable points in the
Southern Command.

185 The specifics of the July Crisis are far too detailed and beyond the scope of this paper to be covered here. For more
information on the July Crisis see Huw Strachan's The First World War Vol. 1: To Arms and David Stevenson's
Armaments and the Coming of War: Europe, 1904-1914.
Two days later, the British Government declared a 'Precautionary Period.'\textsuperscript{187} This period was preparatory to ordering a general mobilization. The purpose of initiating the Precautionary Stage was to ensure certain defensive steps were taken. Places that were deemed vulnerable to sudden attack "at a time when relations with a foreign power are such that a declaration of war, with the possibility of a coincident or event antecedent attack is imminent."\textsuperscript{188} The two main objectives of this stage of readiness was,

(a) To ensure that the ports in which the fleets will mobilize and on which they will be based in war are safeguarded against surprise attack.  
(b) To ensure that vulnerable points such as magazines, stores and factories of war material, wireless telegraph stations, cable landing places, important railway communications, & c. are safeguarded, not so much against attacks by the armed forces of the enemy as against the action of ill-disposed persons.\textsuperscript{189}

This stage was a precursor to general mobilization. It allowed for the Regular Army to initiate preparations for mobilization prior to the actual mobilization order being given and also to safeguard key areas around Britain. Following the initiation of the precautionary stage, there was a five-day period where no new orders were issued to the Army. This lack of action was due to the British Government’s desire not to be viewed as contributing to the conflict by ordering a mobilization or being perceived to do anything along those lines. The inability of the British Government to decide on a course of action was why the order to stop all training and maneuvers, and for the troops to return to their peace station was not issued before 3 August.\textsuperscript{190} But due to the degeneration of events on the continent, it seemed the most prudent course to take.

On August 4, 1914, the British Government declared war on Germany; the order for general mobilization was given at 1600 hours on the same day. The following day,

\textsuperscript{188} "War Book for the War Office" 1914 [National Archives, Kew] WO 33/688 p. 16  
\textsuperscript{189} Ibid. p.16.  
\textsuperscript{190} Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien, \textit{Memories of Forty-Eight Years' Service}. p. 374.
August 5 was to be considered the 1st day of mobilization.\textsuperscript{191} Although, the British Government had decided to go to war with Germany, there had been no actual decision as to how best to fight the war. On August 5 and 6, a War Council was convened at 10 Downing St.

In attendance at this council were most of the Cabinet Ministers and eight senior members of the Army. This included, Field Marshals Lord Roberts and Kitchener, the soon to be Secretary of State for War, Sir Charles Douglas (CIGS), Sir Henry Wilson (DMO), Sir John French (the designated Commander-in-Chief), Sir Ian Hamilton and the two Corps Commanders, Sir Douglas Haig and Sir James Grierson.\textsuperscript{192} This meeting was to determine how best to employ the BEF. French proceeded to outline before the Council the pre-war plans that had been worked out between the French and British General Staffs. He stated that it had been hoped that the BEF would mobilize on the same day as the French and concentrate on the French left at Maubeuge by the fifteenth day of mobilization. Once the force was concentrated, it was to advance towards Belgium.\textsuperscript{193} Not all of the British military officers who were present at the council agreed with the pre-existing mobilization plans.

Some officers put forward the idea of landing in Germany or Belgium; however, Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty, said that the Royal Navy could not protect troop transports that far into the North Sea. Douglas pointed out that according to the existing military plans, the ports for embarkation were Newhaven, Southampton and Bristol, and the disembarkation ports were Le Havre, Boulogne and Rouen. Also, French authorities

\begin{itemize}
\end{itemize}
had arranged enough rolling stock for the force and created railway timetables for the British formations. Any change in the destination of the expeditionary force would result in serious delays in mobilizing. It was decided that the Army would use the existing mobilization plan, although Kitchener wanted the Army to concentrate deeper in France. He recognized that Maubeuge was too exposed; as a result, he ordered the Army to concentrate around Amiens.

The by the end of 6 August, the War Council agreed to three resolutions:

(a) To embark one cavalry division and ultimately five, but for the present only four, of the six divisions of the Expeditionary Force.
(b) To bring home the Imperial Troops from South Africa.
(c) To transport two Indian divisions to Egypt.

The reason for leaving two divisions in Great Britain was because Kitchener was afraid of the possibility of a raid on the Home Islands. All military members present at the council meeting did not share this view. Douglas was very vocal in his disagreement with Kitchener's decision to only send four divisions to France and said:

The decisive point at the present time lies on the Continent and our correct strategy is still to maintain the strongest possible offensive there. In doing so we are not only taking the most effective action to bring the war to a successful conclusion, but we are indirectly protecting England from any serious attempt at invasion.

Douglas raised very good points, and his views were representative of the changes to strategic policy that the role of the Navy was to defend the Home Islands. Wilson called Kitchener's idea "an unreasonable scare." The DMO believed that it was nonsense to transport the 6th Division to England from Ireland and have formations from Aldershot

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sent to Grimsby. These actions would cause disruption in the already created
timetables.\textsuperscript{199} Kitchener's ideas, with respect to keeping divisions in the United Kingdom,
were completely contrary to much of the planning that had occurred as of late.

Another area where Kitchener came into conflict with members of the Army was
the change in the place of concentration from Maubeuge to Amiens. With the help of
French delegation from General Joseph Joffre, the French Commander-in-Chief, headed
by Colonel Huguet the French Military Attaché in London, Wilson was able to persuade
Sir John French and Sir Archibald Murray, the Chief of the General Staff for the BEF,
that the expeditionary force needed to be concentrated at Maubeuge as had previously
been arranged with the French.\textsuperscript{200} Wilson believed that any changes to major parts of the
mobilization plan would create problems and resulting in the mobilization not running
smoothly.

During the first day of mobilization, Commanding Officers were given documents
marked ‘Top Secret.’ They were the mobilization order for their respective units. The
orders had been drafted beforehand and simply had the unit name and time filled in
before being sent out. The orders were extremely detailed. For example, they outlined
the exact entraining instructions:

Train No. 463Y will arrive at siding B at 12.35 a.m., August 10\textsuperscript{th}.
You will complete loading by 3.40 a.m.
This train will leave siding C at 9.45 a.m., August 10\textsuperscript{th}.\textsuperscript{201}

\textsuperscript{200} William James Philpott, \textit{Anglo-French Relations and Strategy on the Western Front, 1914-18}. (London:
\textsuperscript{201} John Terraine, \textit{Mons: The Retreat to Victory} (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd. 1960) p. 23.
These orders were able to be so detailed because of the work that had been done prior the July Crisis. Specifically, the work of the Executive Committee had enabled the railway timetables to be so precise.

In fact, on August 4th the War Office announced an Order in Council signed by the King declaring that "it is expedient that the Government should have control over the railways of Great Britain."202 This situation was exactly that for which the Executive Committee had been created. The Committee issued a statement saying that:

The control of the railways has been taken over by the Government for the purpose of ensuring that the railways, locomotives, rolling stock and staff shall be used as one complete unit in the best interest of the State for the movement of troops, stores and food supplies. The staff of each railway will remain under the same control as hitherto and will receive their instructions through the same channels as in the past.203

Although this statement makes it appear as if the Government was running the railways, it was in fact the Executive Committee, comprising the General Managers of the railway companies that organized rail transport during mobilization.

In 1914, the British railway system was the best in Europe. In terms of railway track, double track was far more effective a form of transport than single track. At this time, fifty-six percent of Britain's entire railway track was double track, the most among the Great Powers.204 The British railway system had one of the densest networks in all of Europe. It had the most locomotives and carriages available per hundred-mile route than either Germany or France.205 The extent of the British railway system was a definite asset to the British in August 1914. On the busiest day during mobilization, eighty trains traveled into the Southampton Docks. Over the five busiest days, 1,800 special trains

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203 Ibid. 21.
205 Ibid. 174.
were run. During all that time there were “almost no hitches: the pre-arranged timetables were meticulously kept.” This showed that the plan Wilson had created was reliable and based on real fact.

Even some of the smaller details were laid out in the mobilization orders. Lieutenant B.L. Montgomery of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment recorded that the mobilization orders were so detailed that it instructed “all officers’ swords were to go to the armourers’ shop on the third day of mobilization to be sharpened.” Montgomery was a little curious why this order had been laid out in the mobilization instructions because he had only ever used his sword for saluting.

9 August had been selected by the War Council as the first day to embark troops. For the purposes of embarkation the transport ships were divided into four classes: (1) personnel ships, (2) horse and vehicle ships, (3) motor transport ships and (4) store ships. Eight different ports were used to transport the soldiers and necessary supplies of the Expeditionary Force to France. Southampton was the port where all troops in Great Britain were embarked; Avonmouth embarked the motor transport and petrol; New Haven embarked stores and supplies; Liverpool was for frozen meats and motor transport; Glasgow embarked a variety of equipment; and the Irish ports of Dublin, Cork and Belfast embarked the 5th and 6th Divisions. The average number of ships dispatched to France was thirteen ships daily with an average daily tonnage of 52,000 tonnes gross. The main body of the BEF began to cross the Channel on August 12; the

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207 Ibid. 24.
209 Ibid., 31-32.
peak days for sea transport were the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth days of mobilization.\textsuperscript{210}

The transport ships were dispatched day and night as soon as they were ready to the French ports of Le Havre, Rouen or Boulogne. The transport of the expeditionary force to France was done without incident. No German submarines or torpedo boats attempted to attack the British transports.\textsuperscript{211} On August 14, Haig recorded in his diary: "Our mobilization and train arrangements have worked out according to plan. The embarkation work, however, which is for the most part under Naval control, seemed to me rather a contrast and lacked method."\textsuperscript{212}

Friday, August 14 was the date for the embarkation of the Headquarters staff. The cruiser, \textit{H.M.S. Sentinel}, carried French, Murray, Wilson, Robertson, Lambton, Wake, Huguet and Brinsley Fitzgerald, French’s private secretary. They disembarked at Boulogne at 1700 hours.\textsuperscript{213} Upon arrival in France, Field Marshal French went to the rest camps outside Boulogne. Where he found that the "Officers and men looked fit and well, and were full of enthusiasm and cheer."\textsuperscript{214} The General Headquarters (GHQ) then proceeded by rail on August 16 to Le Cateau.\textsuperscript{215}

From 14 to 20 August, the units of the British Expeditionary Force began to move by trains to their respective areas of concentration. The overall area of concentration, according to Sir James Edmonds, the British Official Historian for the First World War, resembled "a pear shaped area between Maubeuge and Le Cateau, about twenty-five

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{210} John Terraine. \textit{Mons: The Retreat to Victory}, p. 28.
\textsuperscript{212} Robert Blake ed. \textit{The private Papers of Douglas Haig 1914-1919}, p. 73.
\textsuperscript{214} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 32.
\end{flushleft}
miles long from north-east to south-east, and averaging ten miles wide.\textsuperscript{216} The specific areas of concentration were:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textbf{Cavalry Division}: East of Maubeuge, Jeumont, Damousies, Cousolre and the Divisional Headquarters at Aibes.
  \item \textbf{II Corps}:
    \begin{itemize}
      \item \textbf{3\textsuperscript{rd} Division}:
        Marbaix, Taisnières, Noyelles.
      \item \textbf{5\textsuperscript{th} Division}:
        Maroilles, Landrecies, Ors.
    \end{itemize}
  \item \textbf{III Corps}:
    \begin{itemize}
      \item \textbf{1\textsuperscript{st} Division}:
        Boué, Esqueheries, Leschelles.
      \item \textbf{2\textsuperscript{nd} Division}:
        Grougis, Mennevret, Hannappes.\textsuperscript{217}
    \end{itemize}
\end{itemize}

It took 361 French trains to carry the BEF from the ports of disembarkation to their respective concentration areas.\textsuperscript{218} The French 4\textsuperscript{th} Bureau was responsible for coordinating the trains that carried the British units from Le Havre, Rouen and Boulogne to area around Maubeuge.\textsuperscript{219}

The British forces in France virtually completed their concentration by August 20 and were able to advance the next day. The French viewed the British as being six days late in concentrating. The reason for this difference in points of view from the French and British militaries was that France issued the general mobilization order on August 1. The British did not mobilize until the 5 August, four days later. Granted, Wilson’s plans with the French were based on Britain mobilizing the same day as the French. This delay was a result of the debate in Britain as to if Britain should enter the war and, if so, where to deploy its forces. Given the difference in mobilization dates, the British Army mobilized rather effectively and efficiently, adhering to most of the timetables that had been created by Wilson. The only problem with the timetables had resulted from

\textsuperscript{216}Sir James Edmonds. \textit{Military Operations: France and Belgium, 1914.} p. 49.
\textsuperscript{217}Ibid. p. 49.
\textsuperscript{218}David Stevenson. \textit{“War by Timetable? The Railway Race before 1914.”} p. 168.
\textsuperscript{219}Ibid. 175.
Kitchener’s decision to keep two divisions in Great Britain. Due to this change, the timetables had to be refined. A telegram from the War Office to the Inspector-General of Communications outlined the changes to the mobilization timetables:

The 13th day of Expeditionary Force Railway Time Table will be carried out on the 12th day, the 14th day on the 13th day, the 12th day on the 15th day, and the 15th day on the 14th day.

The portion of the original 13th and 14th days relating to the IVth Division will be sent on the 16th day. The 16th day will go on the 18th day. 220

Aside from the small revisions to the railway timetables carried out in August 1914, the only major incident that effected the mobilization of the BEF was the death, during transit to the concentration area on August 17, of the II Corps commander, General Sir James Grierson. Due to his unexpected death, General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien was given command of the II Corps and quickly taken to France, where he arrived on 20 August only shortly before combat began between Britain and Germany. 221

Excluding the minor problems or changes to the mobilization plan mentioned above, the BEF landed in France relatively quickly following mobilization. This fact illustrates just how well organized and effective the mobilization plans that Wilson created were. 222

The July Crisis was the first time that Britain began an extensive military operation with a mobilization plan already predetermined. Wilson, the DMO, had spent the previous three and half years revising and rewriting various aspects of the

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220 Telegram from War Office to Inspector-General of Communications. 19 Aug 1914. [National Archives, Kew] WO 33/713
221 Smith-Dorrien arrived at the HQ of II Corps on the 21st of August, the first day of the advance and the battle at Mons started two days later.
222 Ian Malcolm Brown, *British Logistics on the Western Front 1914-1919* p. 44.
mobilization plan. These actions were all taken to ensure that once the general
mobilization order was given the plan could simply be implemented with few revisions.
The general mobilization that resulted from the declaration of war by Great Britain on
Germany was fast and effective. Mobilization began on the 5 August and was completed
fifteen days later. This timeline meant that the entire expeditionary force consisting of
four infantry divisions and one cavalry division were completely mobilized and
concentrated in just over two weeks, a considerably shorter period of time than during the
War in South Africa or during the Moroccan Crisis.²²³

Despite some initial delays caused by the indecision of the British Government as
whether or not to go to war and then how to best employ the BEF, mobilization occurred
without any major setbacks. The timetables were revised not to include the 4\textsuperscript{th} and 6\textsuperscript{th}
Divisions and a new Corps commander was found following General Grierson’s sudden
death. Wilson’s mobilization plan, implemented on August 5 1914, was extremely
successful because it mobilized the troops quickly and efficiently.

²²³ In Richard Haldane’s \textit{An Autobiography}, he states that during the Moroccan Crisis if the British Army needed to
mobilize an expeditionary force it would have taken two months to mobilize a force of 80,000 men. p. 188.
CONCLUSION.

There can be no doubt that between 1899 and 1914, there was drastic improvement in British mobilization planning. From 1899 to 1910, there was no pre-planning, and mobilization planning only occurred in response to a perceived crisis, such as the War in South Africa (1899-1902) and the Moroccan Crisis (1905). Following 1910, mobilization planning was given more priority and became a major project for the Department of Military Operations.

The mobilization plan for the War in South Africa was largely inefficient and had many deficiencies. This inefficiency resulted from the fact that mobilization planning for that war had only started months before the Army was dispatched. Due to the small amount of time dedicated to planning, insufficient stores were acquired, including significant amounts of regimental transport. In fact, some units dispatched to South Africa were sent wearing their serge uniforms and not the new khaki.

Following the War in South Africa, mobilization planning received very little if any attention. This neglect was for the most part due to two reasons: first, there was no major crisis to motivate a mobilization plan. Second, the British Army at this time was undergoing major reform. Three Secretaries of State for War served in a three-year period, each with their own idea of how to reform the Army. This inconsistency in leadership resulted in the Army becoming disorganized and dedicating little effort to mobilization planning.
During the Moroccan Crisis, the neglect of mobilization stopped in response to
the possibility of having to mobilize in defence of France. Over the next five years,
Major-General Grierson and then Major-General Ewart slowly worked on a mobilization
plan to send troops to France to defend against a German invasion. However, it was only
once Major-General Henry Wilson took over the Department of Military Operations that
mobilization planning received priority.

The difference between the mobilization plans created for South Africa, created
by Grierson for the Moroccan Crisis and those created by Ewart between 1907 and 1910
is that they do not possess anywhere near the same level of detail as the plans created by
Wilson. Wilson spent three and half years trying to create a mobilization plan that could
easily be implemented at the outbreak of hostilities. He recognized that in the current
military environment Britain not only needed to mobilize quickly, in fact had to be
completely mobilized by the twelfth day of mobilization.

It is clear from a comparison between mobilization in 1899 and mobilization in
1914, that Britain went to war in 1914 with a far more detailed and complete mobilization
plan. Even though there is very little written about the mobilization during August 1914,
even by the primary actors, it is clear that mobilizing occurred rather quickly and without
any major incident. This fact is proven through the numbers, specifically the number of
days it took to mobilize the force. In 1899, it took Britain forty-one days to be ready to
embark. In 1914, it took the British Expeditionary Force fifteen days to mobilize and
concentrate on the left flank of the French Army. Given these times, the BEF of 1914
could have mobilized and concentrated three times by the time the expeditionary force of
1899 was ready to embark. This decrease in time was almost solely due to the work of Major-General Henry Wilson.

Wilson was able to achieve such efficiency with his mobilization plan because he looked outside the Army for help. When it came to creating railway timetables, his predecessors did not contact the private sector. Instead, Wilson created a committee consisting of the General Managers of the railways. He thought that the General Managers knew what their railways were capable of doing best; therefore, it should be up to them to create the railway timetables. Using the example of mobilization in 1914, Wilson was right. The railway timetables were effective and the troops reached their ports of embarkation on time. The problem of sea transport was resolved in much the same manner. Wilson worked with the Director of Naval Transports to ensure that enough transports could be procured so that embarkation went according to schedule.

The speed in which the BEF mobilize in 1914 was not only a vast improvement compared with the events of 1899 but it also allowed the British forces to be at the decisive point to slow down the German invasion. In a comparison between the German or French armies the BEF was relatively small, but it was deployed in an excellent position to slow down the German advance and allow for the French to redeploy troops to the north. Had the BEF not been at Mons or the Marne it is quite possible the Germans would have been able to take Paris. Only through the speed at which the British forces were able to mobilize were they able to be at the decisive point in the Battle of the Frontiers.

British mobilization efficiency allowed for the British to be the only major power to achieve its strategic objectives by the end of 1914. Both Germany and France had
been unsuccessful in achieving their objectives of occupying the other country. Britain’s objective was much smaller in scope; it was to ensure that the Channel ports were not occupied by a hostile force. This objective stemmed from the fact that the Royal Navy was responsible for home defence. If for example, Calais or Boulogne fell into German hands the navy could not guarantee the safety of the home islands. Thus it the task of ensuring that the Channel ports remained unoccupied fell to the Army.

British Army mobilization in 1914 and mobilization planning from 1899-1914 is an area that has been chronically overlooked by First World War historians. This analysis has shown that, despite Britain’s comparatively late start in mobilization planning, Britain was able to create and implement an extremely effective and efficient mobilization plan by 1914.
## Appendix One

Entrainment Tables for Third Mobilization Day

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Train Number</th>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>From.</th>
<th>To.</th>
<th>Starting Time</th>
<th>Arrival Times</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>303</td>
<td>Cavalry</td>
<td>HQ (advanced party)</td>
<td>Aldershot</td>
<td>Southampton</td>
<td>0925</td>
<td>1115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>303</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>HQ and Divisional Train (Advanced Party)</td>
<td>Aldershot</td>
<td>Southampton</td>
<td>0925</td>
<td>1115</td>
</tr>
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<td>HQ and Divisional Train (Advanced Party)</td>
<td>Aldershot</td>
<td>Southampton</td>
<td>0925</td>
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<td>3rd</td>
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<td>1230</td>
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<td>HQ and Divisional Train</td>
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</tr>
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<td>HQ and Divisional Train</td>
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Footnote: All information found in the Appendices tables can be found in [National Archives, Kew] WO 106/49B/3, WO 33/665
Appendix Two

Entrainment Tables for Fourth Mobilization Day

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<th>Train Number</th>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>From.</th>
<th>To.</th>
<th>Starting Time</th>
<th>Arrival Times</th>
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<td>Farnborough</td>
<td>Southampton</td>
<td>0215</td>
<td>0400</td>
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<td>405</td>
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<td>Farnborough</td>
<td>Southampton</td>
<td>0315</td>
<td>0500</td>
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<td>408</td>
<td>2nd</td>
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<td>Southampton</td>
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<td>0612</td>
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<tr>
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## Appendix Three

**Entrainment Timetable for Fifth Mobilization Day**

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<th>Starting Time</th>
<th>Arrival Times</th>
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